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Feelings Are Facts: A Life (Autobiography)



Synopsis

If you're interested in Plato, you're reading the wrong book. If you're interested in difficult childhoods, sexual misadventures, aesthetics, cultural history, and the reasons that a club sandwich and other meals -- including breakfast -- have remained in the memory of the present writer, keep reading. -- from *Feelings Are Facts*

In this memoir, dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker Yvonne Rainer traces her personal and artistic coming of age. *Feelings Are Facts* (the title comes from a dictum by Rainer's one-time psychotherapist) uses diary entries, letters, program notes, excerpts from film scripts, snapshots, and film-frame enlargements to present a vivid portrait of an extraordinary artist and woman in postwar America. Rainer tells of a California childhood in which she was farmed out by her parents to foster families and orphanages, of sexual and intellectual initiations in San Francisco and Berkeley, and of artistic discoveries and accomplishments in the New York City dance world. Rainer studied with Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham in the late 1950s and early 1960s, cofounded the Judson Dance Theater in 1962, hobnobbed with New York artists including Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Morris (her lover and partner for several years), and Yoko Ono, and became involved with feminist and antiwar causes in the 1970s and 1980s. Rainer writes about how she constructed her dances -- including *The Mind Is a Muscle* and its famous section, *Trio A*, as well as the recent *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* -- and about turning from dance to film and back to dance. And she writes about meeting her longtime partner Martha Gever and discovering the pleasures of domestic life.

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Customer Reviews

A transformative career in dance and the development of an experimental artist are examined in choreographer, dancer and filmmaker Rainer's engrossing memoir. Organized by concepts, such as her burgeoning sexuality and her cultural memories, rather than by strict chronology, the structure makes a difficult childhood seem even more unmoored and the dizzying parade of men she slept with more kaleidoscopic. Rainer doesn't have many kind words for anyone in her early years and is equally hard on herself. A ferocious intelligence combined with years of psychotherapy have made her intensely self-aware, and Rainer exposes her flaws, acknowledging potential objections to her behavior and character. Rainer's position at the epicenter of postmodernism in dance in the early '60s is illuminated through descriptions and photographs of working and playing with fellow Judson Dance Theater pioneers such as Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton, as well as artists like Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. Particularly fascinating are her descriptions of her intentions in creating certain dances and the struggle between directing dancers and allowing improvisation to color the work. The explorations of the Judson crew, including Rainer, continue to influence contemporary dance, and Rainer's chronicle of her journey as an artist is a winning addition to the literature about this groundbreaking era. (July) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A master choreographer and filmmaker, Rainer now demonstrates her impressive expertise at writing, inventing and performing brilliantly in a new genre: the meta-auto-biography. Rainer's memoir exudes the same rigorous intelligence and imaginative whimsy that marked her dances. Her vivid descriptions of the everyday infuse history with physicality, illuminating with great precision and insight one body's journey through the second half of the twentieth century."--Susan Leigh Foster, Professor, Department of World Arts and Cultures, University of California, Los Angeles

"In a matter-of-fact style, she explores the various relationships of her life, analyzes herself and the artistic process, and examines her experimental work in dance (e.g., *The Mind Is a Muscle*) as well as the milieu of the early Sixties (Robert Rauschenberg, Yoko Ono, and Andy Warhol all make appearances). This unique view of the creative environment and portrait of the artist as a young woman is recommended..." *Library Journal*

"Particularly fascinating are her descriptions of her intentions in creating certain dances and the struggle between directing dancers and allowing improvisation to color the work. The explorations of the Judson crew, including Rainer, continue to influence contemporary dance, and Rainer's chronicle of her journey as an artist is a winning addition to the literature about this groundbreaking era." *Publishers Weekly*

This is a beautiful piece of writing and one of the most candid memoirs of the artist as a young woman that I have read. Although dance is not one of my major interests, I found Rainer's attraction to performing and her development as a dancer fascinating and applicable to anyone passionate about any field. Her descriptions of family members and her account of the difficulties of integrating sexual/intimate relationships and her work life are particularly moving and compelling. I was sorry when the book ended and recommend it particularly to young women trying to compose their lives. Also, the book itself is a delight to look at: great paper, interesting photographs and quality production.

this is by far an amazing dance book ...it is deep and profound...a record of process. I knew Yvonne way back then when I would photograph her when she was studying with Dunn and Merce...and doing the beginnings of her dance work...I loved this book in its personal slant...a portrait of those times...

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