

Review

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Book review

Trading Places

The Merchants of Nairobi

By Steve Bloom

Thames & Hudson, hardback, 144 pages, £24.95, ISBN 978-0-500-543818

Known for his striking wildlife imagery and as a regular contributor to AP's *Photo Insight* pages, Steve Bloom takes a dramatic step away from his comfort zone with this latest release. In fact, everything about this feels different from what we've seen in the past from Steve, right down to his use of panoramic formats and minimalist portraiture. Taking a documentary approach, Steve has delved into the bustling world of Nairobi's small traders – a patchwork of narrow, earthen lanes and multi-coloured, hand-painted billboards over ramshackle storefronts in Kenya.

The book begins by setting the scene in a series of bright panoramas showing the clusters of shops and stalls, and patrons poking their heads in to see what's on offer. As it progresses, Steve singles out individual merchants and interviews them about their life and trade. He takes their portrait and photographs their wares, which range from domestic workers to cuts of meat. The common thread through all of this, though, is the wonderful graphics and storefronts which, when taken as a whole, form an intriguing procession of street art that is as colourful as the characters Steve interviews. **Jeff Meyer**



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