

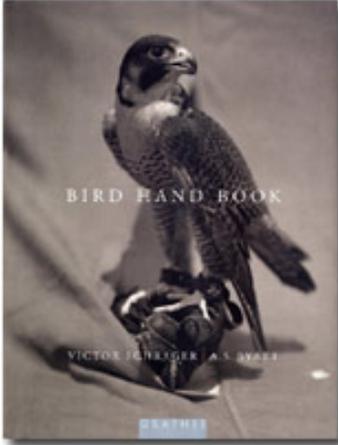


Book Review...

Bird Hand Book

Review by Tere Hendricks

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When I first saw some of Victor Schrager's images from *Bird Hand Book* in a magazine, I have to admit I didn't like them. They were technically superb photographs, but the subject, birds being held by disembodied hands, was somehow disagreeable. The images did not fit my preferred reality of birds. But that was before I read the book and took the time to consider it.

The *Bird Hand Book* is extraordinary and thought provoking. In her essay accompanying the photographs, A.S. Byatt wrote: "Victor Schrager's photographs add another dimension to the mystery of human-bird relations. We feel ambivalent about the relation of the series of hands to the series of birds. We look at the birds, the similarities and the differences, we categorize and catalogue, we form our own emotional and metaphorical responses to them...We describe the birds, but we don't know or possess them."

Many of us try to possess birds in some fashion. We observe them. We name them and catalog them. We feed them. We photograph them. But ultimately, even when we have a bird in the hand, we never possess them.

The *Bird Hand Book* is an intriguing and fascinating study of our relationship to birds. The more than 100 platinum prints are beautiful and intriguing. A.S. Byatt's essay, which covers more than 5,000 years of bird writing, is delightfully insightful. This book is hard to put aside.

About the photographer: Victor Schrager's photographs have been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions in the United States, Europe, and Japan. His photographs are included in numerous public and private collections around the world, including The Museum of Modern Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Houston Museum of Fine Arts.

About the author: A.S. Byatt novels include Possession (winner of the Booker Prize in 1990), and the sequence The Virgin in the Garden, Still Life, and Babel Tower. Educated at Cambridge, she was a senior lecturer at University College, London, before becoming a full-time writer in 1983.

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