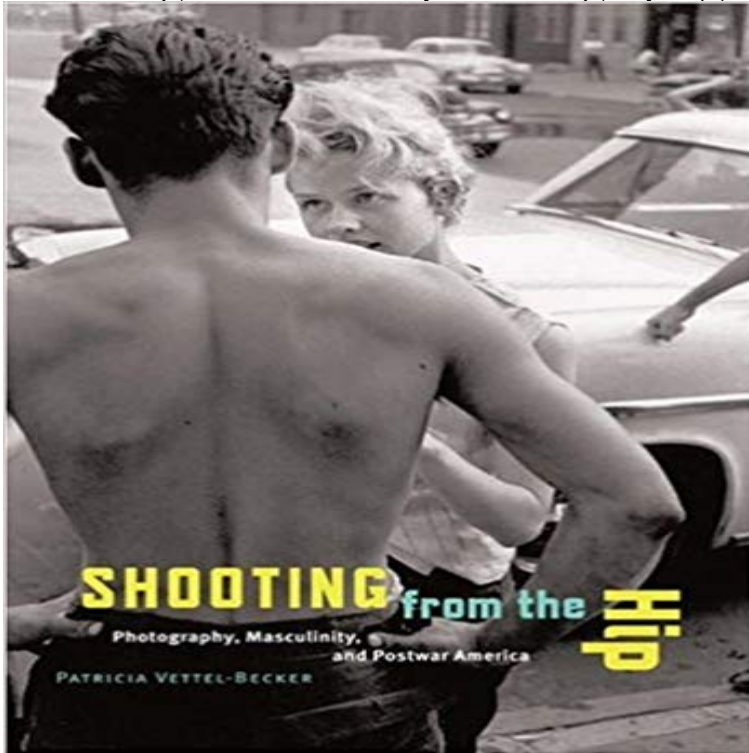


## Shooting from the Hip: Photography, Masculinity, and Postwar America



In *Shooting from the Hip*, Patricia Vettel-Becker reveals how photography helped to reconstruct and redefine the American idea of masculinity after the traumas of World War II. She argues that from 1945 to 1960 photography became increasingly concerned with restoring the male body and psyche, glorifying traditional masculinity - cowboys, boxers, athletes, military men - while treading carefully in an increasingly homophobic Cold War climate. Examining photojournalism as well as art and fashion photography, *Shooting from the Hip* finds in the crisp images of postwar photography five models of masculinity - the breadwinner, the action hero, the tough guy, the playboy, and the rebel. Vettel-Becker shows how the professionalization of photography itself was an attempt by male photographers to identify themselves as breadwinners. She goes on to analyze combat photography, exposing its valorization of action, subjugation of the enemy, and the use of the blurred shot to signify credibility. She links street photography - heir to Depression-era social documentary - with hard-boiled crime photography, exemplified in the works of William Klein and Weegee. And sexualized fashion models and their relationships with photographers, such as Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, fuel the ideal of the consummate playboy. Finally, Vettel-Becker demonstrates the authentic and sometimes rebellious nature of the male body as presented by sports photographers and others influenced by the Beat generation, including Robert Frank and Bruce Davidson. Taking a wide view of postwar photography, Vettel-Becker presents it as the triumph of a new form of modernist photography, centered on individual expression and the seductive image of the male body, and stimulated by a quest for the existential truth of masculinity.

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