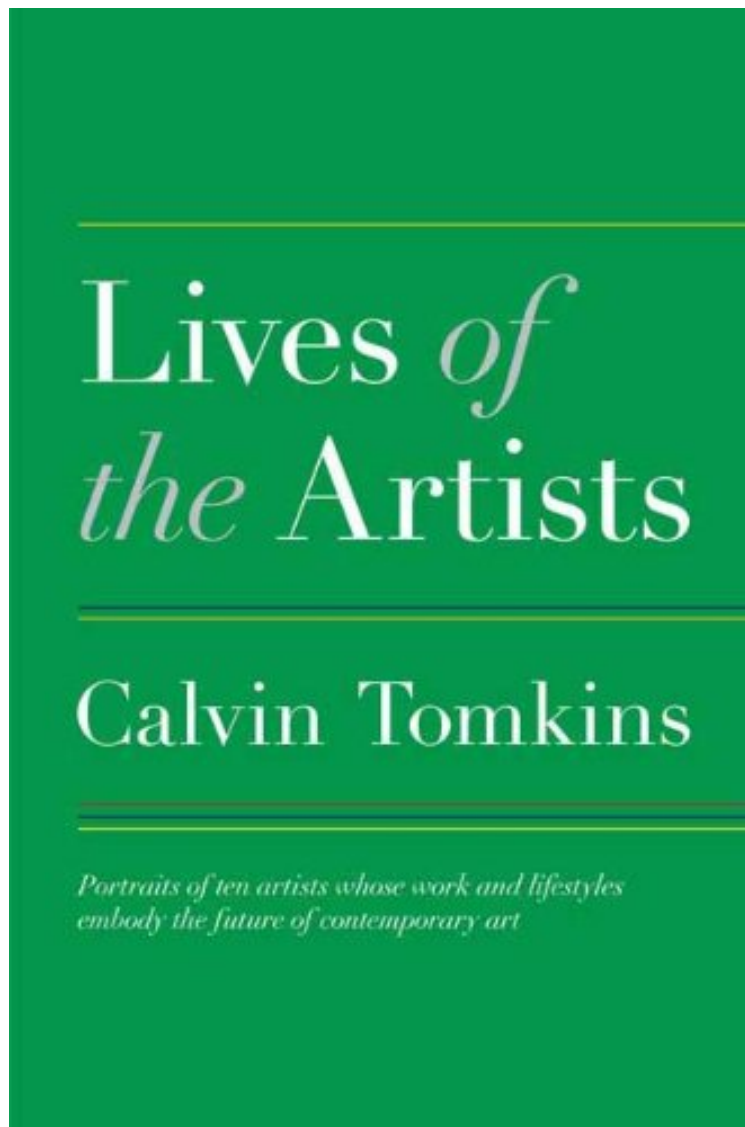


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Lives of the Artists: Portraits of Ten Artists Whose Work and Lifestyles Embody the Future of Contemporary Art

Calvin Tomkins

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Calvin Tomkins : Lives of the Artists: Portraits of Ten Artists Whose Work and Lifestyles Embody the Future of Contemporary Art before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lives of the Artists: Portraits of Ten Artists Whose Work and Lifestyles Embody the Future of Contemporary Art:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Lively ConversationBy C. EbelingI am a general reader and a general lover of the visual arts, who often finds contemporary conceptual art difficult to keep up with. I turn to books

like *Lives of the Artists* in an attempt to keep current and for interesting conversation. *Lives of the Artists*, with its emphasis on the artists' lives rather than art genres and trends makes it more interesting conversation than edification, but that's okay. Tomkins, art critic for *The New Yorker*, had years of articles from which to choose, and he chose biography as his organizing theme, a la Giorgio Vasari, of the movers and shakers in the contemporary international art world. His selection skews to the most controversial, provocative and/or innovative: Jasper Johns, Maurizio Cattelan, Cindy Sherman, Damien Hirst, Jeff Koons, James Turrell, Julian Schnabel, John Currin, Richard Serra and Matthew Barney. Tomkins does a good job of introducing the artist in a current scene, before cutting to the back story to scribe the arc of career, inspiration and critical reaction. This mostly works, though the first profile in the collection, of Damien Hirst, had the ring of a VH1 "Behind the Music" rock star story. Tomkins provides updates on each career, current as of 2008 when this book was prepared. Alas, there are no illustrations, no images of the subjects' work or of them. One thing I could not help but notice about the collection: though the author notes in his preface that there are thousands of working artists living and producing in New York City alone, and he had years of his own profiles to select from, he chose a line-up that is starkly white, and with the exception of Cindy Sherman, male. Women mostly appear as bit players in these stories, as girlfriends, wives, muses, studio assistants and, in a couple of instances, "porno" subjects. Is this representative of the world of art right now? It feels more like the night before the women's and civil rights movements injected a more inclusive diversity into our cultural reflection.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great read...crappy formatting
By Larry Ellingson
I love this book. A great look at wildly different artists who have made their mark in Western culture and, thanks to Calvin Tomkins, in me. Interesting, intimate, personal but never fawning or self-conscious. One really big complaint though...not the writing but eBook technology: why is "performance" always spelled "per for mance?" Many other words were consistently mangled. Several sections were marred by this kind sloppy formatting that I seriously doubt was seen in the "analog" version. I think I deserve my money back. I'm sure if I submitted a manuscript with these kind of errors to , I'd be laughed out of a contract. Fix it!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Knows his subjects
By Arthur Comings
Capsule reviews of the lives and works ten important artists. No pics, which a critic quoted on the back cover claims to be an advantage. Yeah, yeah -- none of those distracting images! With the internet that's not a big disadvantage, but it's certainly more distracting to get up and google than to turn the page. Written in a breezy, well-informed style which I generally like -- I've read a number of Tomkins' books -- but several non sequiturs slipped by his editor. I occasionally got the feeling that the text had been dictated, with minimal revisions. But lots of good facts and impressions, from an author who has spent, in some cases, decades getting to know his subjects.

Whether writing about Jasper Johns or Jeff Koons, Cindy Sherman or Richard Serra, Calvin Tomkins shows why it is both easier and more difficult to make art today. If art can be anything, where do you begin? For more than three decades Calvin Tomkins's incisive profiles in *The New Yorker* have given readers the most satisfying reports on contemporary art and artists available in any language. In *Lives of the Artists* ten major artists are captured in Tomkins's cool and ironic style to record the new directions art is taking during these days of limitless freedom. As formal technique and rigorous training continue to fall away, art has become an approach to living. As the author says, "the lives of contemporary artists are today so integral to what they make that the two cannot be considered in isolation." Among the artists profiled are Jeff Koons and Damien Hirst, the reigning heirs of deliberately outrageous art that feeds off the allegedly corrupting influences of capitalist glut and entertainment; Matthew Barney of the pregenital obsessions; Cindy Sherman, who manages multiple transformations as she disappears into her own work; and Julian Schnabel, who has forged a second career as award-winning film director. Tomkins shows that the making of art remains among the most demanding jobs on earth.