



Title: My Love Affair with Modern Art: Behind the Scenes with a Legendary Curator

Author: Avis Berman

Description:

A unique look at the evolution of modern art in America, from art historian and eminent former curator of the Chicago Art Institute Katharine Kuh, a key figure in opening America's eyes to contemporary art. "Any artist worth his salt is in advance of his time," writes Katharine Kuh. Picasso, Duchamp, Lzger, Miro, Braque, Chagall, Klee, Calder, Davis, Hopper, Weston, Rothko, Arensberg, Dale, Philips. These are just a few of the artists, photographers, and collectors Katharine Kuh knew and worked with during her long career. One of America's pivotal forces in the arts for over four decades, she began with her own gallery in Chicago in the early 1930s. To sell contemporary art in post-Depression America was almost suicidal, but with guts and gumption Kuh survived. In 1954, the Chicago Art Institute named her its first curator of modern art a position of great prestige. Over the next 26 years, scouring the world, she acquired some of the most famous pieces in the institute's collection, and formed close relationships with the artists themselves. Here she gives us insights into their personal lives, their creative influences, and the way they worked. After her death in 1998, noted art historian Avis Berman, Kuh's literary executor, selected her key writings for this book.

Reviews

ARTnews:

Kuh focuses a sharp, critical eye on the art, the artists, and the small, extraordinary world in which they all struggled and triumphed. It is invigorating to be by her side, discovering anew the revolutionary paintings stacked up in corners, piled under beds, or spread out on the floors of studios works that today we can only view on the walls of museums. Kuh wrote this last book because she felt she had stories to tell and insights to offer that no one else could. She was right, and the story of modern art is richer for it.

Booklist (starred review):

Kuh's evocative, engaging, and unique reflections enrich the stirring story of modern art and introduce readers to a refined and unstinting arts advocate who significantly enriched American culture.

Publishers Weekly (signature review):

This love affair provides for those who care about art and artists a piercing,

passionate glimpse of creative activity in America during the first half of the 20th century. Kuh (1904-1994) saw everything, knew everybody, went everywhere and in the miraculous lucidity of her old, old age still had the wit and discernment to tell the story of her vision, knowledge and travels. Her reminiscences vividly draw the reader into a deep sympathy for her love affair. Succinctly written, it is a fine memorial to a memorable journey.

Chicago Tribune:

Before the reader encounters Kuh's lively and candid authorial voice, Berman does the reader and Kuh a great service: She succinctly profiles Kuh, revealing key facets of her life that Kuh does not divulge. These measured disclosures make Kuh all the more impressive and her modest, even self-deprecating essays all the more compelling.

Kuh is a marvelous writer: arch, knowing and nimble. Her crisp, to-the-point prose is spiked with uncommon observations and arresting opinions.

In sum, Kuh's witty and reflective reminiscences preserve invaluable chapters in the complex and resonant story of modern art. And how ennobling it is to spend time with a woman of resilience and vision, a writer of clarity and ardor, and an avid and knowledgeable art advocate dedicated to making art an integral part of our lives.

Art in America:

...the book offers real contributions to one's picture of a fascinating period in the art world. Such flashes of insight, both biographical and critical, make it a great pleasure to have Katharine Kuh's forthright, intelligent and surprisingly timely voice back with us.

Sculpture:

Kuh's ideas and efforts are well worth exploring as something of a role model especially in as disjunctive an age such as ours. The simplicity of her language and the clarity with which she interprets and presents her subjects could serve us well as we continues to build libraries of historic and critical materials about our contemporaries.

The Economist:

Katharine Kuh's memoirs, published 11 years after her death, offer a first-hand account of all the anxiety and excitement that went into seeing, showing and making modern art in the second half of the 20th century.

Christian Science Monitor:

Berman makes clear in the preface that she admired Kuh, and that is apparent in the sensitive way in which she has assembled the book. With the exception of the preface, it is impossible to tell where Kuh stops writing and Berman picks up the thread.

These careful, sensitive, and well-written portraits of several giants from the 20th-century art world make this a deeply rewarding volume. One only wishes that Kuh had been able share her insights about more artists before she died.

Art + Auction:

Kuh's informality and candor are welcome antidotes to a century overloaded with manifesto and dogma.

Newsday:

A pioneering gallery owner, curator at the Art Institute of Chicago, art critic for Saturday Review and self-described "art bum," Katharine Kuh merits an honored place in art history and lays claim to it with her engaging memoir *My Love Affair With Modern Art*. When she died at age 89 in January 1994, Kuh had written three-quarters of the manuscript, which has been seamlessly completed by her literary executor Avis Berman.

It's difficult to write about abstract art without lapsing into cloudy generalities, but Kuh's straightforward prose concentrates on color, texture and other specifics to illuminate a work's essential qualities. Berman, who acknowledges that she wrote "extended portions of this volume," has done such a good job of matching Kuh's tone that the additions are impossible to spot. Thanks to her sensitive editorial support, Kuh speaks directly here to 21st century readers, allowing them to profit from her intimate understanding of the 20th century art and artists she supported so ardently and observed so intelligently.

The Boston Globe:

Art was more important than commerce, and because [Kuh's] passion for it, and her compassion for the artists, are so palpable, the book is exhilarating. Filled with wonderful photos of the artists and the art, all captioned with Kuh's or Berman's astute commentary, this book does what Kuh always wanted art to do it opens your eyes.

Studs Terkel, author of *Conversations with America*:

I was deeply moved and exhilarated in reading the memoir of Katharine Kuh a prophet and art critic. She had the eye of a pioneer [and] she wrote about her true love with enthusiasm and ebullience...This book is as exciting as seeing a Hopper for the first time.

Robert Rosenblum, Guggenheim curator:

I dove right into Kuh's terrific book and kept swimming. It's a fresh experience, a tonic excursion into the private and public story of modern art, as told by a curator who was a living legend. Happily for posterity, Katharine Kuh offers one account after another of her encounters with everybody from Brancusi and Mies van der Rohe to Hopper and Rothko, resurrecting these now remote masters in a vivid, anecdotal fusion of their personalities with their work.