



# Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others

By Sara K Schneider

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## Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others By Sara K Schneider

Just like Scheherazade, undercover agents talk to save their lives. Only if they put in a poor performance, they don't see the curtain rise again. *Art of Darkness* pries open the virtuoso identity techniques practiced by undercover operatives, fugitives, disguise artists, pranksters, con artists, and federally protected witnesses. It draws on original interviews with undercover operators in order to show how identity artists on both sides of the law obtain fake ID, develop a disguise, build a cover story, maintain believability in street performances, and deal with threats to their identities all without formal acting training. *Art of Darkness* inhabits the grey areas of morality as it exposes identity roleplays at the borders of lawfulness. In it you'll find stories of: law-enforcement workers who adopt the techniques of criminals in order to catch them but somehow get caught up in their own trick identities; self-defined artists whose work also has a criminal dimension; criminal informants who masterfully play sides and roles against each other; and hoaxsters and impersonators who may perform trick identities primarily for gain but do so with tremendous inventiveness and a directorial consciousness. This book may explode any remaining notion you harbor that you are not at some level a member of the intelligence community, discerning who is for real and who is presenting a self for personal gain.

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## **Editorial Review**

### Review

A fascinating and compelling book that describes the variety of ploys, stratagems, techniques, and methods used by undercover agents. There is no aspect of being an undercover agent that the author does not discuss in a sophisticated yet absorbing manner. ... The author interviewed people associated with federal, local and private law enforcement agencies involved in a variety of undercover operations. She interviewed those who train people in this art as well as the operatives themselves. In addition, she observed undercover recruits and veterans as they were being trained. However, she did more than just observe and ask questions, she also participated in some of the field role-playing exercises the trainees performed. The book is rich in both analyses and descriptions of such things as: how undercover agents create and internalize a false identity, create believable cover stories, switch from their real to their false identities, and cope with the ever-present possibility of their covers being blown. ...

Her data are exemplifications of many sociological and social psychological concepts, issues and perspectives, ... such as: person-role fit, role conflict, identity transformations, role strain, multiple identities, role exit and entrance, self-monitoring, occupational socialization, master status, role distance, self-selection phenomenon, emotional labor, and working personality. ...

A major plus of the book is how the author seamlessly integrates major points with quotations from undercover operatives, their instructors and other law enforcement personnel.

The level of discourse is similar to pieces in the *New York Times* magazine. The book would certainly be suitable for anyone aspiring to a career in law enforcement in general and as an undercover operative in particular. **Thus professors teaching courses in criminal justice would want to consider adopting this book.** In addition, since the book is so rich in dimensions of undercover work that are exemplars of behavioral science concepts and topics, adventurous professors could have their students taking micro theory or social psychology courses identify and discuss them. It would be a great exercise and result in deeper processing of the material. It would also show the relevance of the sociological concepts. Since being an undercover agent is a kind of extreme form of covert participant observation, the book would be useful for graduate courses in methodology that emphasize participant observation. The problems, dilemmas and strains inherent in this form of research are illustrated and discussed. ...

The book has endnotes and a quite extensive bibliography for readers who would like to do further research about the topic. --*Teaching Sociology*

Deception is not strictly the avenue of the criminal. *Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others* is a look at the many uses of deception and how it has been applied on any and all sides of the law. Gathering complex tales of how these disguises have been used to track down con men and how con men have swindled thousands of dollars and made their form of crime something to be viewed as an art form, *Art of Darkness* is an intriguing piece of nonfiction all the way through. ***Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others* is highly recommended for community library true crime collections.** --*Midwest Book Review*

Praise for Sara K. Schneider's *Vital Mummies*: A most valuable contribution. ... Schneider has captured the fine details of the convergence of eros and thanatos in the department store window display. ... Beautifully

written, reflecting perhaps the rigorous presentational standards of her subject not a word is wasted. --Dean MacCannell, author of *The Tourist*

Happily avoids the kind of impermeable goobledygook that envelops so much that is written about contemporary culture. ... a unique intellectual contribution. --Stuart Ewen, author of *All Consuming Images: The Politics of Style in Contemporary Culture*

Praise for Sara K. Schneider's *Concert Song as Seen*  
Erudite. --*New York Native*

#### About the Author

Sara K. Schneider, Ph.D. writes and teaches about body-based learning and bodily expressions of culture. She is also the author of *Vital Mummies: Performance Design for the Show-Window Mannequin* and *Concert Song as Seen: Kinesthetic Aspects of Musical Interpretation*. She lives in Chicago.

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#### Christopher Hill:

This Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others is great book for you because the content and that is full of information for you who all always deal with world and possess to make decision every minute. This book reveal it data accurately using great coordinate word or we can state no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only offers you straight forward sentences but challenging core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others in your hand like getting the world in your arm, facts in it is not ridiculous one. We can say that no publication that offer you world inside ten or fifteen small right but this guide already do that. So , this

really is good reading book. Hey there Mr. and Mrs. occupied do you still doubt in which?

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