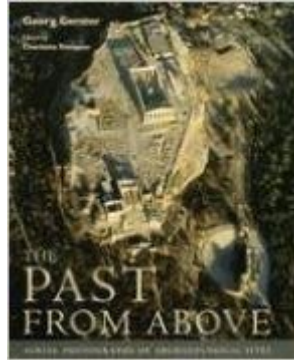


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The Past From Above: Aerial Photographs Of Archaeological Sites



Synopsis

Now available in paperback, *The Past From Above* presents stunning aerial photographs of 250 of the world's foremost archaeological sites. The photographer, Georg Gerster, has been shooting ancient sites from the air for more than fifty years. In this current collection, his subjects range from the temple complex at Karnak to the Great Wall of China, and from the Acropolis in Athens to Aztec palaces in Mexico. Gerster's photographs are technical achievements--often produced under hair-raising circumstances--in their own right but at the same time offer a unique visual history of mankind stretching back to the dawn of civilization. Charlotte Trumpler introduces the photographs with an overview of the critical role that aerial photography has played in archaeological research.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Aerial photographs began being taken in the mid-19th century, from tethered hot-air balloons, but it was a very iffy business. Among other things, the balloon gondola had to include a darkroom because the glass plates of the time couldn't wait the photographer to return to earth. The invention of the airplane in the early 20th century made things much simpler in a technical sense, but more complicated when it came to politics and borders. Most of the earliest aerial photos of archaeological sites were a byproduct of World War I reconnaissance flights, and some of the first locations surveyed no longer exist at all, or not in their earlier form. You'll find all the details of this early history in an introductory chapter, along with Gerster's reminiscences of his own often hair-brained aeronautical adventures with a camera. (No, he never acquired a pilot's license.)The

main section of this large, heavy, glossy book is organized into ten topical chapters covering settlement types, royal residences, fortifications, battlefield, cemeteries and gravesites, sacred sites, monumental carvings in the land itself, and natural resources, with two more chapters on the scourge of looting and on sites later lost to dams and such, or saved at practically the last minute. There's a final chapter on the rescue of the statues at Aswan, which Gerster documented for the National Geographic Society. Altogether, there are some 250 large-format color photos of subjects ranging from famous places like the Athenian Acropolis, the Great Wall of China, Avebury, and Temple Mount in Jerusalem, to much less well-known ones like the prehistoric settlement of Yoshinogari on Kyushu, the Sigiriya palace in Sri Lanka, the Blythe Giant in southeast California, and the ancient Tell Brak in Syria.

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