



Close Reading: Chuck Close and the Artist Portrait

Martin Friedman

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One of the most admired and innovative contemporary artists working today, Chuck Close has pioneered ideas of scale, form, and color through the theme of portraiture, a genre that he has fundamentally redefined. The first book to focus on Close's self-portraits and the portraits he has made of fellow artists, *Close Reading* is a uniquely intimate portrait of Close's life and work by the former director of the Walker Art Center, Martin Friedman, a longtime friend who has had unprecedented access to the artist.

After covering the biographical details of Close's life—including the sudden illness in 1988 that led to near-complete paralysis, and the degree of recovery that enabled him to continue his painting career—Friedman moves on to a probing examination of Close's self-portraiture. The final section deals with Close's paintings of artist subjects, among them Cindy Sherman, Francesco Clemente, Jasper Johns, and William Wegman. Included here are Close's insightful comments about these works and Friedman's discussions with the artists themselves, which reveal much about Close's accomplishments and issues of self-portraiture in both Close's art and their own.

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