The Masculine Masquerade: Masculinity and Representation

The Masculine Masquerade explores often-ignored issues of masculinity in the visual arts as well as models and concepts of masculinity in literature, film, and the mass media. Drawing on the work of feminist and gay studies and the work being done in areas of psychology, sociology, and gender studies, the essays analyze the conventional and limited definition of masculinity as a social and cultural construct. They seek to expand that definition to include multiple masculinities and factors such as race, class, ethnicity, and object choice. Helaine Posner, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center, examines masculinity in the contemporary visual arts, including the works of Matthew Barney, Mary Kelly, Lyle Ashton Harris, Clegg & Guttmann, Keith Piper, and Donald Moffett. Andrew Perchuk, independent curator and critic, focuses on the art of the immediate postwar period to investigate T. J. Clarks notion that the terminology surrounding the New York School was expressed in the language of sexual difference, with severe consequences for artists whose work could not be inserted into this narrative. Steven Cohan, Associate Professor of English, Syracuse University, looks at postwar film in The Spy in the Gray Flannel Suit: Gender Performance and the Representation of Masculinity in North by Northwest. Harry Brod, Department of Philosophy, University of Delaware, traces the history of masculinity as masquerade, from classic conceptions of masquerade as distinctly feminine to contemporary theories of gender as performative. bell hooks, Professor of English, City College, investigates the historical definition of black male sex roles and the commodification of blackness through close readings of the films of Eddie Murphy and Spike Lee, among others. Simon Watney, writer, activist, and critic, considers the current and changing impact of AIDS on the gay male community in Lifelike: Imagining the Bodies of People with AIDS. Finally, Glenn Ligon employs stereotypic images of black men constructed for white pleasure, drawn from 1970s pornographic magazines, and explores the possibility of recovering and transforming these images into non-racist expressions of pleasure and desire. Distributed for the MIT List Visual Arts Center
My Personal Review:
Perchuk and Posner ought to be rewarded for this study. Perchuk's writing, especially, was well worth the price of admission. Their analysis of today post-feminist, post-modern gender values is more than just informative and dead-on target - it sparkles with humor and irony and sizzles with deflatory realism.

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