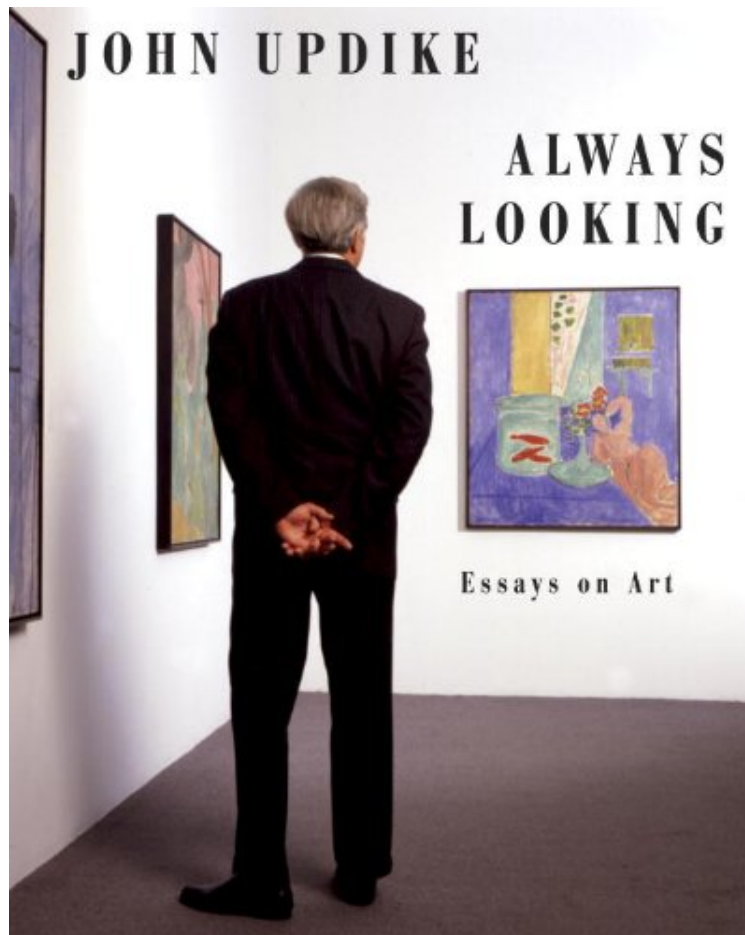


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Always Looking: Essays on Art

John Updike

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John Updike : Always Looking: Essays on Art before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Always Looking: Essays on Art:

29 of 29 people found the following review helpful. Updike at His Relaxed BestBy Great Faulkner's GhostArguably 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. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An interesting path in the art and literature. By Edoardo Angeloni Here Updike defines his back-ground by a point of view of art. First we can learn the characteristics of important painters of landscapes, or of human faces of great personalities. Those aspects run with a certain interest by the lector, but, when Updike passes to consider the great painters of our times, the context becomes of true importance. In fact the author is so able to make an approach between art, philosophy and literature, producing connections between several aspects of the modern culture. We know sufficiently the role of Updike as teacher of the word, here we can see the same fact about the image: therefore a great interpreter of the modernity. A great lesson which today is still unease to forget. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great book. By Edith Lorah I love this book. Pictures and comments are great.

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 "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 Miro, 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.

From Booklist In the third volume of his *Looking* series of art-essay collections, following *Just Looking* (1989) and *Still Looking* (2005), and published posthumously, Updike expands on his articulation of the complex pleasures of intense scrutiny. He is sensuously receptive and discerningly critical as he peers closely and steps back for a more encompassing gaze to assess how each artist brings paint to life. Most of the essays are scintillating and learned biographical and aesthetic responses to major museum exhibits of such artists as Edouard Vuillard, Rene Magritte, Max Beckmann, Joan Miro, and Richard Serra. But in "The Clarity of Things," his 2008 Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, Updike discusses *Picturing America*—a set of 40 reproductions created by the American Library Association and the National Endowment for the Humanities for use in schools and libraries, taking fresh approaches to Gilbert Stuart, Winslow Homer, and Norman Rockwell and posing and answering the question, "What is American about American art?" For all their immediacy, Updike's vital works of art criticism are timeless. --Donna Seaman About the Author John Updike was the author of more than sixty books, including twenty-three novels and dozens of collections of short stories, poems, and criticism. His work has been honored with the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the Gold Medal for Fiction of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He died in January 2009. Christopher Carduff is a member of the staff of The Library of America and the editor of John Updike's *Higher Gossip: Essays and Criticism*.