



# Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture

*Maria Elena Buszek*

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Subverting stereotypical images of women, a new generation of feminist artists is remaking the pin-up, much as Annie Sprinkle, Cindy Sherman, and others did in the 1970s and 1980s. As shocking as contemporary feminist pin-ups are intended to be, perhaps more surprising is that the pin-up has been appropriated by women for their own empowerment since its inception more than a century ago. *Pin-Up Grrrls* tells the history of the pin-up from its birth, revealing how its development is intimately connected to the history of feminism. Maria Elena Buszek documents the genre's 150-year history with more than 100 illustrations, many never before published.

Beginning with the pin-up's origins in mid-nineteenth-century *carte-de-visite* photographs of burlesque performers, Buszek explores how female sex symbols, including Adah Isaacs Menken and Lydia Thompson, fought to exert control over their own images. Buszek analyzes the evolution of the pin-up through the advent of the New Woman, the suffrage movement, fanzine photographs of early film stars, the Varga Girl illustrations that appeared in *Esquire* during World War II, the early years of *Playboy* magazine, and the recent revival of the genre in appropriations by third-wave feminist artists. A fascinating combination of art history and cultural history, *Pin-Up Grrrls* is the story of how women have publicly defined and represented their sexuality since the 1860s.

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