



# Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture

*Jonathan D. Katz, David C. Ward*

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**An entirely new interpretation of modern American portraiture based on the history of sexual difference.**

*Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture*, companion volume to an exhibition of the same name at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, traces the defining presence of same-sex desire in American portraiture through a seductive selection of more than 140 full-color illustrations, drawings, and portraits from leading American artists. Arcing from the turn of the twentieth century, through the emergence of the modern gay liberation movement in 1969, the tragedies of the AIDS epidemic, and to the present, *Hide/Seek* openly considers what has long been suppressed or tacitly ignored, even by the most progressive sectors of our society: the influence of gay and lesbian artists in creating American modernism.

*Hide/Seek* shows how questions of gender and sexual identity dramatically shaped the artistic practices of influential American artists such as Thomas Eakins, Romaine Brooks, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O'Keeffe, Charles Demuth, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Andrew Wyeth, Andy Warhol, Robert Mapplethorpe, and many more—in addition to artists of more recent works such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Glenn Ligon, Catherine Opie, and Cass Bird. The authors argue that despite the late-nineteenth-century definition and legal codification of the “homosexual,” in reality, questions of sexuality always remained fluid and continually redefined by artists concerned with the act of portrayal. In particular, gay and lesbian artists—of but not fully in the society they portrayed—occupied a position of influential marginality, from which vantage point they crafted innovative and revolutionary ways of painting portraits. Their resistance to society's attempt to proscribe them forced them to develop new visual vocabularies by which to code, disguise, and thereby express their subjects' identities—and also their own.

Bringing together for the first time new scholarship in the history of American sexuality and new research in American portraiture, *Hide/Seek* charts the heretofore hidden impact of gay and lesbian artists on American art and portraiture and creates the basis for the necessary reassessment of the careers of major American artists—both gay and straight—as well as of portraiture itself.

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