

Creators

Photographer Captures Women Artists Reading Female Authors

'The Readers' is a series that exposes the female-authored books that inspire other women artists.

Antwaun Sargent — Aug 19 2016



LaToya reading Isabel Wilkerson (*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, 2010) from the series *Reading Women* (2012–2014).

How do women authors inspire female artists? In 2012, artist Carrie Schneider sought to find the answer. She began shooting, *Reading Women*, a photography and video series of female artists reading their favorite authors.

"I began shooting my completed project *Reading Women* to reconcile something under-recognized: the incredible legacy of the influence of women artists and authors on my generation of artist peers," explains Schneider to The Creators Project.

The series is informed by recent surveys and historical texts including [Linda Nochlin's](#) 1971 essay, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" As well as a 2010 study by Slate shows that 71% percent of book reviews are of books authored by men and in 2011 Jerry Saltz made the revelation that only 4% of women artists are represented in MoMA's permanent collection galleries.

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Abigail reading Angela Davis (*An Autobiography, 1974*) from the series *Reading Women* (2012-2014)

“Representing women reading women—and women as bearers of knowledge—sought to undermine this dominant narrative,” explains Schneider. “So I asked 100 artist friends to each sit while reading a book of her choice, written by a woman author, in her own home or studio, while I photographed and filmed her.” She says, “The final four-hour video installation shows the 100 readers in sequence, each engrossed in her text, using the page turn as the structure to transition from one sitter to the next. Cumulatively, the archive of 100 portraits reveals a constellation of influences among my creative peers.”

In one photograph from the series entitled, *Abigail reading Angela Davis* shows the artist Abigail DeVille who creates large sculptural environments reading the former Black Panther and professor’s work of nonfiction, *An Autobiography, 1974*. The portraits in the series provide a glimpse into the creative process of the artists involved. DeVille’s art uses found objects to reveal how local histories feed into the larger narratives surrounding black life. In another work from the series titled, *LaToya reading Isabel Wilkerson* (*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great*

Migration, 2010), the artist says, “There is something physical, visceral about reading a book that is unlike anything else.”

She continues, “There is something rare about the depth of concentration that can be experienced while reading. Living in a culture obsessed with speed—these moments of immersion, are rare, political, and powerful.”

Reading Women has led to Schneider’s current project, *The Readers*. During the two-year’s it took Schneider to complete *Reading Women*, the artists Dawn Kasper and Holly Cahill, chose to read books about the choreographer and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer, which led Schneider to ask Rainer, who does she read for inspiration?

In *The Readers*, Rainer can be seen reading Fran Ross’ *Oreo*. *The Readers* will ask 50 women authors—including Angela Davis, Isabel Wilkerson, Patti Smith, and Lucy Lippard—to read on camera from books that have informed their lives and creativity.

“*The Readers* expands the structural logic of my previous project—I will ask the living authors, my friends, to read for me,” says Schneider of the video work that is archival in scope. “Each author reads an influential author of her own, further mapping the transmission of ideas, among makers, and from one creative generation to the next.”