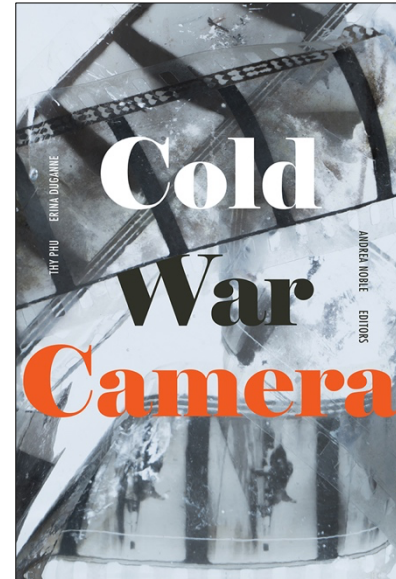


Thy Phu, Erina Duganne, and Andrea Noble (Eds.), **Cold War Camera**, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 432 pp., \$30.95 (paperback).

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Cold War tensions are far from over, as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine made crystal clear in the past year. But while the war in Ukraine is the most visible recent expression of Cold War politics, it is also exactly the kind of conflict, reviving a classic East versus West binary, that ***Cold War Camera***’s editors and contributors unabashedly decenter in their new volume. Edited by Thy Phu, Erina Duganne, and Andrea Noble, *Cold War Camera* takes a nuanced approach to Cold War history by centering the geographies that often go forgotten amidst the dominant US/USSR rivalry. Using photography as the central tool with which to bring this complex past to the fore, *Cold War Camera* is an eye-opening and rich addition to the historiography of the Cold War.



Warmly dedicated to one of the volume’s late editors and accomplished scholar, Andrea Noble, *Cold War Camera* thoughtfully curates a diverse universe of scholars and visual artists to shed light on this understudied aspect of Cold War conflict. Between its multidisciplinary lineup and against-the-grain focus, the book is must-read material for students and seasoned scholars of visual studies, Cold War history, and related fields alike. While a volume promising to answer questions as urgent and complex as “How might photographic practices of the global Cold War selectively and strategically render subjects visible as well as invisible?” (p. 5) might seem unwieldy, *Cold War Camera* is remarkably cogent, its commitment to the visual the thread binding this 432-page volume.

While each of the volume’s essays offers a provocative take on Cold War history—ranging from epistemological revelations, as in the case of Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s “‘curriculum’ of human rights literacy” (p. 216), to alternative potentialities of decolonization, like those spelled out in Jennifer Bajorek’s reading of African photo archives—the volume’s overarching contribution is in its analytic of “the camera.” Defined as a “set of cultural practices” that sets forth forces both “productive and generative” as well as “repressive and destructive” of communities, alliances, societies, and individual life paths and possibilities (p. 5), “the camera” is the uniting analytical lens (pun intended) with which the volume grasps the far-flung boundaries and consequences of the Cold War. Per the volume’s editors:

This book emphasizes the Cold War *camera* to acknowledge an intricate material and ideological apparatus...wherein the workings of power are manifest in what can be perceived, in the repression of sites and subjects from the visual field, and in the production and preservation of images that circumvent these operations. (p. 10)

It is the apparatus of “the camera” that organizes the volume’s chapters into two main parts: “Visual Alliances,” which traces how the visual enabled (often unlikely) Cold War communities and networks, and “Structures of Seeing,” which attends to how photography “was used to structure what could be seen and known during the global Cold War and, conversely, what remained hidden and unknown” (p. 22). The very dynamics laid out in “Visual Alliances” can only be fully understood, then, with “Structures of Seeing” in mind. An interlude between the two sections interprets the camera most literally, bringing the themes of the volume to life with a pair of photo essays meditating on the afterlives and counter-memories of the Cold War era.

“Visual Alliances” begins with Darren Newbury’s treatment of a little-known Cold War episode in which South African photographer Earnest Cole fled his home country for exile in the United States at the assistance of the United States Information Agency, revealing an “entanglement of two visual histories usually treated separately” (p. 34). The entanglements illustrated in Newbury’s piece make for a fitting segue to Thy Phu, Eryn Lê Espiritu Gandhi, and Donya Ziaee’s chapter on the “revolutionary Vietnamese woman” as “icon of solidarity” (p. 66), which traces how a photographic trope that started in Vietnam supported political aims around the world, including in Palestine and Iran. Importantly, Phu, Ghandi, and Ziaee’s analysis of how the figure of the Vietnamese revolutionary woman has functioned across geographies does not force a fixed meaning onto the image, but rather reveals how the same “icon” can carry “manifold meanings . . . in response to political exigencies” (p. 73).

The subsequent chapter from Erina Duganne continues the conversation about the meanings of solidarity in the context of Cold War conflict, challenging commonly held notions of Cold War alliances and temporalities. Duganne examines how the 1982 art exhibit *iLuchar! An Exhibition for the People of Central America* models what she calls “visual solidarities,” in which aesthetic practices can help locate not only commonalities but also “misrecognitions” or “contingencies” (p. 115) that prompt deeper understandings of networks formed during the Cold War period. “Visual solidarities” lays the groundwork for Ángeles Donoso Macaya’s chapter, which offers the concept of “situated visibility,” urging an understanding of the visual as “a partial and incomplete perspective” (p. 22). It is a certain kind of “situated visibility” that Jennifer Bajorek’s chapter uncovers, detailing the ways in which Cold War–era archives from West Africa and the Sahel reveal alternative visions to independence in the wake of decolonization, imagining a possibility for unity not inherent in the Western-imposed nation–state model.

The book’s second section of text, “Structures of Seeing,” kicks off with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay’s provocative take on the “curriculum” of human rights and the form of “global visual literacy” it teaches, in which global superpowers justify violence in the name of “world peace” (p. 216). Azoulay’s chapter provides a kind of metatheoretical summation of themes from the volume’s first section, which reveals how solidarities, alignments, and possibilities have been centered or pushed aside in favor of a narrative serving Western imperial interests. Sarah Parsons’ chapter addresses one such narrative constructed in the Arctic Circle in the 1950s, where “settler-colonial state enlisted photography” strategically emphasized the “presence of Inuit people as a means by which to establish sovereignty claims in the High Arctic . . .” (p. 243). The section’s following three chapters shift gears from analysis of state photography practices to those of the domestic sphere: Laura Wexler, Karinthia Lowe, and Guigui Yao interpret Chinese family photographs from the Cold War period; Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko examine travel photographs from the USSR; and Gil Pasternak and Marta Ziętkiewicz probe photos representing everyday Jewish life exhibited in

the Polish public sphere. Each shedding light on the conditions of Cold War–era life, the chapters reflect how visual practices can subvert and make life livable under repressive state regimes—while also revealing more than previously known about those regimes’ tactics of control.

Bookended between the two main sections, photo essays “Bifurcated Histories,” by Tong Lam, the photographer responsible for the book’s cover, and “Preservation of Terror,” by Eric Gottesman, bring into stark focus the lasting impact of the Cold War era. Lam looks at a collection of Cold War ruins to illustrate how the era has shaped physical space into “a geography of fear” (p. 198) still palpable today, while Gottesman gives new life to old family photographs, originally taken during the Derg when Ethiopia’s government banned photography in public spaces. In his modern-day photos of these decades-old, preserved images, Gottesman reveals a visual practice of counter-memory that both reflects and subverts the government’s attempt to control the “visual field” (p. 203) and brings new perspective to the image-laden society of Ethiopia today. The images are visually arresting, and more than that, they provide much-needed perspective on the modern-day consequences of the Cold War as they are felt around the globe, not just in the “hot spots” most visible on the (Western) news. For a volume that does much to decenter normative Western epistemologies, its inclusion of the photo essays—a way of knowing not traditionally represented in the academy—felt painfully short. But however brief, the section provides an important model for the incorporation of multimodal work in scholarship—especially in less distinctly visual disciplines like history, American studies, communication, and others.

Cold War Camera takes readers from South Africa to Ethiopia, Vietnam to Palestine and Iran, from Chile to China, the Arctic Circle, and beyond. Its reach is sweeping, revealing a world entirely, if differentially, impacted as its most powerful quarreled to suture their place at the top. Just as it sheds light on this rich and storied past, *Cold War Camera* illuminates the present, proving that the tension and violence associated with the “official” Cold War-era never ceased but only took on different forms. With these dynamics laid bare, it makes sense that for some the contemporary moment feels closer to the “official” Cold War era of the late 20th century than any year or decade since. *Cold War Camera* is a much-needed voice for this exact moment in which a self-centered few remain preoccupied with preserving long but precariously held alliances at the expense of the world’s most vulnerable.