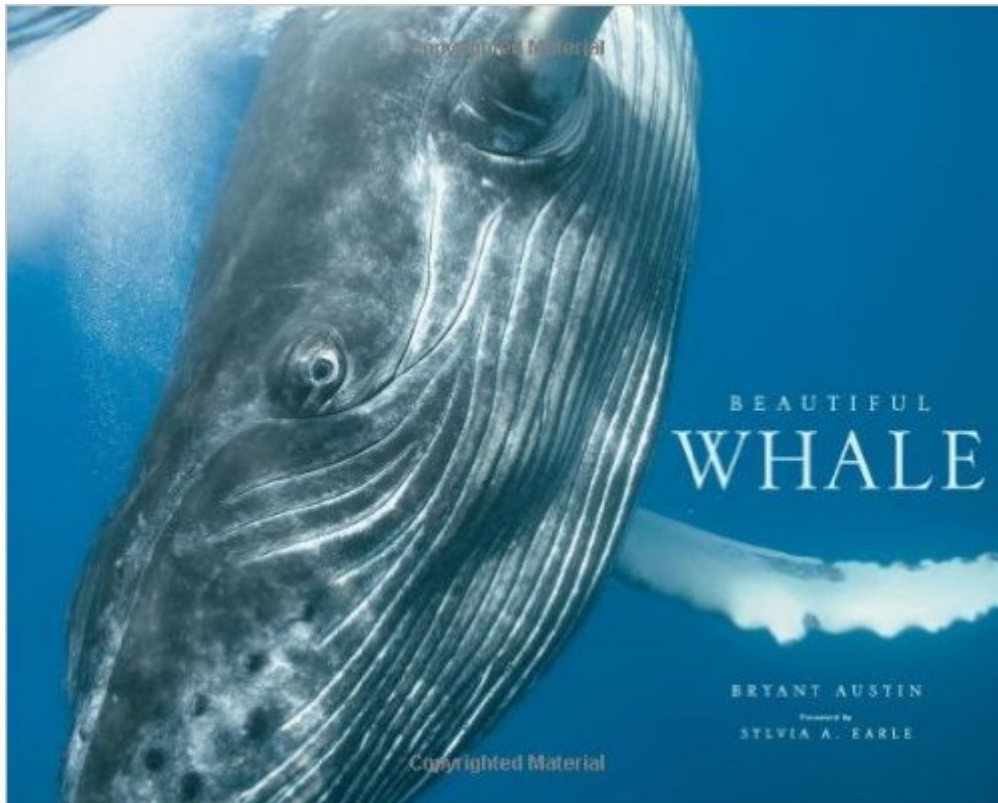


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# Beautiful Whale



## Synopsis

Photographer and conservationist Bryant Austin's breathtaking photographic project *Beautiful Whale* is the first of its kind: It chronicles his fearless attempts to reach out to whales as fellow sentient beings. Featuring Austin's intimate images--some as detailed as a single haunting eye--that result from encounters based on mutual trust, *Beautiful Whale* captures the grace and intelligence of these magnificent creatures. Austin spent days at a time submerged, motionless, in the waters of remote calving grounds waiting for humpback, sperm, and minke whales to seek him out. As oceanographer Sylvia A. Earle says in her foreword to the book, "As an ambassador from the ocean--and to the ocean--Bryant Austin is not only a source of inspiration. He is cause for hope."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I've loved whales since I was 5, and having purchased numerous books of underwater photography, I was starting to ask myself "are there any NEW ways to photograph a whale?" As spectacular as they are, pictures of Humpbacks breaching or Sperm Whale pods are a dime a dozen these days. I wouldn't have given this book a second glance if I hadn't done some research on Mr. Austin's work first. This book contains some of the most incredible pictures of whales I've ever seen. The imagery is startling in its detail, scale, and intimacy. For a long time, whales have been depicted as almost mystical creatures, rather than flesh and blood. These pictures are so much more natural and organic-looking ; we seen tiny sucker marks around a sperm whale calf's jaw, hair follicles inside a humpback whale's tubercules, the concerned eye of a mother whale keeping a close watch on this

human interloper while her calf swims alongside, the fine skin texture of a Minke Whale - really, I could go on a while. The photos also give a great sense of the sheer size of these creatures, helped by the book's huge 12"x15" format and the numerous full-size close-ups of the whales' eyes. I've never seen a Sperm Whale look this big and imposing before - or this gentle and inquisitive either. Bryant Austin's goal was to create life-size, high-resolution composites of whales, of which three are included in this book as foldouts (scaled down, of course!). While he expresses frustration at his early attempts at creating life-size composites, the photos of a Humpback Whale mother and her calf in the first chapter are probably the most affecting. In comparison, the pictures of a Dwarf Minke Whale in the final chapter aren't as interesting.

I am familiar with some of the images in this book, as, in Tokyo in December 2010, I helped produce the Beautiful Whale Project exhibition of Bryant Austin's photographs, as well as the accompanying symposium "New Tales about Whales in Science, Society & Art" at the United Nations University. We put up big whale posters in the subways and the extensive press coverage guaranteed an audience. Day after day in the gallery, we all stood with whale biologists, conservationists and an ex-whaler, as well as young Japanese professionals, families and school children, and we talked about the photographs. There was a quiet sense of awe at the enormous size, but then the human eye was drawn to the eye of the whale in many of the photos. A bit of magic started to happen. Pulled in by curiosity, people noted various things as they looked into the eye, but a prevailing line of comments circled around impressions of the whale's being, that the whale seemed to have deep compassion, a knowing sense, a capacity for life, something that humans could share and learn from. The reactions were mostly whispered or scribbled in a mix of Japanese characters and katakana in the guestbook, and on most days, we noticed a few people dabbing a tear. And now we have the book (mine arrived this week as a welcome review copy). It is suitably big--15 x 12 inches (39 x 31 cm)--and heavy at 4 pounds (1.7 kg). It is a visual feast--a stunning piece of bookmaking with lovely endpapers, jacket and cover design in the tradition of high quality Abrams editions. And here are Bryant's whales, a fresh look at whales, with numerous detailed photos that highlight different parts of the body as well as full body images.

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