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Seeing Is Forgetting The Name Of The Thing One Sees: Expanded Edition



Synopsis

When this book first appeared in 1982, it introduced readers to Robert Irwin, the Los Angeles artist "who one day got hooked on his own curiosity and decided to live it." Now expanded to include six additional chapters and twenty-four pages of color plates, *Seeing Is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees* chronicles three decades of conversation between Lawrence Weschler and light and space master Irwin. It surveys many of Irwin's site-conditioned projects—in particular the Central Gardens at the Getty Museum (the subject of an epic battle with the site's principal architect, Richard Meier) and the design that transformed an abandoned Hudson Valley factory into Dia's new Beacon campus—enhancing what many had already considered the best book ever on an artist.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A magnetic (now expanded) biography."--San Diego Union-Tribune
"Seeing is Forgetting may not be just the best biography of an artist out there but also one of the best books on contemporary art-making."--Frieze
"'Seeing Is Forgetting' and 'True to Life' are not only about the artists talking to Weschler or, through him, to each other; they're about the artists talking to themselves."--Los Angeles Times Book Review

"Robert Irwin, perhaps the most influential of the California artists, moved from his beginnings in abstract expressionism through successive shifts in style and sensibility, into a new aesthetic

territory altogether, one where philosophical concepts of perception and the world interact. Weschler has charted the journey with exceptional clarity and cogency. He has also, in the process, provided what seems to me the best running history of postwar West Coast art that I have yet seen."#151;Calvin Tomkins

I've read on ton of books of art history and theory, and this one stands out as one of the best. Through thirty years of friendship and discussions, Weschler traces Bob Irwin's career, from buffing car dashboards in high school to creating monumental gardens and installations in his old age. The benefit of this extended coverage is that we get to see how Irwin develops in every stage of his career, often as these developments are happening. We discover how relationships, environment, the art world, and philosophy influence Irwin's evolution and how each element manifests itself in his work. Irwin typically deals with abstract, minimalist, and formalist art which is often considered "difficult", even by open minded art viewers. In these interviews, he extensively details his mental and physical process, offering an unparalleled look at just what goes into these works. He recounts staring at a canvas for weeks, trying to decide precisely where a line should go and what impact it will have on the finished work. Even if you don't find yourself mesmerized by the next Agnes Martin you come across after reading this book, you'll at least gain an appreciation of why some people find it interesting and what might have been going through the mind of the artist when he/she created it. Part of what this makes this biography so compelling is that Irwin is an incredibly appealing character. Most successful artists are pigeonholed as shameless self-promoters or tortured geniuses. Irwin comes across as humble, brilliant, open minded, sincere, and indefatigably dedicated to his work. He seems like an art world version of Richard Feynman; the kind of curious guy you'd love to explore ideas with over a beer. He can talk about betting the ponies and Wittgenstein. He has a soft spot for Cadillacs but doesn't mind living a frugal, almost hermetic existence. He's fascinated by both the mind and the soul. This book isn't a page turner (though Bob is an excellent story teller). It's really best savored and carefully considered. But, if you're interested in Irwin, abstract art, art theory, the artistic process, hope to increase your art appreciation, or are just looking for an interesting biography, this is well worth a read.

Next level. Beautifully written stories within a meta story about a genius who is incredibly inspiring. I wish more people would read this and be influenced by Irwin's approach to life. Savior the experience, the experience is the art, and the experience is whenever you decide to be present. Whenever you decide to perceive. Whether your eyes are open or closed, you can always see.

Good review of Robert Irwin's career. Interesting journey from high school through to his 80s. Since I never got to see any of his installations it's hard to appreciate the qualities he so avidly seeks out. I have only seen one of the disc works at the Stanford campus Anderson Collection, which does have a very ethereal quality diffusing the distinctions between object, surface and shadow. So, that was my real touchstone to the discussion of Irwin's work. I had read the Weschler book about the Getty Gardens (and saw the garden in its early stages), so I did have an understanding of Irwin's work on that project. The sections on Irwin's isolation in Ibiza, racetrack discipline and income, and his studying philosophy were pretty enlightening. Irwin's insistence on paying attention to the qualities right in front of our eyes is key. I'm now reading Daniel Kahneman's "Thinking, Fast & Slow" where WYSIATI (what you see is all there is) is a recurrent theme. I cannot help but compare the subtleties of Irwin's visual phenomena and Kahneman's conscious/unconscious thinking modes of reasoning. I hope to see Irwin's work at Dia Beacon and the Chinati Foundation some time soon.

Book came as described and its beautiful!! I dont have much to say about it because there is just nothing wrong with it. Love it!

Can I post 25 stars?

Simply extraordinary.

great

good

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