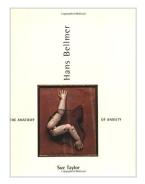
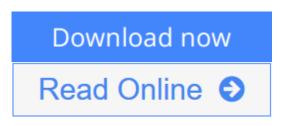
Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety



By Sue Taylor



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The German-born Surrealist Hans Bellmer (1902-1975), best known for his lifesize pubescent dolls, devoted an artistic lifetime to creating sexualized images of the female body -- distorted, dismembered, or menaced in sinister scenarios. In this book Sue Taylor draws on psychoanalytic theory to suggest why Bellmer was so driven by erotomania as well as a desire for revenge, suffering, and the safety of the womb. Although he styled himself as the quintessential Oedipal son, an avant-garde artist in perpetual rebellion against a despised father, Taylor contends that his filial attitude was more complex than he could consciously allow. Tracing a repressed homoerotic attachment to his father, castration anxiety, and an unconscious sense of guilt, Taylor proposes that a feminine identification informs all the disquieting aspects of Bellmer's art.

Most scholarship to date has focused on Bellmer's work of the 1930s, especially the infamous dolls and the photographs he made of them. Taylor extends her discussion to the sexually explicit prints, drawings, paintings, and photographs he produced throughout the ensuing three decades. The book includes a color frontispiece and 121 black-and-white images (eight published here for the first time), as well as appendixes containing several significant texts by Bellmer previously unavailable in English.

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Editorial Review

Review

An impressive book by any standards. Every page displays intelligence, erudition and visual acuity.

(Metapsychology)

Hans Bellmer is a well-written, scrupulously researched book on an important and controversial artist. Taylor combines a balanced, generally sympathetic discussion of Bellmer's work with a feminist critical perspective; her commentaries on individual works are nuanced, never shrill or simplistic.

(Susan Rubin Suleiman, Harvard University, author of *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics, and the Avant-Garde*)

Sue Taylor's new book on Hans Bellmer and his dolls provides the best possible way of looking at this major and controversial artist through both the lens of psychoanalytic theory and the history of psychoanalysis. An original book on a difficult and contested figure of modern art.

(Sander L. Gilman, Distinguished Service Professor, The University of Chicago)

About the Author

Sue Taylor is Assistant Professor of Art History at Portland State University, Oregon.

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