





Wild Art

Chris Johns is one of our best wildlife photographers, his work familiar to any *National Geographic* subscriber. But his second book, **Wild at Heart: Man and Beast in Southern Africa** (National Geographic, \$65), is more than just another collection of the world's sexiest animals. Together with an engaging, richly anecdotal text by journalist and Africa-hand Peter Godwin, Johns's atmospheric pictures explore the tragically complex relationship between the subcontinent's dwindling animal and exploding human populations. The images go back and forth between grim and majestic, hopeful and despairing. A Kalahari lion, mane streaming, strides into a desert sandstorm, while a lone cheetah, the most endangered cat, stares dolefully through the cage of a cattle farmer's trap. A Namibian bushman swings his axe to dismember a giraffe brought down by a poisoned arrow, while a rare black rhino is tranquilized and wrestled to the ground for its own protection after escaping from a secure park into Mozambique, where poachers serving the Asian aphrodisiac trade would have killed it for its horn. Yet Johns's photographs are not rigidly representational; their artfulness is enhanced by the book's oversized, top-bound format. And despite their sometimes gruesome content, the images have a guarded optimism about the future of Africa. "I could not reconcile the vast landscapes, teeming with wildlife, with the needs of the people on the periphery of this incredible spectacle," says Johns. "But a conversation with Nelson Mandela gave me hope. Our conversation inspired this book." —RUSSELL HART