

The Best of 2003

By Darius Himes

Surveying a year's worth of fantastic photography books is an exciting but daunting task. How does one summarize and encapsulate a dozen titles whose strengths lie in their complexity and fundamental expansiveness? Photography's power and pervasiveness is granted, but it is a rare gift when books distill, reconfigure, and bestow back upon an audience the energy of the original work. Ultimately, these books deliver.



Aaron Siskind 100. (Blind Spot Editions, \$65, Cat# PY092H.) Celebrating the 100th anniversary of his birth (12 years after his death), *Aaron Siskind 100*

properly presents the work of the one photographer who directly influenced the abstractionists of the New York School of painting. Siskind abandoned a documentary approach in the 50s, embracing pure form as a subject engaging the uniqueness of the photographic medium in an ever-deepening dialogue. The sensuousness of Siskind's work has been captured anew in this gorgeous volume.

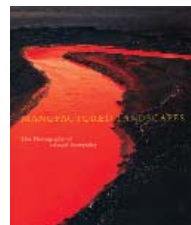
Stems. By Lee Friedlander. (D.A.P., \$85, Cat# PK889H.) In the arts, the still-life has a rich and centuries-old history. With both his knees failing, Lee Friedlander was faced with the possibility of, quite literally, a still life—namely, his own. He turned the situation on its head by photographing the abundance of

fresh flowers left around the house by his wife, Maria. Creating a tabletop arrangement which



resonates visually may seem a simple act, but the results here move beyond the staticity one often associates with the genre. The stem-green cloth and rosy end-pages perfectly compliment the undulating plant world he found at arms' length.

Manufactured Landscapes. By Edward Burtynsky. (Yale University Press, \$55, Cat# YU054H.) Once again, Yale University Press has given us a book of magnificent work. The controversy enmeshed with Burtynsky's subject matter is as old as the Industrial Revolution itself. Man violently wrests the raw materials from Nature to feed his technologi-



cal advancements, irreversibly scarring the surface of the Earth in the process and dumping the detritus of past-progress on her shores. With his large-format camera, Burtynsky presents the full cycle in color—from the mine and quarry to the refuse heap—displaying the mind-boggling scale of our collective activities with an unmatched precision and refinement.

100 Suns. By Michael Light. (Alfred A. Knopf, \$45, Cat# ZC105H.) The 100 photographs reproduced in this collection are



no title, from *Stems* by Lee Friedlander



Jerome 21 1949, from *Aaron Siskind 100*

from a relatively brief era—July 1945 to November 1962. During that time, the United States and the Soviet Union collective-



ly conducted hundreds of underwater and above-ground test explosions of the atomic bomb before signing the Limited Test Ban Treaty in 1963.

Recording these tests was a small division of the Armed Services whose archives Michael Light has unearthed, dusted off, and sequenced to chilling effect.



American Music. By Annie Leibovitz. (Random House, \$75, Cat# RH070H.) For thirteen years, Leibovitz was the principal photographer for Rolling Stone magazine.

In reference to that time, she has commented that, "Music was the center of our lives, or at least it seemed that way." The impulse to do *American Music*, she writes, "came from a desire to return to my original subject and look at it with a mature eye. Bring my experience to it...make it a real American tapestry." Real tapestry indeed. Leibovitz's mastery of all styles of photography commands respect.

From orchestrated group portraits to the staccato of street shots, her images are a paragon of excellence and emotion.



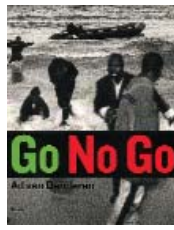
Dune. By Edward Weston and Brett Weston. (Wild Horse Island Press, \$65, Cat# PK877H.) The legacy

of the Weston family cannot be overstated. Edward Weston's groundbreaking work on the West Coast as a member of the f64 group stands unrivalled in twentieth century photography, and his sons Brett, Cole, and Kim have carried on the tradition begun by their illustrious father. *Dune*, which includes Edward's and Brett's work, has been edited around a specific subject and produced to the highest standards. Every aspect of this book—from text layout, to image reproduction, to overall design—is simply outstanding.



Japan. By Michael Kenna. (Nazraeli Press, \$75, Cat# TR136H.) *The New Yorker* has praised Kenna's "lonely, expansive landscapes, so empty as to appear not just a world but an era

apart from the country's cities." Kenna first visited Japan in the mid-80s to organize an exhibition of his work at the famous Min Gallery. Mesmerized by the stunning seascapes and the swooping lines of her sacred architecture, he returned numerous times over the ensuing years, producing a rich body of work. The book is beautifully bound in a silky red cloth and presented in a black Japanese folding slipcase.



brewing. The massive flood primarily of young men that surging from poorer nations to the rich West has reached a critical stage. Ad van Denderen has photographed

this displacement for over 15 years since witnessing it firsthand while on assignment in eastern Turkey. The photographs are at once penetrating, touching, and timeless black-and-white documents revealing not just the social and political ramifications of the disparity between rich and poor, but also the deleterious and cumulative effects of wasted human lives.



The History of Japanese Photography. By Anne Wilkes Tucker. (Yale University Press, \$65, Cat# YU053H.) "What we know about the history of photography

is less than what remains to be discovered," begins Tucker's introduction to this monumental volume. The following statement sums up the underlying intent.

"Photography was one of the most powerful cultural forces in the twentieth century, and the extent of its influence will not be fully understood until we understand the patterns of its evolution worldwide." This volumes brilliantly illuminates one piece of the puzzle.



Ghetto. By Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin. (Trolley, \$49.95, Cat# PI127H.) Trolley continues to publish some of the most compelling

documentary work of our time. The pitfalls in this type of work are numerous—one must avoid a patronizing voice and the curiosity factor while producing imagery that is compelling and informative. *Ghetto* was conceived by Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, the editors and photographers of *COLORS* magazine. They navigate 12 ghettos, photographing and interviewing residents with a startling compassion mixed with objectivity.

Go No Go. By Ad van Denderen. (Paradox, \$65, Cat# ZC153S.) For the past few decades, a major international crisis has been slowing



East 100th Street. By Bruce Davidson. (St. Ann's Press, \$75, Cat# PK844H.) A young Bruce Davidson began to photograph East 100th

Street in Harlem with his 4x5 camera when it was one of New York's most neglected and infamous neighborhoods. He created a body of work that documents the poverty-stricken conditions of the residents while simultaneously conveying warmth and dignity. This slightly revised reissue of the classic 1970 edition captures the eye with the elegance of book materials and design, providing a perfect showcase for Davidson's moving work.



Omizuo. By Masao Yamamoto. (Nazraeli Press, \$100, Cat# TR128H.) Yamamoto seamlessly weaves his mysterious female nude studies

together with snippets of landscapes, botanical studies, and the images of an ever-attentive life in the traditional Japanese *pillow book* format. The title, *Omizuo*, refers to a type of large, light-green moth. His frayed and sundry prints are presented as an accordion-fold book measuring 14 feet in length when fully opened. Hand bound in two clear-lacquered hardwood covers and presented in a matching wooden box, *Omizuo* is a treasure to own.