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The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside Companion To The History Of Western Art



Synopsis

We were Guerillas before we were Gorillas. From the beginning, the press wanted publicity photos. We needed a disguise. No one remembers, for sure, how we got our fur, but one story is that at an early meeting, an original Girl, a bad speller, wrote 'Gorilla' instead of 'Guerilla.' It was an enlightening mistake. It gave us our mask-ularity. Ever wonder about the abundance of naked male statues in the Classical section of your favorite museum? Did you know medieval convents were hotbeds of female artistic expression? And how did those "bad boy" artists of the twentieth century make it even harder for a girl to get a break? Thanks to the Guerrilla Girls, those masked feminists whose mission it is to break the white male stronghold over the art world, art history-as we know it-is history. Taking you back through the ages, the Guerrilla Girls demonstrate how males (particularly white males) have dominated the art scene, and discouraged, belittled, or obscured women's involvement. Their skeptical and hilarious interpretations of "popular" theory are augmented by the newest research and the expertise of prominent feminist art historians. "Believe-it-or-not" quotations from some of the "experts" are sprinkled throughout, as are the Guerrilla Girls' signature masterpieces: reproductions of famous art works, slightly "altered" for historic accuracy and vindication. This colorful reinterpretation of classic and modern art, as outrageous as it is visually arresting, is a much-needed corrective to traditional art history, and an unabashed celebration of female artists.

Book Information

Paperback: 96 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; First Edition edition (February 1, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 014025997X

ISBN-13: 978-0140259971

Product Dimensions: 7.9 x 0.2 x 9.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (35 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #36,058 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #3 in [Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > Themes > Women in Art](#) #148 in [Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History](#) #233 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Gender Studies](#)

Customer Reviews

The Guerrilla Girls' Bedside companion to the History of Western Art succeeds on several levels. First of all, it works on a visual level, with graphics that draw you in immediately. But after you are drawn in, one is equally impressed by the text, which is simultaneously informative and humorous. Between the David Letterman-like top 10 lists, the cartoons, and the collages, one is constantly entertained while simultaneously becoming outraged by outdated, demeaning quotes about women from well-known men. At the same time, one learns a lot about some female artists that have been ignored during our art history studies, and one sees a different perspective on some more famous female artists that were mentioned but treated with less admiration than they probably deserved. All in all, this book succeeds as an extension of the Guerrilla Girls performance art, reaching out to those of us who couldn't go to a New York opening and see it crashed by these women in Gorilla masks. Hopefully soon, partially thanks to books like this, more people will wonder why most of the nudes in museums are women, while so few of the artists represented in these museums are of that same gender.

This book takes you, with biting wit and humor, beyond the works of "accepted" masters (all of whom I deeply admire, by the way), showing you that for every renaissance man, there was an Artemisia Gentileschi. That among the plethora of still lifes from the 17th and 18th centuries, you that you would do well to study those of Rachel Rueysch, who captures every petal and leaf with intoxicating detail and color. They were able, even with my deep-seated resistance to "modern art", to instill in me a deep appreciation for works of impressionists, modernists, post-modernists and abstract artists. In short, an ideal starting point for those looking to delve into art history, yet still ideal for those academics with short attentions spans. I only wish it were longer!

An absolute fun read for lovers of art history! This book gives a brief history of women in art, challenges they faced (and still face today), and the roles of women from classical times through the present time. Just who are the Guerrilla Girls'? They are a group of artists and arts professionals, who in the 1980's, decided to fight discrimination in the art world and become the self-proclaimed "conscience of the art world." "We wore gorilla masks to keep the focus on the issues rather than our personalities." The Guerrilla Girls' begin with the images of women from the Classical Era, where reliefs of s decorated buildings, but an ancient Greek or Roman "women could not vote or engage in transactions worth more than a grain of barley." Travel through the Middle Ages where Hildegard von Bingen decorated beautiful texts and Christine de Pizan made her living as a writer (the first woman known to have done so!) The journey continues through the Renaissance with Lavinia

Fontana, Sofonisba Anguissola, and Artemisia Gentileschi, through the 17th and 18th centuries with Judith Leyster and Angelica Kauffman; all on the way to the 20th century and Frida Kahlo, Lee Krasner, and Eva Hesse. What makes this book so much more interesting than the other books coming out on women artists, is the humor the Guerrilla Girls' use to get the point across and the graphic nature of the book itself. Each page is filled with examples of artwork and fun graphics.

women have been left out of, and shortchanged, in the art world. This is a book with interesting information about female artists that you may not have come across before. The writers are activists for women in art. The cartoony character of the book, while whimsical, makes one wish for a larger book on the topic with more information. It's great as far as it goes.

A delightful expose on women artists gives just enough information for researchers to build on. I use this book for my Women Artist class and add to the Guerilla Girls information with additional images both from the women artists themselves and from male artists with similar themes as a point for class discussion. Would love to see a more extensive book but maybe I should do that myself!

I love the breezy tone of this book and the few artists they picked to talk about are good. However, they stop after Eva Hesse and Ana Mendieta, and only include those two because they died young. Verdict: great for pre-WWI artists, not so great after.

Got it as a required text for my History of Women in the Arts class. It's an enjoyable read, and can be tackled in a couple of hours. Kinda approaches women's art from a political perspective - the lack of representation of women in art exhibits, despite them being the majority of the world's artists.

The Guerilla Girls simply have no equal; the book is genuinely fascinating, and also full of annoying tidbits of how the art world has worked against women artists throughout the ages; notably good artwork and layouts, which adds to the enjoyment of the read. I couldn't put it down. If you're a woman artist, this is a must-read: you need to know where you fit into "the big picture" so to speak.

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