

Solnit, Schneider to close the book on 'Reading Women'

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Brett reading Rebecca Solnit ("*Wanderlust: A History of Walking*," 2001), from the series *Reading Women*, 2012-2014. Photo by Carrie Schneider

That translation is the subject of "Reading Women," an exhibition of video and photos by Carrie Schneider at the Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg.

Today, which is the exhibition's closing day, Schneider's work will bloom into further complexity when she discusses it with award-winning cultural critic Rebecca Solnit in a presentation at the museum.

Solnit is the author of 17 books, including *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West*, which won the 2004 National Book Critics Circle prize for criticism, and the 2014 essay collection *Men Explain Things to Me*.

Schneider earned her master of fine arts degree at the Art Institute of Chicago, and her work has appeared in many solo and group shows.

"Reading Women" debuted in 2014 at the Armory Show. The project was Schneider's response to art historian Linda Nochlin's influential 1971 essay "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" and to the paucity of women in the Western literary canon. Over two years, Schneider videotaped and photographed 100 women reading books of their choice by female authors. The photo subjects are artists themselves — visual artists, writers and musicians — who posed in their own homes or studios.

The sessions went on for two hours, enough time for the readers to become engrossed in their reading and relaxed. Schneider taped and photographed them in natural light, often near windows. The resulting combination of domestic settings and glowing light recalls works by such artists as Vermeer, some of whose female subjects were painted while reading.

In her artist's statement, Schneider says, "There is something rare about the depth of concentration experienced while reading, and it's the moment that I'm after: when the sitter loses awareness of the camera — and any semblance of a pose — forgetting her cultural performance."

Solnit, a contributing editor at *Harper's* and a frequent contributor to the political site *Tomdispatch.com*, will bring to the discussion not only her deep knowledge of visual arts, particularly photography, but insight into contemporary feminism and women in the arts.

It should be a conversation worth putting down your book to go and hear it.