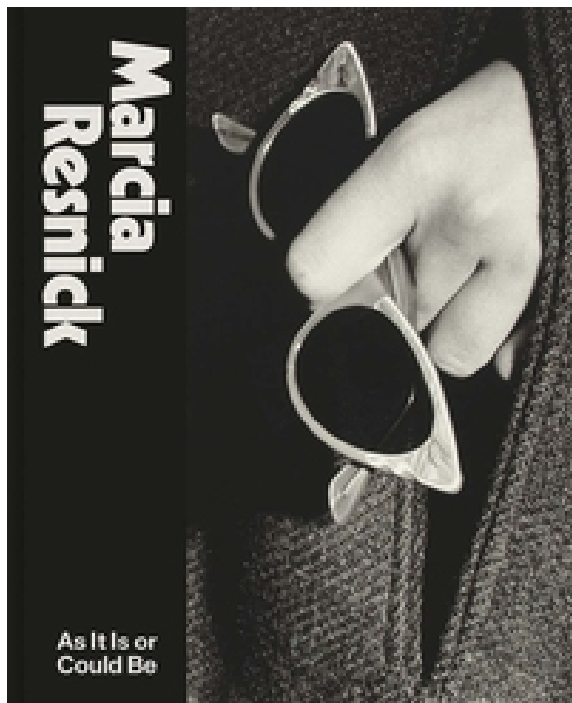


Review: Marcia Resnick: As It Is or Could Be

by Frank H. Goodyear III et al. Yale University Press, March 2022. 208 p. ill. ISBN 978-0-300-25465-5 (h/c), \$50.00.

Reviewed May 2022

Claire Payne, Web Services and Data Librarian, Stony Brook University,
claire.payne@stonybrook.edu, <https://doi.org/10.17613/h9h1-3b85>



In *Marcia Resnick: As It Is or Could Be*, readers are treated to a glossy exploration of New York photographer Resnick's artistic projects throughout the 1970s and early 1980s. The book, produced to accompany a traveling exhibition of the same name co-organized by the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, George Eastman Museum, and Minneapolis Institute of Art, includes sixty large-scale plates and supplementary figures alongside three critical essays.

The book is ordered roughly chronologically: the essays, each written by a curator at an organizing institution, all have both a general temporal and thematic focus. The first, by Lisa Hostetler, includes highly effective visual analysis, and situates Resnick within (and outside of) the canonical conceptualist narrative. The second, by Casey Riley, is primarily a feminist history, and

considers the role of gender in and around Resnick's photobooks. The last essay, from Frank H. Goodyear III, places Resnick's portraits and work for the *Soho Weekly News* within the wider social and economic contexts of New York City. The book's design is minimalist and largely monochromatic, allowing the crisp reproductions of Resnick's primarily black-and-white images their rightful prominence throughout the thick pages. A small design choice that may frustrate: a few plates and figures are printed across two pages, leaving some photographic detail lost in the tightly bound gutter.

The writing in this book all draws heavily on Resnick's biography, and the curators have a close relationship with their subject: an oft-cited reference is a series of oral history interviews the three authors conducted in 2020. Resnick's relative obscurity until recent years means the

authors are also working with a limited body of source material. This idiosyncratic bibliography permits the essays a powerful coherence, but also has its limitations. Specific anecdotes—such as a formative visit to the home of Ansel Adams—are repeated between essays and are less evocative on their second appearance. Additionally, in several different moments, Resnick’s work is compared to that of Adrian Piper; considering the criticality of race in Piper’s oeuvre as well as this book’s extended discussions of Resnick’s feminist positions, it is striking that the racial dynamics of Resnick’s social and artistic contexts are hardly mentioned, apart from a reference to the colonial legacies invoked in her *Tahitian Eve* book project.

However, as the first retrospective catalog of Resnick’s work, it is natural that this book would engender these opportunities for further discussion; the sleek production is certainly an important selection for library collections with holdings in American contemporary art. This catalog’s essays and images can engage anyone interested in the documentation of 1970s and 1980s New York and will particularly inform the work of art historians and photography students interested in conceptualism.