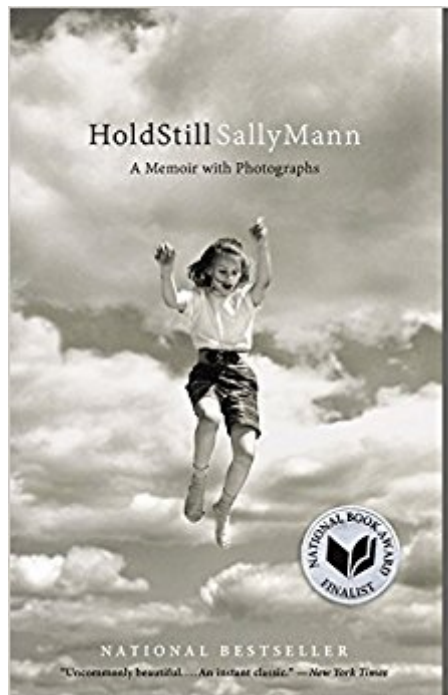




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# Hold Still: A Memoir With Photographs



## 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

An Best Book of May 2015: If you have ever seen Sally Mann's photography you understand her ability to capture emotion and generate conversation. In Hold Still Mann has changed mediums but continues to deliver a strikingly rich composition. Soaked in Southern history and heritage, Mann takes us through her childhood in the Blue Ridge Mountains and her life as a mother, wife, and photographer with finely-crafted insight and honest revelation. For someone who has lived in the public eye for so long, Mann is still able to deliver surprises to the stories we thought we knew

through a memoir written even more beautifully than I expected. --Penny Mann --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Most teens won't expect to read about a bizarre murder-suicide when first picking up this memoir. And yet there it is, part of a central narrative that tangles family, art, racism, mortality, and a beloved Southern landscape. The work is told through a masterful combination of Mann's words and photographs, both startlingly raw and lovely. Mann lived much of her life in the seclusion of rural family property; her three children enjoyed a rare freedom from clothing as they swam and played in privacy. Mann's photographs of the children in their naked and fierce beauty, included in this volume, were published in her book, *Immediate Family* (Aperture, 2005). Controversy followed. Mann eloquently describes this time period, depicting the timeless anguish of an artist whose expression defies society's mores. Young photographers will be fascinated by the author's frank obsession with capturing the perfect image. Her writing, beautifully enhanced by an eclectic array of borrowed quotes, works in remarkable tandem with her images. Teens who enjoy the intersection of words and images as expressed in graphic novels should appreciate this unique work. VERDICT For young adults considering a future in the arts, Mann's memoir is a visceral experience of that life's risks and triumphs.â "Diane Colson, Nashville Public Library --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Sally Mann's "Hold Still" is a thoroughly remarkable achievement. Her stories -- lush, densely interwoven and filled with allegory -- unfold with an eloquence reminiscent of passages from "One Hundred Years of Solitude". And along the way, her backstage color commentary on the character (and the characters) of the South could give "Midnight in the Garden of Good & Evil" a good run for its money. (Picture a Netflix mini-series titled "The Family of Mann"...).But while "Hold Still" is nominally a memoir, Sally Mann uses the opportunity more to analyze her life-in-progress than to display it all wrapped up with a bow on top. Most of the individual chapters would work perfectly well as freestanding essays. Some explore family history (inevitably intertwined with Southern history) while others thread their way through Sally's working process and her encounters with the so-called art world. The writing itself is meticulously detailed and personal -- and spiked throughout with wickedly funny insights (often at her own expense). But her writing is also, above all, intelligent. Simply put, Sally Mann brings a ton of intellectual firepower to bear upon a huge range of subject matter. Taken as a whole, it's wild ride (!) through the perils and rewards of living a rich and varied life.

Fabulous memoir. Mann is as talented with words as she is with photography. I listened to her narrate the audiobook while reading the ebook. I will return to this again and again. Many passages will spark lively discussion regarding art and history, the drive to create, ethics in photography and much more so if you can read this with friends who will love to discuss it with you, I absolutely recommend it. I read it in solitude and wished I had someone to turn to and say look at or listen to this!

I just finished the third reading of Sally Mann's "Hold Still." Three readings are usually sufficient for some disillusionment to arise, for imperfections to raise their hands, but this was not the case. This book is not a simple autobiography or, as it mentions in the cover, "A memoir with Photographs"; This book is one more piece in the immense work of Sally Mann and, as such, has constructed it with its accustomed meticulousness and honesty. Sally tells us her life, with details, but the purpose is no other than that we understand that every fact, every meeting, every look is building the floor on which we founded our work, which we decide to be or that we are inevitable. The story of his Gee-Gee babysitter, the embarrassment of his in-laws, the mystery of his father, the "great" Larry Mann and his farm, his territory, that "Not only is abundant, with the kind of obvious beauty, Every day, that even a baby can appreciate, but also features the world-class drama of Virginia "; Everything is relevant, but not because it accumulates in his DNA, as a journalist insidiously insisted in a recent interview, but because Sally's gaze makes it relevant, analyzes, scrutinizes, integrates. Reading the book generates the same feeling of hearing her speak, especially in the documentary "What remains", we recognize the lucid artist, who selects with wisdom and quickly discards. But what the book can show us, and which largely escapes orality, is the critical ability that Sally has, culturally critical, and the clarity of concepts. Not many artists have, like her, the ability to articulate their concepts in clear language. The book touches fundamental themes of our human condition, such as death, love, beauty and racism. In the latter, racism reaches the bone when it tells us in a chapter on his project of portraying black men: "Exploitation lies at the root of every great portrait, and we all know it." Not a single direct advice, no shortcut list, what Sally offers us in this book is nothing more nor less than a confession, I insist, a work, in which we can see ourselves reflected or not, that can make us think, tremble, as in The chapter in which he describes how he took photographs at the University of Tennessee Anthropology Research Center; Known as the Body Farm, a program that studies how human bodies, in the open air, decompose. "One thing about the helpless dead hit me right away: the need to fix them, to join their drooping lips, to close their prying legs, to cleanse the

eyes of liquefaction."Beyond the awareness that we are willing to produce art, or even to be able to do it, Sally urges us to pay attention to the evidence of existence that we leave in our lives and how that evidence shapes us, that's where we must look again , and again; There is our life and, if we want, there will be our art.

I don't really know much about the photography world, and as such, I had never heard of Sally Mann before. I generally try to read all of the National Book Award finalists though, and since this book was one for non-fiction, it wound up on my list. Sally has certainly lead an interesting life, at least for the parts of it recounted here. She writes very eloquently as well, giving the reader a true sense of time and place, along with a solid understanding of her thought processes as she recalls them. Learning about her family and its history, sometimes as she does, also makes for a compelling read filled with a surprising variety of characters. All of this is made even richer by the liberal inclusion of photography, both artistic and personal. There are some deeply philosophical moments here too, most poignantly about memory, race and death, that lend the book an even greater weight. I am not really a fan of memoirs but I enjoyed this one greatly, and finished the book feeling like an old family friend.

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