



Artful Volumes

CHRISTOPHER LYON REVIEWS THIS SEASON'S NOTEWORTHY ART BOOKS.



Charlie Chaplin, *Mabel at the Wheel*, 1914, 35 mm, black-and-white, silent, 23 minutes 18 seconds.

The genius of Charlie Chaplin was quickly recognized, but the evidence of his achievements prior to World War I was already fading from view as World War II approached. In about 1940, the Chaplin authority H. D. Waley created an extraordinary photo album that recovered the silent-film star's early on-screen history.

Oversize and slipcased, **CHARLIE CHAPLIN: THE KEYSTONE ALBUM: THE INVENTION OF THE TRAMP** (Éditions Xavier Barral/ARTBOOK DAP, \$180) is a near facsimile of Waley's never-published album, featuring a post binding—rivets securing the spine—and pages with the fore-edge fold that albums of the time also typically had. The original's seventy-two pages, with handwritten captions, include nearly eight hundred frame enlargements, illustrating twenty-nine of the three dozen short movies Chaplin appeared in for the Keystone Film Company in 1914—the year he devised his signature comic persona, the Tramp. It spreads that unfold like storyboards, the album walks us through each of these comedies, which varied in length from half a reel to two reels (about thirty minutes) to the six-reel, feature-length film *Tillie's Punctured Romance*. In them, Chaplin relentlessly seeks love, is thwarted by rivals, and is pursued by (who else?) Keystone cops; but their range and sophistication go beyond such clichés of the era. For example, where silent-film actors in women's clothes typically emphasize a farcical discrepancy between costume and anatomy, *The Masquerader* features Chaplin looking quite glamorous in drag—nearly seventy years before *Tootsie*.