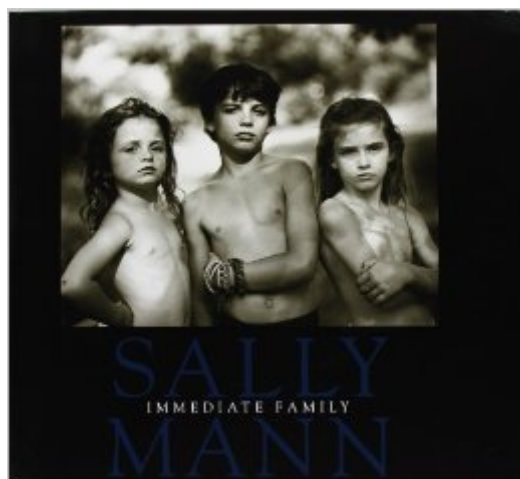


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# Immediate Family



## Synopsis

Mann's subjects are her small children (a boy, a girl and a new baby), often shot when they're sick or hurt or just naked. Nosebleeds, cuts, hives, chicken pox, swollen eyes, vomiting--the usual trials of childhood--can be alarmingly beautiful, thrillingly sensual moments in Mann's portrait album. Her ambivalence about motherhood--her delight and despair--pushes Mann to delve deeper into the steaming mess of family life than most of us are willing to go. What she comes up with is astonishing. --Vince Aletti, *The Village Voice*

## Book Information

Hardcover: 88 pages

Publisher: Aperture; 1st edition (June 15, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0893815187

ISBN-13: 978-0893815189

Product Dimensions: 9.9 x 11.3 x 0.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (51 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #145,825 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Children](#) #156 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Photography & Video > Portraits](#) #207 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Collections, Catalogs & Exhibitions](#)

## Customer Reviews

This collection of works is undoubtedly a seminal work for contemporary fine art photography. Sally Mann's print work is without a doubt some of the most competent and breathtaking I have ever seen. Her scenes are rich with subtle tones and almost ethereal luminance that captivates the viewer. I would not be surprised if she is remembered as much for her printing as she is for the controversial subject matter. The book deals with childhood in a very honest unashamed way. This is problematic for some viewers who think that pictures with children should only portray their happiest moments. This subject matter may not be suitable for the rigid-minded and certainly will be unpleasant for those who believe children, unlike the rest of humanity, can only be presented as cheerful little sprites. The book challenges the viewer and brings up issues of how our cultures representations of female sexuality are interpreted and acted out by young girls. Beyond that it refuses to entertain the idea that nudity in children is necessarily harmful and exploitative. These issues are broached in a beautiful, delicate way. The lives of her children are portrayed honestly

and respectfully as she sees them through her lens.

Sally Mann's "Immediate Family" is startling when you first open it. Not because the children who are so often her subjects are nude much of the time, but because the scenes immediately draw you in and hold you like a feather gripped by a dirty-faced wild child. I grew up in rural Tennessee, and though I didn't have the freedom of the Mann children in some ways, I feel an affinity with them unlike any other children I've seen in these kinds of collections and was instantly transported back to my early years. My favorite pictures are "Crossed Sticks", which perfectly depicts the energy and vitality of childhood, and "Virginia at 3", which inspires both curiosity and empathy in me whenever I see it. I'm glad someone like Sally Mann is out there to portray childhood honestly and fearlessly, and I will treasure this book.

i need to reiterate the point made in a previous review: this is not the place for opinions, personal values, or an ethics discussion. people who read these reviews for the purpose of trying to understand the contents of the book are not interested in these things. this book contains some very well-renowned photographs, an essential for those who already appreciate sally mann's work or are interested in learning about it for the first time. i highly recommend this along with "At Twelve" for some extremely compelling and powerful documents of photography. Also, whoever thinks these photographs could be taken with a \$200 camera has clearly never used one before. These were taken with an 8x10 view camera, which is incredibly difficult to master, as Sally Mann has done, largely without any professional instruction. That comment just demonstrates the reviewer's ignorance about photography in general and does a disservice to anyone reading these reviews seriously. This book is a fine addition to a serious photography collection.

I was unaware of the controversy regarding Mrs. Mann's work until recently and find the harsh words totally unwarranted and the attitudes unbelievable. This book reflects her understanding of what it's like to be a child in a rural environment and has NOTHING to do with pornography. The nudity which some find so shocking is natural for kids. It's not until later when we learn our bodies are "bad" that we stop displaying them. That some attach the nudity in the shots of her children with sex speaks poorly of them and those who perpetuate this attitude. This is a wonderful book that most of you will appreciate and identify with, making you recall memories of your own youth. And, if you were brought up in a suburban area you'll even learn some of what it's like being a kid in the country. However, if your looking for a book with snapshots of smiling kids, you'll be disappointed.

This is a photo essay on an all too brief time of our lives, with the pictures being neither cute nor pretty, the photographer having chosen instead to show emotion and reality, and has done so beautifully.

Sally Mann was introduced to me in my college photography class through a video and I was fascinated from the start. She is incredibly creative and her ideas were shot down by many because of nudity. It is not nudity, it is a beautiful art that she has been able to transform to film. She is wonderful and very talented. The book helps to show the children's lives. How they lived within themselves and Sally was simply there constantly repeating, hold that pose. A lot of heart was put into this, creating amazing work.

Sally Mann is so talented! I love these photographs. She has captured the reality of life with creativity and love. Love for art, love for her children, and love for life. After looking through the book, I found that I felt that I KNEW the three children pictured. I wondered where they are now, 10+ years later. An Amazing piece of Art and American Culture

This great book is a great book. Not a fine point, though: it is a germinal book, not a seminal one. Parse that etymology and you will find the basis of why these photographs are not exploitive or vulgar, or even voyeuristic (except inasmuch as ALL photographs are voyeuristic). If it makes you uneasy, ask yourself why, and at least entertain the possibility the discomfort originates from your own confusion and mixed impulses, as much or more than anything Mann constructed or expressed. Sure, the controversy surrounding these photographs still elicits tension in the room when she is interviewed, but only the briefest and least thoughtful observation of that tension would conclude that it has its source in any sense of guilt or personal moral doubt on the part of the photographer. I read the same sort of tension when on the rare occasion that Robert DeNiro has granted interviews for television, someone asks him to say the line "Are you talking to me?" Mere exasperation with a worn out and dull question. Answered, if it were ever relevant at all. Again: I find virtually nothing exploitive, pornographic, or psychologically damaging (to the subject children, or the photographer), or even very much sexual, at all, here. Nakedness is not necessarily erotic, and naked children not necessarily pedophilic (by such a simplistic standard many National Geographic photos ought to be expunged, or never printed). These are beautiful and arresting photographs. Part of what makes them as compelling as they are is the daring of the subject and how it is treated, with bravery and a clear eye, and in contrast/tension with a viewer's expectation of what such

pictures mean or represent, where they belong, and what the intentions and motives of viewers and photographers are with respect to that subject.

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