

lensculture

Photobooks of the Year, Part II: 24 Personal Favorites

Selection of 10 by a global panel of photobook experts

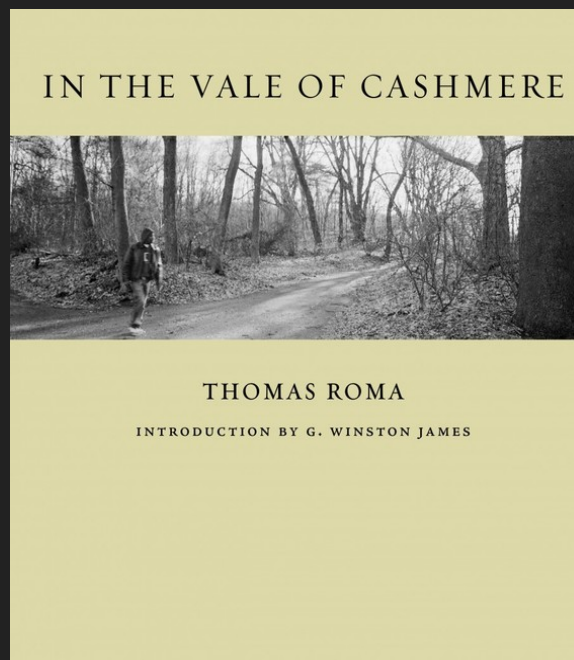
Over the past few years, we have witnessed not only an explosion in photobook publishing but also in photobook awards, publishing grants and institutional recognition for the importance of the format.

But even amidst vastly increased recognition and appreciation, the photobook remains an intensely personal object. While a museum exhibition is viewed, *en masse*, by thousands of different people, a book is best appreciated as an individual, one-on-one experience. As the renowned book designer David Chickey told us **recently in an interview**, "As a reader, a photobook allows you to enter in dialogue with the artist in an intense way—on your own, privately, at whatever pace you choose. It's different than a gallery or a museum. It's special."

So, while we were happy to **recognize ten books** which received wide-spread, even global, acclaim in 2015, we also want to shine a light on more idiosyncratic favorites. After asking the opinion of nearly two dozen experts, here are 23 books that were offered as singular, personal picks.

We hope you enjoy this list and discover some inspiring, yet unfamiliar, titles that deepen your perspective on what a photobook can offer. And best wishes for the upcoming year—full of more great books!

—Alexander Strecker



In The Vale of Cashmere

by **Thomas Roma**

Published by **Powerhouse Books**

Thomas Roma's portraits of gay African-American men in a small pocket of Brooklyn's Prospect Park does what all good photobooks should do: reveals an overlooked subject and wraps a full, well-rounded narrative around that topic.

Through its comprehensive and careful descriptions, the book becomes the authoritative portrait of a previously invisible population. From within the midst of a hushed and furtive social milieu, these men—known as cruisers—stand in confidence and with knowing gazes.

What's evident in each frame is that Roma wasn't considered a snoop or rejected by the people he was photographing. Above all else, the book is respectful of the topic. All of the photographs were made as a result of discussion between photographer and subject. At the same time, these collaborative portraits retain a distinct air of mystery: they are a tribute to a subculture that exists on the edge, proudly and defiantly.

*Selection and review by Pete Brook, Founder, **Prison Photography**, Editor, **Vantage***
