

# 20 Best Art Books of 2021

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This month, our editors and writers have selected their favorite art books of 2021, featuring interviews, anthologies, photography, critical writings, and more, from authors and artists such as Gillian Laub, Robert Storr, Sky Hopinka, and Édouard Glissant, among others.

## **Godzilla: Asian American Arts Network 1990–2001**

**Edited by Howie Chen (Primary Information, 2021)**

With over 500 pages of archival materials, this anthology documents the origins and activities of the New York-based Godzilla collective, founded in 1990 by Ken Chu, Bing Lee, and Margo Machida with the stated goal of providing a forum for mutual support and exchange among Asian American artists. Editor Howie Chen has compiled scans of the group's newsletters and meeting notes, critical essays, open letters, catalogue texts, and other correspondences to build a picture of a decade of dialogue, resistance, and exchange. Early activity centered on institutional representation, with a focus on the lack of Asian American artists in the 1991

Whitney Biennial, and scandals surrounding Franklin Furnace's exhibition of takeout menus and an NEA grant to Mel Chin. Flipping through the book's xerox-aesthetic pages provides a view into the humble roots of community organizing—potlucks, fundraising asks—as well as a galvanizing account of Godzilla's struggles and successes. That the group's often fiery letters led to open dialogues with the same institutions they critiqued speaks to the fundamentally constructive nature of their program. The anthology ends with Godzilla members' withdrawal from the Museum of Chinese in America's planned 2020 retrospective *Godzilla vs. The Art World:1990-2001* in light of the museum's confused messaging on the construction of a new jail in Chinatown and its own recent city funding. That postscript embodies the consistent spirit found in this book's pages; reading through them is a reminder that community building is itself a form of resistance. *—Louis Block*

