
Christopher Finch delivers an authoritative and compelling look at the life of the American artist Chuck Close in this biographical follow-up to the 2007 publication, Chuck Close: Work. Chuck Close: Life gives an intimate view of Chuck Close, the boy struggling to overcome learning disabilities, the student searching for his artistic niche, and the process artist famous for his mug shot-like portraits and experimentations with various media.

The author’s long-time personal and professional relationship with the process artist, Chuck Close, is evident throughout in the conversational writing style and many parenthetical asides the author uses to engage the reader. Finch’s familiar and candid tone, his use of the artist’s first name, and his use of quotes and accounts from fellow artists, friends, and the artist himself intermix throughout the text, giving the work a predominantly biographical rather than critical tone. Despite this, Finch successfully incorporates art historical jargon and stylistic analyses of Close’s works.

The chapters of the book are separated into three parts. Part one describes the events of Close’s childhood in Washington State, his formal education at Yale, and his teaching position at the University of Massachusetts. Part two concentrates on the artist’s move to New York City, his involvement in the blossoming SoHo art scene, and the evolution of his artistic self. Part three focuses on the watershed moment in Close’s career, his paralysis and his subsequent rehabilitation and re-mastery of his artistic methods. Taken individually, the chapters stand alone as miniature biographical episodes. Taken as a whole, Life shows the people, the places, and the events that have defined and shaped Close’s personal and professional life.

Some readers will be disappointed by the limited number of reproductions that accompany the discussion of Close’s artistic process and technique. An extensive catalog of Close’s body of work is found in the companion volume, Chuck Close: Work. Taken together these volumes contain the most comprehensive discussion of the life and works of Chuck Close to date.

Chuck Close: Life is recommended for academic and museum libraries. This title is essential for institutions with collecting interests and strengths in American art. The author includes brief explanatory notes and ample primary source content, in the form of interview snippets, which will satisfy the most ardent of Chuck Close fans.

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