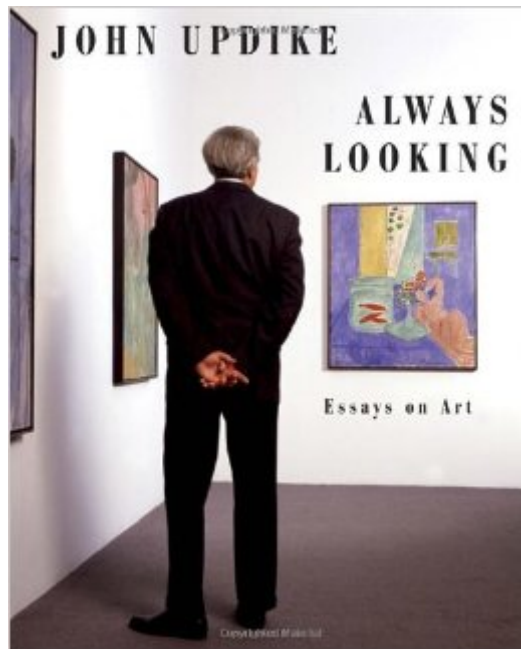


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Always Looking: Essays On Art



Synopsis

In this posthumous collection of John Updike's art writings, a companion volume to the acclaimed *Just Looking* (1989) and *Still Looking* (2005), readers are again treated to a remarkably elegant essays (Newsday) in which the psychological concerns of the novelist drive the eye from work to work until a deep understanding of the art emerges (The New York Times Book Review). *Always Looking* opens with "The Clarity of Things," the Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities for 2008. Here, in looking closely at individual works by Copley, Homer, Eakins, Norman Rockwell, and others, the author teases out what is characteristically "American" in American art. This talk is followed by fourteen essays, most of them written for *The New York Review of Books*, on certain highlights in Western art of the last two hundred years: the iconic portraits of Gilbert Stuart and the sublime landscapes of Frederic Edwin Church, the series paintings of Monet and the monotypes of Degas, the richly patterned canvases of Vuillard and the golden extravagances of Klimt, the cryptic triptychs of Beckmann, the personal graffiti of Miró, the verbal-visual puzzles of Magritte, and the monumental Pop of Oldenburg and Lichtenstein. The book ends with a consideration of recent works by a living American master, the steely sculptural environments of Richard Serra. John Updike was a gallery-goer of genius. *Always Looking* is, like everything else he wrote, an invitation to look, to see, to apprehend the visual world through the eyes of a connoisseur.

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Customer Reviews

Arguably America's last great man of letters, the late John Updike's interests ranged from art, to literature, children's books, and occasionally to golf. With the exception of literature, in which he wrote from the perspective of a foremost practitioner, he was, as he admits himself, more of a well-informed dabbler. Therein lies the charm of this book, capturing his observations on art by collecting various pieces he wrote, primarily for the NYRB, New Republic, and for honorary lectures. They are not the observations of an "art critic" per se, but of a professed non-expert (like most of us), who was at the same time, one of the most profoundly literate, and intelligent men of his era. In short, he approached art in the way most of us do, as an amateur, yet with far greater artistic gifts and sensibilities than certainly I, and probably most people, could ever dream of. Thus, I found his observation to be so helpful to me -- like, "yes, that is exactly the same question I had, and, of course, that is exactly what I was sorta' thinking, but couldn't quite get too." In short, I enjoyed lingering on every page of this book, with its lovely reproductions of the art Updike is describing (I only wish that more of the painting/art were actually pictured), and of course, the mind of John Updike himself, who loved art, and who took time from his too short, but marvelously productive literary life to explain art to those of us who shared his passion for it, using the full range of his immense intellectual and humanistic gifts.

Only a few people can use words to help one see. Sometimes art writers use words are used to impress each other I fear. . Clarity abounds in this celebrated authors insights. Who knew he was an art groupie?

This amazing American Man of Letters combines his knowledge of art (Oxford-Ruskin School) with his skill of observation and writing to product an interesting and informative art review book.

John Updike is a superb, entertaining and insightful writer. Obviously enjoys his gallery and museum visits. Conveys far more than just what he sees. He skillfully expresses a deep appreciation of artists, their creativity and historical context, including other artists influences.If you want to understand the artists he address, John Updike is the writer to read!

I enjoyed this, the third in a series of essay on art. I only wish the illustrations could have been larger to enable the reader to fully appreciate Updike's critiques.

A thoughtful review of famous and lesser known artists and sculptures. Each review delightfully

described something new about their unique works. Well worth exploring!

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