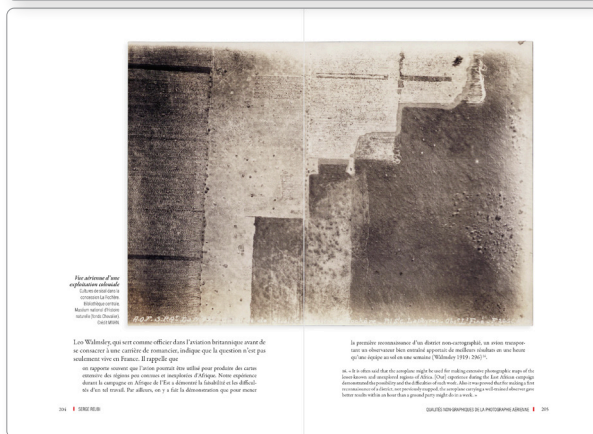


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D'en haut La photographie aérienne et ses usages savants (1918-1939)

Serge Reubi

THE BOOK

In the aftermath of the First World War, aerial photography captivated scholars. Archaeologists, geographers, cartographers, urban planners, ethnographers, geologists, botanists, historians, and art historians were dazzled by these images, which had been brought to the public's attention during the war. Aerial photographs were believed to speed up research, reduce costs, and improve accuracy; they were thought to transform vision, reveal previously unseen worlds, and produce knowledge free from subjectivity and personal perspective. Yet these virtues were soon challenged. By the end of the interwar period, only geography, urban planning, and archaeology were still making use of them.

This book examines both the rapid rise and decline of this scientific tool. This unusual controversy, which was resolved within a short space of time in conflicting ways, sheds light on significant changes in scientific practices. The uses of aerial photographs highlight the effects of technological transfer from war to peace; they demonstrate the role of amateurs, industrialists, and the military in the development of scientific instruments; they underscore the central role of the colonial world in the construction of knowledge; finally, they shed light on the transformations of the moral economy of the sciences.

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