



# Just Looking: Essays on Art

*John Updike*

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## **Just Looking: Essays on Art** John Updike

These 23 essays on traditional and modern art show John Updike at his most eclectic, entertaining, and enlightening. Originally published in 1989 and until now unavailable in any edition, *Just Looking* had become one of Updike's rarest and most sought-after titles. It collects the best of the novelist and critic's multifarious musings on art and artists, museums and popular culture, the lives behind the works and the ways in which these works have informed his own life. Included here are pieces on Vermeer, Erastus Field, Modigliani, the major Impressionists, New Yorker cartoonist Ralph Barton, children's book illustrations, Fairfield Porter, and Jean Ipousteguy, among others, as well as extensive reflections on John Singer Sargent and Andrew Wyeth, a critical examination of writers' art, and a long essay on his impressions of the Museum of Modern Art. Featuring a new introduction by the author, this edition of *Just Looking* -- the first ever in paperback -- brings back into print a key work of art criticism by one of the most respected and accomplished writers of our time and is the first in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's new reprint series.

## **Just Looking: Essays on Art Details**

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# From Reader Review Just Looking: Essays on Art for online ebook

## Megan Baxter says

This is quite unlike most of the books I read. It's not fiction, which is the vast majority, or a focused non-fiction. It's a collection of essays about art and artists, written by a man best known for his literature. (I have only read Rabbit, Run, and I can't say I loved it.) I know very little about art. At all.

Note: The rest of this review has been withheld due to the changes in Goodreads policy and enforcement. You can read why I came to this decision [here](#).

In the meantime, you can read the entire review at Smorgasbook

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## Amy Wolf says

Updike applies his beautiful literary style to art. He has a unique way of looking at things which makes you appreciate the pieces he's reviewing that much more.

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## Carol Wakefield says

I begin with an interest in art and this collection of essays is quite delightful.

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## Cindy says

I'm breaking up with John Updike. We met in a Dublin used bookstore in 1986. The paperback cover of his Rabbit is Rich bore a Pulitzer Prize notice, also a title so literal and a color illustration of the main character so paunchy and unforgiving that I was intrigued. No lofty and abstract literature here, this was a real story and I was sucked in during my Irish, Scottish and English train and bus rides of the next week. Sex, money and aging, written with such thrilling precision. A night of wife-swapping fascinated me.

But now I see the WASPy sexism and casual racism and the male-centered view and it just seems dated. For every didactic truism like "The tinted volumes that confront the outer eye--that most vulnerable of body parts, where our brain interfaces with the world--are imitated by those dramatic spaces the inner eye creates, as theaters for thoughts and fantasies," there is a painful "the brushstrokes turn greasier, the colors rawer, the drawing vaguer. In the end the people all look Mexican" (of Renoir.) All talk of nudes is a private conversation with other white heterosexual males: "The glossy and lewd Sien tactile (Tactile Breast, 1968) (by French sculpture Jean Ipousteguy) but emphasizes the tactility that pervades his creation; we wish to touch his works, much as we itch to touch other bodies, because their textures are not monotonous but responsive and various." White patriarchy at its finest.

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### **Tracy says**

this treasure should be read over and over again...

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### **Rebecca says**

He's not an art critic. This is the strength of this book--someone without a lot of art junk cluttering up his eyes, just looking and responding. It doesn't hurt that he's good with language, but I found these essays clear, lovely, and openly curious about visual art. He doesn't pretend to be an expert, and he certainly goes by the limits of his own tastes, but these are strengths, I think.

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### **Theresa says**

Updike's reviews are written with the care of an art enthusiast. His deeply personal reflections on artworks and artists takes this collection of essays out of the usual "art criticism" genre and places it into what can only be described as a conversation between the audience and the artwork. It is a lovely read for any art enthusiast.

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### **F.J. Commelin says**

Updike is a good writer and often brings our eye to things we didn't think of.  
It is one of a set of three.

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### **Mary Louise says**

Today I missed my train stop because I was completely engrossed in this book. Not heavy handed art-crit, but who cares.

I had to buy a used copy of it because it is out-of-print.

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