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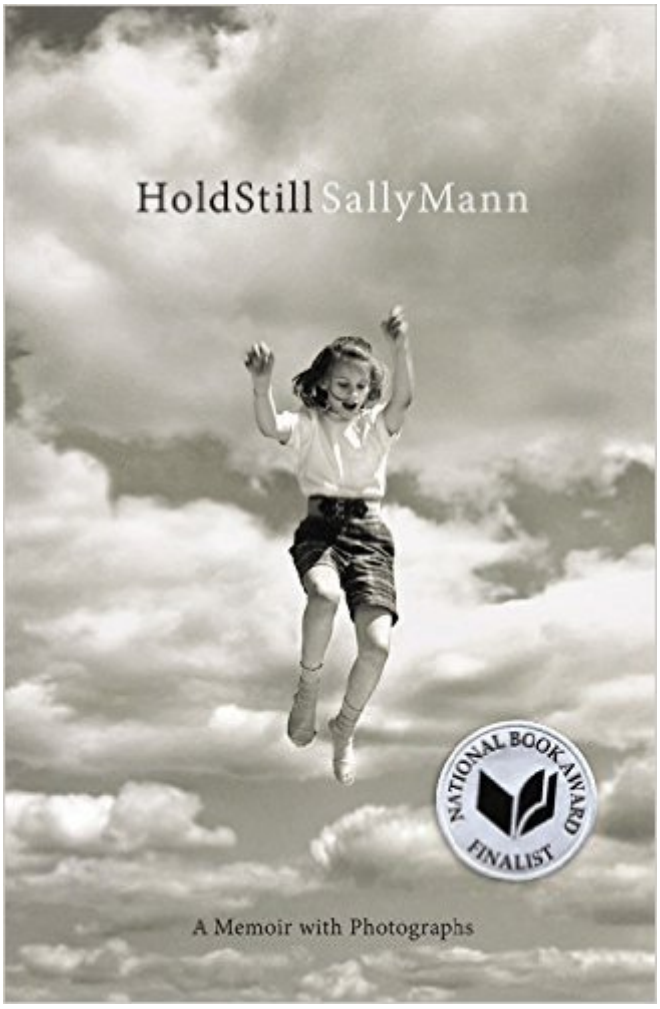
Hold Still: A Memoir With Photographs



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Synopsis

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALISTONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEARThe New York Times, Washington Post, The San Francisco Chronicle, Vogue, NPR, Publishers Weekly, BookPage A revealing and beautifully written memoir and family history from acclaimed photographer Sally Mann. In this groundbreaking book, a unique interplay of narrative and image, Mann’s preoccupation with family, race, mortality, and the storied landscape of the American South are revealed as almost genetically predetermined, written into her DNA by the family history that precedes her. Sorting through boxes of family papers and yellowed photographs she finds more than she bargained for: "deceit and scandal, alcohol, domestic abuse, car crashes, bogeymen, clandestine affairs, dearly loved and disputed family land . . . racial complications, vast sums of money made and lost, the return of the prodigal son, and maybe even bloody murder." In lyrical prose and startlingly revealing photographs, she crafts a totally original form of personal history that has the page-turning drama of a great novel but is firmly rooted in the fertile soil of her own life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

What follows is the review I published in The Washington Free Beacon (http://freebeacon.com/culture/exposed-in-a-southern-lens/)Midway through her memoir, Hold Still, photographer Sally Mann recounts the first of several journeys she took through the Deep South with her portable photograph studio, seeking, â œTo whatever extent it is possible to photograph air â | To whatever extent photographs can reveal the dark mysteries of a haunted landscape.â • Using

the archaic process of wet-plate collodion, which requires enough explosive, ether-based chemicals that her Suburban was â œeffectively a rolling bomb,â • Mann produced massive landscapes, sometimes 40 x 50 inches in size, whose washed-out ethereality and mystery can stir the viewer much like the Civil War photographs of Matthew Brady or Michael Miley (whose work Mann discovered in an attic, and later saved, while working as the campus photographer at Washington and Lee University).Driving through Mississippi with a local woman whose family once owned the site where Emmett Tillâ ™s body was recovered, Mann, who photographed it, recounts how, â œWe chatted as we drove, but even distracted as I was I still slammed on the brakes when I saw the roughly human-shaped concrete mound off to the side of the fields. â ˆOh,â ™ said Maude airily, â ˆitâ ™s how they bury people out here in the summer.â ™â •The image Mann producedâ ”yellowy-grey, with a lone tree centered in the upper half and a cocoon-like shape angling beneath it like the slanted beam of an Orthodox crossâ ”is like Hold Still itself in its blend of hauntedness, rurality, and the suggestion of mysteries that art touches obliquely.

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