



Cypher

Jeff Chang

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Acclaimed rock photographer Charles Peterson is back with a new subject—the world of contemporary breakdancing. B-boying, as it's referred to by its adepts, centers around the “cypher” (circle) created when b-boys and b-girls gather to practice or to “battle.” Bigger and badder than ever, breakdancing has grown since its beginnings in the 1970s to become a global youth phenomenon today. Yet it remains a highly individualized practice—all one needs to get down are some beats and a smooth floor (and, of course, scads of strength, style, and brio).

With *Cypher*, Peterson takes a fresh look at this phenomenon with his own brand of fine-art documentation: part Larry Fink, part Barbara Morgan, with a heaping dose of the spirit that defined his previous powerHouse monograph, *Touch Me I'm Sick*. He focuses not only on some of the most radical performances by today's most talented breakers, but also on the fans, the sidelines, and the camaraderie of the crews in order to put you inside the world of the b-boy.

Taken primarily with cumbersome medium-format cameras, the photographs have the depth and resolution normally associated with high-end fashion and portrait photography— even when the subjects are caught spontaneously in mid-air! Despite the awkwardness of the method, the photos still have all the buzz and excitement found in Peterson's iconic images of the grunge movement, with an added twist of unexpected elegance.

Cypher was shot over a period of six years, primarily in Peterson's hometown of Seattle, as well as at major events over the last few years in Los Angeles, New York City, and Portland, Oregon.

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