



Joseph Cornell: Stargazing in the Cinema (Yale Publications in the History of Art)

Assistant Professor Jodi Hauptman

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Best known for evocative box-constructions in which he assembled small objects and ephemera, the American surrealist Joseph Cornell (1903-72) was also a devoted fan of the cinema. He thrived on almost daily visits to movie theaters, amassed archives of films and film stills, created short motion pictures, and produced works honoring his favorite female movie stars. This book examines for the first time Cornell's "portrait-homages" to these actresses, Hedy Lamarr, Lauren Bacall, Greta Garbo, and Jennifer Jones, among others. Focusing on Cornell's "cinematic imagination" and the ways he adapted techniques of accumulation, collection, and juxtaposition to the art of portrayal, Jodi Hauptman argues that Cornell's movie star portraits are his most emblematic works. She shows how each portrait is inflected by the star's personality, roles, and the moment of a particular film's release and how Cornell ultimately transforms each of his subjects. Hauptman also explores the links between collection and desire, contending that Cornell is both a surrealist and a historian: his accumulation of cast-offs echoes surrealism's infatuation with the found object while his attempts to rescue swiftly disappearing pasts reenact the historian's labor in the archive.

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