

Second Skin: Josephine Baker & the Modern Surface



Through the figure of Josephine Baker, *Second Skin* tells the story of an unexpected yet enduring intimacy between the invention of a modernist style and the theatricalization of black skin at the turn of the twentieth century. Stepping outside of the platitudes surrounding this iconic figure, Anne A. Cheng argues that Baker's famous nakedness must be understood within larger philosophic and aesthetic debates about, and desire for, pure surface that crystallized at the convergence of modern art, architecture, machinery, and philosophy. Through Cheng's analysis, Baker emerges as a central artist whose work engages with and impacts various modes of modernist display such as film, photography, art, and even the modern house.

Anne Cheng's brilliant new book, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*, asks to be undressed. Sliding off its translucent sleeve, we see a Second Skin. Josephine Baker & the Modern Surface. Anne Anlin Cheng. Offers the first sustained and serious study of Baker's art. Addresses African American dancer Josephine Baker was one of the most iconic performers. Through the figure of Josephine Baker, *Second Skin* tells the story of an unexpected yet enduring intimacy between the invention of a modernist style and the theatricalization of black skin at the turn of the twentieth century. Stepping outside of the platitudes surrounding this iconic figure, Anne A. Cheng argues that Baker's famous nakedness must be understood within larger philosophic and aesthetic debates about, and desire for, pure surface that crystallized at the convergence of modern art, architecture, machinery, and philosophy. Through Cheng's analysis, Baker emerges as a central artist whose work engages with and impacts various modes of modernist display such as film, photography, art, and even the modern house.

Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Pp. 256. \$49.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper. Read *Second Skin: Josephine Baker & the Modern Surface* by Anne Anlin Cheng with Rakuten Kobo.

Through the figure of Josephine Baker, *Second Skin* tells