

photographer
peter beard's
famous journals

In the beginning, the sweeping beauty of Africa enchanted photographer Peter Beard. He befriended author Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), and even bought the property, Hog Ranch, next to hers near the Ngong Hills. Beard's life was all about open, breathtaking landscapes filled with beautiful creatures. But then a dramatic shift in the region took hold, and, in the end, Beard would discover his calling: chronicling the massive starvation of elephants due to a population explosion in Kenya. Now, more than 50 years since Beard first visited Africa, an ambitious collector's "art edition" of his written and visual documentation of the land has been published by Taschen: *Peter Beard* (\$2,500), a stunning, 616-page volume, packed with photos, diaries, handwritten observations and inspired drawings, captures the plight of these elephants, including those that starved to death in Tsavo, tens of thousands at a time, amid a bleak canvas of eaten trees.

Born in 1938 in New York, Beard was encouraged by his mother to keep diaries while on vacation. His photography, launched at age 12, was the visual extension of those. After majoring in art history at Yale University, Beard first traveled to Kenya in 1955 and returned in the early 1960s. His first book of photographs, *The End of the Game*, was published in 1965, shedding light upon the heartbreaking loss of more than 35,000 elephants. (Later his first show featuring diaries that went back a quarter-century with hundreds of photographs of dead elephants opened at the Blum Helman Gallery in 1975.)

Beard, who was known for his collaborations with Andy Warhol, Francis Bacon, Terry Southern and Truman Capote, discovered Iman, the fascinating model from Somalia, and for a two-year stint in the '80s, was married to the first "supermodel," Cheryl Tiegs. But it was the plight of the African elephants that consumed him.

In the new book, which comes with a handcrafted bookstand, some photographs are presented for the first time as intended—in panoramic foldouts. Other, smaller photos are magnified to focus on the small but telling details. With 200 pages of diaries, 294 pages of collages and an original essay by photo critic Owen Edwards, Beard's life's work unfolds. "To understand this," he wrote, "is to begin to realize that we have conquered nothing at all."

Top to bottom: Diary Pages, Peter Beard, Kamiti Prison, Nairobi, Kenya, August 26 and September 4, 1978; Peter Beard and Karen Blixen, Rungstedlund, Denmark, 1962; World-Class Black Rhino, Aberdare Forest, Kenya, 1972. Photos courtesy of Taschen.

