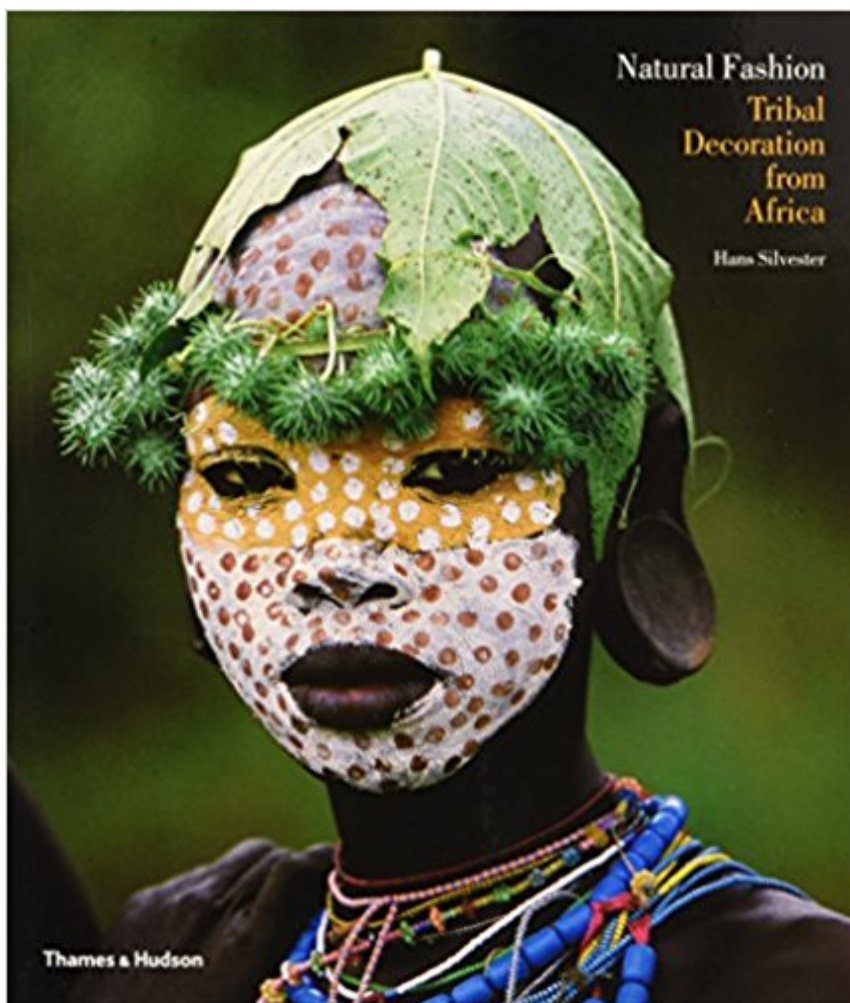


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Natural Fashion: Tribal Decoration From Africa



Synopsis

The scene of tribal conflicts and guerrilla incursions, Ethiopia's Omo Valley is also home to fascinating rites and traditions that have survived for thousands of years. The nomadic people who inhabit the valley share a gift for body painting and elaborate adornments borrowed from nature, and Hans Silvester has captured the results in a series of photographs made over the course of numerous trips. 160 color photographs

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this stunning collection of photographs, Silvester (Ethiopia: Peoples of the Omo Valley) celebrates the unique art of the Surma and Mursi tribes of the Omo Valley, on the borders of Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. These nomadic people have no architecture or crafts with which to express their innate artistic sense. Instead, they use their bodies as canvases, painting their skin with pigments made from powdered volcanic rock and adorning themselves with materials obtained from the world around them—such as flowers, leaves, grasses, shells and animal horns. The adolescents of the tribes are especially adept at this art, and Silvester's superb photographs show many youths who, imbued with an exquisite sense of color and form, have painted their beautiful bodies with colorful dots, stripes and circles, and encased themselves in elaborate arrangements of vegetation and found objects. This art is endlessly inventive, magical and, above all, fun. In his brief text, Sylvester worries that as civilization encroaches on this largely unexplored region, these people will lose their delightful tradition. 160 color photographs. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed

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“The images are a magical portal to childhood fantasy and play, to a lost world of unfettered, unfiltered imagination and creativity.” - Huffington Post Arts

As a collage artist with an interest in appropriating spontaneous and low-tech materials for the purposes of art-making, these images were a reminder that we are always surrounded by everything we need. The great outdoors is the greatest "art supply" resource imaginable. It is impossible to look through this array of inspirational photos and not be totally transfixed by the creativity, exuberance and personal expression of the subjects. This is a book that I will look at again and again, because it affirms the enduring power of the individual as well as the universal need to self-identify and be fully expressive. Magnificent.

I saw this book in the Museum of Natural History in DC and was thrilled by the beauty it conveyed. I also noticed how different reviewers reacted to the book, each one expressed a valid point. The fact that this tribe may be used as a spectacle is true, but it is important to weigh this against many other spectacles or tribes all over the world. This one becomes benign in comparison and in my opinion remains artistic, creative and beautiful. Not to mention you can wash the paint of the canvas and start over again without damaging it!

My sister is an artist. While visiting her recently I noticed this book in her home. I couldn't put it down. The photographs are exquisite. I used this book to select the palette for my recent home exterior painting project. I have taken this book to several parties of late to share with friends the loveliness of it all. Beautiful book, beautiful photographs...

I love this so much. I was thrilled to find a link again. I've been looking for it again for years.

Fortunately I didn't return it after I purchased the other set Ethiopia - people of the Omo Valley. Beautiful photos all over. I wish it is the hard cover version

Amazing and inspiring images of these beautiful people but the printing of the images is where the book goes awry. I was so excited to get this book as I had seen some of the photos on line and I

was immediately in love so I knew I had to get a copy of the book but I found the printed images dull and thus a detriment to the work itself. Bigtime Bummer.

Wonderful book! Thank you ..

This is not your typical coffee table book full of big bright exotic photographs. It is big, it is bright, and it is exotic but the images of the young people of the Omo Valley are incredibly unique visions of mankind and nature. These young people paint their faces and bodies with natural pigments derived from the soils and clay of the area. Thus you see reds, yellows, white, brown, and grey. The children devise creative head adornment from fruit, seeds, leaves, branches, seedpods, and even animal skins and horns. The people are beautiful in their innocent nakedness. The use of flowers and leaves and twigs as bodily decoration occurs primarily around the head and as a head covering or decoration, much like a crown of leaves. Many cultures do this including the ancient Greeks or Hawaiian islanders. The reddish black skin of the people acts as a contrast to the off-white, grey, and yellow ochre body paints. The application of the pigments is often roughly drawn with a natural relaxed flair. There is rarely a painted face with the precision of a circus clown. Of course these young people don't go around looking like this every day since they have lives to live tending gardens and livestock. But neither do the images feel false. If someone came to the USA and took pictures of people going to midnight mass on Christmas eve, would we say the pictures were atypical of daily life in America, probably we would. But would we say the images were not part of the American experience and reality, probably not. These images give the same impression. These are young people dressing up with leaves and flowers and body paint, something they don't do every day but something that is indeed part of their culture. This makes the book fascinating and one of the strongest books of photography of Africans that I have ever seen. It is highly recommended.

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