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William Klein ABC



Synopsis

Born in New York in 1929, William Klein is one of the leading photographers of the postwar era, as well as an influential filmmaker, painter, and graphic artist. This astonishing book, selected and designed by Klein himself, offers a visual survey of his long and varied career. It includes his poetic street photography of New York, Moscow, Rome, Tokyo, and Paris; his exciting fashion photography; stills and posters from his biting satirical films; and his graphically powerful painted contact sheets. Klein, whose achievement puts him on a level with Robert Frank, Richard Avedon, and Irving Penn, lives in Paris and is revered in Europe. This is the first comprehensive book on his work published in the United States in 20 years.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

William Klein has been creating groundbreaking photographic books since the 1950s. He lives in Paris. David Company is a writer, curator, teacher, and the author of several books, including *Photography and Cinema* and *Art and Photography*. He lives in London.

William Klein's books have been mostly published in Europe, and in the US prices of used copies have become prohibitive for all but deep-pocketed collectors, typically topping \$200 for a copy in good or better condition. So it was with some real anticipation that I ordered "ABC" when it became available a few months ago. And it is with some real regret that I have to judge this book a serious disappointment, and don't believe it serves well as a retrospective of a 60 year career. The

reproduction is very good, as is the binding, paper, jacket, and all other superficial physical features by which I usually judge a photo or art book. I know I will raise a few hackles saying so, but the use of double-spreads for nearly all of the large "straight" photographs (not collaged, painted, or otherwise changed) is more than a distraction. I find double spreads ruin viewing a photograph, anyone's photograph (though I realize Klein himself has often chosen this layout, to a lesser degree, in earlier books). It interrupts what should be a continuous, flowing experience just as much as splitting a single piece of music into two tracks (or onto two 'sides,' if you remember that). The gutter, and the curvature of the open book distort and obfuscate the essential image. Klein and his publishers could have made a number of other choices that would have avoided what really is a small disaster, and we would have had a more substantial, more pleasing book for the same or lower production cost. For me, this is non-negotiable, especially in a book that purports to be a summary and review, so I will have to keep hope alive that I will someday find an affordable used copy of the '54-'55 book, or wait for Klein (or his estate) to issue a more proper "collected works." The spreads may not bother you as much, but I'd be surprised to find anyone defend their use here, to the extent used here, as adding rather than taking away from viewing the photographs. If you are not familiar with Klein's work, you would be better served to find a library copy of "Life is Good/'54-'55" or the "Rome, " Tokyo," or "Moscow" books and study that (or buy them, if you can afford it). "ABC" does précis his entire oeuvre fairly well, and the painted contacts are a delight here, and of course the quality of production is excellent overall and in every particular (except: the all-cap helvetica essay is hard to read, more so since it is printed so lightly). But the double-spreads, eek! And so many missing Klein-gems. Klein famously reduced a great photographer's life to about two seconds: 200 or fewer images taken at an average of 125th/second. But where are they? I'd gladly pay \$75 (more than twice what charges for "ABC") for a more direct, inclusive scan of William Klein's work. If you have been waiting years for this book, I think you may be as disappointed with it as I am. Sorry, I really am.

Very interesting retrospective and format. I liked both the street and fashion shots. I was skeptical about the collages but in the end felt they added to the book. I saw a while ago an interview with Klein and this put all in perspective

Rude, crude with plenty of 'tude...and yet an empathetic eye--that's what I like about Klein. I don't have the same issues with the layout as some other reviewers--I think it is well designed and printed, and printing photos across the gutter is a trade-off that I accept in books that want to show

you larger images.

Fantastic survey of Klein's work with a great introductory essay. At \$10, this is a no-brainer! And Klein is said to have designed the book himself.

really? double spread for almost all the large photos? it just ruins everything, the first time i opened the book i was disappointed on the 1st photo already, im trying to find out if i could still return this book...waste of money

Love William Klein, I enjoyed this book because it's one of the books William Klein put together himself. The only thing is the book is fairly small in size, not a big coffee table book but none the less very beautiful and amazing photos.

Bit disappointed, both in quality of print as in quality of pics

I know, he is a GREAT photographer, and, a "talented" graphic artist and all that, but the only good photo is the one on the cover that is not crossed out. Of all the photography books I have collected I could afford, I would not recommend this one at all. If you want to pay the postage, I will mail you mine for free. I don't know what this book was meant to reflect or reveal, and I am at least semi-intelligent? Don't answer that. His other books have contents much more ponderous and accessible.

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