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Los Angeles: Portrait Of A City



Synopsis

Rise and sprawl: how Los Angeles came to be A pictorial history of the City of Angels Â From the first known photograph taken in Los Angeles to its most recent sweeping vistas, thisÂ photographic tribute to the City of AngelsÂ provides a fascinating journey through the cityâ™s cultural, political, industrial, and sociological history. It traces the cityâ™s development from the 1880sâ™ real estate boom, through the early days of Hollywood and the urban sprawl of the late 20th century, right up to the present day. WithÂ over 500 images, L.A. is shown emerging from a desert wasteland to become a vast palm-studded urban metropolis. Events that made world newsâ™ including two Olympics, Bobby Kennedyâ™s assassination, and the Rodney King riotsâ™ reveal a city of many dimensions. The entertainment capital of the world, Hollywood, and its celebrities are showcased along with many other notable residents, personalities, architects, artists, and musicians. The cityâ™s pop cultural movements, its music, surfing, health food fads, gangs, and hot rods are included, as are its notorious crimes and criminals. This book depicts Los Angeles in all its glory and grit, viaÂ hundreds of freshly discovered imagesÂ including those ofÂ Julius Shulman,Â Garry Winogrand,Â William ClaxtonÂ and many other superb photographers, culled from major historical archives, museums, private collectors, and universities. These are given context and resonance through essays by renowned California historianÂ Kevin StarrÂ and Los Angeles literature expertÂ David L. Ulin. Â Text in English, French, and German

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Customer Reviews

At last, the city at the end of the rainbow gets the Taschen treatment: a large, chunky, 570 page, visual history. This is more than just an ordinary picture book though because so many of the photos, after the Thirties, have been taken by named photographers (there are biographies of thirty-nine of them at the back of the book) and it's the mixing of their work and anonymous photos that I thought gave the book a special feel. Another interesting theme reflects the creativity of the city with the use of quotes from well-known historical books and movies that appear throughout the pages, nicely with a graphic of the jacket or poster. Having looked through the pages a few times it does seem amazingly comprehensive. The seven chapters run from 1862 to the last photo in 2005. Each starts with a several hundred word overview followed by a spread with a period map then by captioned photos. Cultural, political and sports personalities, architecture (including street scenes plus industry) and historic news photos are the dominant themes and I thought the selection was rather impressive, there doesn't seem to be any image that would make me say "Just why is that one included". What I really love about the book is its big page size. Pin-sharp photos from before 1940 are frequently run over a spread and look terrific as do news photos from later decades (all printed with a 175 screen). Tying in with the historical book and movie links throughout the book the back pages carry a recommended list of viewing, listening and reading material that sum up this intriguing city. A slightly similar photo book of Los Angeles but with images selected from the last few decades which might be worth checking out is *Looking At Los Angeles*, with many of the same well-known photographers as Jim Heimann's book. ***SEE SOME INSIDE PAGES by clicking 'customer images' under the cover.

To a life-long New Yorker, Los Angeles is a foreign country, filled with vivid impressions -- warm all the time, unseemly pink and turquoise neon pillars at the airport, lush vegetation, endless freeways, glittering Disney Center, lovely bungalow neighborhoods, downtown that stretches to Santa Monica, Hollywood emblazoned on the hill, Century City sprouting from somewhere, the Getty Center gleaming from its perch, Wilshire Boulevard marching through time and linking it all together, mammoth city hall, nostalgic Union Station, pinata and flower markets, new rapid transit, cars, cars, cars.... Of course, we all have mental images of the place, products of the media -- cops, movie stars, immigrants, water wars -- that shape a superficial understanding of LA. But in many ways it's a hard-to-navigate place -- I am not talking about the famed transportation routes, but about its culture and history. For the discerning visitor, there are visual hints of the past, wonderful surprises in the canyons and a shadow of a long-gone community here and there, but its full imprint is gone. At least it was gone until *Los Angeles, Portrait of a City* appeared this fall. Here, the city

unfurls in word (Kevin Starr is simply brilliant) and in image (Jim Heimann's selections, extraordinary). We can see who made the city what it is today. We can sense the hopes, drive and ambition of its inhabitants over time and view its developing and ever-changing landscape. This book is a masterpiece. It makes the city no longer hard-to-navigate, no longer a foreign country but a beloved American icon.

I am a Northern California native, but moved to Los Angeles 10 years ago. This is a great book for anyone who wants to know more about a city that is often accused, mostly by outsiders, of being shallow, one-dimensional or soulless. It provides a unique glimpse into the real Los Angeles, one that is rich in history, complex and ever-changing. Great book. Highly recommended...

As a Los Angeles history buff, I have many books on the city but this one is truly special. It is not the same tired collection of photographs you have seen in so many other publications. Taschen has collected unique images of all the sites you have always wondered about or have seen remnants of. I am particularly fond of the vintage maps which are truly inspiring. Moreover, Taschen's well known large image format creates an amazing and unique experience for the reader. Jim Heimann has really done it! It's truly a special book.

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