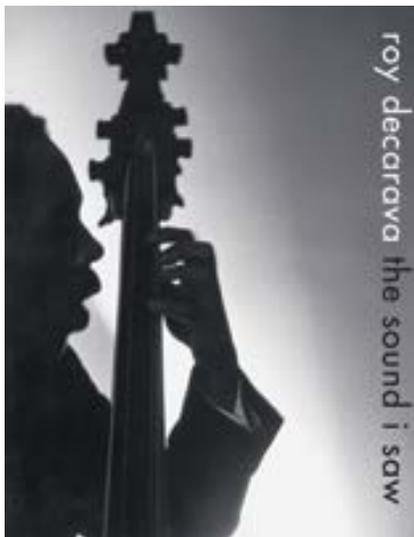


Roy DeCarava

the sound i saw

Texts by Radiclani Clytus and Sherry Turner DeCarava



Roy DeCarava's *the sound i saw* is the pictorial equivalent of jazz. Here, the visionary photographer turns his gaze on legendary jazz icons Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, and Billie Holiday, among many others.

"This is a book about people, about jazz, and about things. The work between its covers tries to present images for the head and for the heart and, like its subject matter, is particular, subjective, and individual," writes DeCarava. A master of poetic contemplation and of sensual tonalities in black and white, DeCarava is, above all, a photographer of people. A member of the post-World War II generation that sought a new modernist vocabulary, he was first recognized for his innovative images of life in Harlem (the subject of *The Sweet Flypaper of Life*, his 1955 collaboration with poet Langston Hughes) and extraordinary portraits of jazz musicians. It is these two themes—New York and jazz—interwoven and inseparable, that are the ostensible subject of *the sound i saw*. However, the seemingly casual yet deeply felt compositions and the rich, gradient tones of DeCarava's photographs stir emotions that resonate far beyond one neighborhood and one era.

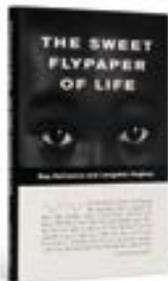
Conceived, designed, written, and made as an artist maquette by DeCarava in the early 1960s, *the sound i saw* went unpublished for almost half a century until it was printed by Phaidon in 2001. At its core is a visual and philosophical journey to plumb the meaning of a creative life. The artist's intention in proposing a complex relationship between vision and music moves his comprehensive, decade-long reflection to the status of a magnum opus. This new edition, copublished by First Print Press and David Zwirner Books, includes new scholarship by Radiclani Clytus, and reflections by Sherry Turner DeCarava.

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Over the course of six decades, American artist **Roy DeCarava** (1919–2009) produced a singular collection of black-and-white photographs of modern life that combine formal acuity with an intimate and deeply human treatment of his subject matter. Grounded by a unified theory of the visual plane, his work displays a subtle mastery of tonal and spatial elements and devotion to the medium of photography as a means of artistic expression. DeCarava created images that carry an emotional impact in their immediate relationship to the viewer, while also revealing less-than-visible terrains. DeCarava's pioneering work privileged the aesthetic qualities of the medium, carrying the ability to reach the viewer as a counterpoint to the view of photography as mere chronicle or document and helping it to gain acceptance as an art form in its own right.

Radiclani Clytus is an academic and independent filmmaker who works at the intersections of new media and nineteenth-century American literature and visual culture. He has written extensively on transatlantic abolitionist imagery and is the editor of two compilations of prose by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa: *Blue Notes* (2000) and *Condition Red* (2017). As a documentary filmmaker, Clytus has received commissions from Luhring Augustine, Steinway & Sons, and the United States National Park Service. His first film, *Looks of a Lot*, premiered at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and his latest feature, *Grammar*, explores the interdisciplinary language of creative expression. He is the principal of RoundO Films.

Sherry Turner DeCarava is an art historian, curator, and independent scholar in the fields of traditional arts and contemporary American photography. Serving as the executive director, the principal focus of her professional career has been the development of The DeCarava Archives, which supports exhibition and scholarly research projects related to the work of her late husband Roy DeCarava. She is the author of two definitive texts on his photography, published in *Roy DeCarava: Photographs* (1981) and *Roy DeCarava: A Retrospective* (1996). In 2014, she initiated First Print Press, beginning a process to republish classic Roy DeCarava books, while bringing new photographic projects into print.



Related title

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