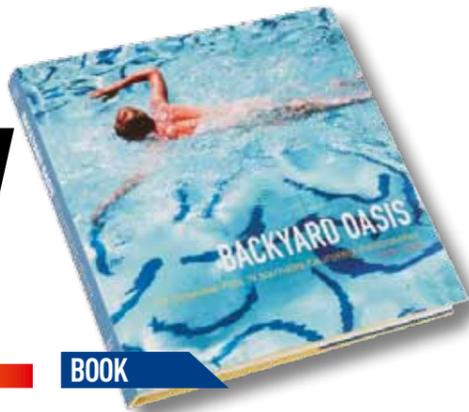


AP Review

The latest photography books, exhibitions and websites. By Oliver Atwell



BOOK

Backyard Oasis: The Swimming Pool in Southern California Photography 1945-1982

Edited by Daniell Cornell
Prestel, hardback, £40, 256 pages, ISBN 978-3-7913-5176-6



WHAT is the American dream? According to movie mythology, it involves spending your days of youth living on a ranch and murdering tin cans with an air rifle. What follows is a gradual build up from a poor upbringing to success and a life defined by wealth. The backyard pool is one of those odd symbols of success. It's amazing that just a hole full of water can denote a luxurious lifestyle.

This epic tome contains around 200 images showing various California pools and the people who use them, photographed from 1945-1982. It's an odd collection, but somehow it seems to work. The sun-drenched scenes seem almost unreal and a little too idealistic to have any relation to reality. The images reveal the pool to have a rich cultural connotation and as such the book functions perfectly. It's not a book that's going to have a lot of appeal for most people, so it's difficult to truly recommend it, but if you have a thing for Californian or celebrity photography then it's worth looking out for.



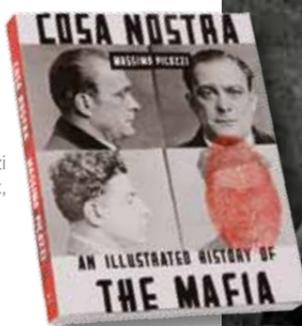
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Cosa Nostra: An Illustrated History of the Mafia

By Massimo Picozzi
Norton, paperback, £18.99, 288 pages, ISBN 978-0-393-34196-6

BOOK

COSA Nostra (loosely translated as 'our thing' or 'this thing of ours') refers to the crime syndicate that emerged in Sicily in the 1800s, a way of life that eventually spread to American shores where it became known as the Mafia. This unflinching illustrated history takes us on a bloody and fascinating journey. The book starts right at the beginning and leads us through to the present day, where we find the Mafia to be a many-headed hydra that can never truly be slain. Some of the more grisly images occupy a troubling space that finds the viewer wanting to look away yet being compelled to take a peek. There is plenty of text and it is never less than informative and compelling.



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EXHIBITION



Size Matters: Re-Imagining Frame and Scale

Until 19 May. Daniel Blau Gallery, 51 Hoxton Square, London N1 6PB.
Tel: 0207 831 7998. Website: www.danielblau.com. Open Tues-Fri 11am-6pm, Mon and Sat by appointment. Admission free

SCALE, truth and identity: three subjects that haunt the periphery of photography. This exhibition, hosted by the Daniel Blau Gallery, questions how photography (vintage photography in this case) can challenge notions of the interaction between scale and the truth of identity. We know photography is a hoax: it has shown us that even our most grandiose ideas can be compacted down into a manageable two-dimensional surface. The size of an image is the biggest lie of all. Rarely is one to scale, and even when it is the lies keep on coming. 'Identity' is a loose idea here: 'us', 'them' and 'it' share equal space upon the gallery walls. The personal (a self-portrait by Chuck Close) resides opposite the catastrophic (large-scale aerial images showing the two days following the nuclear strike on Hiroshima). More than that, the images reveal the idea that photography is a suit we wear to identify our place within this world (and universe) and what exactly that world really looks like. Do we fit within the frame or does that frame force its way into us? On a technical level, it's difficult not to marvel at the range of techniques on display, particularly when faced with large-scale Polaroids sitting alongside salt prints. This is a wonderful and challenging exhibition.



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WEBSITE



www.foam.org

FOAM is a multi-faceted platform, being a gallery in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, an internationally distributed magazine and a multimedia website. The site focuses on exhibitions, publications, theoretical

discourse and projects devoted to the furthering of our understanding of the contemporary photographic scene. The site layout may be a little overwhelming at first, but once your eye becomes accustomed to the multiple boxes and little areas of text you'll likely feel compelled to dive into the ocean of information contained within the site's pages. Better still is the blog that arranges its reviews and features in a straightforward manner. This is one of the most visited sites for anyone looking to keep abreast of the contemporary scene, so if you're looking to stay current then this is a key site to bookmark.



CONDENSED READING

A round-up of the latest photography books on the market



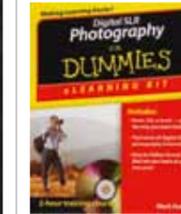
● BEST PHOTOSHOP FILTERS

by Susannah Hall, £24.99
This exhaustive book takes the time to survey the seemingly endless number of filters that can be applied to your images in Photoshop when you realise that your photographs weren't quite good enough to begin with. The content is perhaps a little dry and frustratingly light on text, but if filters are your thing then have a look.



● MAKE MONEY WITH YOUR DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY

by Erin Manning, £19.99
We see many books like this in the office, and the thing you learn rather quickly is that there really is no such thing as the right way to go about setting yourself up in business. The advice will always be different and, as a result, there's nothing really to recommend this book over the others. But then, that's not really a reason to steer clear of it, either.



● DIGITAL SLR PHOTOGRAPHY FOR DUMMIES (eLEARNING KIT)

by Mark Holmes, £24.99
This is another type of book that we see a lot of, but to be fair the *Dummies* titles are always worth a look. This particular title is an instantly accessible way into the world of DSLRs and is typically breezy and appealingly laid out.



● MY BIG CATS JOURNAL

by Steve Bloom, £7.95
Steve Bloom has spent his career producing assured and instantly recognisable wildlife imagery and here he has taken the approach of targeting a younger audience. This title focuses on lions, leopards, cheetahs and tigers, and is a pleasure to read no matter how old you are.