

## REDHEADED PECKERWOOD

By Sandra Arnáiz Ibañez

While everyone is talking about the emergence of electronic books and the end of the publishing industry as we know it, there is, nonetheless, a kind of book that is experiencing a spectacular resurgence: the **photobook**. You may be wondering as to the reasons behind this. The trend can be traced in large part to *The Book of 101 Books* by **Andrew Roth** (PPP Editions, 2001) and *Photobook: A History* by **Martin Parr** and **Gerry Badger** (Phaidon, 2006), two publications that emphasize the photobook as not only a way to display photographic works but rather as a work in its own right – a wonderful object with its own significance and narrative. An unexpected piece of art, easily purchased and repeatedly enjoyed.

But there is no better way to discover what I'm talking about than to experience for yourself the charm of one of these appealing books. Whether as a first acquisition or addition to your collection, I would recommend none other than the latest international sensation: *Redheaded Peckerwood* by **Christian Patterson** (MACK, October 2011) which depicts the story of 19-year old **Charles Starkweather** and his 14-year old girlfriend **Caril Ann Fugate** who murdered eleven people (Fugate's family included) in a two-month killing spree across Nebraska and Wyoming in 1958. You've probably heard the story before – the same teenage couple inspired the magnificent film *Badlands* by **Terrence Malick** (1973) and may



well have inspired **Ray Pettibon's** famous cover of **Goo**, **Sonic Youth's** 1988 album.

The way Patterson approaches this dramatic story is unique. The book brilliantly mixes archive images and facsimile documents – such as the confession letter and pieces of paper found in the pocket of one of the victims – with Patterson's photography, taken fifty years later following the couple's murderous path. Part fiction, part reality – part past, part present – the nature of the photos is never revealed, so that we slowly decipher the facts, as in a mystery novel. It is a surprising new kind of narrative and captivating “read” that may seduce you forever to the pleasures of photobooks. ■

[christianpatterson.com/redheaded-peckerwood](http://christianpatterson.com/redheaded-peckerwood)