



Girls Standing on Lawns

Maira Kalman, Daniel Handler

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Girls Standing on Lawns is a unique collaboration between renowned artist and bestselling children's book author Maira Kalman and *New York Times* bestselling writer Daniel Handler, better known as Lemony Snicket. This clever book contains 40 vintage photographs from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, more than a dozen original paintings by Kalman inspired by the photographs, and brief, lyrical texts by Handler. Poetic and thought-provoking, *Girls Standing on Lawns* is a meditation on memories, childhood, nostalgia, home, family, and the act of seeing. The gorgeous visual material sets the stage for what Handler succinctly describes as “a photograph, a painting, a sentence, a pose.” Girls, women, families, and even pets from days gone by grace the pages, looking out at us, enticing readers to imagine these people, their lives—and where they have gone.

Girls Standing on Lawns Details

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Author : Maira Kalman , Daniel Handler

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From Reader Review Girls Standing on Lawns for online ebook

Elizabeth A says

Book burb: This clever book contains 40 vintage photographs from the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, more than a dozen original paintings by Kalman inspired by the photographs, and brief, lyrical texts by Handler.

Here's the thing, I read and really loved the second book in this collaboration series, but this one did not work for me. Yes, I think there is a sweetness and innocence captured in these anonymous photos, but I did not love Kalman's art as much in this one, and Handler's text did nothing for me whatsoever. Overall this was OK, but I do know there is a third book in the series which I will be checking out. Maybe it's just the freshmen effort that doesn't work for me.

margothere says

When creative people collaborate, the outcomes can be truly sweet. This book is delightful. Combining Handler's written word, old photography, and Kalman's art, Girls Standing on Lawns made my day when it arrived. Each page is a place to stop and enjoy the moment. For me, it's like laying on a hammock and looking up through the leaves of a tree to a blue sky on a sunny day... really, that's what it's like for me. Looking forward to the next in the MoMA/Kalman series.

Nice article about the book here: http://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2014/05/22/girls-standing-on-lawns/

If I lived in NYC, I would go to the free (with admission) garden party to celebrate the book - June 1, 2014 3-5pm MoMA Kalman Handler Parisian style jazz. Sounds good to me!

Ariel says

As I was walking out of the bookstore in MoMA the authors of this book caught my eye. I swivelled around and victoriously lifted the book into the air: another collaboration from Kalman and Handler!

I read Why We Broke Up a few years ago and really loved it. The story hooked me and the prose was gorgeous and the paintings were decadent. I'll admit I expected this to be similar and it wasn't. I think the biggest thing to keep in mind is that there is a third collaborator here too: MoMA. This book is, before anything else, a collection of photographs owned by MoMA with annotations (in the form of prose and paintings) from Kalman and Handler. I would have liked more from them, but after accepting that this was from a trio not a duo I adapted my expectations and really enjoyed it.

I saw a second book in this collection when I was at the bookstore but didn't pick it up because I didn't know if I would like this but now I definitely want it!

Doris Gourbere says

"Stand for something,
stand for something!
Otherwise what do
you stand for?
why are you even standing?"

Cassie says

My Mom always gets a little sad when we find old black & whites at the flea market. Sometimes, I find them quite creepy because they're not smiling. Does anyone know what's up with that? I wonder if there's some historical precedent of looking demure, quiet, or moral. She also doesn't like to find knit, sewn, quilted, or crocheted coverings. We both believe some grandmother has spent hard worn hours, pricking fingers or using a tight lip to pull out slip knots and excess yarn. Let's be honest, I know nothing about these crafty art forms, even though I do believe that pirates wore them best.

At one point in my college writing life I thought that if I collected enough of these old pictures - in their lockets and out - I would be able to write the stories of the people in them. The art of "judging a book by its cover." I think Ransom Riggs kind of stole that dream, at least in the strange fiction young adult way. Even though I only read the first in that series, I've found two of my favorite, favorite authors created (dare I say it) an upscale form of the flea market photo a la a book series with MoMA.

Maira Kalman, Daniel Handler, and MoMA have created a "unique collaboration" as the blurb says. I found the first one, Girls Standing On Lawns, in Parker & Otis, carried it around for thirty minutes, placed it next to my feet like man's best friend while I ate lunch, and then promptly went back to the stationary aisle where I found the second in the series collaboration, Hurry Up and Wait. Both of these texts are fascinating just in their basic forms.

As a twentieth century woman, Girls Standing on Lawns is my favorite, but as a teacher and a person who lives by a to-do list, Hurry Up and Wait is just as good. Girls Standing on Lawns, as a woman, is a quintessential read. What of us have not stood on a doorstep for a prom photo, or a first day of school montage? Which of us did not leap through sprinklers on the lawn, or practice dance moves for the boy across the street before we knew those things were called "a crush," and would be the burden of our entire existence? Which of us aren't in a scrapbook somewhere in a lace dress? I'm not sure how many lawn photos my mother and I have taken together, and she's taken of me, but I'd guarantee it's more than a thousand.

The book is an odd mix of MoMA photos, Maira Kalman's paintings, and Daniel Handler's quaint but effective prose. In a photo of a young girl, hesitant on the bricks just before shrubs, Handler writes, "Because I didn't want to ruin my shoes, is why." And I can just hear her little high-pitch whine to her mother, or her sweetheart who wants her in front of the brush rather than next to it. My mother always posed me, which is exactly why I also want her to read this one. My favorite lines, "A painting, a photograph, a sentence, a pose. Keep track of this. You will not remember every place you have stood. A picture will last longer. There will come a time when you can't believe it's you standing on that lawn." This was my favorite line because I love having pictures of my relatives everywhere. I am my mother's daughter in this way. I like my grandmother's small cursive dating the photo of her holding a line of caught fish across her elbow. I love that my mother

wore jumpsuits with big hair back in the day and the only way I have to own these moments is through the photographs.

I wonder now who will look at my photos on the lawn. What daughter of my tribe will want to know why I was all dressed up? Especially in this world of social media where we only take photos for other people's "likes." I can't tell you the last time I stood in a photo with my mother. Oh wait, yes I can, we were climbing a very unshapely log, and she climbed higher because she's a bold woman and sometimes I am sheepish.

Maira Kalman's paintings in each book are as wonderful as ever. I have a small collection of all of her books on my end table in the living room and it makes me happy just to look through them. They're always vibrant, and they don't ever deny the human spirit that was captured in the inspiration. I adore that about her. She's also quite witty, much like Handler, and so the words in her books can make her reader laugh out loud.

Hurry Up and Wait is the story of the American Dream to me. Here we are, rushing around, checking off our experiences, calling them "bucket lists," when only really half the time we are waiting for the next thing, the next adventure, the bus line, the coffee at Starbucks, the television show that comes on just past our bed time. There are blurred bikers, women walking with scowls (I'm a mean face walker so I get that), girls jumping into pools. Alongside children get puckered on popsicles, women hailing a cab, couples sleeping on the train. This idea that our lives are made of waiting, then standing, then rushing is so true. Handler says things like, "I'm just standing still, and then suddenly I think I am waiting for something. Once I've decided I'm waiting it's like I'm not standing still anymore." Somehow, this becomes this hyper-philosophical idea in my head.

My favorite image comes on a page with a photo of a man hauling bags (of feed, maybe) on a cart down a street. Handler writes, "If you had to leave right this minute forever, what would you take with you? / Just this. Just this."

Both books are just sixty-four pages and can be read in one sitting. Just know, you will be coming back to these. They are forever books. They are designed beautifully (as MoMA would of course complete) and they are brilliant in both their words and small ideas, as well as the art and times held within. These books make me look new at flea market photos. They may be next to cheaply strung pearls, or someone's rusted iron work, but they are important to someone too. They have meaning and putting them with concise, simple words makes them true art, a new form, innovative and reactionary.

Theresa Marsala says

I'm a fan of all three collaborators of this book! I love MoMA in general, & Kalman and Handlers previous collaboration in "Why We Broke Up" was one of my faves. I like that the book is printed in Italy & has a vintage tactile feel with the textured cloth cover. I like that the photos are from the messy collection of vernacular photography that MoMA has collected over many many years & how both the illustrator & author have gathered a handful of these photos to share their thoughts on how these photos came to be. Artsy, imaginative, modern, nostalgic & interesting all at the same time.

BiblioBrandie says

A fun little collection of words and photographs of girls standing on lawns.

Nicole says

For this book, I enjoyed the concept more than I enjoyed the result. Though, after reading the artist little blurbs on the project and the statement by MoMa, I reread the book and was able to appreciate certain aspects a bit more.

Jaye says

from one of the notes next to a picture:

"A painting, a photograph,
a sentence, a pose.
Keep track of this.
You will not remember
every place you have stood.

A picture will last longer.
There will come a time when
you can't believe it's you
standing on that lawn."

I need to add:

if you have actual physical pictures that
you can hold in your hand, make a little
note on the back because in the future
someone will come across the picture
(a grandchild, great-grandchild, etc.?)
and that person will ask themselves,
"who the heck is this?" or "what does
this mean?".

also:

I particularly liked the paintings that were done
from these small snapshots.

Dov Zeller says

"Meet me on the lawn,
I want to take a
picture of you."

Kalman and Handler invite us into a very innocent and yet not so innocent book of photographs. They lure us

with charming innocence and physical comedy into asking some deeper existential/philosophical questions. When are we "in a costume" versus "just dressing up"? A simple question, right? And yet, well, not so simple. When we look at a photograph without any context, it is impossible to know, how the person got there, whether they want to be there, whether their outfit was chosen or whether they were forced into, for example, a dress. There is an exploration of awkwardness, and of course, of time.

"A painting, a photograph,
a sentence, a pose.
Keep track of this.
You will not remember
every place you have stood.

"A picture will last longer.
There will come a time when
you can't believe it's you
standing on that lawn."

Would have been nice to see a bit more diversity of people in the photos. And I would have been happy had it been more pages.

Kalman's illustrations, as usual, add an element of seeming joyful simplicity under which lurks a very particular kind of sadness.

David Schaafsma says

I can't imagine many people loving this book, but I did. Why wouldn't someone like it? The text is pretty random, sometimes hilariously so. Which is why I like it. And because quirky tandem Kalman and Daniel Handler did it together, so it is just as bemused/amusing as you can get.

This is the first of several collaborations between Kalman, Handler and the collections folks at MOMA, where they have archived thousands of what used to be called "snapshots," now seen as "vernacular photography," or the pictures millions of people took and pasted in albums or threw in shoeboxes. Kalman and Handler picked a few pictures, mostly of girls standing on lawns--don't you just love that title?! But that's what it is, girls just asked to stand while someone snaps a picture. Our bizarre habit of just asking people to stand still. The photos are of anonymous women and girls, and sure, they sometimes do other things, and Kalman also is inspired to paint pictures of such scenes. I want to own it, it just is as bizarre as every day life on this planet.

Handler writes,

"A painting, a photograph,
a sentence, a pose.
Keep track of this.
You will not remember

every place you have stood.

A picture will last longer.
There will come a time when
you can't believe it's you
standing on that lawn."

I need to own this book.

Miriam says

Slight. Get it from the library, read it in ten minutes, maybe feel inspired to do something vaguely arty with your old family photos. Or crayons. Or blank verse. (Those are poems, right, not just short lines? Whatever).

Jennifer Haight says

MoMA has begun a series of collaborative books with Girls Standing on Lawns. Author Daniel Handler and author/illustrator Maira Kalman searched through MoMA's extensive collection of photography archives and compiled a group of photographs, most by unknown photographers, and have compiled them in this slim but thought-provoking volume. The photographs are interspersed with original paintings by Kalman and text by Handler that leave readers to ponder one of life's most common and innocuous acts, photographing a woman standing on a lawn. All of this is accomplished in a mere 40 sentences.

“We want to stand where we are standing. We want to, or we wouldn't be standing there.”

It is no secret that there are stories hidden within each photograph and part of the wisdom of this book is to avoid writing text that dictates what readers should be pulling from the photographs. Instead the text encourages readers to dig into the innumerable possibilities of the lives and thoughts of the women featured in the photographs as well as the motive and intention of the person snapping the pictures.

“None of this is there, not anymore. And yet we are still standing.”

The book concludes with author and publisher notes which help readers to understand the intent and import of the project. Included in the notes is the definition of the kind of photography used in the volume; vernacular photography.

This book would make a fabulous tool for writing teachers to encourage students to create fictional tales of the women featured. It could be used in a photography or art class as an example of how art can be compiled to tell another story by the way that it is combined. It could be used to study the history of American fashion, trends and photography from 1910-1950. In short, this book is a lovely, thoughtful and brief read that has the

potential of opening one's eyes to seeing the mundane in a new, more beautiful light.

Celyn says

A delightful collaboration (part of a series) between the Museum of Modern Art New York, Maira Kalman and Daniel Handler. Though only a slim volume, it contains a meditation on themes as complex and varied as art, womanhood and the transient nature of all things, based on a modest collection of photographs from the MOMA's permanent collection, all of which are by now unknown photographers. I would especially recommend it to readers who enjoy books such as 'Being Human: Enigmatic Images of People by Unknown Photographers', curated by Robert Flynn Johnson.

Deborah says

This book is very simple and short for packing such an interesting punch.

It is a small collection of anonymous photos donated to MOMA of...girls standing on lawns, with poetic blurbs from Daniel Handler (aka Lemony Snicket) and paintings of the photos by Maira Kalman. And that's all it is. You can read the whole thing in ten minutes, and that's meandering.

But wait. Such intrigue. I turn the page, then turn it back, look more closely, study it. Who are these girls, these women? What would someone think of the pictures in my mother's endless boxes of pictures that have me standing on one lawn or another? I would be as anonymous as any of the women in this book. It's an interesting way to see yourself, with no context whatsoever, without knowing that was me before my initiation into the clique-ish Job's Daughters and not a prom, without knowing how much money my mother spent on that beauty parlor hairdo, without hearing the screaming argument as I furiously dragged a brush through it, ruining it because I hated it so. Or without knowing how badly my stomach was knotted as I posed before that first day of school in a new town full of strangers. Without knowing how desperate I'd been to be invited to that birthday party I was on my way to, without knowing how many hours I'd babysat to earn the money for that dress I was posing in, without knowing that lawn was lovingly watered and trimmed by my grandfather and felt like velvet to bare feet, without knowing who loved me enough to want to preserve me at that moment and said, "Stand over there. Let me get a picture."

A moment in time, sliding over the surface only. But what was the moment, exactly? Who was behind the camera? It's hard for me to remember, after all these years, and you don't know at all. I'm just a girl, standing on a lawn. I could be any girl. That could be anybody's lawn, anybody's camera. The lack of context is what gives these photos their depth, their potential to be any story you want them to be.

It can be difficult to see these sorts of snapshots as art, or this book as a literary pursuit at all. I think people tend to view photography as the red-headed stepchild of the arts, not taking it quite seriously, especially once cameras became readily available to the common person with no sense of the artistic whatsoever. I fear this has only increased as cameras have proliferated to the point where one can be found in almost anyone's hand at any given time. Selfies are almost offensively ubiquitous -- or are they? Are they another art form, a reflection of the fluidity of art and of our culture? Artist Dylan Neuwirth would say so, judging from his "Just Be Your Selfie" exhibit, recently seen at Tacoma Art Museum and in Seattle's Occidental Park.

Pictures of girls standing on lawns are going to be few and far between before very much more time passes, and that's a shame.
