



Dime-Store Alchemy: The Art of Joseph Cornell **(New York Review Books Classics)**

Charles Simic

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In *Dime-Store Alchemy*, poet Charles Simic reflects on the life and work of Joseph Cornell, the maverick surrealist who is one of America's great artists. Simic's spare prose is as enchanting and luminous as the mysterious boxes of found objects for which Cornell is justly renowned.

In a work that is in various degrees biography, criticism, and sheer poetry, Simic tells the story of Cornell's life and illuminates the hermetic mysteries of his extraordinary boxes—objects in which private obsessions were alchemically transformed into enduring works of art. Simic sees Cornell's work as exemplifying a distinctively American aesthetic, open to the world, improvisatory, at once homemade and universal, modest and teasing and profound. Full of unexpected riches, *Dime-Store Alchemy* is both an entrancing meditation on the nature of art and a perfect introduction to a major American artist by one of his peers—a book that can be perused at length or dipped into at leisure again and again.

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