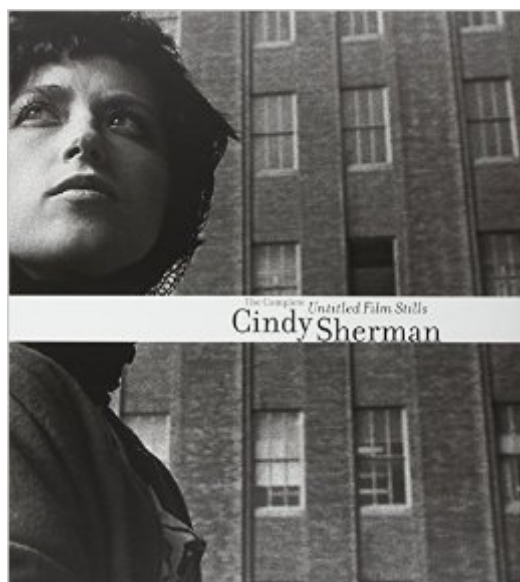


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# Cindy Sherman: The Complete Untitled Film Stills



## Synopsis

Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, a series of 69 black-and-white photographs created between 1977 and 1980, is widely seen as one of the most original and influential achievements in recent art. Witty, provocative and searching, this lively catalogue of female roles inspired by the movies crystallizes widespread concerns in our culture, examining the ways we shape our personal identities and the role of the mass media in our lives. Sherman began making these pictures in 1977 when she was 23 years old. The first six were an experiment: fan-magazine glimpses into the life (or roles) of an imaginary blond actress, played by Sherman herself. The photographs look like movie stills--or perhaps publicity pix--purporting to catch the blond bombshell in unguarded moments at home. The protagonist is shown preening in the kitchen and lounging in the bedroom. Onto something big, Sherman tried other characters in other roles: the chic starlet at her seaside hideaway, the luscious librarian, the domesticated sex kitten, the hot-blooded woman of the people, the ice-cold sophisticate and a can-can line of other stereotypes. She eventually completed the series in 1980. She stopped, she has explained, when she ran out of clichés. Other artists had drawn upon popular culture but Sherman's strategy was new. For her the pop-culture image was not a subject (as it had been for Walker Evans) or raw material (as it had been for Andy Warhol) but a whole artistic vocabulary, ready-made. Her film stills look and function just like the real ones--those 8 x 10 glossies designed to lure us into a drama we find all the more compelling because we know it isn't real. In the *Untitled Film Stills* there are no Cleopatras, no ladies on trains, no women of a certain age. There are, of course, no men. The 69 solitary heroines map a particular constellation of fictional femininity that took hold in postwar America--the period of Sherman's youth and the starting point for our contemporary mythology. In finding a form for her own sensibility, Sherman touched a sensitive nerve in the culture at large. Although most of the characters are invented, we sense right away that we already know them. That twinge of instant recognition is what makes the series tick and it arises from Cindy Sherman's uncanny poise. There is no wink at the viewer, no open irony, no camp. In 1995, The Museum of Modern Art purchased the series from the artist, preserving the work in its entirety. This book marks the first time that the complete series will be published as a unified work, with Sherman herself arranging the pictures in sequence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At first glance, you might see ordinary, banal photos that resemble out takes from studio stills. Look deeper and you will see works of genius that expose a new way of seeing and exploring the inner self that have been highly influential in the art world. This book has the images that started it all for Cindy Sherman and for that reason, you should start with this book if you want to learn about this artist. Who will like this book? I think just about anyone with an interest in art or photography would consider this a "must have" book for their personal library. Nothing in this book would embarrass you if you gave it as a gift; it is edgy, but not to the point of weirdness. I just gave a copy to my 10-year-old daughter for inspiration and she really enjoyed it (though probably not at the level of an adult). If you are willing to look, this book will reward you. Like any great artist, she makes it look easy. Her singular vision is apparent in the location selection, "set" design, makeup and costuming. If you have ever tried to do this yourself, you will respect what she has accomplished. The end result is that Ms. Sherman reveals what she wants us to believe are her innermost thoughts and emotions. Like great cinema, these photos achieve true suspension of disbelief and challenge the viewer's own framework of emotional identity. In the end, we believe. Arguably, these are the best work ever done by Ms. Sherman. One complaint about her newer work is that it seems to continue to retread the same themes and variations. Sure, her newest works are bigger and colorful in keeping with the latest trends in photography -- personally, my favorites are the images in this book. There is a freshness I don't find in her later work. But this human story, like her imagery, will always continue to be explored by artists as long as there are humans to explore.

Cindy Sherman's work is inspiring. She's deadly serious about not being serious. This book is a great collection of her Untitled Film Stills collection, which happen to be my favorites in her body of

work. Great introductory to her art.

I'm writing in late 2013. About 1-2 years ago The New Yorker critic (w/ whom I often agree) wrote a piece on Cindy Sherman that was mostly laudatory but dismissive of the film stills as immature and the least important part of her oeuvre and he implied that everyone who's anyone knows that. (That's not a direct quote but it captures the gist). My jaw dropped and I was like Excuse me??? I penned a nastyish letter to The New Yorker which they declined to print. Anyway, my point is this and I think it's sort of important: Great artists have to start somewhere, folks. Van Gogh did not hit a homerun every time. In my view the film stills are incredibly important. (And apparently MOMA agrees w/ me on that.) Why? These are her breakthrough. It's all here. In one volume. I'm inelegantly stating this, I know: The film stills are an important start to an important career.

If you'd like a collection of all of Cindy Sherman's film stills series, here they are. Perhaps the work she is best known for, you either like them or don't. The more of her other photography I've looked at, the better I like the film stills, not sure if that is because of a better understanding of her or something else.

I have to vehemently disagree with the previous review. Art is not all about perfection of technique. Technique helps, but point of view is always more important. Take, for example, Sebastio Salgado's third world portraits - super grainy, not technically perfect, but beautiful. Sherman has created a series of portraits lampooning as film stills that are lighthearted in idea, but in reality are often melancholy and full of life. The content is what's important here, not technique. If you want technically perfect photographs and don't care if there's interesting content, go look at some Ansel Adams landscapes.

This book along with the "Centerfolds" hardcover exhibition book provide the essential Cindy Sherman images. The film stills presented here are all in black and white, and her next project "Centerfolds" were all in color. Taken together you get the complete picture on Cindy Sherman.

This is a GREAT book. The pages are large and sturdy and show off her artwork well. A huge plus is the introduction written by Sherman...it gives you an inside look at some of the stories behind and the inspirations to some of the photographs. The book features a variety of her work through time. It is arranged very well.

Interesting collection of black & white photos depicting the photographer as a film star. First read about her in The New Yorker magazine. Bought this because it's the best-known of her works.

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