Books

Exhibitionist

By Peter Mendelsund ’91CC.

By
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|
Fall 2025



From *Exhibitionist*, by Peter Mendelsund © 2025 Catapult Books, reprinted with permission.

Peter Mendelsund ’91CC is not new to the artistic process: an award-winning book-cover designer, he has also performed as a classical pianist and written several books, and he currently serves as the creative director of *The Atlantic.* But during the pandemic, his mental-health struggles took him down a new path — to abstract painting. Nearly paralyzed by depression, Mendelsund spent his days isolated in a barn, teaching himself to paint while agonizing over his inability to write or even read. He tormented and wrecked his canvases, searching for a way back to his creative nature. The result was his new book, *Exhibitionist*, a memoir of this time, featuring one hundred of his paintings. In it, Mendelsund recalls a conversation with

his mother, who was skeptical of the genre. “Why go on about yourself, about your past?” she said. “Memoirs are so exhibitionist.” Mendelsund’s book both challenges and embraces that notion. A blunt and starkly honest account of a difficult time in his life, it also serves as a poetic meditation on art and expression.

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