



Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety

Sue Taylor

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The German-born Surrealist Hans Bellmer (1902-1975), best known for his life-size pubescent dolls, devoted an artistic lifetime to creating sexualized images of the female body -- distorted, dismembered, or menaced in sinister scenarios. In this book Sue Taylor draws on psychoanalytic theory to suggest why Bellmer was so driven by erotomania as well as a desire for revenge, suffering, and the safety of the womb. Although he styled himself as the quintessential Oedipal son, an avant-garde artist in perpetual rebellion against a despised father, Taylor contends that his filial attitude was more complex than he could consciously allow. Tracing a repressed homoerotic attachment to his father, castration anxiety, and an unconscious sense of guilt, Taylor proposes that a feminine identification informs all the disquieting aspects of Bellmer's art.

Most scholarship to date has focused on Bellmer's work of the 1930s, especially the infamous dolls and the photographs he made of them. Taylor extends her discussion to the sexually explicit prints, drawings, paintings, and photographs he produced throughout the ensuing three decades. The book includes a color frontispiece and 121 black-and-white images (eight published here for the first time), as well as appendixes containing several significant texts by Bellmer previously unavailable in English.

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