Puppet: An Essay On Uncanny Life

Kenneth Gross
AN ESSAY ON UNCANNY LIFE
The puppet creates delight and fear. It may evoke the innocent play of childhood, or become a tool of ritual magic, able to negotiate with ghosts and gods. Puppets can be creepy things, secretive, inanimate while also full of spirit, alive with gesture and voice. In this eloquent book, Kenneth Gross contemplates the fascination of these unsettling objects—objects that are also actors and images of life. The poetry of the puppet is central here, whether in its blunt grotesquity or symbolic simplicity, and always in its talent for metamorphosis. On a meditative journey to seek the idiosyncratic shapes of puppets on stage, Gross looks at the anarchic Punch and Judy show, the sacred shadow theater of Bali, and experimental theaters in Europe and the United States, where puppets enact everything from Baroque opera and Shakespearean tragedy to Beckettian farce. Throughout, he interweaves accounts of the myriad faces of the puppet in literature—Collodi’s cruel, wooden Pinocchio, puppetlike characters in Kafka and Dickens, Rilke’s puppet-angels, the dark puppeteering of Philip Roth’s Micky Sabbath—as well as in the work of artists Joseph Cornell and Paul Klee. The puppet emerges here as a hungry creature, seducer and destroyer, demon and clown. It is a test of our experience of things, of the human and inhuman. A book about reseeing what we know, or what we think we know, Puppet evokes the startling power of puppets as mirrors of the uncanny in life and art.

Book Information

Paperback: 216 pages
Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; Reprint edition (October 3, 2012)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 9780226005508
ASIN: 022600550X
Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.8 x 8.5 inches
Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (2 customer reviews)
Best Sellers Rank: #156,650 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #6 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Puppets & Puppetry #1015 in Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History #1055 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods

Customer Reviews
Anyone interested in theatre, puppets, human consciousness or life in all its strangeness will find a feast in this book. Gross writes like a 21st century Walter Benjamin.

Book arrived as promised. Great writing, original notions. I would buy again from this seller and by this writer.

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