



Talking to a Portrait: Tales of an Art Curator

Rosalind Pepall

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Talking to a Portrait is a rare glimpse into the world of fine art galleries and museums that contains the delights, blunders, research, conversations, and inspiration of curating an exhibition. This memoir from one of Canada's foremost curators spans a distinguished career studded with fascinating and notable objects, paintings, and works of art.

Rosalind Pepall came to fine art through the side door at the age of twenty-three. She's a nontraditional curator; her perspective enlivens centuries-old works. In 1978, she began her thirty-year tenure at the Museum of Fine Arts in Montreal as Curator of Canadian Art. Drawing on her access to some of the world's finest art, Pepall shares complex, detailed insights into the qualities that make art memorable, valuable, and relevant.

The text is rich, informative, and accessible. Gorgeous full-color plates accompany each chapter for reference. Pepall links each to Canada's art traditions and her personal experiences, and her descriptions have the intimate flavor of an exclusive preview. Her selection of works includes paintings; glass, metal, and wood pieces; installation art; and architectural details. This diversity results in a vision of art as more than that which is confined by a frame or anchored in a gallery.

Pepall animates the selected works and humanizes them, showing how to enter each piece and, once there, how to get comfortable with seeing the world in a new way. Preparing for an exhibition of Tiffany glass, she notes: "Fractured bits of green glass might be scattered like confetti over clear molten glass to imitate the density and rustling of tree leaves." The spaces within the museum are given as much attention as the works they house, resulting in a sensuous, satisfying virtual tour.

Even for those unfamiliar with fine art, *Talking to a Portrait* is a captivating memoir.

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