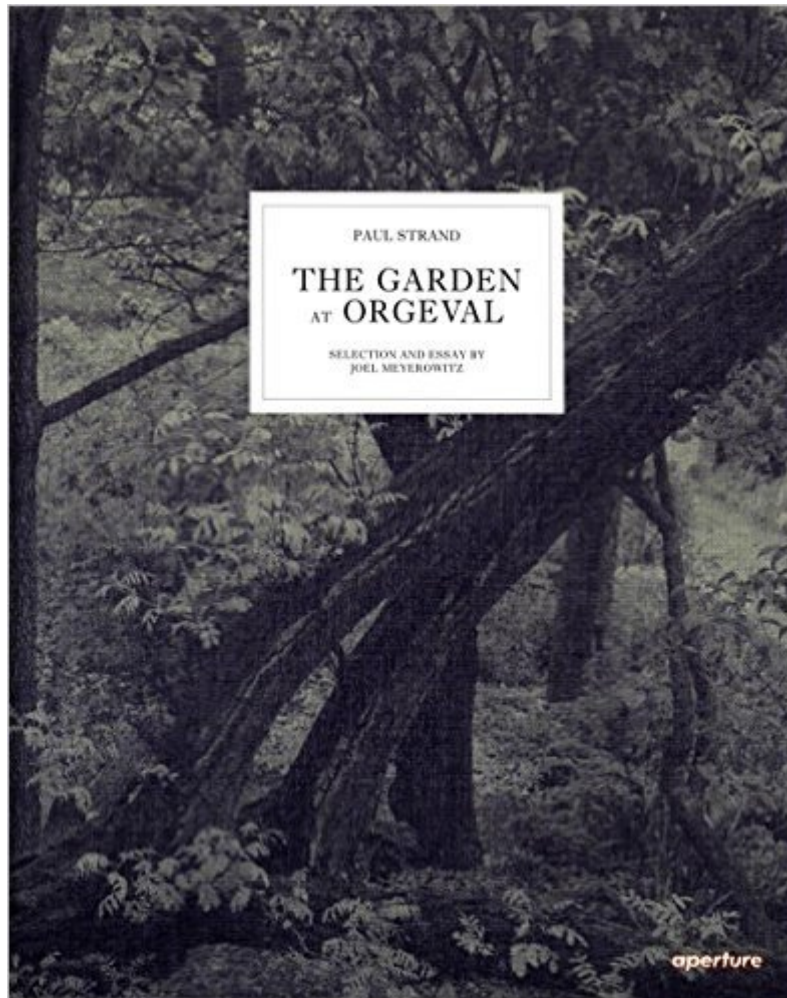


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Paul Strand: The Garden At Orgeval



Synopsis

After nearly a lifetime of traveling and photographing in far-flung places such as Mexico, Ghana, Italy, Scotland and his adoptive country, France, Paul Strand began to concentrate on the stony beauty of his own garden at Orgeval. The work that constitutes "The Garden at Orgeval" offers a close, exacting study of nature's forms and patterns: tiny button-shaped flowers, cascading winter branches and snarls of twigs. While these photographs exhibit the same directness and precise vision that is so quintessentially Strand, they also reflect his increasing preoccupation with mortality and the fragility of existence. The photographs in this volume have been selected by the renowned photographer, Joel Meyerowitz--whose own affinity toward the "Orgeval" series stems from a lifetime of photographing in different genres and ultimately, like Strand, returning to nature as an enduring subject. Meyerowitz also contributes an essay responding to Strand's images and reflecting on the contemplation of gardens and the process of aging. Paul Strand (1890-1976) was one of the greatest photographers of the twentieth century, and among the first to establish photography as an art form. As a youth, he studied under Lewis Hine at the Ethical Culture Fieldston School, going on to win acclaim from the likes of Alfred Stieglitz and David Alfaro Siqueiros. After World War II, Strand traveled around the world--from New England to Ghana, France to the Outer Hebrides--and eventually settled in Orgeval, France, where he spent the remaining 27 years of his life.

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Customer Reviews

If asked to name my favorite photographer, I would attempt to duck the question, but if pressed enough, I would say Paul Strand. For me, his work strikes the right balance between documentary and aesthetic. Plus, it's black-and-white, for which I have a strong preference. In 1955, Strand and his third wife bought a house with an old garden in the small village of Orgeval, twenty miles outside Paris. The garden and its trees, vines, fruit, flowers, and organic detritus became Strand's principal subject over the last two decades of his life. There, he reworked "the themes that had preoccupied him throughout his career--abstraction, modernism, and the notion of place." Those are the words of Joel Meyerowitz, who contributes a brief introduction to *THE GARDEN AT ORGEVAL* and who selected the forty-one photographs included in the book. Meyerowitz entitles his introduction "The Gravity of Time", and he sees in Strand's Orgeval photographs a "return to simplicity" typical of artists near the ends of their lives when they "discover the meaning of the seasons, or meditate on nature, or death". That's Meyerowitz's interpretation. I am not so knowledgeable, or audacious, as to attempt an over-arching characterization of the book. I simply revel in individual photographs, any one of fifteen or so I would happily hang in my house alongside two earlier Strand prints already there. The book is rather expensive, but (save for one carelessly strewn apostrophe on p. ix) it is beautifully produced, as is the norm for Aperture. I know that I will return to it from time to time in my remaining years, Insh'allah.

A photo book often is an experience of browsing. This book is an experience of feeling. It took 5 separate sessions to view all of its content -- so overwhelmed I was these images. I would slowly page through and be overwhelmed with emotion to such an extent that I had to put the book down for another day. The introduction is a fine contribution too. Joel Meyerowitz has a perfect background for this (see the BBC series *The Genius of Photography*).

Paul Strand's work in his later years is a beautiful study in shape, form and detail. The black and white photos are rich in depth and feelings, a wonderful book.

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