50 Heroes Lost to AIDS and One Gorgeous Book About Them

Designer Doug Meyer's stylish, updated version of "Heroes: A Tribute" educates as it captivates.

July 3, 2019 By Trent Straube

Heroes: A Tribute began as a series of 19 small sculptures of creative icons lost to AIDS in the '80s and '90s, which were exhibited for a 2015 fundraising event for DIFFA: Design Industries Foundation Fighting AIDS. That grew into a collection of 50 three-dimensional portraits that toured the country in 2016. Last year, the project morphed into a fabulous (and pricey) collector's book. Finally, this summer, artist and designer Doug Meyer has translated his project into a trade edition, also titled Heroes: A Tribute.

A spread from the bookCourtesy of "Heroes: A Tribute"/Doug Meyer

At 200 pages long and featuring 143 photographs, this $45 edition by Tra Publishing does not skimp on quality. The book boasts a redesign, biographies of the icons, additional images of Meyer’s sketches, updated editorial content and new photography of the 50 sculptures. (To create his sculptures, Meyer blended techniques and media, such as terra-cotta, eglomise, papier-mâché and computer-generated collage.)

A spread from the bookCourtesy of “Heroes: A Tribute”/Doug Meyer

Flip through the pages and learn about Robert Mapplethorpe, Gia Carangi, Keith Haring, Rudolf Nureyev, Freddie Mercury, Rock Hudson, John Duka, Tina Chow, Klaus Nomi, Amanda Blake, Halston, Haoui Montaug, Sylvester, Angelo Donghia and 36 more.

The book includes sketches and collages for the sculptures of (clockwise from top left) Rock Hudson, Tina Chow and Charles Ludlam.Courtesy of “Heroes: A Tribute”/Doug Meyer

“All these people were pioneers in their fields—art, design, fashion, entertainment, theater, film,” Meyer has said about the project. “This book is my way of reminding people that these men and women existed and what they did—how their work contributed to and certainly helped shape our world.”

A spread from the bookCourtesy of “Heroes: A Tribute”/Doug Meyer

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Learn more about the book and order your copy here.

To click through images of sculptures from the tour, check out the POZ article “SLIDESHOW: Can You Recognize These Sculptures of Famous Icons Lost to AIDS?” and for more background about Meyer and his project, read “Heroes Tour 2016.”

A spread from the bookCourtesy of “Heroes: A Tribute”/Doug Meyer

Doug Meyer’s studio, as pictured in the bookCourtesy of “Heroes: A Tribute”/Doug Meyer

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