



# Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary (a John Hope Franklin Center Book)

*Paul Rabinow, George E. Marcus, James D. Faubion, Tobias Rees*

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In this compact volume two of anthropology's most influential theorists, Paul Rabinow and George E. Marcus, engage in a series of conversations about the past, present, and future of anthropological knowledge, pedagogy, and practice. James D. Faubion joins in several exchanges to facilitate and elaborate the dialogue, and Tobias Rees moderates the discussions and contributes an introduction and an afterword to the volume. Most of the conversations are focused on contemporary challenges to how anthropology understands its subject and how ethnographic research projects are designed and carried out. Rabinow and Marcus reflect on what remains distinctly anthropological about the study of contemporary events and processes, and they contemplate productive new directions for the field. The two converge in Marcus's emphasis on the need to redesign pedagogical practices for training anthropological researchers and in Rabinow's proposal of collaborative initiatives in which ethnographic research designs could be analyzed, experimented with, and transformed.

Both Rabinow and Marcus participated in the milestone collection *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Published in 1986, *Writing Culture* catalyzed a reassessment of how ethnographers encountered, studied, and wrote about their subjects. In the opening conversations of *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary*, Rabinow and Marcus take stock of anthropology's recent past by discussing the intellectual scene in which *Writing Culture* intervened, the book's contributions, and its conceptual limitations. Considering how the field has developed since the publication of that volume, they address topics including ethnography's self-reflexive turn, scholars' increased focus on questions of identity, the *Public Culture* project, science and technology studies, and the changing interests and goals of students. *Designs for an Anthropology of the Contemporary* allows readers to eavesdrop on lively conversations between anthropologists who have helped to shape their field's recent past and are deeply invested in its future.

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