



Hide and Seek

Camouflage, Photography,
and the Media of Reconnaissance

Hanna Rose Shell

Camouflage is an adaptive logic of escape from photographic representation. In *Hide and Seek*, Hanna Rose Shell traces the evolution of camouflage as it developed in counterpoint to technological advances in photography, innovations in warfare, and as-yet-unsolved mysteries of natural history. Today camouflage is commonly thought of as a textile pattern of interlocking greens and browns. But in *Hide and Seek* it reveals itself to be much more—a

set of institutional structures, mixed-media art practices, and permutations of subjectivity, that emerged over the course of the twentieth century in environments increasingly mediated by photographic and cinematic intervention.

Through a series of fascinating case studies, Shell uncovers three conceptually linked species of photographic camouflage—the static, the serial, and the dynamic—and shows how each not only reflects the type of photographic reconnaissance it was meant to counter, but also contains aspects of the previously developed species. *Hide and Seek* develops its argument from the material forms camouflage has left behind: photomontages, paper blankets, stuffed rabbits, ghillie suits, and instructional films. Beginning with natural history and figurative art in the late nineteenth-century, continuing through the rise of aerial warfare in World War I, and onto the cinematic techniques designed to train snipers and civilians during World War II, this book is both a history and a theory of the drive to hide in plain sight.

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“Funny, poetic, and scary by turns, *Hide and Seek* asserts it is not human vision that camouflage seeks to trick, but the gaze of the camera. The skin of emulsions, no less than the hides of humans and beasts, is ground for trickery and revelation in this remarkable book.” — Caroline A. Jones, Professor of Art History and Director of the History, Theory, and Criticism Program, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

“Beautifully written, brilliantly argued, and vividly illustrated, *Hide and Seek* is a paradigm-altering book, and the anatomy of a new kind of consciousness.” — Laura Wexler, Professor of American Studies and Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and Director of the Photographic Memory Workshop, Yale University

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