



The Last Years of Walker Evans: A First-Hand Account by Jerry L. Thompson

Jerry L. Thompson

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In 1971, when the author enrolled in the Yale School of Art as an aspiring photographer, his principal aim was to learn all he could from one of the leading and most admired American photographers of this century, Walker Evans. Once Evans accepted Jerry Thompson as a student, they developed an extremely close working relationship as well as a personal friendship. At Yale, at Evans's Connecticut home in Old Lyme, and during a number of field trips to other parts of the country, Thompson was always close at hand, helping in the darkroom, fetching and carrying, mounting prints for exhibitions, driving, dealing with the archives that were the accumulation of almost forty years of work, and absorbing all the time what Evans, always articulate, had to say about his interests, his intellectual curiosity, and the basis of his approach to the art of photography. By the time Evans's health deteriorated and he died in 1975, Thompson had become deeply involved with his idol, learning as much about Evans's foibles and eccentricities as he did about the man's genius. As a result, Thompson's account of those last four years gives us a precious insight into the mind and sensibilities of a great man. To remind the reader of some of Evans's most famous photographs, a number of them are reproduced here, along with informal photographs of him at home, and a sampling of his late interest in color Polaroid photography, published for the first time. In combination with an unusually sensitive text, this is a book of great interest not only to photographers and those interested in photography, but to all who respond to biography and the analysis of character.

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