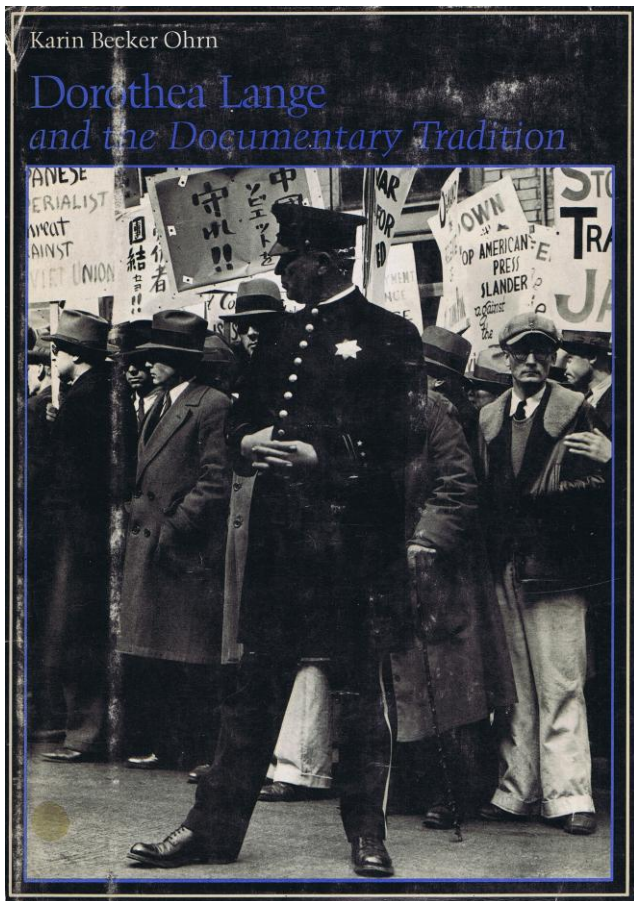


## Quotes on /by Dorothea Lange

*Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition*, Karin Becker Ohrn, Louisiana State University Press, 1980 – Sept 16, 277 pgs



Lange and Dixon thought their work should take priority over home life. However, the decision was extremely difficult for Lange. She had worked hard to provide a secure life for her husband and children, and this separation recalled the pain of her own childhood, when her father had abandoned the family.

But the strain had its positive side; it drove Lange's work into new areas. She felt the world outside her studio offered a "bigger canvas," and she turned to it, in part to ease the pain of separation from her sons. "I worked then as I would not have done, I am sure, if I had gone back to my habitual life. There in my studio on Montgomery Street, I was surrounded by evidences of the Depression." The abrupt change in her life enabled her to accept the challenge she saw outside her studio. "If the boys hadn't been taken from me by circumstances, I might have said to myself, 'I *would* do this, but I can't because...' as many women say to themselves over and over again, which is one reason why men have the advantage. I was driven by the fact that I was under personal turmoil to do something."

*Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition*,  
Karin Becker Ohrn, pgs 22-23

Lange later described her impressions as she walked into [Roy] Stryker's office for the first time, during the summer after she began working for the FSA: "You speak of organization; I didn't find any. You speak of work plans; I didn't find any. I didn't find any economics professor. I didn't find any of those things. I found a little office, tucked away, in a hot muggy summer, where nobody especially knew exactly what he was going to do or how he was going to do it. And this is no criticism, because you walked into an atmosphere of a very special kind of freedom." It was this quality of freedom and the sense of responsibility shared by the staff—a responsibility to themselves as photographers, to the people they photographed, and to all those who would ever see their work—that enabled them to make photographs of lasting power.

*Dorothea Lange and the Documentary Tradition*, Karin Becker Ohrn, pgs 51-52

*Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life*, Milton Meltzer, Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1978 – Aug 24, 399 pgs

There is no attempt to conceal her apparatus, Miss Lange merely appears to take as little interest in the proceedings around her as is possible. She looks at no individual directly, and soon she becomes one of the familiar elements of her surroundings. Her subjects become unaware of her presence. Her method, as she describes it, is to act as if she possessed the power to become invisible to those around her. This mental attitude enables her to completely ignore those who might resent her presence.

Perhaps we can arrive at a better evaluation of her work in terms of a future observer than as contemporary critics. We ourselves are too poignantly involved in the turmoil of present life. Much of it is stupid, confused, violent, some little of it is significant, all of it is of the most immediate concern to everyone living today—we have no time for the records, ourselves living and dying in the recording.

We can assume the role of the future critic by looking back to the work of Matthew Brady, who in the dawn of photography made a heroic record of another crisis in American life. Brady and Lange have both made significant use of their common medium—they differ mainly in terms of the technical advancement of the medium itself. Lange can photograph the split-seconds of the dynamic surges about her—Brady, carrying a complete darkroom about with him on the northern battlefields of the Civil War, sensitizing his own plates before each shot, making twenty-minute exposures, had to wait for the ample lulls between engagements. The implications of his record are retrospective, the scene after the battle, the dead that were once living, the ruins that were once forts, faces still and relaxed. Both Lange and Brady share the passionate desire to show posterity the mixture of futility and hope, of heroism and stupidity, greatness and banality that are the concomitants of man's struggle forward.

Willard Van Dyke in an article on Lange for *Camera Craft*, October, 1934

*Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life*, Milton Meltzer, pgs 85-6

She was engaged in propaganda photography, yes, but she reasoned there was nothing wrong with it in this case. She knew conscientious people had to draw a fine line when it came to propaganda: "Everything is propaganda for what you believe in, isn't it? I don't see that it could be otherwise. The harder and the more deeply you believe in anything, the more in a sense you're a propagandist... But at any rate, that's what the OWI [Office of War Information] was."

*Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life*, Milton Meltzer, pg 246

For me documentary photography is less a matter of *subject* and more a matter of *approach*. The important thing is not *what's* photographed but *how*... My own approach is based on three considerations. First—hands off! Whatever I photograph, I do not molest or tamper with or arrange. Second—a sense of place. Whatever I photograph, I try to picture as part of its surroundings, as having roots. Third—a sense of time. Whatever I photograph, I try to show as having its position in the past or present, But beyond these three things, the only thing I keep in mind is that—well there it is, that quotation pinned up on my darkroom door.

It was the passage from Francis Bacon: "The contemplation of things as they are, without error or confusion, without substitution or imposture, is in itself a nobler thing than a whole harvest of invention."

*Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life*, Milton Meltzer, pg 286

I find that it has become instinctive, habitual, *necessary*, to *group* photographs. I used to think in terms of single photographs, the bulls-eye technique. No more.

A photographic statement is more what I reach for. Therefore these pairs, like a sentence of 2 words.

Here we can express the relationships, equivalents, progressions, contradictions, positives, negatives, etc. etc. Our medium is peculiarly geared to this. (I am just beginning to understand it.)

*Dorothea Lange: A Photographer's Life*, Milton Meltzer, pg 352



# Comments on Dorothea Lange in Oregon Exhibition

YOUR COMMENTS

HERE

#3 WA  
County  
Museum

Amazing Photos!

Wonderful Example of early sewing techniques!

Fabulous quilts - Quilts of D. Lange - very well done - best I've seen here!

Fascinating photos. Such humanity, expressive faces.

Fascinating and interesting photos!

I bet someone could find similar subjects in these times. Thanks!

I REMEMBER THESE DAYS - no weight problems.

Such rich photography - can't beat black & white - & such expressive people. I was drawn to the condition of their feet, shoes, clothes, cars... and we think we have a hard time now.

Thank you for sharing such wonderful images with us. What reminders of our heritage.

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DOROTHEA LANGE IN  
OREGON



# YOUR COMMENTS

PLEASE!

This is a very poignant exhibit of historic photography. Reminds me of life on the farm at Cooper Mtn. ...  
Marta DeLeon

Great Pictures of a terrible period of our nation's history. 

My mother was one of the "OKies" who migrated to Astoria, Oregon from Oklahoma in the 1930s. Her mother carried the family sewing machine on her lap all the way. I can't imagine the poverty, the despair, yet the hope in the human spirit to "Keep on, Keep on." Thanks for this glimpse at a desperate time.  
M. Barney

I find it fascinating to look into the faces of people who lived in a world less dominated by mass media. In contemporary America we are so accustomed to the camera's lens that we unconsciously adopt photogenic poses - with or without a photographer. Here the posing is minimal, or somewhat naive, which leads to a sort of candor with the viewer. I really like historic stuff!

I really like historic stuff!

I applaud your efforts to make this possible. I will spread the word





a wonderful exhibit both of  
quilts + Lange's pictures of  
dear, hard times the 1930's

I wish the captions were placed  
adjacent to the pictures so  
we go up and could read  
without bending.

6/28/10

What a wonderful exhibit! Great Job!  
Marcy Foster

7/1/10

The photographs are amazing. They make me  
cry. (My Grandma) The quilts are  
beautiful, too.

7/9/10

1. Would like to see a map on the  
regional tags.

2. Did she take pictures of Japanese  
farmers?

7/9/10

It's very wonderful for me (and all)  
to see so many of D. Lange's  
prints in one room. Thank you!

7/10/10

Very well done exhibit.

8/13/10

So cool I loved it +

8/13/10

Totally killer dude !!!

8/13/10

The art is very interesting! First time to a  
place like this. Glad I came. It was good.



One of the best exhibitions you've ever had  
07/15/10

It was good. Anthony

July 16 10 - beautifully presented magnificent photography  
heartbreaking reality of it. Thank you!  
Where are all the Chinese + Japanese farm families?

Great pictures and Great History Lesson

Thank you for helping us to see how fortunate we are today!  
Very moving exhibit.

Great pictures. Would loved to have had the  
descriptions between rows of pictures - easier to read  
Keep up good work

bd light + Pictures In a grate museum

July 22, 2010

What a privilege to see such stunning prints.  
Thank you,

Kay Yasutomo

Haunting photos, beautifully printed, a wonderful  
history. Jim Yasutomo

Great insight of this time period and the people.

Nura Pollock 7/23/10

Wonderful exhibit. Such great insight into the times of  
these people.

Debby Wohlmut 7/23/2010

Wonderful collection - privilege to see these photos  
Awesome 7/23/2010



July 29<sup>th</sup> - Grew up in Pendleton Country -  
This exhibit brings back lots of memories

July 29<sup>th</sup> - We talk about their recession  
as being so bad - we have nothing  
to complain about.

August 3 - Very interesting. It gave me  
a feeling of warmth (Holly)

Aug 6 - Thank you for sharing. It's a  
reminder of Strong People in Bad Times.

Aug 6 - Let's stop complaining about hard times.

Our families are these people  
who made our strong America -

it is cool funnel

Beautiful work by Dorothy Lange -  
See into their lives...

8/18/10 INTERESTING Juxtaposition of exhibits:  
The colorful quilts w/ the B&W  
photos of Dorothy Lange...

Very cool and I loved quilting

8/19/10

Quilting is cool!!



8-19-2010

I love quilts ... really, I do.

absolutely magnificent museum  
you've got here.

- PCC History

I was directed here by the Sandy  
Historical Society to see the  
quilting exhibit - yipee!

Yes, the quilt display is nice -

But the memories of the 30s are

incredibly poignant to those of us

in our 80s. - Material goods were

rare and life was hard but the

interpersonal relationships were much

more common and lots more frequent than

we see today!

Fabulous, down to earth! Jim, age 80.

Back Large photos of the quilts  
show is just AAT. And w going on 80



August 21, 2010

Hi, I'm Teagan and I am 12 years old. I love your FREE patch quilts! I can't wait to get home and start.

August 21, 2010

I've learned about quilts before and wanted to try, now I can!!

August 21, 2010

There's a lot of cool quilts here. And a lot of pictures of where I grew up from

August 23

I love the older pics



August 23 is IT Garlic & Onions  
It's a wonderful exhibit!

8/25

I've been looking at D. Lange prints for years, read two books about her, and never knew she photographed for the FSA in Oregon. Some great images! Many thanks for mounting the exhibit.

grace

awesome! Mayat.

< - And we think we have it tough!!  
Wow. - Be thankful. >



September 1st -

This is so fun! Never had such a good time at a museum!

Nicole, Cindy, & Julia

Wonderful photos. Keep up the great work here!

Just Amazing Photography Amazing!

Wonderful exhibit!! Love the pictures!

I really enjoyed the photographs brought back a lot of memories!

Thanks, I just love this exhibit. My mother picked Hops in Silverton, OR.

Great Show. Thanks for extending it.

I'm so glad this place is here its wonderful  
9/11/10 Lori from Tualatin

9-11-10

The pictures are cool. From Ireland

9-11-10

Excellent photography! It really expresses how the people must have been feeling.

I love it! Thank you & keep up the fabulous work! ♡Chelsie from Hillsboro  
born & raised ("")



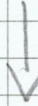
I love it so much!



Lorien

Age 10

Love the display but picture info is  
hung too low!



I agree - can't read info

9-11-10

Wonderful photographs. Thank you.  
(I like the large format.)

9-11-10

GREAT PHOTOS - THANKS

I WOULD HAVE MOVED TOP PHOTOS UP  
ABOUT 4 in. & LOWERED BOTTOM ONES  
A LITTLE TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE CAPTIONS,  
WHICH ARE TOO LOW.

This is a wonderful black & white photo display.  
However, unless you are sitting in a chair or  
on the floor, it is almost impossible to read the captions.  
Please see above suggestion. The captions should be  
between the photos.

9-13-2010

Wonderful & revealing photos. I'm  
glad I took time to really look -

9-21-2010

Great Pictures! I would have  
like to have seeing circa dates  
on the picture information

Very cool museum!

9-24-10

Very thought provoking exhibit of historical Oregon.  
Compared to these farmers and immigrants, we don't have  
it so bad after all! Enjoyed the visit here - will come back.



9-24 nice exhibit but too much repeated verbiage.

Thank you for bring it to Wash. Co.

10-5 Very moving experience — to see how close  
+ real was Dorothea Lange's work — and  
how strong the human spirit when up  
against a very thin line. Important history  
especially the comment re the market.  
+ her story

This is a wonderful exhibition of Oregon  
history. I'm glad I happened upon it.  
Thank you to everyone who put it together.

Anna Erickson

What An Exciting Show - Well put Together  
and Informative Thank you, Nancy Cutler

I think its pretty cool how  
people washed things in the old day!

♡ Gretchen  
age 9!

10-13-10 I have admired Dorothea Lange's work for  
years. She had a wonderful eye for catching  
the human experience.

I am also struck by how history is repeating  
itself now. Unemployment and poverty are  
huge issues once again.

May common good prevail, so people can  
have jobs and homes once again.

Paula (61)

10-13 Enjoyed photos very much. I would have  
liked the date (year) on placard and placards  
hung higher up.