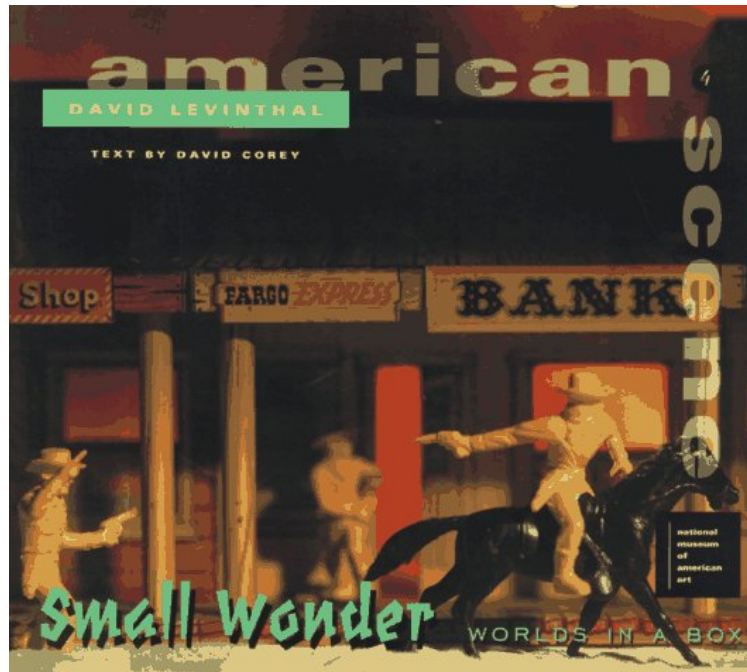


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[Ebook pdf] David Levinthal: Small Wonders (American Scene)

## David Levinthal: Small Wonders (American Scene)

**From D.A.P./National Museum of American Art : David Levinthal: Small Wonders (American Scene)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised David Levinthal: Small Wonders (American Scene):

11 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful photosBy A CustomerIf you recall with fondness the great old Louis Marx Co. playsets of the 1950's '60s then this book is a must. David Levinthal's color photographs are superb, bringing life to these little plastic people and animals at their eye-level, much as we saw and remember them when we were kids. The color photographic layouts of various playsets are divided into three chapters. "Our World" contains great shots of the Marx Dollhouse, Skyscraper, Schoolhouse, Boy Scouts, Jetport, Service Station, and "The Untouchables" playsets. The "World of War" chapter highlights the various Marx WWII, Civil War, Revolutionary War, Alamo, Frontier and Western playsets. "Other Worlds" concludes the book with images from the "Ben-Hur," Robin Hood, Jungle and Circus playsets. This is one of the most imaginative coffee-table photography books I've seen in ages. Now comes my only negative comment which robbed this otherwise superb book of one star. David Corey's introduction leaves a lot to be desired. While it provides some historical information on Louis Marx and his company there really isn't enough info to satisfy the knowledge-seeking reader. The overblow and pretentious text contrasts sharply with Levinthal's photos injecting cynicism and misplaced intellectualism with photographs of a child's world where that kind of drivel has no place. Corey's self-serving intro is a bit bizarre to say the least. He writes, "The service-station attendant in my playset was in some ways as tragic as Oedipus, as confined by time, place and action to his inescapable destiny, while I, like the Athenian spectator - or better still, the demiurge - could contemplate the conditions of..." What the heck is he talking about? This book celebrates children's playsets for crying out loud! Buy the book for the pictures and enjoy the great memories it brings back. 1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful photos ruined by poor book designBy J PetrilleIf you're reading this, you likely know Levinthal's formidable

talent. It's on display here, of course, but the book's design, assembly instructions superimposed next to, behind and even over the photos, distracts from his work. Self-consciously clever, the design so irritated me it was a genuinely unpleasant experience to look through this book--hardly the reaction one expects from Levinthal. Look for another introduction to his work. I am.8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. The irony is that nobody sees the irony....By OAKSHAMANThis book was intended to be a critical, artistic examination of the traditional American society of the 50's and 60's as viewed from children's playsets of that period. Ironically, it has become immensely popular among toyset collectors who either ignore, or disagree with, the critical introduction. It is the marvelously posed and photographed Marx playsets that steal the show (Roman, western, Civil War, circus, jungle, WW2, space, etc.) The social comentary has been totally eclipsed by the pure nostalgia value. I know that is why I bought it....

In the general introduction to these first two books in the National Museum of American Art's new series, "American Scene," the series editor and series curator express a hope to "present the evolving portrait of America" in a time when "the myth of the `melting pot' has given way to a social fabric woven into a `coat of many colors.'" While that noble dream is well on its way to being realized here, the reality still does not quite feel like art. The work of Bernice Abbott and Robert Frank, referred to in the introduction, provides insights into American life but is also characterized by a particular way of seeing. These books have less the effect of art than of photojournalism-though perhaps the best sort, one encouraging contemplation rather than sensationalism. Unfortunately, the problem lies largely in the nature of series, the constraints of size and format and introduction, which here places as much weight on the editors' vision as the individual photographer's ability to see. That said, these are nonetheless valuable documents of today's middle America, by turns pleasant and disturbing, honest, and mythical. Pratt focuses on the county fairs of the Midwest, the traditions they maintain, and, most importantly, the people who attend them. Arndt photographs men, mostly working class, mostly in crumbling cities, establishing a sense of unity among his subjects that makes it the more successful of the books. In these two multiple-image portraits, public libraries will find a moving record of fading people and their traditions.-Eric Bryant Library Journal

By toying with our images of history, Levinthal questions how much we substitute image for actuality.... -- The New York Times Book , Eric P. Nash