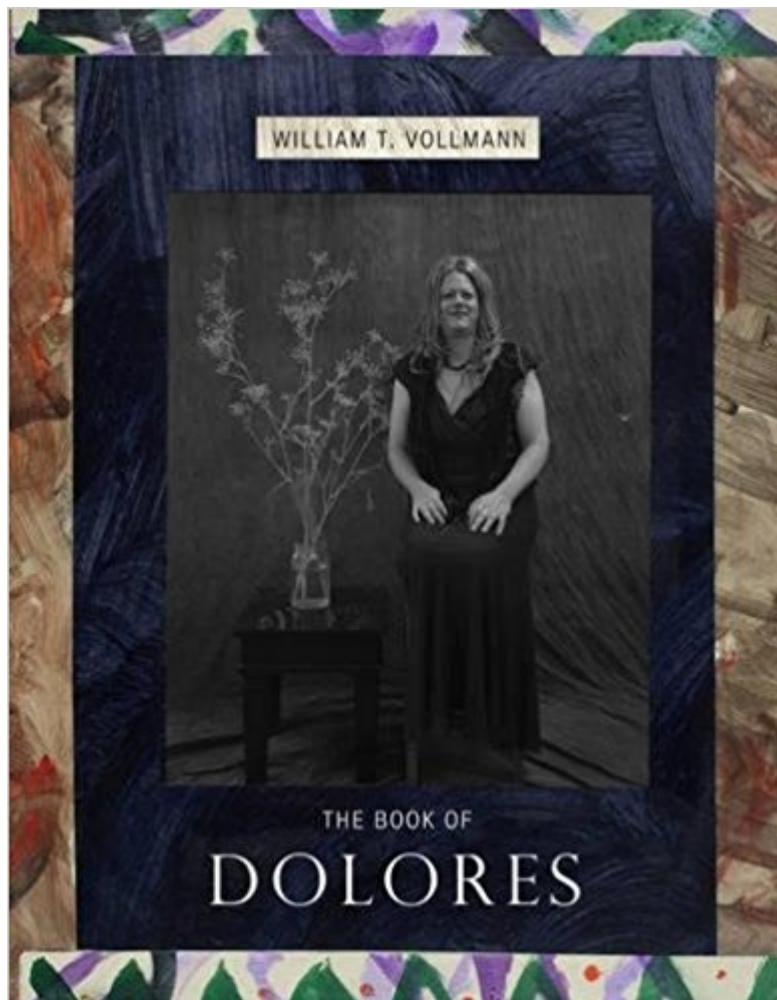


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The Book Of Dolores



Synopsis

William T. Vollmann has travelled to Soviet-occupied Afghanistan with Islamic commandos, shivered out a solitary stretch at the North Magnetic Pole in winter, hopped freight trains, studied the stately ancient beauties of Japanese Noh theater, and made friends with street prostitutes all over the world—all in the interest of learning a little more about life. Now in his mid-fifties, Vollmann sets out on what may well be impossible for a heterosexual genetic male: to envision himself as a woman. In these photographs, block prints, and watercolor drawings, he portrays his alter ego, Dolores, with whimsicality, and sometimes with cruelty—for Dolores would like to be attractive, or at least to “pass,” but the ageing male body in which she remains confined requires lowered expectations. Meanwhile, the drawings and block prints, composed with the artist’s glasses off, show Dolores as she imagines herself to be. The Book of Dolores brings the genre of self-portraits to a new level of vulnerability and bravery. In the process, it offers virtuoso performances of nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first-century photographic techniques, including the seductively difficult gum bichromate method. Each section of the book is accompanied by an essay on motives and techniques.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Whether or not it turns him on, whether or not it makes him feel more like, or better than, himself, becoming Dolores in words and images gives Vollmann one more way to say that his own world is what he can make it." -Stephen Burt, New Yorker"Indeed, many of the images in "The Book

of Dolores have a garish sideshow quality: Dolores with whip and dog collar; Dolores with a noose around her neck; Dolores as a deranged clown...The results are shocking in a sense of shock that Mr. Vollmann cultivates. Sometimes he even scares himself."-The New York Times"Vollmann's latest, *The Book of Dolores*, is perhaps his most unusual, which is no small assertion."-Newsweek"A major writer has left us alone in his studio to play around with his tools: cameras, film, developing baths, brushes, paints, pencils and pens. He has left us alone in the studio of his sex."-New York Observer"The results of the experiment are undeniably transfixing, a mixed-media look at a raw and intimate transformation."-New York magazine's "The Cut" blogNamed one of photo-eye's best photo books of the year.

William T. Vollmann was born in California in 1959. He has worked as a journalist for BBC Radio, The New Yorker, Spin, Granta, The Los Angeles Times, and other venues. He is the author of a number of various works of fiction and nonfiction, including *Europe Central* (Viking, 2005), which won the National Book Award, *Poor People* (Ecco Press, 2007), which won the French Prix du Meilleur livre *l'Étranger* in the essay category, and the seven-volume essay on violence *Rising Up and Rising Down* (McSweeney's, 2003). He is especially proud of having been (as he found from reading his FBI file) both a Unabomber suspect and an anthrax suspect. Although many of Vollmann's books and articles contain his photographs and drawings, the first work exclusively devoted to his photography was *Imperial*, which powerHouse published in 2008 (while Viking brought out an accompanying text volume of the same name).

I am a great admirer of Vollmann. There are several feet of his works on my shelf, some of the volumes are heavily highlighted. He is an amazing writer. It was an amazement to order Dolores and find him exploring cross dressing and gender identity. I admire him all the more for being so bold. The detailed discussion of antique photography techniques was surprisingly interesting as well. I would like to see some of the photos 'in the flesh' at a gallery. I'm sure that much of the subtlety and detail is lost in the printing process.

The Book of Dolores

This is a weird and wonderful book, perfect for any Vollmann fan or fan of artistic photographic techniques. Featuring gorgeous plates of photographs, watercolors, and woodblock prints, this art catalog is like few others, particularly since it is the work of a mainly literary artist. The text that

accompany's the images covers an appropriately wide range of topics from femininity, transgender rights, literature versus reportage, to inside explanations of photographic and other artistic processes. Worth the buy for the connoisseur or dilettante.

He is one of the greatest writers on this small planet. His books are never easy reads, never easy to stand, never easy to like. Some might have thought that provocation is not longer on the map since the seventies have passed: this BOOK OF DOLORES gives harsh proof that provocative art still exists, with pleasure! Vollmann, the great and extensive traveller of geographical and physical, and what is more, of psychological and imaginative landscape & location of literally all styles, makes himself travel into a female body - and, no surprise, this releases eerie, weird and outlandish, but as well smart and joyful impressions. Dolores, the female alter ego of Vollmann (and maybe of all of his male readers) closely is linked with pain (latin: dolor), and each and every reader is entitled to experience this very rude though important kind of pain. Really a wild trip into reality though we might not always would have liked to experience it.

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