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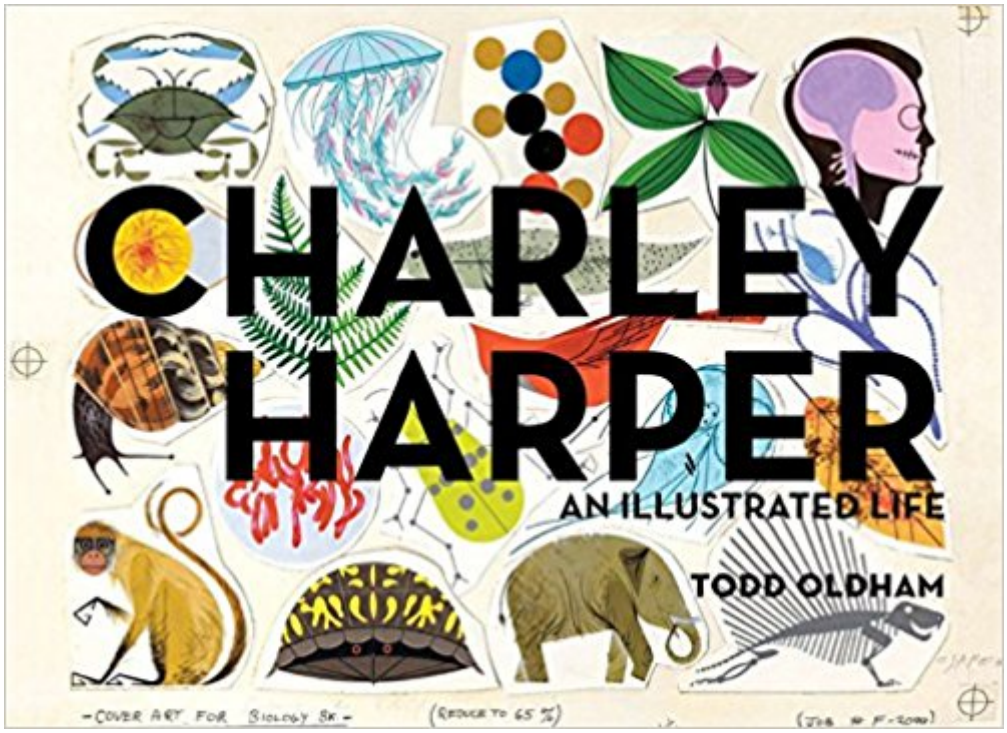
Charley Harper: An Illustrated Life



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Synopsis

Charley Harper was an American original. For more than six decades he painted colorful and graphic illustrations of nature, animals, insects and people alike, from his home studio in Cincinnati, Ohio, until he passed away in 2007, at the age of 84. Renowned New York-based designer Todd Oldham rediscovered Charley's work in 2001, and collaborated closely with him in the ensuing years; combing through his extensive archive to edit and design this stunning monograph.
ThisÂ new "mini" editionÂ is a popularly priced, beautiful tribute to Charley Harper's singular style, which he referred to as Minimal Realism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I am a fan and collector of Charley Harper's, and, that being said, this book is truly a beautiful and wonderful representation of his work. Also, I want to say as an owner of the large $200 dollar edition of this book, I have to admit that I like this one better. The big one is really tough to physically handle due to its size and weight. Plus the pages in the big book are matte and really don't do Charley's work justice. This smaller version has glossy pages which allows all the images to really pop off the page. Please note that this version of the book has every single image and page that is in the larger version -- EVERY PAGE. So, buy this for yourself and buy one for a gift...everyone will love this book.

Length: 0:30 Mins

Charley Harper is an artist with a very unique style he calls "minimal realism". He’s able to capture the essence of his subjects with minimal visual elements.The painting of birds caught my attention with the clean smooth lines which resembles vector work. His colour choices are from observation in life and the resulting image is always bold and striking. Many of his pieces are on nature.The author Todd Oldham only discovered Charley Harper’s work in 2001. Since then, he has been collecting all the work he has ever published. The result is this impressive 424-page book that collects work that span the entire career of Charley Harper. It includes the commissions he done for Ford Motors, schools, advertising agencies, etc.There are two editions for this art book. The first is a 5.5kg book published in 2007, the year Charley Harper passed away. The newer edition, which I have, is the shrunken down version which is lighter, more handy and affordable. The construction of the book is great and all the illustrations are brilliantly reproduced.The contents are as follows: * Conversation with Charley Harper * Betty Crocker’s Dinner For Two Cook Book * The Giant Golden Book of Biology * The Animal Kingdom * Ford Times Magazine * Birds & Words * Advertising & Promotions * Mosaic Murals * Paintings * PostersThere’s a nice long interview written by Todd Oldham which is also translated in French, German, Italian and Spanish.Charley Harper has published a few books before so there might be some duplication here. If you’re just intent on getting one book, make this the one. It’s a beautiful, timeless art book.(More pictures are available on my blog. Just visit my profile for the link.)

As soon as I saw Harper’s wonderful bird illustrations in Audubon magazine, I had to see more of his work. I was pretty taken aback by the price at first, but after previewing the entire book on the AMMO website (see Discussions below), I was more confident with my decision. It looked beautiful in the Flash slideshow and I hoped that it would look just as clear in the printed book. I had some concerns about the paper affecting print quality as the other reviewer mentioned, but I’d read other blogs & reviews from other sites and I’d heard more than enough good things about this volume.It arrived in a lovely black & white patterned box to protect it during shipping, which is also useful for storage. As far as printing quality goes, it looks very similar to my vintage encyclopedia set from the 1960s - I have a feeling that they chose the matte paper for this reason. Yes, the colors are not as vibrant as the online preview (or the glossy pages of Audubon magazine), and yes, many of the images look like enlarged scans from previously-printed sources. You can see the blown-up halftone and a bit of a blurry edge on many illustrations. The photos of his wonderful mosaics need some color adjustment and look better online.However, the whites are crisp and the blacks are pure black, and I’m not disappointed (I’m a picky OCD graphic designer too). My favorite aspects of this

book are the creative spread layouts, the sketches & "in-progress" material, and the sheer volume & range of works contained in this book. It’s an expensive book, but it’s a deal when you consider the individual price of prints. In many cases, the prints will be about the same size as these pages anyways!

Fans of Charley Harper will be thrilled by the breadth of this book, which produces images from his early illustration work as well as dozens and dozens of his beloved art prints. Todd Oldham did an outstanding job choosing and laying out the art work, which truly give a great overview of Charley’s life and work.HOWEVER. The book is printed on thick paper with a matte finish, and the result is disappointing for anyone who has seen the real pieces. The colors are muddy and dull, not at all like the bright colors Charley used, and the images lack the crisp lines that are the hallmark of serigraph prints. Glossy paper helps keep the colors bright and the lines sharp. This book has a hefty weight and a luxurious feel, but the images suffer substantially.I hope that Todd Oldham and the printers will consider a second printing on glossy paper. Buy this book if you want to spend $200-$400 for a comprehensive look at Charley Harper’s amazing work. But if you really want to enjoy his style, spend $50 for the smaller selection in "Beguiled by the Wild."

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