Columns of Smoke is a two-volume collection. The first volume includes Photography or Life and Popular Mies, which illuminate overlooked aspects of modern architecture and photography and reveal a more nuanced-and plausible-conception of the modern world. In Photography or Life, Juan Jose Lahuerta contrasts well-known images tied to the history of twentieth-century architecture with anonymous graphic materials and pictures from the popular press. In doing so, he demonstrates that pointing a camera at a building is neither natural nor innocent-it involves deliberate and telling decisions. His analysis of the work of Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, for example, suggests irreconcilable differences between the two architects that represent radically opposed approaches to architecture and life. Furthermore, a close study of snapshots of Walter Gropius Bauhaus building taken by teachers and students leads to new ways of understanding the myths associated with the Dessau school. Using the same method in Popular Mies, Lahuerta looks at photographs of architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's work and shows that Mies was influenced not only by Stieglitz and Camera Work, but also a mass culture that enjoyed zeppelins, music halls, x-rays, and phantasmagorical gadgets. At the same time, in their portrayals of Mies work, the press and anonymous photographers situated it in a popular context that stands as a counterpoint to the notion of a heroic modern era. This first volume of Columns of Smoke is a brilliant treatment of modern visual culture that will redefine our concept of modernity.