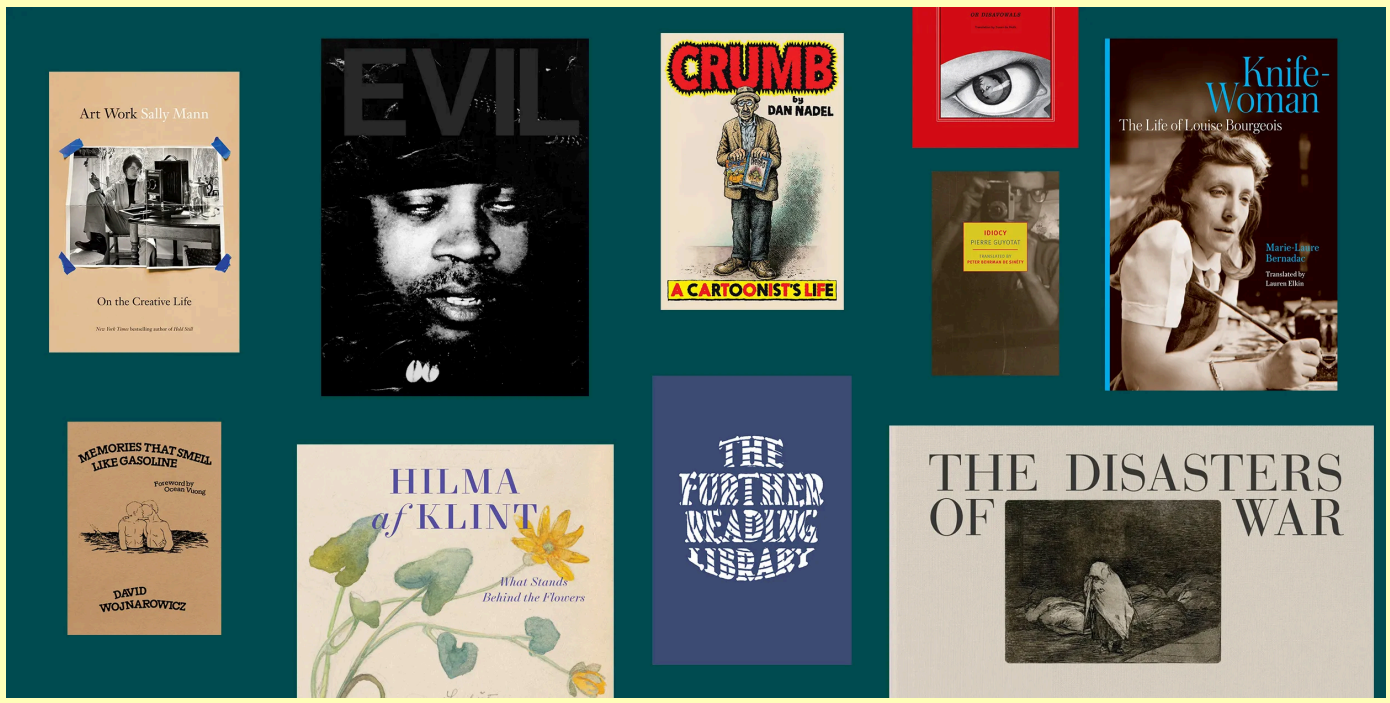
Herbert’s Highlights of 2025

A selection of great books, available at the New Museum Store.

Herbert Pföstl
December 12, 2025



The Further Reading Library: The First Five Books

By Christine Burgin and Andrew Lampert, Ed. (Christine Burgin)

Courtesy Christine Burgin

The Burgin/Lampert *Further Reading Library* presents five books of wonder from the twilight zones between art and science. United by a vision to highlight “forgotten ideas, overlooked accomplishments, and idiosyncratic world views,” these books explore the following marvelous individuals: Avant-garde dancer, light artist, and radium wrangler Loïe Fuller (1862–1928); designer, musician, and inventor of Lumia “light organs” Thomas Wilfred (1889–1968); sci-fi author and obsessive investigator into ancient mysteries, Richard Sharpe Shaver (1907–1975); founder of the Ontological-Hysteric Theater company and pioneer of New York’s experimental theatre scene Richard Foreman (1937-2025); and singer, philanthropist, and inventor Margaret Watts Hughes (1842-1907), who created the “eidophone,” a device that recorded sound waves by etching them onto glass slides!

Hilma af Klint: What Stands Behind the Flowers

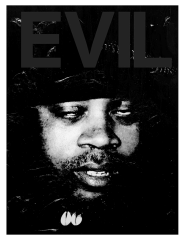
By Jodi Hauptman, Ed. (The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, New York

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Swedish artist and mystic Hilma af Klint created a body of work that left visible reality behind, exploring the radical possibilities of abstraction years before the movement’s male luminaries Kandinsky, Malevich, or Mondrian. *What Stands Behind the Flowers* focuses on af Klint’s intense observation of, and spiritual engagement with, the flora of Sweden during the spring and summer seasons of 1919 and 1920. Hilma af Klint was more than a “pioneer of abstraction in art;” she was also a consummate cataloger and communicator—focusing her rigorous attention on the micro and the macro, the perceptible and the invisible, while mobilizing her gifts into a unique vocabulary that was in service of both her vision and her wish to teach through the dissemination of information.

Arthur Jafa: Live Evil

By Arthur Jafa (Walter König, Köln / LUMA Arles)



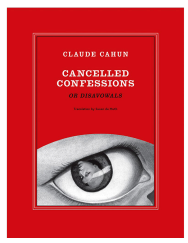
Courtesy Walter König, Köln / LUMA Arles

> A lot of Black artists do uplift, but I don't really do uplift. I'm an undertaker.
>
> —Arthur Jafa

American artist, filmmaker, and cinematographer Arthur Jafa was born in 1960 in Tupelo, Mississippi and raised in highly segregated Clarksdale, Mississippi. An alchemist of juxtaposition, his work of historical excavation and transpositioning through layered visuals from archived materials has forged a rich trail within the deep terrain of Black history. Building on Jafa's monumental LUMA, Arles exhibition of the same name, this heavily illustrated, 360-page catalog-as-picture-book presents a comprehensive and deeply immersive overview of his work over several decades, and explores the philosophical, historical, and artistic implications of his practice. The book bears witness to the deep soul and irresistible force of Black life, and stands as a warning sign and mark of radiant resistance.

Claude Cahun: Cancelled Confessions (or Disavowals)

By Claude Cahun (Siglio)

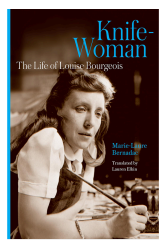


Courtesy Siglio

Aveux non Avenus, translated here as *Cancelled Confessions (or Disavowals)*, was written, compiled, and illustrated in Paris in the 1920s and first published in 1930. Author, Claude Cahun (born Lucy Renée Mathilde Schwob, niece of the "passive adventurer" Marcel Schwob), created her "confessions without deceit" in response to an invitation to write an autobiography. Cahun's memoir in cypher form staged an ever-mutating inquiry into the instability of "self" and its many masks as shape-shifting, gender-bending, Marxist-inflected mischief-making cri de cœurs. *Cancelled Confessions* is illustrated with photomontages composed by Marcel Moore and Claude Cahun, includes the chant-like 1930 preface by Pierre Mac Orlan, and enlightening words from art historian Amelia Groom.

Knife-Woman : The Life of Louise Bourgeois

By Marie-Laure Bernadac (Yale University Press)

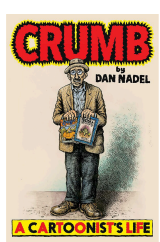


Courtesy Yale University Press

Marie-Laure Bernadac's *Knife Woman* is the first comprehensive biography of Louise Bourgeois, one of the most fascinatingly autobiographical and obsessively self-analytical artists of the twentieth century. Drawing on Bourgeois's enormous personal archive of diaries, letters, and psychoanalytic writings, as well as on numerous interviews and recollections from people who knew her, Bernadac has created an engaging and eminently readable account of the life of an artist who poured her demons into her work and believed that "everything comes from the mystery, magic, and drama of childhood."

Crumb: A Cartoonist's Life

By Dan Nadel (Scribner)

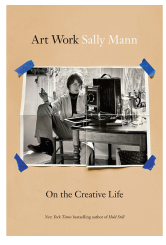


Courtesy Scribner

Very few get the biographer they deserve—Robert Crumb got lucky with Dan Nadel, an expert and connoisseur of underground comics culture. Nadel's rigorously researched and wonderfully candid chronicle does not recoil, moralize, or whitewash. While exhibiting deep sympathy and admiration for the artist—in glory and crisis—Nadel navigates the many minefields of troubled and troubling biographical and artistic episodes with tenacity, backbone, and a much needed sense of irony. Generously illustrated with images and teeming with a fascinating cast of characters, Nadel's biography is an excellent study of the artist as misfit. The book is an admirable achievement of ardent exploration, and a bona fide page-turner.

Art Work: On the Creative Life

By Sally Mann (Abrams Books)

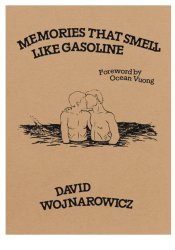


Courtesy Abrams Books

Ten years after her frank and fearless memoir *Hold Still*, we now have a new volume of "mutable memories" from the incomparable photographer and consummate raconteur Sally Mann. A kind of how-to (and how-not-to) guide "primarily for young artists and writers," *Art Work* may be slimmer and lighter than *Hold Still*, but it pulls no punches. Replete with both mundane and marvelous advice, it offers hard-earned wisdom and insight. As tough-minded as it is clear-eyed, open-hearted, and grittily funny, Mann's newest book explores the mistakes and breakthroughs, pitfalls and pleasures of making art and living art.

Memories That Smell like Gasoline

By David Wojnarowicz (Nightboat Books)

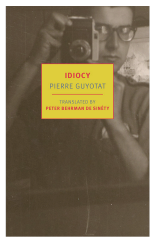


Courtesy Nighboat Books

Memories That Smell like Gasoline is David Wojnarowicz's hallucinatory account of sexual craving forged from "images and indictments of a precocious adolescence" and "later adventures in the streets of New York." His diaristic pamphlets of bruised encounters with the margins of American society feel frank and free in their achingly defiant confessional force. The four sections of this new and revised edition are interspersed with fevered black and white watercolors and drawings by the author. Thank you, Nightboat Books, for resuscitating these urgent and unguarded texts of radical longing.

Idiocy

By Pierre Guyotat (NYRB Classics)

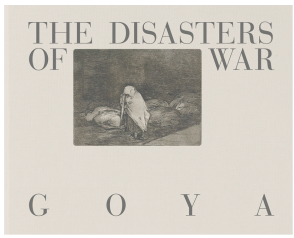


Courtesy NYRB Classics

French avant-garde novelist and playwright Pierre Guyotat was notable for his widely controversial and groundbreaking work, including his novel, *Eden Eden Eden*, which was banned by the French government. For Coma, a "cruelly lucid" memoir, Guyotat wrote from such a state of hyper-volatility and obsession that he had to be hospitalized. In *Idiocy*, recently resurrected by the indispensable NYRB Classics, Guyotat's captivating work of memory recounts dreams and terrors of childhood, adolescent fears and fevers, and the "filth of fighting" during the Algerian War. Compared with his extreme early work, which often pushed language to (and beyond) its limits, Idiocy seems to strike a kinder, trancelike tone, while at the same time remaining uncompromising in its intense depiction of "the brutality of the world."

Goya: The Disasters of War

By Francisco Goya (La Fábrica)



Courtesy La Fábrica

Francisco Goya didn't have to wait for our time to realize that humanity was headed for insolubility and darkness. His shards-sharp integrity and visionary imagination pull the rug out from under us. Unblinkered and unconstrained by religions or ideologies, alone and ailing, Goya labored for ten years on his astonishing *Disasters of War*. This clothbound reproduction of the first edition of these radically unflinching etchings about the consequences of war is exquisitely printed "on paper that closely resembles the texture of the original engravings," as well as mirroring the original format and scale. The book contains no text—apart from the bitter and bitingly ironic titles Goya gave each etching—and it doesn't need any.

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The Further Reading Library Book Bundle
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Live Evil
$59.95

Knife-Woman
$38.00

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Herbert Pföstl

Veteran New Museum Book Buyer Herbert Pföstl is an Austrian artist, writer, and literary translator. A painter of departed landscapes, plants, animals, minerals, and saints, his artworks are held in both public and private collections. For his bread and butter, he has worked with and for books all his life—creating selections for bookstores and private libraries. Pföstl is the the author of *To Die No More* (Blind Pony Books, 2008), *Light Issued Against Ruin* (The Brother in Elysium, 2014), *Schrift Landschaften* (Fajidata Press, 2016)

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