



# The Photography of John Gutmann: Culture Shock

*By Sandra B. Phillips, John Gutmann*

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The photographs in this book trace Gutmann's career from Germany where he trained in Expressionism, through his resolution to leave during Hitler's ascent to power, and his decision to settle in America where he would live most of his life.'

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

In 1933, as America adjusted to the Great Depression, the young artist John Gutmann left Berlin and settled in San Francisco. With an émigré's clear vision, he photographed an energetic society on the move. Automobiles, for example, are a constant motif: Gutmann was amazed at their ubiquity in consumerist America compared to Europe, where they were still owned only by the privileged. Gutmann's idiosyncratic portraits and vignettes of street life captured the vitality of urban America and delivered a strong social message. His directness is the antithesis of the lyricism of his California contemporaries Edward Weston and Ansel Adams, whose work he found self-conscious and annoying.

The lively essay by Sandra Phillips, curator of photography at San Francisco MOMA, is correspondingly and refreshingly free of contemporary art jargon. Her analysis of the avant-garde German magazines to which Gutmann was exposed during his formative years is excellent; she notes affinities with pictures of athletes, massed individuals, and airplane maneuvers that he would have seen in early Nazi Germany--another society in ferment. We learn technical details--for example, that the Leica still-camera was invented to test sprocketed movie film. The hundred images illustrated in *The Photography of John Gutmann: Culture Shock* were chosen by Gutmann himself shortly before his death at the age of 93 to represent his work. Stanford's Center for Visual Arts has organized them into an exhibition for which this book is the well-produced catalog, besides being the definitive study of Gutmann to date. --*John Stevenson*

From [The New Yorker](#)

"Stylish"

#### Review

"A beautiful book" -- *The San Diego Union-Tribune, June 25, 2000*

"Mysterious and sensual ... Gutmann's photographs ... make you sit up and take notice" -- *Black and White, summer 2000*

"Should serve as the standard book on Gutmann ... you don't really know San Francisco until you see Gutmann's version of it" -- *San Francisco Examiner, March 3, 2000*

"Some of the most vivid images of the American mid-century" -- *The Irish Times, May 6, 2000*

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##### Russell Carson:

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**Robin Bone:**

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