FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥

100 Best Paintings in New York

Deanna MacDonald
Geoffrey Smith
Interlink Books (October 2007)
Softcover $22.00 (256pp)
978-1-56656-696-4

“I paint myself because I am so often alone, because I am the subject I know best,” said Frida Kahlo. Her painting, *Self-Portrait with Cropped Hair*, is in the Museum of Modern Art. Created in 1940, shortly after her divorce from muralist Diego Rivera, Kahlo is dressed in men’s clothes, sitting in a chair with short hair, scissors in hand; she looks sad, yet strong.

100 Best Paintings in New York presents fine art selections by MacDonald, art historian and former McGill University art history professor, and Smith, art connoisseur and author of *100 Best Paintings in London*. Nine museums are included, ranging from the Frick Collection to the Whitney Museum of American Art. Their locations and hours are provided as well as facts about the museums: Solomon R. Guggenheim commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright in 1934 to design a permanent structure for his modern art collection; construction of the Guggenheim Museum was started in 1956 and was finished in 1959 with its “modernist symphony of spiraling forms.”

Each museum section consists of anecdotal information on the painter and a description of the art. One learns, for example, that Frida was married to Rivera twice, that one of her paramours was the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky, and that she “depicted images of naïve, bright color and flattened forms, a style inspired by Mexican folk art.” The painting is described with imaginative palette: “Her freshly cut locks, surreally animated, seem almost to crawl over the floor and chair.”

Complementing the vignettes are Contemporary Works sidebars; in the case of Kahlo: “1940 Edward Hopper: *Gas*, New York, MOMA.” Chronology corners provide significant dates in the artists’ lives, for Kahlo (1907-1954): “1925: Begins to paint while recovering from serious injuries incurred during a bus accident.”

At the Metropolitan Museum of Art one finds *The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* where Jesus fed 5,000 of his followers with five barley loaves and two fishes. With trenchant and whimsical observation the authors comment, “In typical Tintoretto fashion, the artist takes this moving holy event and turns it into a party” resembling a “courtly picnic rather than a New Testament parable.” Additional comments concern the painting’s Venetian Mannerism style of the sixteenth century.

The 5“ x 9“ guide book could have been improved by noting the dimensions of the art. Also, one wants the color paintings to be larger for closer observation, but it’s impractical in this convenient travel size. The diminutive pictures, however, act as an inducement to visit the museums.

This is a jewelry box of a book for tourists and museum visitors looking to maximize their time with exquisite art.

(August 15, 2008)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission’s 16 CFR, Part 255.