
Reading this anthology of letters to and from Carolee Schneemann, one may think, "how utterly pompous and egocentric to keep so many letters for so long". However, continuing on through the letters, almost 500 pages of them and the accompanying photos, there comes a realization that although it was somewhat pompous that the artist would think of herself that important at an early stage of her career, in effect, she was correct. The letters are an amazing look into the heart, soul, and psyche of a trend setting artist. They are also, as is her art, not for the shy, the faint of heart, or the easily offended. Her death threat letters are interesting in the sheer fact that she received them. This was and is the world of Schneemann (born 1939), an artist whose work spans many media but who is known widely for her early performance art and films.

For those preparing to read this book, a word of caution; consume a short history of Schneemann prior to starting this book. There are places, people, and situations that are confusing without a scorecard. By the end of the book, the reader has a feeling of having been a hundred places at the same time, but the trip is well worth the entry fee. And the photographs and images included are priceless in their assistance of that understanding. One may read a number of letters about her nudity at this show or on that poster but to be able to witness the event, albeit in still life, greatly assists the reader and forms an indelible image that so perfectly matches the printed word as to be two sides of the same coin.

This book is wholeheartedly recommended. That said, one may wonder if this book is for everyone - definitely not. For those who possess no appreciation of art or those that perform or create it then this book is probably not a wise choice. If one is, as previously stated, easily offended by language, nudity, or free thought then this book is emphatically not appropriate. However, if the reader can appreciate a refreshing look into the early life and career of a trend setter, a rebel, and a possible genius (the reviewer will leave that determination to history), then this is a book that demands to be read and appreciated. This book, as any art, is up to the consumer.

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