



(Duke University Press, 2006)

Why do most women adore Bettie Page but not *Playboy* centerfolds? According to Maria Elena Buszek, it's the difference between a transgressive pin-up and a chauvinistic one. In *Pin-up Grrrls*, Buszek unpacks the pin-up's cultural history and unravels its visual language in order to reveal the role of sexuality in feminism. Hugh Hefner's bunnies began as a response to a post-WWII environment, in which homecoming soldiers wanted women to submit to the non-threatening fantasy of the happy homemaker with a naughty side. In contrast, alternative magazines like *Bizarre* published pin-ups of Page, an aesthetic that evolved from mid 19th century burlesque performers, who found that by publicly defining their sexuality, they could also control it. Those burlesque actresses had been the first women to employ public sexuality as a form of empowerment, but soon even female activists in the suffrage and workers' rights movements followed suit. As the pin-up became appropriated into publications that solely targeted males, third-wave feminist artists like Cindy Sherman worked to reclaim the form for women.

Buszek's academic background in art history allows her to convincingly dispute the notion of the pin-up as merely objectifying women, and her selection of archival images is a feast for the eyes. Through her detailed historical account, she shows that the advent of the pin-up was women's coming-out party, although with nearly 150 years of evidence to present, the allure of the genre gets lost under all that proof. *BUST* readers will still no doubt devour this intergenerational exposé of how strong women asserted themselves, their whole selves—including those lovely legs, bodacious busts, and devilish derrières. [AMANDA MCCORQUODALE]



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