

PHOTO DISTRICT NEWS

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Photo Annual 2001

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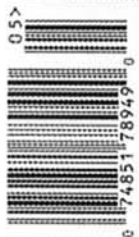
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PDN's Players: The Year's Trend Makers
Nadav Kander's Pursuit of Beauty



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The international publication for
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May 2001 | \$9.95 US | \$11.50 CAN

A Proposal To Establish **A Photo Rights Clearinghouse**
National Geographic Ruling Scores One For Photogs

Player

Elsa Kendall

Elsa Kendall,
Creative director
Arena Editions



© ERIC O'CONNELL

Photographer Richard Misrach calls Elsa Kendall “the best designer I’ve ever worked with.” Misrach, who has published eight books, took his latest, *The Sky Book* to Arena Editions of Santa Fe, New Mexico, after seeing the work Arena did on fine-art photographer Adam Fuss’s first book. That “quiet, perfect book,” as one reviewer described it, was Arena’s first publication and Kendall’s first foray into book design. Three and a half years later, Arena has published 35 titles, 30 of which Kendall designed. Last year, Arena published 15 titles—almost twice the number produced the previous year—including the elegantly designed *Walker Evans: The Lost Years*, *Melvin Sokolsky: Seeing Fashion*, *Robert Maxwell:*

also knew that with the intensity of his blacks, the duotones would look luscious on that paper.”

James Crump, Arena’s founder and publisher, edits all the books and usually collaborates with Kendall on the sequencing of the pictures. Says Kendall, “It’s a very instinctive and intuitive process. I find one place to start, then thankfully it usually just unravels like a ribbon.” Again, she says each book’s pacing is determined by the photos. “It’s a matter of recognizing when a photo is strong enough to stand on its own and when it should be on a spread with another image.”

The recent project she’s probably proudest of was the monograph on Sokolsky, the Sixties fashion photographer, which inspired a rare incidence of what Kendall calls a “challenging creative difference,” between her and Crump. “When I first told James, ‘I see a cover with fuchsia, tangerine and chartreuse type!’ I had to pick him up off the floor.” Crump soon came around. Kendall also set the text in the shape of a sphere—an homage to Sokolsky’s famous pictures of models in floating bubbles. “Working with those images, and meeting the photographer, was such a privilege for me,” says Kendall. “I really wanted his book to be elegant, but in coming up with those colors and doing the text as a bubble, it tread the fine line between complementing the photos and not being too cutesy.”

“Elsa’s really attuned to details in creative, beautiful ways,” says Misrach. “She’s pretty adventurous, too. I usually make a tight dummy for each of my books, and she just started playing off that. She was very sensitive to what I had done, but she also brought some very creative ideas to the project.”

Kendall comes by her sensitivity to photography through experience. She got a box camera when she was 8, and though she was trained in interior architectural design, she has worked as a photographer off and on throughout her adult life. She worked as a graphic designer in the San Francisco Bay Area for eight years. She first visited Santa Fe in 1993 when she took a class with photojournalist Nick Nichols at the Santa Fe Workshops. Two years later, she moved there and quit graphic design to shoot pictures and teach dance.

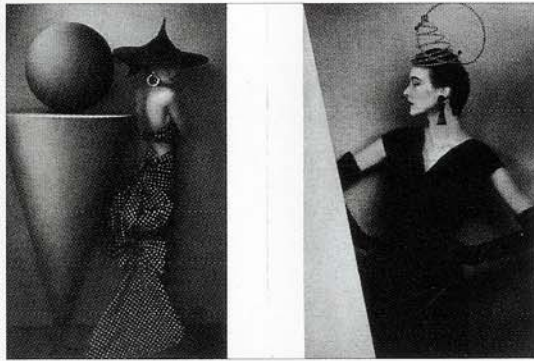
Mutual friends introduced her to Crump when he was starting his publishing company. He first hired Kendall to design a logo for the company, then asked her to do some collateral materials, and then she designed the Fuss book. In her role as Arena’s creative director, Kendall has an art department staff of two that looks after the company’s entire look, from catalogues to ads.

Savoring her collaborations with photographers, Kendall says she doesn’t miss her old job. “Finally, I get to design things I really care about, rather than software packaging, and to participate in something from its inception. It’s wonderful.”

—Holly Stuart Hughes



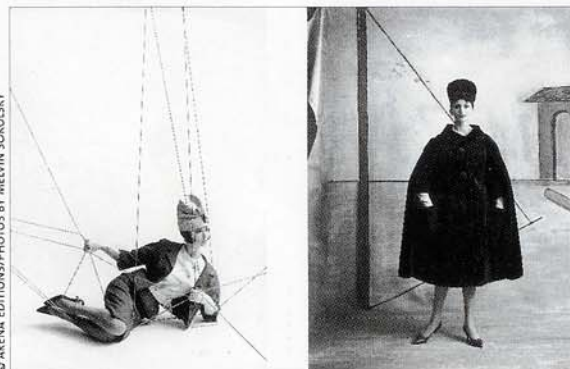
© ARENA EDITIONS/PHOTOS BY SHEILA METZNER (RIGHT AND ABOVE)



© ARENA EDITIONS/PHOTOS BY SANTE D'ORAZIO (RIGHT AND ABOVE, LEFT)



© ARENA EDITIONS/PHOTOS BY MELVIN SOKOLSKY



Top, right: Designer Elsa Kendall. **Top, left:** A cover and spread from Arena’s new Sheila Metzner book. **Middle of page:** Last year’s book on the fashion and portrait work of Sante D’Orazio. **Above, left:** Kendall designed the fuchsia, tangerine and chartreuse type for the cover of Melvin Sokolsky’s book. **Bottom:** A Sokolsky spread.

Photographs and *Steve McQueen: Photographs* by William Claxton. Kendall also designed forthcoming books on Sheila Metzner and Robert Mapplethorpe, and she has already begun work on Misrach’s next book, about the Golden Gate Bridge.

Always moving forward, Kendall makes each of her designs slightly different. “The photographs really design the book,” Kendall insists. “I never want the reader to see the design, I want them to see the imagery.” For Misrach’s *The Sky Book*, for example, she strived for an airy look. To reproduce his spare images, she chose an Italian matte paper with a hard surface that would register even the subtlest details.

By contrast, she chose a cream-hued paper for the Walker Evans book after seeing an exhibition of vintage prints by the photographer (or artist). “Evans didn’t use that creamy paper that we used, but I think it really transports you back to the time when he was working—without looking dusty. I