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Ravens



Synopsis

Consistently proclaimed as one of the most important photobooks in the history of the medium, Ravens by Japanese photographer Masahisa Fukase was first published in 1986 and the two subsequent editions were both short print runs that sold out immediately. This bilingual facsimile of the first edition contains a new text by founder of the Masahisa Fukase Archives, Tomo Kosuga. His essay locates Ravens in Fukase's wider work and life, and is illustrated with numerous recently discovered photographs and drawings. Fukase's haunting series of work was made between 1975 and 1986 in the aftermath of a divorce and was apparently triggered by a mournful train journey to his hometown. The coastal landscapes of Hokkaido serve as the backdrop for his profoundly dark and impressionistic photographs of ominous flocks of crows. The work has been interpreted as an ominous allegory for postwar Japan.

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Customer Reviews

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interpreted as an ominous allegory for postwar Japan.

This is a review of the binding rather than the book's visual contents. With that in mind, this is a missed opportunity. The idea of a stamped cover is nice, but not at the expense of a flimsy-feeling binding--after flipping through it for a minute, the book has started to bow. The slip case is a poor quality afterthought (mine has already ripped after trying to reinsert the now arched book. I would have preferred to spend an extra 20 bucks for a more solid tactile experience. Still, MACK should be commended for bringing this title back into print--excellent content and useful essays.

Shocking or provocative images are pretty common in photography world. If you are interested in photography, you get used to them. But 'Ravens' is something else. The images of 'Raven' gave me a shudder. If you feel lonely or depressed, do not open this book. You have to stare into your black hole, and would be crushed.

This is an amazing book! I saw the hardcover version in a special collections library and despite the price just had to add it to my collection. This soft cover edition is beautiful in every way. Not to be overlooked by serious collectors of photographic books.

Surely one of the greatest works in the photo book genre. Very highly recommended.

A legendary book that is not well known enough! it is a remarkable feat of insight and effort by a disciplined artist. every photographer, artist, poet should know about this book. In the current age where hype trumps all, this is the real thing.

Probably one of the best and most important photo books of all time.

Good, like

I was the director of Bedford Arts, Publishers (San Francisco) that produced the paperback reprint of Masahisa Fukase's RAVENS in 1991. It is a stellar work and now justly recognized for being one of the great photography volumes of the Twentieth Century. The initial printing in cloth must have been quite small (I have never seen a number). It was just by chance that a member of my staff discovered the book in Dai Nippon Printing's Copyright Division. There we were able to acquire the

rights to reprint the work through Dai Nippon and use the film from the first printing. That was 23 years ago so, without going into notes at the time, I am probably forgetting some interesting details here. The reviewer's objection to my change in the title - and I made the change - is principled. Yes, the original title was "RAVENS". However, at the time I was in the business of selling books to trade bookstores and museum bookshops across the country and the world. I did not want the book to be confused with a documentary photographic account of Ravens. (Japan, at the time anyway, was full of such books on every manner and kind of bird). I wanted the title to at least imply a work of emotional depth and be ambiguous at the same time. Ravens themselves, as far as we may know, are not conscious of any concept of solitude. It is only we who might give them that attribute. And Fukase appears, it seems, to have been very much drawn (whether alone or in a group) to their solitary condition - make whatever one will out of his divorce and solitary pilgrimage to the north that followed. I fundamentally - as a poet and deep enthusiast for the work - wanted to create an accurate enough title that what would work best in the context of the trade. (These title changes in foreign markets, by the way, happen all the time). Yet, I understand the betrayal of the purist on these matters. The addition of "The Solitude of..." does rob the original of its absolute sense of Fukase's relentlessly stark vision. For that I probably owe some apology! But the book did get out. The Press was closed shortly after its printing. It was our last book (a sad story). Chronicle Books took over the inventory and remaindered the book to who knows who for probably a dollar a book. . And, sadly, it took another 20 years - in spite of many suitors - before the Fukase guardian(s) permitted the book back into print in a facsimile of the original hardback, with gold cloth instead of black. And further sadly no further paperback reprint has yet been permitted. All in all, I remain delighted to have given it life beyond Japan and the light of Western attention. Stephen Vincent

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