

Martha Langford and John Langford, *A Cold War Tourist and His Camera*. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, 208 pp., 85 colour photos, \$39.95, ISBN: 9780773538214

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Volume 36, numéro 2, 2011

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1066745ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066745ar>

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Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Antoncic, D. (2011). Compte rendu de [Martha Langford and John Langford, *A Cold War Tourist and His Camera*. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, 208 pp., 85 colour photos, \$39.95, ISBN: 9780773538214]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 36(2), 78–79. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066745ar>

Book Reviews

Comptes-rendus de livres

Martha Langford and John Langford, *A Cold War Tourist and His Camera*. Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011, 208 pp., 85 colour photos, \$39.95, ISBN: 9780773538214.

This book is welcome addition to a growing body of literature concerning Canada's experience of the Cold War. A collaboration between art historian Martha Langford and her brother, John, a political scientist, *A Cold War Tourist* focuses on a series of photographs taken by their father, Warren, in the 1960s while the senior Langford was a student at the National Defense College (NDC) in Kingston, Ontario. The book exposes the gender and racial divisions common to the Cold War era and the separation between public and private worlds of work and family. In addition, the book suggests something of the difficulty of maintaining a strong anti-communist stance, particularly when the highly charged atmosphere of the Cold War dissolved into the ordinariness of the tourist gaze. With this publication, the authors have made a significant contribution to both the history of the period and our knowledge of photography in Canada, in a text that intertwines personal with public histories.

A World War II veteran and career civil servant, Warren Langford was a member of Course Sixteen in 1962–63 at NDC. As recounted by the authors, course participants received national security training through a curriculum that included classroom lectures and discussion, and tours of key Cold War sites in North America, Africa, and Europe. Warren Langford travelled with fellow participants, both military and civilian, and documented his travels in photographs and occasional postcards. Upon his return, Langford “briefed” his family by way of a series of slide shows projected on a screen set up in the living room. This collection of slides, taken by what the authors describe as “an apprentice snapshotter” and augmented by photographs exchanged with other members of the group, form the basis for detailed analysis and commentary by his children, specialists in their respective fields.

The result of their analysis is a text that places this personal archive within the political context of the period. The photographic travelogue begins with a tour of strategic military installations in North Bay, Ontario, followed by a visit to Churchill, Manitoba, and on to sites in the United States. The authors provide a detailed description of the location and context for each of the photographs, along with an overview of contemporary developments in the Cold War. Readers unfamiliar with the history of the period, and Canada's role in the conflict, will appreciate the inclusion of this historical background. Traveling with the “Cold War tourist,” we learn details such as the extent of military integration and that Canada was very much a junior partner in the alliance with the United States, just as

this reality was brought home to the NDC study group. Photographs of U.S. Navy destroyers and submarines in San Diego, taken by Langford, provide evidence of the military strength of the United States. In contrast, Canada's relatively minor role is suggested by a lone Bomarc missile, shown in a close-up photograph taken in North Bay.

Visits to military sites were only one aspect of the tour, and the book includes photographs of the travellers at their leisure beside a hotel pool in San Diego and at the popular zoo. These were perhaps taken with the family at home specifically in mind, the at times humorous shots suggesting that the tourists enjoyed sightseeing along with the more serious investigation of U.S.-led nuclear strategy, in the months following the Cuban Missile Crisis. The moments of leisure also reveal the “snapshotter” learning to look with the camera, and developing confidence and proficiency with it, progress the authors chart with obvious pride and affection.

While the investigation of strategic policy and military installations in Canada and the United States is the focus of the first extended tour, a more conventional travel narrative emerges in the group's subsequent trip to Africa and Europe. On visits to Morocco and Nigeria, the Cold War focus slackens and the snapshotter becomes the tourist. Langford's photographs concentrate on the juxtaposition of old and new Morocco, for instance, and suggest the time-honored touristic pursuit of the exotic. The authors attribute this shift to the novelty of the experience and the unfamiliarity of the landscape and people, and to the fact that Canada had a minor interest in the region. But the change in tone is still troubling, particularly in the series of photographs from Nigeria. Langford apparently ignored economic development and modernization underway, for instance, finding the underdeveloped regions more appealing for the camera. The authors describe this focus as one infused with “imperialist nostalgia,” or regret for the loss of empire. In this sense, the photographer reproduced a stereotypical view of an impoverished former colonial possession, the all-white “Cold War tourists” incongruous amongst a sea of black faces. With a keen awareness of the issues at stake, the authors are critical of their father's dogged pursuit of the exotic and his willingness to violate gender segregation in Muslim countries, behaviour that exposes the insensitivity of westerners on their travels abroad.

As the above example suggests, the authors have developed their analysis of Langford's photographs in the history of the Cold War but, in addition, they have employed recent literature on travel and tourism. The *National Geographic* serves as a useful model for the authors, who associate the magazine with U.S. imperialism and identify the imperialist gaze in much travel literature. Applying theoretical perspectives adapted from cultural and post-colonial studies, feminism, and studies of

both mass media and vernacular photography, they have fleshed out the narrative using formal analysis. Along with a pieced-together itinerary and the remnants of both reading lists and lecture topics covered in NDC courses, keen scrutiny of the photographs serves as the narrative spine of the book. The authors have relied on this analysis of the photographic evidence, rather than their father's voice, and there are few indications of either the commentary that may have accompanied the family slide show, or the audience response. The passage of time and difficulty recalling words spoken more than forty years ago no doubt prevented this inclusion, but the narrator's voice is nonetheless missed.

The analysis might also have benefited from greater attention to the place of economic development within a larger military and geo-political context. The touring itinerary in Africa suggests that the possibility of establishing trade relationships, in addition to diplomatic and military alliances, was an important consideration for course planners. As the authors acknowledge, economic initiatives and foreign aid were important elements of Western Cold War strategy, used to guard against the spread of communism in developing countries. The inclusion of Warren Langford, a career civil servant working for Customs and Excise of the Department of National Revenue, was perhaps linked to this policy. The authors acknowledge that their father's profile did not fit the model of the other participants from military or diplomatic career paths, but are uncertain as to why his participation was approved.

In other ways, the book is a brave look at the attitudes and prejudices of the post-war generation of Anglo-Canadians. The worst that might be said, perhaps, was that Langford was an intrepid traveler, a devoted father and "the right sort of chap." The all-male, white, exclusivity of the study group was characteristic of the era, an aspect of the past that the authors acknowledge without hesitation.

The obvious camaraderie among the group of all-male participants extended to their Iron Curtain counterparts, the Cold War binary between good and evil breaking down, ironically,

during the group's visit to segregated Berlin. Among the photographs the authors have included are those showing makeshift memorials to East Berliners who died trying to escape to the West. These photographs stand in contrast to images of uniformed Soviet military personnel, smiling and posing informally for the group's cameras. In this section of the book, photographs of check-points and barriers at various points along the Berlin Wall are offset by images of the group's visits to Soviet war memorials in both East and West Berlin. These pilgrimages honoured the sacrifices of the former World War II ally, even as they afforded members of the group a glimpse of life on the other side of the Wall. The authors have interpreted these final photographs as examples of dark tourism, a term drawn from theoretical studies of tourism and used to explain the popularity of sites of disaster and death. Within this analysis, former battlefields and monuments hold a particular fascination for tourists, this fascination also extending to the desire to photograph such sites as part of the touristic experience.

Although it is very much an exploration of the perspective of one individual, interpreted by members of his family, the book serves as a useful entry point into the experience and mentality of the Cold War period in Canada. The Canadian focus is particularly welcome because, too often, the experience of the Cold War is somehow associated with the United States and only peripherally with Canada. The selection of reprinted archival photographs is an additional resource, not only for their historical interest but also for ongoing interest in vernacular photography, or photography of the everyday. The book is in many ways a unique type of family photo album and personal archive, one that might easily have remained hidden from public view. It has instead been fruitfully exposed and thoughtfully examined by two scholars who have added to our knowledge of, not only the Cold War era, but the role of photography within this history.

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Independent Scholar

Matthew Brower, *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 244 pp., 42 black-and-white illus., \$25 U.S. paper, ISBN: 9780816654796.

In the preface to *Developing Animals: Wildlife and Early American Photography*, curator and art historian Matthew Brower sketches out his early influences and the personal background from which his research interests originated. Beginning in Rochester in the late 1990s, where he did the graduate work that

led to this book, Brower encountered resistance towards his choice of animals as his research subject. He notes how significantly the terrain has shifted now that "animal studies" is a reputable, interdisciplinary field of academic inquiry, as opposed to a mere curiosity within the humanities. His own questions "around animals, display, and looking" (p. xi) contribute considerably to a field still in the relatively early days of its more widespread academic legitimacy, and *Developing Animals* will certainly be of particular interest to historians of photography and of animal representation.