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BOOK REVIEW

BY AMANDA QUINTENZ-FIEDLER

SCHATZ IMAGES: 25 YEARS

By Howard Schatz and Beverly Omstein. 832 pp. (two-volume boxed set, limited edition). \$500 hardcover.

A lovely and fit pregnant woman stands naked against a simple gray backdrop, her arms arched away from her in a dancer's pose and her right foot delicately poised against the floor. Next to her is an image of her new daughter, only four days old — then an image of that same daughter at two years, and then at eight, 12 and 17 years. It's one of many astounding series of mothers and their children photographed by Howard Schatz. From brilliant dance and fashion photography to experimental studies and homeless portraits, this two-volume boxed set contains 1,083 images representing Schatz at his best.

Taken together, the photographs in *Schatz Images: 25 Years* create an amazing demonstration of the human lifecycle. In fact, Schatz is a photographer capable of capturing all the amazing things that humans do. Seemingly levitating dancers freeze in momentous leaps and impossible contortions, their facial expressions almost calm and serene. Bodies wrapped in knots are photographed in vivid colors, while others draped in fluorescent liquids leave impressions of the human form outlined in drips and streaks on the page. Pregnant women dance, newborns nurse, children grow. There are worn and weathered faces, stories from life on the street and in prison, and striking portraits of celebrities, athletes and models with their mothers. Actors "in character" play out bizarre scenarios from Schatz's mind in ridiculous, hilarious, poignant or terrifying moments.

The list of situations seems endless, but they all possess a unifying element: the extraordinary control, precision, passion and life of Schatz's photography. No matter the inspiration for a body of work, Schatz pursues that concept to its fullest representation. He creates consistent images within a series, but he doesn't limit his visual expression to one kind of photography. Some concepts are best served with a simple white backdrop à la Irving Penn, others necessitate raked lighting to reveal texture and shape, or unique chemistry and colored gels to elicit specif-

(and many already have books of their own). But what is truly fantastic about this collection is having all of these bodies of work in one place. Juxtaposing portraits of Folsom Street Fair players with portraits of professional athletes shows the scope of Schatz's abilities and interests. You can witness his extraordinary vision with the malleable forms of dancers. You can appreciate his acceptance of people from all walks of life, from boxers to runaways. You can see his affinity for redheads. You can savor his location photographs and stunning

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botanicals. But most of all, you can marvel at the extent of a truly magnificent career that is not afraid to shift and sway, follow new ideas and visions, or persist with projects spanning decades to capture the most elemental part of being human — growing up.

Just as Schatz captures the amazing things that humans can do, this major retrospective manages to capture, and elegantly present, the amazing things

that Howard Schatz can do. With two 12 x 12 inch volumes in a beautiful custom slipcase, this signed and numbered limited edition of 500 copies is a collector's item to be treasured. ▲

Amanda Quintenz-Fiedler is a freelance writer and photographer based in Southern California, where she received her MFA in Still Photography. She has contributed articles to Digital Photo Pro, Rangefinder, and the PIEA Journal and has authored three instructional books on photography.