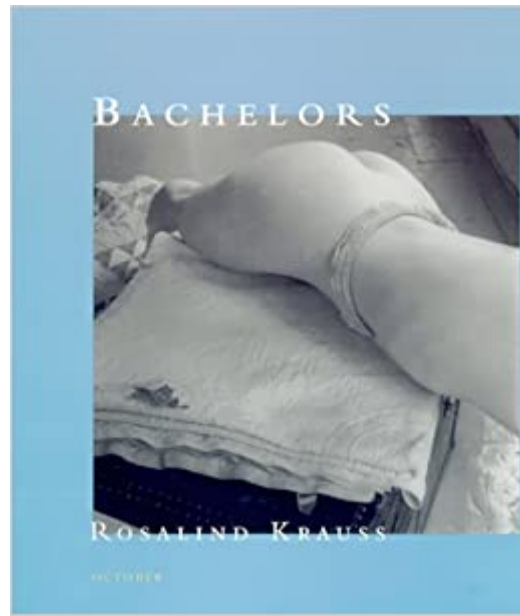


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Bachelors (October Books)



Synopsis

Since the 1970s Rosalind Krauss has been exploring the art of painters, sculptors, and photographers, examining the intersection of these artists concerns with the major currents of postwar visual culture: the question of the commodity, the status of the subject, issues of representation and abstraction, and the viability of individual media. These essays on nine women artists "gathered as Bachelors" are framed by the question, born of feminism, "What evaluative criteria can be applied to women's art?" In the case of surrealism, in particular, some have claimed that surrealist women artists must either redraw the lines of their practice or participate in the movement's misogyny. Krauss resists that claim, for these "bachelors" are artists whose expressive strategies challenge the very ideals of unity and mastery identified with masculinist aesthetics. Some of this work, such as the "part object" (Louise Bourgeois) or the "formless" (Cindy Sherman) could be said to find its power in strategies associated with such concepts as *écriture féminine*. In the work of Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse, or Sherrie Levine, one can make the case that the power of the work can be revealed only by recourse to another type of logic altogether. *Bachelors* attempts to do justice to these and other artists (Claude Cahun, Dora Maar, Louise Lawler, Francesca Woodman) in the terms their works demand.

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Customer Reviews

The esteemed Krauss (art, Columbia) is prominent in the field of deconstructionist, feminist, and

psychoanalytical art criticism. This collection of her essays applies the theories to nine women artists, neo-Duchampian "bachelors" who mostly practiced photography, sculpture, and some filmmaking and painting. The artists distinguished by this complex rhetorical discourse include Claude Cahun, Dora Maar, Louise Bourgeois, Agnes Martin, Eva Hesse, Cindy Sherman, Francesca Woodman, Sherrie Levine, and Louise Lawler. Krauss demonstrates how each achieved the "feminization" of the male gaze. Although the formal notation of semiological analysis is clarified in an endnote, from the beginning Krauss assumes her readers to be totally conversant with and attuned to the scholasticism of postmodern art theory. Appropriate mainly for graduate- and professional-level collections. Mary Hamel-Schwulst, Towson Univ., MD Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"A provocative and astute analysis of the works of nine women artists, *Bachelors* redefines some old ideas about surrealist art while offering some innovative parameters on feminist art." -- *Art Times*, April 1999 "A provocative and astute analysis of the works of nine women artists, *Bachelors* redefines some old ideas about surrealist art while offering some innovative parameters on feminist art." -- *Art Times*, April 1999 "The individual essays are remarkable for their sharpness and thickness of their argument..." -- *Publisher's Weekly*, February 8, 1999...Krauss's analysis is grounded in careful observation of specific works ... [and] ultimately brings us to a closer appreciation of the art in question. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Suzanne Ramljak

I haven't read all of the essays in this book. I might not want to. I think I've read five of the eight and parts of two others. Overall, I have not been particularly impressed. My introduction to Krauss came in an essay she authored on James Coleman, which I read for a class in college. It was particularly sophisticated: employing ideas from Barthes and Benjamin, she touched on ideas about obsolescence and signifiers that fail to signify, and in doing so brought a fresh perspective to an artist I never understood. In short, Krauss took difficult art and made sense of it. Unfortunately, in this book, Krauss takes on the foundation of the feminist canon but refuses to do feminist readings of their work. In fact, she attempts to perform an overhaul not just of critical appreciation of Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Claude Cahun, etc., but attempts to dismantle feminist theory altogether. In the very weak essay on Cindy Sherman, Krauss overlooks obvious feminist elements of Sherman's imagery (how they mimic the form of the pornographic centerfold, for example) with some talk about the "fetishization of the vertical" and the "sublimation of the subject into the horizontal." Worse, she tries to undo Laura Mulvey's seminal essay on film theory by pointing out a

few assumption's Mulvey makes. Krauss never fesses up to her own assumptions. It's not persuasive art criticism. Basically, Krauss's method is always to locate in the art some formal element which can then be tied to a critical theoretical term. Thus, the horizontal is a rejection of "the fetishization of the vertical

Rosalind Krauss' theories have some merits, and if you are looking at a book that will drive you up the wall the entire time shouting at it-- read this. I would never allow my grad students to read this dribble.

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