

To Air is Human

IN *FLIGHT ATTENDANTS*, PHOTOGRAPHER **BRIAN FINKE** FOCUSES UPON THE NOT-SO-LOFTY WORLD OF THOSE WHO MAKE A LIVING SERVING SNACKS AND CHIDING PASSENGERS FROM 37,634 FEET IN THE SKY. TAKE A PEEK IN THEIR WINDOWS.



Sara, Icelandair



Wenyi and Kate, Tiger Airways



Sarah, Hooters Air



An Icelandair training drill

W e all know that nowadays jet airliners are flying buses—overcrowded, broken down, and odious, a dangerous cargo of complainers, a Petri dish of potential disease floating about, hermetically sealed like the escape hatch. Gone, seemingly, is the *Catch Me if You Can* heyday of jaunty starched caps and smart pumps, when the “friendly skies” held no threat of hostile takeover.

God bless documentary photographer Brian Finke. In his new tome *Flight Attendants*—published by powerHouse (\$35, 112 pages) with text by Alix Browne and Alison Nordstrom—the culture chronicler exposes the candid results of his traveling the world by commercial jet over the course of two years. His hyper-real portraits of flight attendants, pilots, and other airline staffers not only show that there are still some lookers (and glamour) out there in the skies (see *Air Asia*, *Air France*, *Cathay Pacific*, *Tiger*, and *Icelandair*), but also that this vocation is a true-blue subculture that is most fascinating at its dullest hours.

Some of the best images were captured when Finke signed up for flight attendant school, capturing the Wes Anderson-like dioramas (think *The Life Aquatic*) of staged emergency raft-unloadings, false cockpit fires, emergency exit routines, and the like. It's all equally reminiscent of the suburban disasters that photographer Gregory Crewdson stages inside houses, upon Saint Augustine-grass lawns, and quiet cul-de-sacs in bucolic America. Yes, flying is almost always a drag, but *Flight Attendants* is a breath of fresh air. —Steve Garbarino