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Arts Professor is golden

Amir Zaki's latest book is awarded a gold medal for Best Photography Book in the PubWest Book Design Awards

By Alejandra Prado, Student Writer/Marketing and Communications | July 05, 2023

Amir Zaki, an art professor at UC Riverside, took home a gold medal for Best Photography Book at the 2022 PubWest Book Design Awards in February 2023 for his latest book, “Building+Becoming.”


Published in 2022 by DoppelHouse Press and X Artists' Books, “Building+Becoming” explores the intersection of landscapes, personal growth, and Zaki's multi-ethnic identity work over 272 pages.

“Building+Becoming” was submitted by DoppelHouse Press for consideration at the 2022 PubWest Book Design Awards which are dedicated to recognizing outstanding design and production quality of works in North America.

“I was delighted and very surprised to win the award for Best Photography Book,” Zaki said.

Spanning 23 years of photography and art, “Building+Becoming” conveys images of nature and architecture from landscapes, beaches, and skateparks.

“The title is a wordplay that references both the built and natural landscape, central thematic in my oeuvre, but also the ever-present quality of the building of a life and the becoming of a person within a larger world,” Zaki said.

Judges at the PubWest Book Design Awards praised Zaki and his work, stating on their [website](#) : “The book presents itself beautifully in many ways—from the textured cover to the double-gatefold layout, which gives the reader a sense of two books (Building & Becoming) side-by-side but

Zaki attributes this win to the designer, Chris Svensson, and the team he worked with during the making of “Building+Becoming.”

(/) College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (A) He deserves a lot of credit for the entire process required a team of patient and dedicated world people.”

“Building+Becoming” (A) takes about a unique design of a front cover with three spines that reflect Zaki’s cultural background and family. The folds unveil the right side to be a representative of Zaki’s mother’s background, written in English, and the other, symbolic of his father’s background and written in Arabic.

“In this book, the two halves can be viewed independently or in relationship to one another as a four-page spread, creating many more relationships between images than I could have possibly intended,” Zaki said. “The book’s design is a sort of metaphor for how my body and mind are literally connected to my parents.”

“Building + Becoming is both a book and a conceptual artwork,” said Carrie Paterson, publisher and editor-in-chief at DoppelHouse Press. “It follows other book projects by Zaki in terms of its thoughtful three-dimensional construction and ways that it enacts and cooperatively plays with the reader as they experience the images either sequentially or in the manner of their own choosing and instinct.”

“Building+Becoming” is available for purchase through [X Artists’ Books](#) and for a signed copy, on Zaki’s [website](#).

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