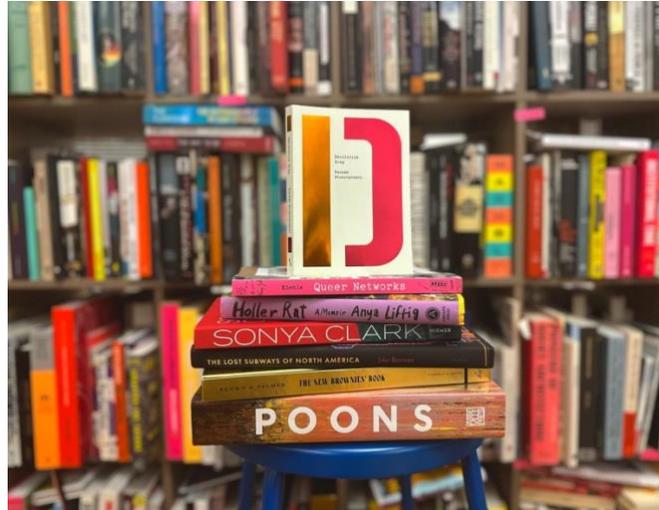


HYPERALLERGIC

10 Art Books to Add to Your Shelf This December

Sonya Clark's latest catalogue, the case for decolonizing drag, Coco Fusco speaks truth to power, a memoir of Brooklyn's underground performance scene, and more.

By: Hrag Vartanian, Lakshmi Rivera Amin, Hakim Bishara and Natalie Haddad
December 5, 2023



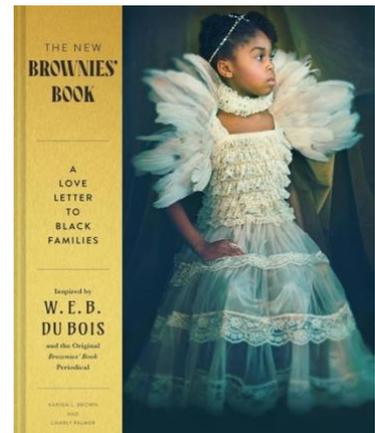
Kareem Khubchandani's *Decolonize Drag*, Sonya Clark's newest catalogue, and more books we're reading this December (photo Lakshmi Rivera Amin/*Hyperallergic*)

If you're shamefully counting the titles you didn't get around to reading this year, know that you are not alone. This month, we'd like to recommend 10 art books to keep you company as you navigate the busy season and provide you with a bit of respite from the chaos December often brings. Our editors reflect on the indefatigable Coco Fusco's art on the occasion of her latest catalogue, the late Ray Johnson and his queer correspondence art, the commercialization of drag and how to fight against it, and other new books that remind us of art's potential to illuminate the fractures in our world. —Lakshmi Rivera Amin, *Editorial Coordinator*

Recently Reviewed

***The New Brownies' Book: A Love Letter to Black Families* by Karida L. Brown and Charly Palmer**

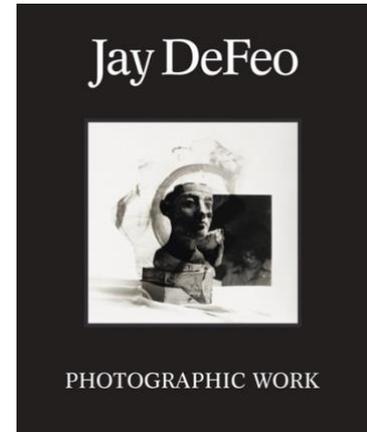
In her review of this new title, giving the namesake original 1920 periodical new life, Sarah Rose Sharp writes: "The book beautifully juxtaposes contemporary art and poetry with Black history in the US and abroad, including the impact of the original *Brownies' Book*. Historic images of African-American youth and snippets of the old black-and-white periodical blend and contrast with full-color imagery, vivid poetry, and storytelling that tackles modern-day issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing state-sanctioned violence toward people of color in the US."



Jay DeFeo: Photographic Work

As Julia Curl writes in her review: “When the Jay DeFeo Foundation opened some of the late artist’s archive boxes, which they believed contained her papers, they uncovered something else: decades’ worth of photographs. This discovery has led to a third exhumation of her oeuvre, culminating in a new monograph, *Jay DeFeo*:

Photographic Work, and a recent exhibition at Paula Cooper Gallery. The book features texts by an impressive collection of authors, including Hilton Als, Corey Keller, Dana Miller, Catherine Wagner, and Justine Kurland (who has curated a concurrent exhibition in homage to DeFeo at the Lumber Room in Portland, Oregon). Together, they demonstrate that DeFeo should be seen as a major figure in contemporary photography.”



On Our Reading List

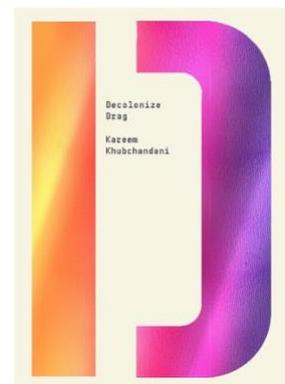
***Queer Networks: Ray Johnson's Correspondence Art* by Miriam Kienle**

Once upon a time, mail was not electronic. Letters were tangible, sometimes even aesthetic, objects. Artist Ray Johnson tapped into the creative potential of mail via collaged postcards that he would send to a group of friends and collaborators. Johnson’s pioneering “correspondence art” not only democratized the art object by circulating it through the postal service but also illuminated invisible networks. With *Queer Networks: Ray Johnson's Correspondence Art*, Miriam Kienle examines the subversive subtext of Johnson’s methods as he forged connections and worked against the classification systems that dominate the art world. Ultimately, Johnson’s art proposes an alternative mode of making and being. —*Natalie Haddad*



***Decolonize Drag* by Kareem Khubchandani**

Nearly 15 years after *RuPaul's Drag Race* premiered, scholar Kareem Khubchandani — who performs as drag queen LaWhore Vagistan — declares that drag has been “occupied,” as with so many other art forms subsumed under the market. With alternating chapters narrated by Khubchandani and LaWhore, this succinct exploration of drag’s origins and possibilities calls for the decolonization of its current mainstream form, which privileges capitalism, whiteness, and gender binaries. As a piece of performance art in itself, the book acts as a guide to the ways that class, race, ability, and a range of other factors constitute drag and offers a much-needed reminder of the drag artists of color who continue driving the medium forward through protest and boundless creativity. Khubchandani’s analysis pairs wonderfully with LaWhore’s voice, making for a memorable read that is equal parts informative, galvanizing, and joyful. —*LA*



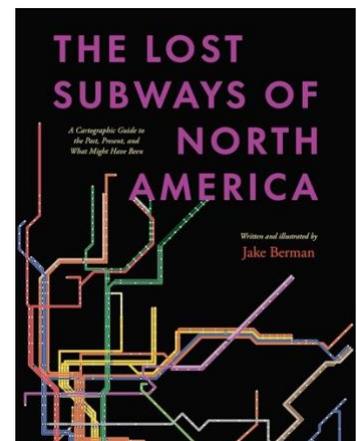
***Pentagram: Living by Design* by Adrian Shaughnessy**

Design giant Pentagram is responsible for so many major projects that it's almost impossible to imagine contemporary design culture without them. They're responsible for the logo and branding of the World Economic Forum, NYC Parks, the National Gallery of Art, and more. The brilliance of Pentagram is their clean, almost invisible design, which is always fresh and memorable from the first moment you encounter it. Those of us who follow their work may have favorite designers (mine are Michael Bierut, Abbott Miller, and Paula Scher), and this two-volume set divided between *The Biography* and *The Directory* is a comprehensive archive of their work in every conceivable field. —*Hrag Vartanian*



***The Lost Subways of North America: A Cartographic Guide to the Past, Present, and What Might Have Been* by Jake Berman**

If your daily life, too, is governed by the whims of your local subway, this book is for you. Cartographer Jake Berman uncovers the ghosts of bygone transit systems and incomplete transportation plans of 23 cities across North America. The maps appear alongside explanations of the systemic inequities that permanently altered the transportation systems we still use today. Also, you may finally get an answer as to why your subway is consistently 20 minutes late. —*LA*



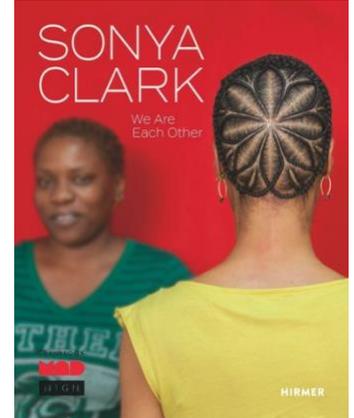
Coco Fusco: Tomorrow, I Will Become an Island

Cuban-American artist, writer, and activist Coco Fusco is an inveterate truth-teller and a longtime fighter for the rights of the marginalized, persecuted, and dispossessed. She is the enemy of the dictatorial state and the morally rotten art establishment. This beautiful book, released in conjunction with the opening of Fusco's namesake exhibition at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin earlier this year, looks back at her influential work, including many of her memorable performances, in the three decades since she emerged on the scene in the 1990s. It's an unfinished story as Fusco is still making work and publishing words that bring deep discomfort to the powers to be. —*Hakim Bishara*



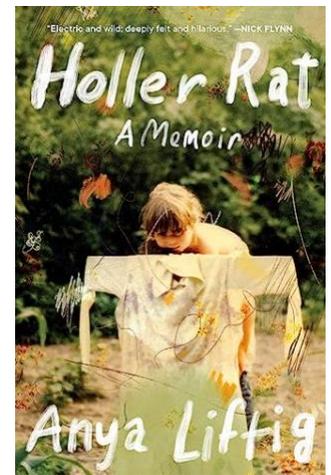
Sonya Clark: We Are Each Other

This is the catalogue for Clark's touring exhibition, which is currently at Atlanta's High Museum before landing at Manhattan's Museum of Arts and Design this March, and I challenge you not to be wowed by an artist who transforms the familiar into something new and unexpected. —*HV*



Holler Rat: A Memoir by Anya Liftig

A part of the Brooklyn underground performance scene for years, Anya Liftig shares her personal journey that will resonate with those who blend life with art and love to reflect on both. I have to mention her "Non Human Animals," a short performance piece (Google it, but perhaps not at work) I saw years ago that I'll never forget, and I mention it because it visually captures her ability to surprise and offer insight in a way only she can. —*HV*



Larry Poons

In the 1970s, Larry Poons was at the peak of his fame, and while nowadays he may be less known, this hefty tome makes the case that it's time to reconsider his dot, drip, and later, more gestural work. With an introduction by Michael Fried, and essays by Barbara Rose, Karen Wilkin, David Ebony, and David Anfam, this extensively illustrated volume is ideal for those interested in modernist painting and an era of American art when formal experiments in paint were all the rage. —*HV*

