

The best photography books

From glossy coffee table books to a pocket guide, ISABEL STEVENS selects outstanding new publications

Photography books have never felt more vital and alive. Indeed, so popular are they today (and in the case of early editions prohibitively expensive) that there are now numerous books about photography books themselves.

The books selected here illustrate the breadth of photography and of photo-publishing, and each provides a window onto another world, be it 16th-century Italian dissection theatres, the streets of New York or the skies of Japan.

1. Survivor

Harry Borden

Cassell Illustrated (Octopus), £30, hbk

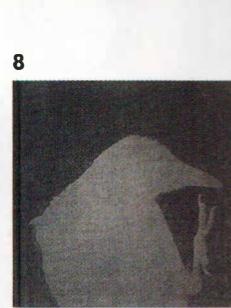
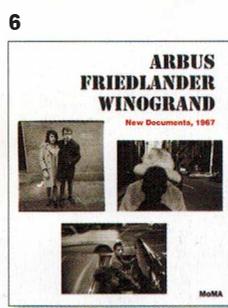
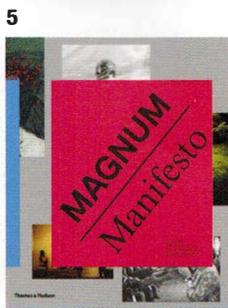
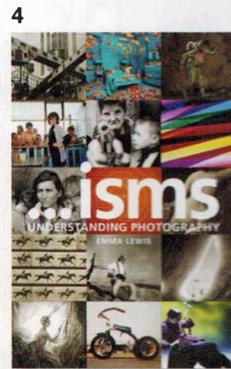
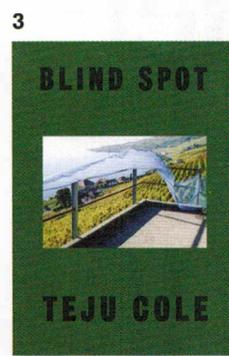
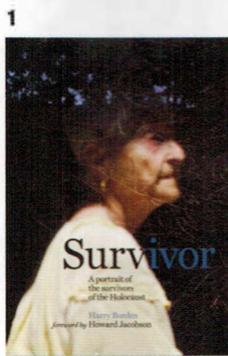
Photographer Harry Borden travelled the world seeking out over 100 child survivors of the Holocaust, and the result is this remarkable testimony to remembrance, loss and human endurance. Borden's portraits are coupled with short statements from the now elderly survivors: some detail optimism, others nightmares, while others offer snippets of their war experiences or warnings for today. The book is a timely reminder that many of these people were child immigrants who found sanctuary in other countries.

2. The Modern Spirit is Vivisective

Francesca Catastini

Anzenberger Edition, £33, hbk

Francesca Catastini's delightfully playful and idiosyncratic *wunderkammer* of a book presents an alternative history of dissection. Fear not, it's more exquisite book than corpse, full of curiosity and humour rather than gore. Quotations from philosophers and artists, 17th-century anatomical drawings and archival images of medical students all mingle with Catastini's own photographs of Italy's ornate empty public dissection theatres. The result is a singular visual essay on voyeurism, the human desire for perfection and the quest for knowledge.



3. Blind Spot

Teju Cole

Faber & Faber, £20, hbk

Novelist and *New York Times* critic Teju Cole is that rare combination of writer and equally adept photographer. This roadtrip diary pairs everyday scenes that Cole has collected with his impressions of these places, their history and their artistic and literary associations. He has a delightful eye for reflections that merge deliriously and duplicitously with their surroundings. This travelogue avoids any whiff of tourism and demands a curious audience.

4. Isms: Understanding Photography

Emma Lewis

Bloomsbury, £9.99, pbk

A detailed pocket encyclopaedia, ranging from early experiments to fix an image onto paper to photography in the age of pixels and the Internet. Lewis's desire to catalogue and assign buzzwords can seem convoluted but as an overview with an expansive attitude to the medium, eager to highlight photographers off the beaten path, it's an instructive map.

5. Magnum Manifesto

Edited by Clément Chéroux in collaboration with

Clara Bouveresse

Thames & Hudson, £45, hbk

At a time when in-depth photojournalism barely has a foothold in the mainstream media, the prestigious photographic co-operative Magnum trawls its archive to provide a vital compendium of documentary photography from the past 70 years. Reportage of overlooked people and places outnumbers pivotal moments in history. Less-heralded photographers (such as the new female Magnum recruits) and lesser-known series by recognised figures (including Henri Cartier-Bresson's views of London) get the spotlight.

6. Arbus Friedlander Winograd: New Documents, 1967

Sarah Hermanson Meister and Max Kozloff

MoMA, £35, hbk

This is the catalogue that MoMA New York's groundbreaking show of 1967, 'New Documents', never had. According to its curator John Szarkowski, a new generation of pioneering street photographers simply wanted to show their subjects' 'imperfections and frailties'. Fifty years on, the 'commonplace' captured by Diane Arbus, Lee Friedlander and Garry Winograd still feels like nothing else.

7. Fancy Pictures

Mark Neville

Steidl, £40, hbk

Neville has always favoured the format of books over exhibitions. This impeccably produced survey of 13 years of little-seen work includes his documentation of Helmand, Afghanistan, and his Port Glasgow project, which resulted in a book that was distributed exclusively to every household in the town. As he shoots with a flood flash, his subjects loom out of the darkness, his images seeming both monumental and intimate.

8. Ravens

Masahisa Fukase

MACK, £75, hbk

One of the seminal books in photography history, reprinted 31 years on, starts with a raven's stark silhouette and ends with a homeless man, his blanket draped over his body like plumage. When humans occasionally figure in Fukase's murky, impressionistic, monochrome images, they resemble these outsider birds, often alone, trapped in barbed wire. Fukase spent ten years travelling his native Japan collecting these desolate scenes, but the real travelogue this book offers is into the depths of the photographer's lonely psyche.