

Hunted Whale



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HUNTED WHALE

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W. W. Norton & Company October 2013, 2013. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. The Hunted Whale is a spectacular photographic exploration of the material culture of American whaling in the age of sail. Before the coming of steam and diesel ships with instruments of mechanized slaughter, the hunt was a relatively even contest between two wily mammals--man and the sperm whale. The danger that lurked in each hunt can be seen in the ultra-light cedar construction of the whale boat that the men 'beached' on the living whale's back. The gnarled and twisted shapes of surviving harpoons document the tenacity of the hunters as well as the wounded whale's manic attempt to break free. Many aspects of the sperm whale's unusual physiology are illustrated here, as are the whaler's personal belongings: hats, gloves, and scrimshaw--the intricate carvings he made on the whale's teeth. Expertly curated and beautifully shot, this magnificent photo essay takes the viewer to the New England ports of a fledgling America as it struggled to dominate a global industry. Amazing facts, explanatory notes, and tales from the sea, representing the fruit of years of research, accompany James McGuane's over 250 masterful photographs. McGuane looks to identify the various motivations that turned ordinary men into whale hunters. He discovers adventure, greed, courage, escape, gullibility and ignorance. The book also includes a riveting firsthand account of the hunt, excerpted from naturalist Robert Cushman Murphy's Logbook for Grace, a diary he kept of his time aboard the whaleship Daisy in 1912. With The Hunted Whale, McGuane delivers an engrossing and humane snapshot of a now-vanished age that helped forge the American nation as we know it. The lethal industry that lit the world, explained and illustrated by precise photographs of its weapons and equipment.

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