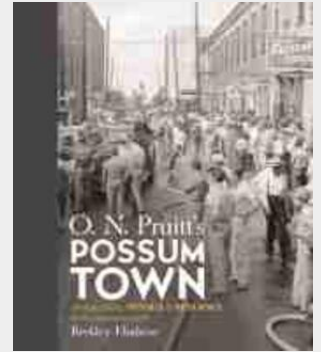


Hudson

O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town

Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South

Photographer O. N. Pruitt (1891–1967) was for some forty years the de facto documentarian of Lowndes County, Mississippi, and its county seat, Columbus--known to locals as "Possum Town." His body of work recalls many FSA photographers, but Pruitt was not an outsider with an agenda; he was a community member with intimate knowledge of the town and its residents. He photographed his fellow White citizens and Black ones as well, in circumstances ranging from the mundane to the horrific: family picnics, parades, river baptisms, carnivals, fires, funerals, two of Mississippi's last public and legal executions by hanging, and most grimly, a lynching. From formal portraits to candid images of events in the moment, Pruitt's documentary of a specific yet representative southern town offers viewers today an invitation to meditate on the vexing interrelations of photography, community, race, and historical memory. Columbus native Berkley Hudson was photographed by Pruitt, and for more than three decades he has considered and curated Pruitt's expansive archive, both as a scholar of media and visual journalism and as a community member. This stunning book presents Pruitt's photography as never before, combining more than 150 images with a biographical introduction and Hudson's short essays and reflective captions on subjects such as religion and racial violence, small-town work-life and entertainment, and the idea of visual legacy as linked to historical memory.



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