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Alexey Brodovitch: Ballet: Books On Books No. 11



Synopsis

Published in 1945, Alexey Brodovitch's *Ballet* is easily among the most legendary photobooks of the twentieth century: the first and only book he authored as photographer, it was printed in a small run of a few hundred copies, and quickly became a rarity. A Russian émigré in 1920s Paris, Brodovitch began his career as a scene painter for Diaghilev's *Ballet Russes*, and had firmly established himself as a leading art director and graphic designer in New York when he began photographing the *Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo* in the mid-1930s. Shot on 35 mm film, Brodovitch's images radically disregard conventions of "good" technique; blurred and fast-paced, they capture the motion and spirit of dance both in rehearsals and on stage. Errata Editions reproduces every captivating page spread from this rarely seen classic of both dance and photography history, making it at last available to a broader audience. The Errata Editions' Books on Books series is an ongoing publishing project dedicated to making rare and out-of-print photography books accessible to students and photobook enthusiasts. These are not reprints or facsimiles but complete studies of the original books. Each volume in the series presents the entire content, page for page, of an original master bookwork which, up until now, has been too rare or expensive for most to experience. Through a mix of classic and contemporary titles, this series spans the breadth of photographic practice as it has appeared on the printed page and allows further study of the creation and meanings of these great works of art. Each volume in the series contains illustrations of every page in the original photobook, a new essay by an established writer on photography, production notes about the creation of the original edition and biographical and bibliographical information about each artist.

Book Information

Series: Books on Books (Book 11)

Hardcover: 142 pages

Publisher: Errata Editions (January 31, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1935004220

ISBN-13: 978-1935004226

Product Dimensions: 0.8 x 7.5 x 10 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #667,872 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #183 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Graphic Design > Commercial > Book Design #393 in Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Individual Photographers > Monographs #705 in Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Collections, Catalogues & Exhibitions

Customer Reviews

A beautiful facsimile of a great and rare book.

I was introduced to this book through a survey of photobooks titled The Photobook: A History, Vol. 1. The intense pictures in Ballet as well as the precise, unconventional layout of the book immediately caught my eye, so I made a request for the book through my library's interlibrary loan service. When I went to pick it up after a month of waiting, I was shocked to be handed this book. Unaware of the rarity of Ballet, thinking that there must have been at least second or third printings, I was disgusted when I got this - what seemed to be a preview or a critical review of the work, instead of what I was hoping for. I felt gyped, I really wanted to see the original. Instead of pointlessly complaining to the library, I checked the publisher's website and realized exactly why books like these are published. As is quoted on their website: "What isn't common knowledge is that many of the books that we are going to feature in this series will never be reprinted in their original form again. That restriction comes from the artists themselves through their reluctance to keep revisiting and publishing old work. If you have ever wondered why these great books haven't been reprinted, that is a very common reason." So in essence, the publisher is doing the best they can to present and republish the work, but the artists or copyright holders are refusing to have the works reprinted in a new edition, regardless of demand. I'm pleased that this press is trying to recirculate Ballet and other wonderful, rare books for public enjoyment. However, I think it's absolutely pathetic and abhorrent that there is such resistance by the artists or whoever the copyright holders are to reprint these rare books. A photobook this pivotal needs to be available in a contemporary edition near to its original form if there is a demand for it. Especially, Ballet HAS to be read in its original form; the pacing, spread design, and book size were meticulously accomplished in the original edition so the whole body of work flows smoothly, and the Books on Books layout sadly undermines it. You would think that with a timeless, easily-reproduced artistic medium like photography, work like this would be as widely available as it is admired. The original edition is listing for \$8000 on a certain auction site, so I'm positive that there are many who would love to see this book bought back. But I suppose stuffiness and/or a senseless air of exclusivity gets in the way of promoting and making available great photography.

Thanks to Errata for their service in archiving these important historical books.

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