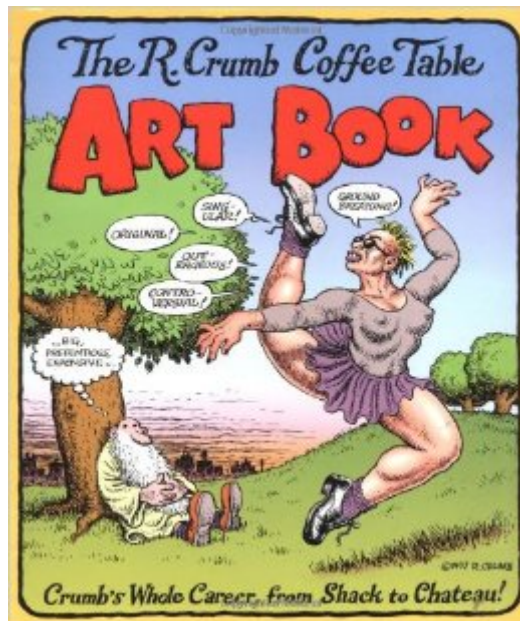


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The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book (Kitchen Sink Press Book For Back Bay Books)



Synopsis

When published in hardcover,, The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book was hailed as an original & audacious celebration of artistic genius & American popular culture. This paperback edition makes the best of this author available in a price that fans of comic book art are sure to appreciate.

Book Information

Series: Kitchen Sink Press Book for Back Bay Books

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Back Bay Books; 1st Back Bay Pbk. Ed edition (October 15, 1998)

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Product Dimensions: 10.9 x 0.8 x 13 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (52 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

There's an illustration on the back cover of The R. Crumb Coffee Table Art Book that perfectly encapsulates the artist's work - it depicts the top of Robert's head exploding, with several of his creations, famous, infamous, and otherwise, leaping out. That, to me, sums up Crumb's work - this incredibly inventive artist with, to paraphrase Bob Dylan, a head full of ideas that are drivin' him insane. There are frequent complaints about Crumb's work being too dark, racist, sexist, and/or misogynistic. While I can see where these criticisms come from, I really don't think Crumb is any darker, more racist, sexist, or misogynistic than any of us - he simply is unafraid to - COMPELLED to, almost - lay his cards on the table. Some people find this offensive. Would it be absurd of me to suggest that some of those who are offended by his work have their own issues with sexism, racism, and/or misogyny that they are unwilling to confront? What I'm trying to get at here, I guess, is that this IS NOT a book for little kids. There's a sticker on the front of my copy of the book that says "FOR ADULT INTELLECTUALS ONLY!", and while I'm not so sure about the "intellectuals" part, this is probably not a book you want your grade-school age child to get ahold of, unless you're okay with said child seeing depictions of graphic (and I do mean GRAPHIC) sex, hard-core drug use, and

extreme (albiet cartoonish) violence. I realize all I've spent all this space talking about Crumb without ever really discussing what I like about his work. I think there's two main things: (1) his unflinching honesty (as I touched upon earlier), and (2) the incredible beauty of his draftsmanship. I think my favotite chapter in the whole book is the one that features his pen-and-ink still-lifes and landscapes.

There's a line that R. Crumb uses twice, in two separate comics, that epitomizes the major themes of his art: "Nobody understands [me]... and of course, how could they??" Periodically his work will stumble into a pit of naval gazing and self-indulgence when it comes to the subjects for his comics. But ultimately, everything he does boils down to this one line. The level of self-awareness he manages to achieve with this line, and throughout the remainder of his work, is both staggering and fascinating, enough to justify the grandiosity of this book. I tried to read this as an autobiography, from cover to cover, taking time to carefully understand how the context of Crumb's life affected his work. Not an effective strategy. If the book wasn't so cumbersome to hold, it might have worked. But since that first reading, I've gotten much more enjoyment just laying the book open flat on a large surface, and staring at the audacious art contained herein. The large-scale (13"x11") format has various levels of effectiveness when presenting Crumb's work. The sketchbook pages, when blown up to this size, lose their intimacy. You can see the fudges and mistakes that Crumb's made. These imperfections are beautiful in the smaller format, but become grotesque and distracting at this size. On the other hand, too often his comic book covers should have been enlarged but weren't. The details in the margins, brought out gloriously when they are blown up, can't be seen when the covers are presented as thumbnails. Each chapter begins with a page-long, hand-written introduction by the man himself. Robert is self-effacing to a fault; you can tell that he's embarrassed by the treatment his works have been given here.

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