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BOOK INFORMATION SHEET (5.23.22)

Author (as it should appear on the book): David Scheinbaum

Title: *Varanasi*

Subtitle: *City Immersed in Prayer*

Contributors: essay by BJ Miller and historical vignettes by Diana Eck

Partner: Published in association with the Center for the Study of Place

Book pages: 160

Number and type of illustrations: 110 (or 111) color images by the author

Trim size: 12.0" x 10.75" landscape

List price: \$45.00

Discount: Trade

ISBN (book): 978-1-938086-96-0

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Interactive e-book? No.

Jacket: Yes

Edition size: 1,000

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Distributor: Casemate/IPM

Bookstore categories (list three): Photography/India/Religion

Audience: Those who are interested in India and Varanasi (India's spiritual capital), religion (Hinduism), death/dying, travel, and gorgeous photography.

Selling points (list three): Varanasi and the Ganges River are world renowned, attracting millions of pilgrims and visitors each year; David Scheinbaum portrays the City of Light as immersed in prayer, capturing the living history of traditions that are relatively unchanged over millennia; and both B. J. Miller and Diana Eck are world-renowned experts on, respectively, death/dying and India, Varanasi, and Hinduism, with their own followings.

Tagline: An unforgettable portrayal of India's holiest city.

Description of the work:

Varanasi, also known as Kashi and Banaras, is a city in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh dating to the 11th century B.C.E. Regarded as the spiritual capital of India, the “City of Light” draws Hindu pilgrims who bathe in the Ganges River’s sacred waters for prayer and ritual. In Varanasi, one is in some sort of time warp *living in history* as if time has never stopped, where both residents and pilgrims, continue their daily practices and worship in ways relatively unchanged for millennia, a continuum of thousands of years. Being in Varanasi is like being on a thread pulled from a cloth that dates back to the beginning of time. Here, one doesn’t “see” a ruin, as one does in other ancient civilizations, but discovers a living city where history hasn’t stopped.

David Scheinbaum guides us, with his camera, through the city’s winding streets that are filled with thousands of shrines and temples at virtually every turn. He takes us on an incredible visual journey to the Ganges, the sacred river where bathers are in prayer, and to the funerary Ghats, steps that lead down to the river where cremations take place, filling the air with incense and burning pyres. Hindus believe that being cremated along the banks of the *holy* Ganges allows one to break the cycle of death and rebirth and attain Moksha (salvation), making it a major center for pilgrimages.

David Scheinbaum’s beautiful, soulful photographs present an ancient, holy city immersed in prayer. And contributions by Diana L. Eck and BJ Miller, noted scholars and writers, shed light on the special qualities that make Varanasi the holy city it has always been, including the powerful embrace of life and death.

Blurbs:

“What a beautiful and moving book this is! In it, David Scheinbaum gives us vivid, intimate, stirring, contemplative photographs and personal reflections of life in Varanasi. He brings us to this incomparable, special place where the expansive range of human experience finds expression. We see why he, when in Varanasi, feels a pervasive inner peace within the complexities of life and death. Diana Eck’s informed and illuminating vignettes invite us into a sense of the history and inner meaning of this holiest of places. And BJ Miller thoughtfully reflects on the mystery of death, a mystery that life in the City of Light itself so fully and prayerfully embodies. *Varanasi* is indeed a remarkable book.”

—William K. Mahoney, Charles A. Dana Professor of Religious Studies, Davidson College, and author of *The Artful Universe: An Introduction to the Vedic Religious Imagination*

“*Varanasi* is visually compelling and beautifully written. David Scheinbaum’s delivery is elegantly complete with his photographs standing alone in their intimacy with the subject of prayer. His annotated visual notes as well as BJ Miller’s essay and Diana Eck’s reflections give an even greater appreciation of the material in this superb book. *Varanasi* is an extraordinary achievement.”

—Martha A. Strawn, Professor of Art Emerita, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, and author of *Across the*

Threshold of India: Art, Women, and Religion

“David Scheinbaum's remarkable photographs of Varanasi bring us to a place that is simultaneously eternal and contemporary. They show people that, at times, seem as familiar as those we might encounter on a morning walk or commute, as if humanity is peering back. But this is Varanasi, where the returned gaze is especially raw and wondrous, challenging and tender. Scheinbaum presents us with kaleidoscopic views of extraordinary contrasts: life and death, fire and water, the sublime and the ordinary. The dreamlike pictures seem almost otherworldly. In *Varanasi*, Scheinbaum has captured the pulse of India's holy city. I am grateful for his gift and find his book profoundly moving.”

—Christopher Jordan, Associate Professor of Photography and Digital Studies, University of Alabama, and author of *Nowhere in Place*

About the Author:

David Scheinbaum is former Director/Chair of the Photography Department in the Marion Center for Photographic Arts at the Santa Fe University of Art and Design and Professor Emeritus at the College of Santa Fe. He is the author of *Bisti* (University of New Mexico Press, 1987), *Miami Beach: Photographs of an American Dream* (Florida International University Press, 1990), *Stone: A Substantial Witness* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2006), and *Hip Hop: Portraits of an Urban Hymn* (Damiani Editore, 2012). He and his wife, Janet Russek, have collaborated on three other projects: *Ghost Ranch: Land of Light, Photographs by David Scheinbaum and Janet Russek* (Balcony Press, 1997), *Images in the Heavens, Patterns on the Earth: The I Ching* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2005), and *Remnants: Photographs of the Lower East Side* (Radius Books, 2017). Together, they operate Scheinbaum & Russek Ltd., fine-art photography dealers and consultants in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

About the Contributor(s):

BJ Miller is an American physician, author, educator, and practicing hospice and palliative medicine physician who is well known for his 2015 TED Talk, "What Really Matters at the End of Life?" He has taught at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, since 2007. In film, BJ is the subject of Netflix's Academy Award-nominated short documentary, *End Game*, by veteran directors Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman. His book for approaching the end of life, *A Beginner's Guide to the End*, was co-authored with Shoshana Berger (Simon and Schuster, 2019).

Diana L. Eck is Professor of Comparative Religion and Indian Studies and Frederic Wertham Professor of Law and Psychiatry in Society at Harvard University. She is the author of *Banaras: City of Light* (Alfred A. Knopf,

1982), *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Anima Books, 1981), and *India: A Sacred Geography* (Harmony Books, 2012). As the founder and director of the Pluralism Project, she produced the Web-based resource *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*. On the subject of pluralism, she has written *Encountering God: A Spiritual Journey from Bozeman to Banaras* (Beacon Press, 1993) and *A New Religious America: How a "Christian" Country Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (Harper San Francisco, 2001). In 1998, she received the National Humanities Medal from President Bill Clinton for her work on religious pluralism in America.