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Dancers Among Us: A Celebration Of Joy In The Everyday



Synopsis

The mystery of the body in motion. The surprise of seeing what seems impossible. And the pure, joyful optimism of it all. *Dancers Among Us* presents one thrilling photograph after another of dancers leaping, spinning, lifting, kicking—but in the midst of daily life: on the beach, at a construction site, in a library, a restaurant, a park. With each image the reader feels buoyed up, eager to see the next bit of magic. Photographer Jordan Matter started his *Dancers Among Us* Project by asking a member of the Paul Taylor Dance Company to dance for him in a place where dance is unexpected. So, dressed in a commuter's suit and tie, the dancer flew across a Times Square subway platform. And in that image Matter found what he'd been searching for: a way to express the feeling of being fully alive in the moment, unself-conscious, present. Organized around themes of work, play, love, exploration, dreaming, and more, *Dancers Among Us* celebrates life in a way that's fresh, surprising, original, universal. There's no photoshopping here, no trampolines, no gimmicks, no tricks. Just a photographer, his vision, and the serendipity of what happens when the shutter clicks.

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Customer Reviews

Full Disclosure: I've known Jordan since 2005. I was happy to assist him on a few shoots for *Dancers Among Us*, brainstorming ideas, and trying to get every dancer I knew to work with him. If you believe that taints my ability to give a decent review, I suppose I understand. But I'd argue I'm

the perfect person to give a review because I can promise you that these pictures are real. The sweat, passion, and commitment of each dancer is real. The sheer talent of the photographer is real. And the power of this book is real. Even being close to this project, I was in no way prepared for how completely this book would consume me once I finally had it in my hands. I looked at the website dozens of times, I saw some of these shoots first hand, and there were still images that were new, that surprised me, made me laugh, and some that took my breath away. I stayed awake for several hours getting completely lost in each page, feeling my heart swell. Even if I spent some time thinking, "Oh, I wish I looked like that" (these bodies are amazing!), I spent more time thinking, "Oh, I've felt like that." The situations in the book are so recognizable and are divided into sections depicting things we all do: Dream, Love, Play, Explore, Grieve, Work, and above all, Live. Jordan has included background stories for several pictures, and anecdotes from his own life so you can see how personal and heartfelt the creation of this book was. The pictures would be remarkable on their own, but it is so much more meaningful to know how much went into devising each shot - or how some of them seemingly created themselves. I can say it was a privilege to witness the enthusiasm, dedication, and courage of these dancers firsthand. I watched Carrie Nicastro jumping off the side of Buckingham Fountain over 200 times during the course of almost 2 hours (page 36). Marissa Horton didn't think twice before stripping down and jumping into Lake Michigan in October when we suggested a nighttime skinny-dip (page 78). Erin Clyne leaped across active train tracks with the Northbound Metra train speeding towards her (page 172). Kara Lozanovski rolled herself in oily, gritty asphalt (page 148). Over and over again dancers volunteered, saying, "Yes!" or "I'll try!" or "What if...?". Improvising, thinking on their feet, and all the time willing to give their all just to share their love for dance. This book is a testament to humankind's best potential for creativity, spontaneity, and collaborative spirit. I remember a lecture from an art history class about the difference between photography and painting; the gist was that photography captures a moment as it is and painting captures a moment as it could be. With "Dancers Among Us" Jordan and his amazing team of dancers manages to do both. These images freeze a single moment in time - some of them as mundane as sitting on a park bench, crossing the street, or drinking a cup of coffee - but fill it with all of the life, emotion, and power that sits, too often unseen, inside each of us.

I'll be the outlier on these reviews but I was sorely disappointed by this book. I am a professional dancer so of course I am happy to see any material celebrating dance. But this book is uninspiring. 90% of the pictures are of dancers in a very similar position; if you just flip through the book in one setting, you'll notice the same image again and again - a leap or a dancer leaning back with her/his

leg in the air. Human movement is so diverse and this was all the author could come up with? There are hundreds of dance traditions practiced in the U.S. and they were nowhere to be found in this book. Also, Dance expresses the whole range of human emotions and again, it was the same facial expression (or lack of) over and over in this book. My favorite picture was actually of a woman not doing a backbend but positioned with her partner and with the most beautiful expression on her face. This touched my soul. We artists do see joy in the everyday because we recognize the crazy diversity of the human experience. This book fell very short of its potential.

We have enjoyed this book, although it would be much more impactful as a hardcover "coffee table book" and culled a little -- some of the pictures are too obvious/unimaginative and dilute the book (for example, the girl in flowing white on a tree swing...why wasn't this perhaps a boy looking ready to leap or squirm off, capturing that emotion of childhood challenge and adventure instead of a boring overdone romantic-girl stereotype?). But, the majority of the pictures are very imaginative and expressive, and capture the emotion of an everyday situation in a creative and enjoyable way, and I find myself reminded of them in various situations in my day-to-day life.

A collection of lighthearted photographs showing dancers practicing their art in incongruously everyday settings. My personal favorite is a setting that appears to be mountains of coal at an industrial setting. On top of a pile of coal, we see only the lower legs of a person wearing jeans - and ballet slippers, standing on point atop the refuse. Many pictures will bring a smile to your face. A few, maybe even a tear.

I had preordered my book and it on Friday. I love it. It's so much bigger than I thought it would be. So. Many. Photos. Each one more beautiful and creative than the last. It makes me happy. Thank you, Jordan Matter, and the participating dancers. Jennifer Dotter

Beautiful images magically transposed over the every day! My only question...where are the rest of the pictures??? There are pics in the book not on the website and pics on the website not in the book. So I'm betting there are more pics not shown on or in either? Must have more!!!

If you love dancing, whether you dance or love watching dancers, this is a book that is filled with dancers in every position possible! I found it joyous, lovely, and heart lifting. Treat yourself to beauty & the best!

Such a wonderful book, I bought this as a gift for a friend of mine (a dancer at heart) and was able to preview it before giving it to her. Stunning photos, Jordan Matter really catches the beauty of these dancers. A wonderful gift choice for anybody, dancer or not. We both loved it.

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