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Hurrell's Hollywood Portraits: The Chapman Collection

By Mark A. Vieira



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This book presents in depth the work of George Hurrell, the photographer who more than anyone else was responsible for inventing the Hollywood "glamour" portrait - the essential publicity tool for the major studios during the Golden Age of the movies. The book traces his immense impact on the portrayal of the leading stars year by year, from his arrival in California in 1925 until his departure in 1943. During that time he photographed all of the greatest personalities, at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, Warner Brothers, and Columbia as well as independently. The prints come from the Chapman Collection, one of the most extensive archives of original Hurrell photographs in the world, and they include a number of rarities and surprises. Although some photos by Hurrell are familiar and frequently reproduced, most of the images in this book will come as a revelation, since they have not been published in over half a century. The genesis of the pictures is examined in a remarkable text by Mark A. Vieira, himself a highly regarded portrait photographer, who came to know Hurrell well during the photographer's later years. Vieira explains in detail Hurrell's technical feats of lighting and retouching. And drawing on firsthand accounts, he vividly re-creates the lively interplay between the photographer and his subjects at the shooting sessions in which these portraits were taken.



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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

They had faces then, in the golden age of Hollywood when a publicity photo could make or break a star. The visual power of George Hurrell's portraits, with their Rembrandtesque lighting and dramatic poses, shaped the careers of such stars as Joan Crawford, Jean Harlow, and Jane Russell, and did as much or more to establish them as their film performances. Mark Vieira, who adopted Hurrell's techniques and uses them to this day, explains how the master portraitist lit and retouched his photographs--a portrait of Crawford before and after retouching reveals what an artist the one-time painter really was--and analyzes their impact.

From Library Journal

George Hurrell was the most sought-after celebrity photographer in Hollywood's Golden Era. He had total control of light, the complete confidence of his subjects, and a storied reputation for making the ordinary beautiful and the beautiful dazzling. The Chapman Collection is one of the most extensive archives of Hurrell's photographs in the world. A close friend of the photographer, Vieira has carefully selected 275 of the images from the collection for this book. The selections leave the reader with a reassuring sense of familiarity with the hundreds of stars, who are remembered here as the film studios planned?as people who amazed us and were bigger than life. Vieira has collected and arranged the stars in this volume in an admiring way, turning Hurrell's incredible ability to merge glamour, creative lighting, star quality, and imaginative posing into a timeless book. Recommended for general collections.?David Bryant, New Canaan P.L., Ct.

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Review

Mr. Vieira attempts to define Hurrell's technique, but too often he merely describes, in condescending detail, simple technical terms like f-stops, while skimming over more unusual procedures like Hurrell's retouching process. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Patricia Eliot Tobias

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