

# Images of the West



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出版者:Univ of Chicago Pr

出版时间:2007-7

装帧:HRD

isbn:9780932171542

As American settlement expanded westward in the 1860s, the U.S. government undertook large-scale investigations of its new territories. "Images of the West: Survey Photography in French Collections, 1860-1880" presents memorable glass-plate photographs from these federal surveys. The selection includes breathtaking views of such iconic sites as Yosemite, as well as lesser-known ethnographic portraits taken by Timothy H. O'Sullivan, William H. Jackson, and William Bell, among others. The accompanying essays discuss how the photographs were used to promote white settlement, how their distribution at home and abroad contributed to the aggrandizement of the American West, and how the exploitative ideology underlying the use of photography extended to attitudes toward both American landscapes and American Indians. The images are all drawn from French public collections, which hold an astonishing number of these U.S. survey photographs. Accompanying an exhibition at the Musee d'Art Americain Giverny, "Images of the West" provides a critical new examination of a bygone era.

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目录:

[Images of the West\\_下载链接1](#)

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