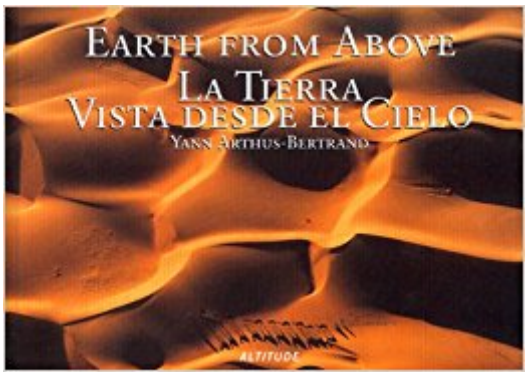
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Earth From Above



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Synopsis

The Earth s best-kept secrets can only be seen from above. Through 170 images taken by remarkable photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand for ten years in different geographies of more than 60 countries, we get a privileged perspective that discloses a planet as never seen before. Based on a project sponsored by UNESCO and other distinguished international institutions, this original photography record in book format becomes an indispensable document for the visual memory that promotes carefulness for our planet in order to enjoy it and transmit its beauty and richness to future generations. With more than 2.5 million copies sold all over the world, Yann Arthus-Bertrand s Earth from Above moves us and renews our connection with the blue planet: natural layouts and man-made structures become, from above, works of art that give rise to a renewed love for our big house .

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ecology, a science scarcely a century old, aims to give its practitioners an approach to understanding how whole natural systems--for example, watersheds, deserts, and estuaries--work. Few books translate this aim as well as Earth from Above, a stunning collection of photographs that affords its viewers a window into the world’s workings. It is something of a commonplace, for instance, that the large-scale logging now being visited on the world’s rainforests is causing untold damage to tropical ecosystems. In French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand’s hands, this problem is translated from arid fact to alarming image, giving immediate meaning to the statistics

that underlie today's environmental headlines; his photographs of the ruins of rural Madagascar, where forests are being cleared at a rate of 1,500 square kilometers (580 square miles) annually, are a sad case in point. Arthus-Bertrand, working with the support of UNESCO, has wandered the globe to gather this collection of more than 200 photographs, presented in a folio format. The images are uniformly striking, whether of stalagmite-like fans of algae spreading into the Mediterranean Sea, farmers working their fields in northern India, or destroyed Iraqi tanks littering the deserts of Kuwait. The accompanying text, captions, and short essays by some of France's leading scientists and social critics lend specific depth to the images, which will cheer few readers--but that will shock, and educate, and, with luck, inspire closer attention to the world around us. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

To many people over the past five years, preparing for the millennium meant surveying restaurants, hotels, parties, then trying to get a reservation and (more challenging) maybe a baby-sitter. To Yann Arthus-Bertrand it meant surveying the entire world and trying to get a sense of it. During the five years, he overflew and photographed 75 countries, shooting out the open door of a helicopter. The result is Earth from Above (Terre Vue du Ciel in the original French edition), at 424 pages and 11 by 15 inches almost more of a coffee table than a coffee-table book. It is weighty with thoughts and concerns about the millennium, with insightful observations about far-flung places and above all with 170 large color photographs, many of them stunning. The book is divided into 11 sections, each anchored by a thematic essay. In each essay two foldouts contain thumbnail-size reproductions of the preceding and following images, so the reader can locate the image on a map and read the detailed captions without having to flip back and forth to an index. This is a clever way to inform about an image without distracting from it. The most consistently recurring topic in the essays and images is our troubled and in many ways dysfunctional relationship with nature. Several images are of natural disasters, not just aftermaths of tornadoes and floods but also those waiting to happen. The view along a stretch of the San Andreas Fault is chilling. Most unsettling are the disastrous conditions of our own making. The text tells us that 19 countries suffer from serious drought and that between 1.6 billion and 1.8 billion people do not have access to potable water. A photograph shows us the perfect, white, prostrate "silhouette" of a tree that has been felled and burned to ash in northern Ivory Coast. The distinction between natural spectacles and man-made landscapes is a relatively recent one that arose with the burgeoning scale of our manipulation of the environment. In one of the best essays, French geographer and archaeologist Pierre Gentelle writes, "We take comfort in nature, forgetting that at one time we feared it." Humans were cowed by nature in earlier

times, but now it is almost an object of pity. The urbanized majority doesn't really want to live in nature or by any means to be affected by it; we simply want it to be there for aesthetics, or for visits. Gentelle takes the view that nature roped off in reserves is no longer authentic or untamed but rather more of a stage set. The natural spectacles that Arthus-Bertrand sought and selected take implicit exception to Gentelle's rule. There is nothing either comforting or false about the nature presented in the images of the toothy karst formations of the Tsingy of Bemaraha in Madagascar or the gannet colony on Iceland's Eldney Island. Aesthetic, yes, but inseparable from awesome, and our capacity still to be awestruck by nature is essential to our survival, because it prevents us from arrogance, from the obliviousness to the environment that leads us toward oblivion. Some of the most exquisite shots are of inaccessible, inhospitable World Heritage sites; we may never get to see most of them, but we need to know they exist. Many of the best images are actually of man-made patterns, be they fields of bright carpets in Marrakech or swirling agricultural fields in the interfluve between the Uruguay and ParanÃƒÂ¡ rivers in Argentina. Although our touch turns everything to sand or ash in so many places, some of the photographs evince how approaches to agriculture can cleave to topography and to the demands of extreme conditions. The photographs are wonderful. The spacious format of course enhances their impact. Arthus-Bertrand clearly loves the long shadows of late afternoon (as in the caravan of dromedaries below); in some images large blocks of shadow accentuate what is lit, the way well-placed pauses brighten music. He uses the beauty of the images to great effect with disturbing subjects, because it fascinates and makes them even more terrible. An immense plague of locusts makes a Seurat painting of the landscape below it. What first strikes the eye as huge splashes of color turns out in one case to be destitute people picking through a garbage dump in Mexico City, in another the teetering poverty of a hillside favela above Rio de Janeiro. Pleasingly abstract patterns prove to be the aimless crush of burned-out tanks in Iraq after Desert Storm or the awful symmetry of a B-52 parking lot. Words and Images Marrying the visual and the textual in a book like this is very difficult, and in most cases the two parts seem less integrated than tacked together. Few photographers attempt the text, and only a very few (such as Loren McIntyre) can do justice to their own images. To be fair, on the scale of the millennium, who on earth would be equal to the task? The essays, written by editors of the annual L'ÃƒÂ©tat du monde, are data-intensive and relentlessly macro as they tackle such topics as the origins of culture, the evolution of cities, population growth, climate change and sustainable development. They are well written and thought-provoking, and the translations are virtually seamless, but juxtaposed with the intimacy, poetry and passion of the images they can seem bland and detached, victims of millennial ennui. Moreover, they are pretty dismal, the hope expressed

sounding hollow among all the discouraging trends they describe. An example is the evolution (or devolution) of cities, where the cited trends of overexpansion, contamination, the growth of edge cities and literal decentralization point nowhere but downhill, despite the author's optimism about a new dynamic. Some of the recommendations are too sweeping to have any impact: take action, eliminate inequalities, do more research and so on. The book is reinforced by the photo captions, apparently the work of the photographer and his field team. They are substantial, and many are small gems that convey both detail and larger lessons. Most are well researched, although in the caption accompanying the image of logs being floated down the , I would dispute the assertion that Brazil's principal economic asset is timber. This implies a mercifully unrealistic efficiency in deforesting the nation, and at present Brazil's status as the world's seventh largest economy owes very little to timber. Finding much fault with the photographs is neither necessary nor possible. A bit of repetition reflects Arthus-Bertrand's fascination with agricultural landscapes. Some of the more familiar subjects (Nazca, Inishmore, Stonehenge) are less than captivating. In a few, people on the ground squint up at the helicopter and break the spell that lets us believe we are not intruding. In most instances, however, the "whirlybird's-eye view" taken by Arthus-Bertrand is effective. It is high enough to see patterns but not so high as to render the subjects completely abstract. The book satisfies a need at this moment to step away from--and above--our circumstances to understand them better. From this perspective, we are presented with a spectrum of environments, lives, harmonies and dissonances, a tableau that is exquisite, ghastly, and sometimes both. The last photograph is a dusty blur of children near Korhogo, Ivory Coast, mobbing the helicopter and mugging for the camera. At the end, it is strange to be on solid ground--we have been taken on quite a journey. Douglas C. Daly is curator of ian botany at the New York Botanical Garden in Bronx, N.Y. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is a book that I would have loved as a child. Don't get me wrong, I love it today but a child would bask in the wonders of the Earth for hours with these images. It's hard to believe that some of the locations in this book are on this planet. There is such beauty and awe in these pictures. At almost every turn of the page there is a "wow" coming out of my mouth. Well worth the money. The only gripe I have is the reference of the locations. You have to flip around all over the place to find out the location of the photographs. There does not seem to be any order connecting the photos to the descriptions. Don't worry though! Still get the book.

I saw this amazing exhibit, "La Terre Vue Du Ciel", of Yann Arthus-Bertrand's in the Jardin du

Luxembourg Senat when I was in Paris a few weeks ago. The exhibit included much larger-than poster-sized photos that are some of the same photos contained in the book. They were spectacular and breath-taking. Stunning really. But if you can't afford to go to Paris, or if you can't get a hold of a poster of his work, this book is a fantastic collection of awesome, thoughtful, inspiring, thought-provoking, and humanistic usually unseen images taken from above Earth, that have an incredible aesthetic beauty. I can't recommend this book more highly. I was going to purchase 3-4 of them myself for me and my family and friends. However, I waited to get back to the US before doing so since they are large and very heavy due to the high-quality paper the photos are printed on. I was sorry they would not fit in my luggage as I had wished to stare at the photos for many hours on the plane trip home. Many kudos to Yann Arthus-Bertrand for an outstanding artistic work! Bravo! I hope to see another exhibit by this talented photographer in Paris or the U.S. in the near future.

I purchased for the photos. Pictures are fabulous, intriguing. Buy the large book. Pictures don't have nearly the same impact in the smaller version.

Without question the most superb collection of aerial photographs I've ever seen. As a landscape photographer, I own dozens of coffee table books covering all types of landscapes, seascapes and even the heavens. I love to learn from those who have blazed a trail ahead of me - to see what makes their work great, so that I may improve my own work.I can honestly say though, of all the modern photographers who's work I view regularly, only Arthus-Bertrand, David Doubilet and Galen Rowell stand in greatness. Wolfe, Brandenberg, Zuckerman...they're all very good at what they do. But there's something that sets work like this apart from the rest. Words can't do them justice, so I'll stop trying.Suffice it to say this work is a masterpiece.

We first saw Yann's work on large display boards while travelling from city to city throughout the world. The exhibits turned everyone's eyes and you wished you could linger on each of them longer. Once we got home we looked for Earth from Above/Earth from the Air, but the size of the small books we found made it hard to appreciate the grand scenes. Until we found this one! The prints are big enough to capture your whole gaze and get lost in. The images get a full page each, with descriptive text on the opposite page. There's a signature on the opening page and the covers are heavy matte fabric. I recommend putting this out for everybody to enjoy, perhaps with white gloves?

Such an amazing collection of photographs. It’s lovely to open to a new one every day, so as to give each landscape it’s due.The only thing that would improve this magnum opus is a CD with 360 degree views. Of course that’s another set of cameras and another project. Hint . . . Hint . . .I’ve bough this as a gift for "non readers" many times and they always have it hanging in their living room.

In Prague last summer there was an outdoor exhibit of a few dozen of the images from this book. I think they were about 4-5 feet wide. I wasn’t aware of the work of Arthus-Bertrand before. I returned twice more to look at them. The massive book was on sale but for about 100 euros. The price plus the weight deterred me from buying it. So when I saw it on recently for less than half of that price, it was a no-brainer. The production quality of the images is high. The fold out caption pages are very useful. The essays are generally "non-preachy" and quite-informative. My one complaint, which I think is echoed in another review here or elsewhere on the Web, is that two many of the images in the book are marred because they must be printed on two facing pages with the ususal problems this introduces. Admittedly, having all of the images as fold outs would probably have been too expensive and difficult. Printing them one only one page would not have done the details in the images justice, particular after seeing the big blow ups last summer.

I first saw the work of this super talented photographer in the wee hours of August 20th, 2000 outside Palais du Luxembourg in Paris. I was so fascinated by the colors, the angles, the beauty, and the emotions conveyed that I pledged to get a copy of the book as soon as I returned to the US. The pictures portray everyday places and people that seem out of this world when viewed through the lens of Arthus-Bertrand. The photographer and his staff really did their homework when putting together the captions that accompany the pictures. They have gathered information on geography, history, ecology, anthropology, economics, sociology, politics, and popular culture to describe the sites, hence increasing our awareness of our precious and wondrous yet fragile world. Earth from Above will never make it to my bookshelf because it’s so fascinating that I keep it out on my living room table to share the wonder!

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