CAROL BECKWITH AND ANGELA FISHER PUBLISH THEIR FINEST ICONIC IMAGES IN “PAINTED BODIES” FROM RIZZOLI, SEPTEMBER 2012

“NO STRANGERS: ANCIENT WISDOM IN A MODERN WORLD” OPENS AT THE ANNENBERG SPACE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY NOVEMBER 17, LOS ANGELES

“Painted Bodies: African Body Painting, Tattoos, and Scarification” is a stunning book that features extraordinary photographs of enduring cultures. This is Beckwith and Fisher’s fifteenth book of ceremonies and body painting of the African people. “One of the most beautiful books I have ever seen,” writes author Alex Shoumatoff.

National Geographic Live presentations at the Broad Stage, Santa Monica (Oct. 18); Goodman Theatre, Chicago (Oct. 22); Mesa Arts Center, Phoenix (Oct. 24); and National Geographic headquarters, Washington, D.C. (Nov. 8) will celebrate the publication of “Painted Bodies” this fall. Other lectures will be at the Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, CA, and the Annenberg Space for Photography in conjunction with the “No Strangers” exhibit, curated by Wade Davis, at the Annenberg Space for Photography - November 17, 2012 to February 24, 2013.

Clockwise from top left: Angela Fisher and Carol Beckwith with Mursi woman, Southwest Ethiopia; Angela and Carol crocodile hunting with the Dassanech, Southwest Ethiopia; Dr. Donald Johanson with Angela and Carol at the site where Johanson found “Lucy,” Hadar, Ethiopia; Angela and Carol in the Danakil Desert, Ethiopia.
Angela Fisher and Carol Beckwith’s extraordinary photographic expeditions take them to photograph and film ceremonies in remote parts of Africa. In June 2012, Carol and Angela journeyed by boat up Lake Turkana in Kenya to the Omo River Delta to visit the Dassanech, one of the most remote tribes in Ethiopia. They photographed the once-every-three-year Dimi Ceremony during which hundreds of men enter elderhood and their daughters are blessed for marriage and motherhood. A journey back in time, the Dassanech still perform this age-old ceremony wearing black ostrich feather headdresses, leopard skins and colobus monkey capes. By night, Angela and Carol followed the men in dugout canoes hunting crocodiles.

In January 2012, with careful planning and connections, they visited remote places in Ethiopia, focusing on the peoples of the Omo River Valley. The year before they photographed the Royal Kuba Kingdom as guests of the Royal family in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This little visited Kingdom is renowned for its exquisite raffia textiles, traditional palace and magnificent costumes worn during rituals in the Royal Court.

Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher, the photographers of African ceremonies, met in Kenya thirty-five years ago. Their unique acclaimed images covering 150 African cultures were made on journeys of 270,000 miles throughout the African continent. As young female explorers, they saw Africa through the eyes of the people they lived with, photographing each group meticulously, from their body adornment to their ritual passages through life. Each image tells a story of the lives of the men, women and children within the vibrant traditions of these cultures.


“African Ceremonies,” their defining body of work published twelve years ago, is a double volume that sold close to one hundred thousand copies. It is a pan-African study of rituals and rites of passage from birth to death, covering 93 ceremonies from 26 countries. This book won the United Nations Award for Excellence for “vision and understanding of the role of cultural traditions in the pursuit of world peace.”

Honored twice with the Annisfield-Wolf Book Award in race relations for “outstanding contributions to the understanding of cultural diversity and prejudice,” Angela and Carol are also winners of the Royal Geographical Society of London’s Cherry Kearton Medal for their contribution to the photographic recording of African ethnography and ritual.

The photographers have made four films about traditional Africa, including Way of the Wodaabe (1986), The Painter and the Fighter, and two programs for the Millennium Series Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World. Numerous exhibitions of their photography and films have been shown in museums and galleries around the world. In 2000 their Passages exhibition opened at the Brooklyn Museum of Art featuring 97 mural photographs, six video films and a
Each dot on this map represents an indigenous culture that Carol Beckwith and Angela Fisher photographed and observed for “Painted Bodies.”

Contact amanda@c4global.com for the original high-res images for publication.

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