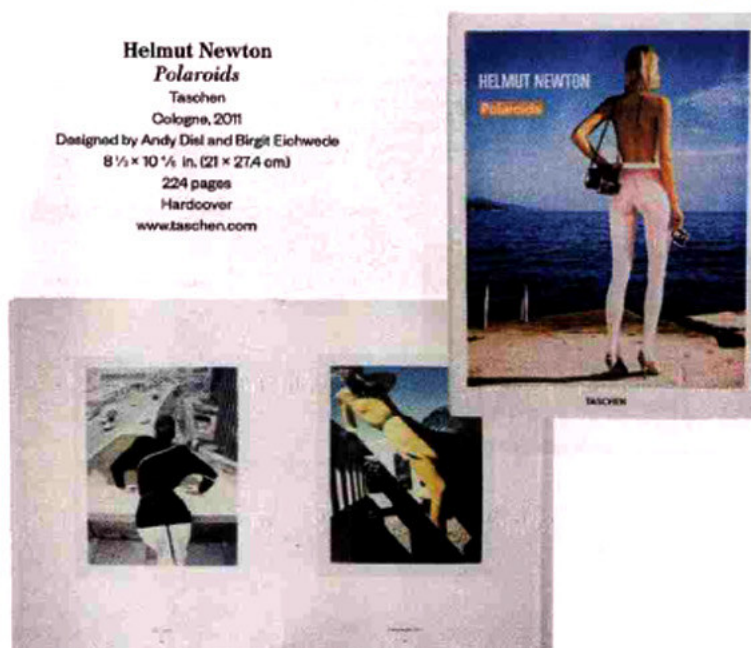


PBR 002 spring 2012

REVIEWS



Helmut Newton
Polaroids

Taschen
Cologne, 2011

Designed by Andy Diehl and Birgit Eichwede

8 1/2 × 10 1/4 in. (21 × 27.4 cm)

224 pages

Hardcover

www.taschen.com

Taschen's newest Helmut Newton publication, *Polaroids*, contains over three hundred Polaroid photographs by the famous and infamous fashion photographer. The book ranges from 1965 to 2003, providing an extensive overview of Newton's career, with the test shots from years of work with French and U.S. *Vogue*, *Stern*, as well as Yves Saint Laurent and Versace campaigns, among many others. In a way, *Polaroids* could be considered a kind of sketch book for Taschen's massive Newton tome, *SUMO* (the world's largest and most expensive photobook), with the Polaroids revealing Newton's process and thinking—many have folds and visible wear or are marked with his handwriting. A number of iconic shots make appearances in the sequence, but they show up as slightly more casual versions of themselves. They're looser, even playful, often with less formal styling and lighting and occasionally a more exaggerated use of scale. And, it's particularly refreshing today to look at page after page of unretouched fashion models, who echo the imperfections of the film itself, as well as the relaxed nature of the test shots.

The book is organized in roughly chronological order, with most of the Polaroids enlarged on the pages. The design feels a touch too formal and static for the material, with the pictures running centered in several inches of white space. The occasional double-page spread feels equally out of step as well. At first, I found myself frustrated with the larger-than-life sizing; I wanted to see the Polaroids at their true size, to get a sense that I was holding the objects themselves in my hand. The book does not achieve this quality. However, as I continued to look, I had to admit that the images would have been very difficult to see at their real size, and also that the layout choices suit the wider, more general audience the book is trying to reach.

The audience for photography may have a tendency to be narrow in what it values as a photobook, focusing on the somewhat obscure, small-run, collectable books. In doing so, we overlook books like *Polaroids* that present a wealth of material, are packaged in a more commercial way, and will be in print for a long time. Even though I didn't feel as though I was sitting and thumbing through Helmut Newton's original Polaroids—something a book aimed at a photographic audience might have aimed for—this book certainly made me want to do so, which is a good thing.