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Dan Franck, Cynthia Liebow (Memoir by)

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A legendary capital of the arts, Paris hosted some of the most legendary developments in world culture -- particularly at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the flowering of fauvism, cubism, dadaism, and surrealism. In *Bohemian Paris*, Dan Franck leads us on a vivid and magical tour of the Paris of 1900-1930, a hotbed of artistic creation where we encounter Apollinaire, Modigliani, Cocteau, Matisse, Picasso, Hemingway, and Fitzgerald, working, loving, and struggling to stay afloat. 16 pages of black-and-white illustrations are featured.

Bohemian Paris: Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse and the Birth of Modern Art Details

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From Reader Review Bohemian Paris: Picasso, Modigliani, Matisse and the Birth of Modern Art for online ebook

Michelle says

I should say that I perused this book, rather than actually read it. A perfect addition for Francophiles and lovers of the Belle Époque and twenties era in Paris. I thought it would make a nice and succinct segue after reading "Murder Below Montparnasse" by Cara Black, which involves a mystery surrounding a missing Modigliani painting (painter in early 20th century Paris). It's a heavy read, though, with lots of Parisian Boho names and faces- some are familiar, many are not. I felt as though I should read this and write a term paper, as it borders on the academic side, although there is a whimsy to his writing but I can't tell if it was the author's intention or due to the translation.

Perhaps if I had more time with it, and owned it rather than borrowed from the library, I would actually read all the way through. I did have enjoy a nice glass of a delicious cotes du rhone and read sections of the book while the sun set on a balmy early evening last week, and this is the mood one must have while reading "Bohemian Paris". Makes me want to go back to France tout de suite!

Mikey B. says

They are all in here – Picasso, Modigliani, Rousseau, Gertrude Stein, Duchamp, Man Ray with a sprinkling of Hemingway. The book is a series of short vignettes on the daily life in Montmartre and Montparnasse with the drugs, the poverty the sex...

Sometimes I feel the author is too dismissive of the emotional toll on the lives of the women who were used/abused/discard with regularity by these artists and some make-believe artists. And the vignettes become repetitive, but entertaining nonetheless.

What is intriguing is that Paris was the centre for art, culture and experimentation from 1900 thru the 1930's, but was gradually replaced by New York (the occupation during the war accomplished the final transfer).

emm says

Yes, I read both books. I'll restate that I'm a Bibliophile and a Francophile and 'je suis une parisienne' in my head (to borrow a line from Wendy Williams) so I had to read them both!

I gave this version a higher rating because I liked this version just a bit more. Mostly because Dan Franck being French was writing on piece of his own history and culture. It's like this: no one can talk about oranges but Florida and actually know what the hell they're talkin' about.

Books like this I love because they're not only good stories but they were true and we've heard of these artists and we've heard of their work and now we know what's behind their poems and stories. It's one thing to read or see or listen to person's art but there's nothing like understanding them and books like this help you do that.

Lauren Albert says

The People Magazine of Bohemian Paris. Franck seems at times a little too breathlessly excited by all the excitement. And as with all excitement when its gone on for too long, the excitement becomes tedious.

Lu says

I found the book too fragmented. It was rather like listening to a person tell a long convoluted story which goes down every tangential bunny trail. Sometimes less is more.

Amy says

This is a kind of gossip rag for the painters and poets, mostly men, in Paris from roughly 1900-1950. I was surprised that there were no women profiled, except for the occasional muse or lover and of course Gertrude Stein. I'm going to have to read Women of the Left Bank, I guess.

Anyway, the names profiled jump from one to another with no connection other than they all know each other because they were artists and in the same circle. There were also names of cafe owners, benefactors, art dealers and others in position to keep the artists alive during the war. They were starving to death.

Obviously there's a lot to gossip about, the book is pretty long. After 300 pages I couldn't remember some of the lesser known artists and I got distracted.

When Surrealism jumps into the picture things get interesting again. They profile Antonin Artaud but don't even mention the Theatre of Cruelty. Anyway, good stories.

Sharon says

An absolutely fascinating book: part art history, part cultural anthropology and many parts biography.

Franck examines Parisian art and artists from 1900-1930, beginning with the Fauvists and ending with the Surrealists. In between explaining the movements, he provides outstanding autobiographical information on the artists. Not only does he talk about their lives, he talks about their love affairs and their friendships (or lack thereof) with one another. Historical photographs round out an interesting and scholarly presentation.

Highly recommended for those with an interest in art from this period.

Nicole Wilson says

This is like no other historical non-fiction book I've read. It takes a unique approach to telling the stories of these artists and their lives - the places they lived, the places they ate, the women they loved. Its totally engaging and especially so if you love Paris and Picasso like I do..

Amy says

Picked this up after seeing "Midnight in Paris." It covers the artists and poets in Montmartre and Montparnasse from roughly 1900-1920. Pranks and squabbles and genuine friendships. Vivid descriptions of Paris. Interesting stuff, but didn't really satisfy my curiosity about the time period.

Interesting to note whose names are still big, 100 years later. The author assumed all of the names were familiar, which I think was optimistic of him. A reader with a degree in art history or French literature might find this book not scholarly enough; a reader without that degree often feels lost.

Picasso gets a lot of air-time, all very unflattering. Modigliani gets some attention (not sure it's enough to qualify for the book's subtitle, though). Matisse barely appears. Gertrude Stein weaves in and out. Chagall turns up for a few pages, then disappears (same with the Dadaists, although that sort of makes sense). Kiki turns up at the end, along with the post-WWI Americans, but the book is wrapping up at this point. Guillaume Apollinaire gets the most attention in the book. If you like Apollinaire, you'll learn almost every thought he had, about every mistress and every scrap of lint in his pockets. Max Jacobs was the most compelling character. I wanted to yell at Picasso and hug Jacobs.

The book's organization was a mystery to me. Not always clear what each chapter was about. Were they written/translated by different people? I skimmed for fun/silly stories. Plenty of them, b/c these artists were wild, witty, and sometimes both. When the book slows down to capture a particular joke or meeting, it tells those stories well.

Kate Alexis says

I'm surprised by anyone who reads this book and doesn't give it 5 stars. I loved this book and plan on reading it again. This book goes to show you that a really great movie could be made about this era in French history. I loved reading this book so much that I actually put it down so I wouldn't finish it. Being in Paris while I was reading it was an extra bonus. Anyone who loves art and art history should read this book, but it is also a fantastical collection of strange and true happenings that will rivet any reader. **READ THIS BOOK!**

John Nelson says

The story of Bohemian artists in Paris from the 1890s through the 1930s. The book is a string of interlocking vignettes, organized more or less in chronological order, rather than a traditional history. The author focuses on the artists rather than their works of art, and presumes that the reader already possesses a great deal of familiarity with the persons discussed, which can pose a problem with regard to those personalities who are less well known. The book deals primarily with Continental European painters, and to a lesser extent, poets and novelists; the post-WWI American "Lost Generation" of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, and the rest hardly is mentioned.

The book makes the bohemian character clear: persons who chose to live for art above all else, in penury if

need be, though many had family money, and when their works started selling for large sums of money they universally were happy to take it. The bohemians organized their social lives around going out in groups of friends, to cafes, parties, plays, or whatever, rather than around family activities. This structure lent an adolescent character to the group, and sure enough, adolescent backbiting apparently was common. I have seen the same characteristic repeated in my own experience when adults organize their social lives around a large group, most prominently at the late, great University Club of Denver.

The book also contains a number of delectable bon mots, at least a few of which should be mentioned here. From Andre Salmon: "There once was a poet so poor, so badly lodged, and so lacking in any kind of comfort that when he was offered a chair by the Academie Francaise, he asked if he could take it home." And this, detailing a discussion between Picasso and a stranger while looking at a painting of Gertrude Stein which Picasso recently had completed: Stranger: "Is that Gertrude Stein?" Picasso: "Yes." Stranger: "It doesn't look like her." Picasso (shrugging his shoulders): "It doesn't make any difference; she will end up looking like it." Despite Picasso's assessment, even the notoriously ungainly Stein never decayed to the point of looking like one of his concoctions.

Erik Surewaard says

As far as my knowledge reaches, this is the only book so far that gives a good overview of the artistic revolution that took place in the late 19th and early 20th century. Starting with the impressionist revolution in Montmartre followed by amongst others the Paris School in Montparnasse (+ move of many impressionists to Montparnasse).

This book is not for the faint of heart. It would be good in case you are already aware of many artists during this period. The book discusses many many people from this area, ranging from painters, sculptors, poets, book authors, dealers, collectors, critics, photographers, .. 'Landmarks' of this period are also important to know like the bars / restos where the artists often made use of (Lapin Agile, Rotonde, Dome), the theatres, certain streets and houses where artists lived (e.g. Batteau Lavoir, La Ruche)

The only downside of this book is that it changes the subject a lot. But this is also the consequence of this book covering a lot of topics.

In my opinion this is a great book for the advanced reader of art. In case you are not aware of any impressionists or paris school painters, you better first start with other book like e.g. from Sue Roe. For me, this book easily deserves a four star rating.

Samantha says

A veritable panorama of Montmartre and Montparnasse in the early 20th century. Though the cover name-checks Picasso, Modigliani, and Matisse, the actual cast of characters is much larger, comprising everyone from Utrillo to Man Ray. Picasso is the anchor of sorts, as so much of the artistic scene of the time and place revolved around him. Matisse, Gertrude Stein, and Guillaume Apollinaire, as well as the various art dealers and critics who shaped the artists' careers, also play large parts. With the advent of the war and the setting's

shift across the Seine the book loses some of its focus, with short chapters focusing on less well-known Paris characters. Some of their stories, however, are rather interesting. The better-known American "expatriates" were, of course, not the whole story. Among the well-meaning and/or irascible cabaret owners and landlords, collectors, and fiery-tempered women were also other artists from as far afield as Poland or Japan who had flocked to Paris for its reputation and for its freedom. The scene couldn't last forever, however, and before the specter of the Nazis there was the doctrinaire infighting of the Surrealists and the retreat of many of the principal artists to either greener pastures or the grave. *Bohemian Paris* was an excellent and accessible overview of the artistic and literary ferment of that now bygone Paris.

Nevcihan Oktar says

Franck, "Geçmi?teki sanatç?lardan söz etmek ayn? zamanda günümüz sanatç?lar?n? da sevmektir" diyor. 1911 y?l?nda Mona Lisa'n?n Louvre'dan çal?nmas? büyük bir skandala neden olmu?, Louvre'dan Mona Lisa'y? de?il ama baz? nesneleri yürüttü?ünü aç?klayan Géry-Piéret ad?ndaki Belçikal?dan baz? heykelcikler sat?n alan Pablo Picasso'yu bir tela?t?r alm??t? Heykelcikler, Picasso ve Apollinaire dostlu?unun s?nand?? uzun bir macera sonucu Seine nehrine at?lmaktan kurtulup, Louvre'a geri döndü... Ama yüzy?l ba??nda Paris, modern sanat?n bu tart??mas?z ba?kenti, daha nice ilginç olaya gebeydi

Picasso'dan Matisse'e, Modigliani'den Man Ray'e, Apollinaire'den Hemingway'e, Braque'tan Breton'a, Max Jacob'tan Cocteau'ya, Cendrars'tan Desnos'a, Diego Rivera'dan Utrillo'ya, Tristan Tzara'dan Kiki'ye nice ressam, model, ?air ve yazara evsahipli?i yapan Paris, Montmare?, Montparnasse?, sokaklar?, müzeleri, barlar? ve birbirinden ilginç karakterleriyle Bohemler'in ba?rolünde: Modern sanat?n tarihinin yaz?ld?? y?llarda Paris'te ya?anan bireysel mücadeleler ve genel olarak avangard sanat?n mücadele; gelece?in ünlü sanatç?lar? aras?ndaki dostluklar, a?klar, k?skanç?klar ve kavgalar ve yüzy?l ba??nda, Paris'i bugünü efsanevi kenti yapan her ?ey... Picasso'yla heyecanlanacak, Utrillo'yla içecek, Modigliani'yle hüzünlenecek ve daha nice ilginç karakterin gerçek ya?am?nda kesitlere tan?kl?k edeceksiniz...
Bohemler, modern sanat?n do?um sürecini merak edenler, ama bir tarih kesitini edebiyat tad?nda okumak isteyenler için vazgeçilmez bir kaynak...Bohemler bu yüzden genç sanatç? adaylar?na ve sanatseverlere çok ?ey vaat ediyor. Çok sevece?inize eminim.....:)

Montmarte komününde ç?plak ayakla grek dans? yapan Isadora Duncan... Bir hafta çok s?k? çal??p üç hafta alem yapan Jules Depaquit... Bir bardak ?arap ya da apsent kar??l???nda resimlerini satan Utrillo... Eter koklay?p ?sa'yla konu?an Max Jacob... Kenar mahalle anar?istlerini destekleyen isyankar, kavgac?, ayya?, ba??ml?, yoksul, ?ehvet dü?künü, avangard sanatç?lar grubu... Bohemler, birbirlerini taklit ediyorlard? ve bunu yaparken, tamamen kendilerine özgüydüler. Ve bu insanlar, sefalet içindeki Paris'te, Montmarte'den Montparnasse'ye uzanan yolculuklar?nda, tek bir ki?inin etraf?nda toplan?yorlard?: Picasso.

Bohemler, sanat ak?mlar?n? ki?iselle?tirmesiyle öne ç?kan bir sanat kitab?. Sanatç?lar?n ve eserlerin hikâyelerini anlatan Franck'in Picasso'ya di?erlerinden daha fazla yer vermi? olmas?n?n sebebi, bu yoksul ve harika çocu?un bohemlerin lideri haline gelmesi ya da sonunda bütün sanatç? dostlar?ndan daha ünlü ve zengin olmas? de?il, Picasso'nun ruh halindeki de?i?imlerin sanatç?n?n resimlerindeki yans?malar?n?n bir çok önemli ak?m?n ba?lang?c? kabul edilmesi.

Ian Forsyth says

Didn't hold my attention all the way to the end. Suppose it's because I'm exhausting my interest in reading about this period. But there was also something in the style that wasn't as gripping as other books I've read on the same subject. Or maybe it was because it's focus was much more on art than writing, and I'm more

interested in the latter. Also, Picasso, if you didn't already know it, was an asshole.

Quotes:

In 20s Montparnasee there would no longer be a handful of artists, as in Montmartre, but hundreds, thousands of them. It was an artistic flowering of a richness and quality never to be rivalled, even later in Saint-Germain-des-Pres. Painters, poets, sculptors, and musicians, from all countries, all cultures, classical and modern, met and mingled. Rich patrons of the arts and art dealers of the moment, models and their painters, writers and publishers, poverty-stricken artists and millionaires lived together, side by side.

Doubt is the eternal language of the artist faced with themselves. The new work is never a certainty. It rests on nothing, not even the preceding one.

On the right bank was the Bateau Lavoir, on the left, the smoke-filled evenings of the Closerie des Lilas. Between the two flowed the Seine. And the entire history of modern art.

As Picasso himself would recognize, he wasn't a giver, but a taker.

The novelist will write 'a green dress' and the poet will write 'a dress the color of grass'.

Picasso was jealous of everything and everyone as he would remain the rest of his life.

Their works, vigorous in colors and contrasts, were grouped together in one single room that the art critic Louis Vauxcelles, very popular with conventional thinkers and totally hostile to modern art, called the 'wild beasts' cage', the cage aux fauves. Thus fauvism was born and baptized. Three years later, with others, this same critic compared Braque's painting, exhibited at Kahnweiler's, to cubes. Thus cubism got its name. The man, in his way, was a visionary...

Vlaminck hated not only schools and academies, but also museums, cemeteries, and churches. He claimed that anarchism has led him to fauvism. "I thus satisfied my desire to destroy the old conventions, to 'disobey', so as to recreate a sensitive, vibrant, and liberated world."

Baudelaire wrote The South of France is brutal and positive whereas the North is suffering and anxious.

Arthur Caravan: Some might be tempted to think that I have something against cubism. Not at all: I prefer the eccentricities of even a banal mind to the boring, predictable work of a bourgeois imbecile.

Symbolism freed verse from its constraints and from the burdensome rules of prosody.

In La Ruche, Boucher rented out the studios for a modest price to poor painters (many of them Jewish painters who'd come from Eastern Europe). They had a single room, which they called 'the coffin': a triangle with a platform above the door where the tenants slept on a thin mattress. There was no water, no gas, no electricity. The halls were dark, with rubbish heaped up in the corners, and leaky sewers.

[Poets love wit the way painters love color.]

Blaise Cendrars: The first virtue of a novelist is to be a liar.

The French invented camouflage in World War I by hiring painters, many of them cubists, to make it.

Breton considered Duchamp to be the most intelligent man of the 20th century.

Stieglitz exhibited the works of other artists for free, giving them the full sum earned from every sale. The sale of his own photos was enough for him.

Dada as a term was born on Feb 8th, 1916. On July 14th, 1916, the first Dada performance took place.
