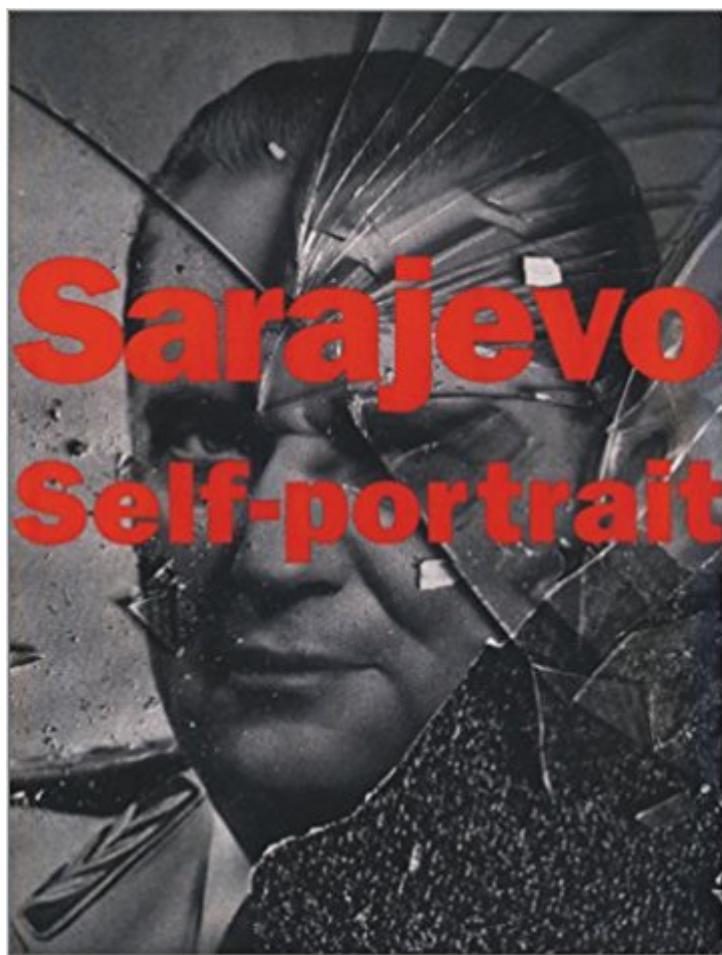


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# Sarajevo Self-Portrait: The View From Inside



## **Synopsis**

Sarajevo Self-Portrait presents the work and words of nine photographers from a country in the aftermath of war. Created with what little film they had, in ruined darkrooms without electricity or running water, the photographs in this book are not only hard proof of the destruction and the suffering of this once-beautiful country but a salute to its indomitable spirit. For a country so brutally torn apart by racial conflict and hate, and for the rest of the world which largely ignored Bosnia's cries for help, Sarajevo Self-Portrait offers an authentic view of Bosnia in a completely new way - through the eyes of those actually living inside it.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Nine Bosnian photographers present 130 color and b & w photographs of their ravaged homeland, accompanied by statements about the process of documenting the war in Sarajevo Self-Portrait: The View from Inside, compiled by freelance photographer Leslie Fratkin. These war and postwar images will resonate particularly sharply with American viewers following September 11. Alongside his images of children playing with dolls and wooden guns in the devastated city of Zenica, Mladen Pikulic describes his decision to show "the normal life of children" during the war. Kemal Hadzic, a former Bosnian soldier, shows before-and-after images of 500-year-old Islamic architecture destroyed in the war, as well as portraits of his fellow soldiers; Danilo Krstanovic shows civilian victims lying where they fell in 1992 and people in food lines behind sniper screens. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

In 1984, the multiethnic city of Sarajevo was proud host to the Winter Olympics. Less than a decade later, the world watched, with both horror and indifference, as its centuries-old churches and mosques were bombed into ruins and thousands of civilians perished. But what one often learns from television is the questionable truth of the moment as seen through the eyes of the visitor, armed with a foreign passport and a geographically bound perspective, who tours troubled spots to show rather than to comprehend. The world rarely saw how many Sarajeans snubbed shallow patriotic ideologies and embraced the challenge of artistic creation in the most vicious circumstances, both as a way of documenting and of communicating the unspeakable. A stroll through the peaceful Sarajevo today affirms the city's intrinsically imaginative character: beautifully carved gun shells, for example, are sold as souvenirs rather than discarded as painful war residue. This book is a sincere attempt to celebrate Sarajevo as a city of gifted artists. The nine native photographers and their disturbing yet arresting images embody what Bosnia and its capital once represented: a religious and ethnic harmony, not just diversity. Despite the weakly translated essays with histrionic overtones that introduce each photographer, this kind of genuine and unrehearsed photography educates more convincingly and enduringly than words ever could. Mirela Roncevic, "Library Journal" Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I visited Sarajevo this past summer, and after returning home, I searched for books that contained first hand information about the war and hardship it caused for the people living there. I haven't completed reading this book, but I can say the images it contains will certainly impact you, and I can't imagine how it was like to have experienced it in person. There is a section at the end of this book which lists in chronological order the historical background of the Balkans, specifically Yugoslavia and the result of the wars that began in 1991. This is a large coffee table type of book that's hard bound. Definitely worth owning.

I purchased this book for my father who recently travelled to Sarajevo. The photos and stories were exactly what I was hoping for - personal and touching. It is a very moving collection of work. I would recommend to anyone interested in this region.

The killing fields of Bosnia, like so many wars, attracted the world's most renowned journalists. But of all of the war correspondents who covered the war in Bosnia, none have depicted the tragedy, suffering and heroism of war as honestly as Leslie Fratkin - and that's because Fratkin had the

foresight to realize that no outsider could tell the story of Sarajevo as well as Sarajevoans. Fratkin, an accomplished photographer in her own right, arrived in Bosnia to cover the war and simply set down her camera. She spent the next five years tracking down Bosnian photographers, who now live all over the world, looking at their pictures and listening to their stories. Sarajevo Self-Portrait is the culmination of her efforts. It tells the story of nine Bosnian photographers as they chronicled the destruction of their own country. Through a series of extensive interviews, which accompany their bodies of work, we hear how they struggled to hold their lenses still as their friends and families were struck down by snipers' bullets, how they schemed to smuggle film into the city through an underground tunnel, and how at times they used their own urine instead of developing chemicals to make their prints. At times tear-jerking, and at other times gut-wrenchingly comical, Sarajevo Self-Portrait is one of the best, and certainly the most sensitive book to come out of the war. Anyone who wants to understand the human side of that war should buy this book.

At a quick lookthrough Sarajevo SelfPortrait looks like any other warstory because you tend to fixate on the photos of graves and blood - but after reading the photographers introductions and seeing all the other photos of everyday life in a city under siege this book stays with you for a long time. Without being sentimental or sensationalizing it takes you on a heartwrenching journey down bombed out streets and sniper warnings. After listening to international news and seeing pressphotos from Bosnia for a long time this book gives you a chance to get a realistic and sometimes even humorous look at how to not only survive but live with terror everyday.

I recently came across this book and a testament to its power is that I am not personally or particularly involved or interested in the Sarajevo conflict but found myself deeply impacted by these photos and accompanying text. I found this to be a wonderfully original idea--to have a compilation of photos from native photographers as opposed to the standard international reporters. It gave a unique perspective.

I love this book. Great concept - it's not about some foreign Magnum photographers coming in to Sarajevo for a few days and publishing a book but the exact opposite! It's Sarajevo photographers portraying their country going through horrible change. This is really a great and unique book. Double thumbs up for the author and photographers. I think they did a wonderful job!

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