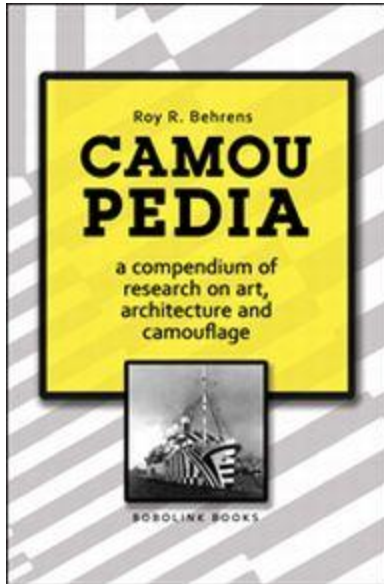


**Camoumedia: A Compendium of Research on Art, Architecture and Camouflage**, by Roy R. Behrens. Bobolink Books, April 2009. 463 p.ill. ISBN 9780971324466 (pbk.), \$35.00.



The visually arresting and culturally pertinent nature of camouflage make it an apt focus of contemporary art-making and research, with a lineage stretching back to the twisted forms and temporal language of cubism and the post-Darwinian fascination with animals and their markings. Into this arena emerges *Camoumedia*, containing a vast number of concise, well-researched, and engaging entries on subjects pertaining to camouflage. Many are a paragraph long which makes the work highly readable and permits the inclusion of a wide range of topics. *Camoumedia* also has a number of illustrations, including photographs, sketches, or diagrams (none in color). As befits an encyclopedia the graphics are somewhat secondary to the text, but they are none-the-less fascinating.

Many of the entries are biographical, ranging from the unheralded to the famous (for instance, Walt Disney and Thomas Edison, the latter of whose naval camouflage efforts appear to have been both fanciful and unsuccessful). Dazzle patterning is also investigated at length. A form of disruptive camouflage used to confuse rather than conceal, its vivid, zebra-like markings were applied primarily to ships. However, Behrens broadens the cultural context by including images of women in dazzle-inspired bathing suits and references to dazzle socks. Other topics include industrial camouflage, animal markings, and clandestine wartime operations like the poetically named Ghost Army, a United States Army unit that specialized in creating deceptions. The work has a historical feel, concentrating on the Allied forces of World Wars I and II. Many of the individuals discussed either were, or became artists following service in their nation's military camouflage units. The book provides an interesting insight into art schools and curricula of the time.

Despite a number of recent publications on the subject of camouflage, including another by this author, Behrens' efforts do not feel redundant. *Camoumedia* lacks coverage of specific camouflage patterns, perhaps because this terrain has been explored extensively in other visually lush publications. Fewer contemporary artists are included; perhaps for similar reasons. Women are rarely mentioned but this may be a function of history rather than Behrens' choice. Similarly lacking are critical analyses of the subjects discussed.

*Camoumedia* is a paperback. Its pages are somewhat brittle and re-binding it is recommended. Behrens includes an extensive bibliography making it an excellent starting point for researchers on both the graduate and undergraduate level. It will appeal to art and cultural historians as well as to artists who will find within it many points of inspiration.

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