



Berenice Abbott: Documenting Science

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Fascination with the scientific advances that were rapidly changing the world motivated Berenice Abbott to use photography as the friendly interpreter of science. *Documenting Science* explores this work, beginning in 1939 with Abbott's early experiments with scientific imagery, continuing with science-based commercial assignments, and culminating in 1958 with the Physical Science Study Project at MIT which illustrated a new series of physics text books. This spectacular body of work is arguably Abbott's most innovative and creative. Both beautiful and instructive, these images often illustrate some basic scientific principle. They are a marriage of science and art, and have fundamentally changed the way thousands of students visualize complex principles of physics.

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Berenice Abbott: Documenting Science From Steidl Bibliography

- Rank: #1515159 in Books
- Published on: 2012-02-12
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .90" h x 11.60" w x 12.50" l, 4.00 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 182 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Other ur-forms of twentieth-century “nature” appear in *Documenting Science*: the cylinders, spirals, globes, and tendrils of computer wiring, radio tubes, and electrostatic generators. Photography, as in its earliest iterations, is called upon to taxonomize the incalculable order of the natural and, increasingly, technological world. Yet Abbott, like Benjamin, could not have anticipated how quickly the medium would outdate even itself, becoming ever more intertwined with the immateriality of the digital. Nonetheless, as documents of a future in the making—as well as of photography’s vital role in picturing it?Abbott’s science photographs fulfill her own dictum: “It is beautiful because it has fulfilled its use, recording the subject completely and understandingly.” (Jennifer Pranolo *MAKE Magazine*)

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