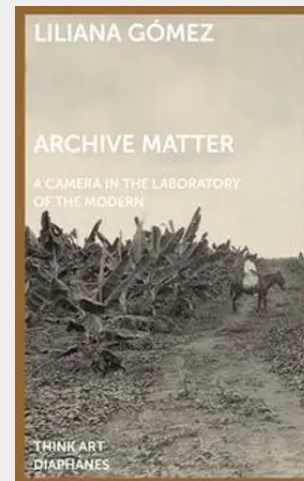


Archive Matter

A Camera in the Laboratory of the Modern

The establishment of the United Fruit Company as a global political agent with its banana plantations met with considerable resistance. The Company's resurgent photographic archive is at the center of this book's considerations on the historical and political agency of photography as a field. By exploring a set of practices, institutions, and relationships, as well as the aesthetic and epistemic contexts of the images in botany, archaeology and tropical medicine, this book argues that the overlooked but important photographic archive made the expansion of corporate capitalism into the Caribbean possible. "Since photographic archives tend to suspend meaning and use; within the archive meaning exists in a state that is both residual and potential," Allan Sekula maintains.

Reading the photographic archive against the grain, this book examines the images from within their "optical unconscious" and via the archive's silences and omissions; as residues they attest to the (in)visibility and cultural implications of the violence of the radical man-made environmental alterations. The archive's powerful imaginaries, envisaged as a chronotope of the eternal transition towards modernity, a promise of modernization itself, have effectively brought the Caribbean into modernity. Yet, the aftermath of the photographs helps scrutinize this modernity and recognize the violence embodied as the foundational act of the archive.



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