

Hol Bulletin

January 08



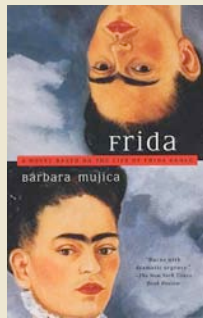
Fridamania

FRIDA KAHLO: POETRY & PROSE

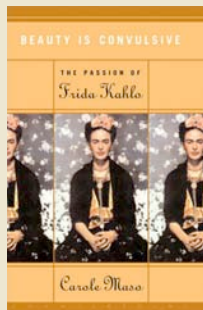
In 1991, following a record-setting sale of [Frida Kahlo's](#) work at Sotheby's, art critic Peter Plagens wrote in *Newsweek*, "If Kahlo had been a ballplayer or a rock star instead of a mere painter, we'd be in the midst of Fridamania." Now, some seventeen years later, it seems Fridamania may never fade.

The latest, major Frida Kahlo exhibition closes this month after a four-month run at the [Walker Art Center](#) (closes January 20). It will next travel to the [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#) (February 20-May 18) before finishing its run at the [San Francisco Museum of Modern Art](#) (June 14-September 28). Coast-to-coast, it's a full year of Frida and caps off the 2007 centenary celebrations of the artist's birth.

For the interested bookseller, along with Hayden Herrera's seminal biography on the artist, the Walker Art Center's stunning exhibition catalogue, and the recent reissue of a book of Frida's writings (details on all below), there are a number of other books worth stocking. They won't, however, be found on the art book shelves. For while some artists have inspired volumes of scholarly study, Kahlo has uniquely spawned writings of a more poetic bent.



The first is example is *Frida: A Novel*, by **Bárbara Mújica** (2002, Plume, \$14, 9780452283039). This well-crafted book is narrated from the perspective of Frida's sister, Christina. And in an extended flashback (the narrative is ostensibly being told to a psychiatrist) she tells Frida's story. A smooth read, the book feels much like a biography, and though fictional it will indeed ring true to those already familiar with the artist's life. Even then, Mújica's Frida Kahlo is definitely the writer's own creation. As *The San Diego Union-Tribune* said, "Mújica's Frida is a brave, foul-mouthed child, simultaneously defiant and winning."



Moving away from straight biography and into a more poetic territory, *Beauty is Convulsive: The Passion of Frida Kahlo*, by **Carole Maso** (2002, Counterpoint, \$26.50, 9781582430898) is a connected series of prose poems that the *Los Angeles Times* called an "Impressionistic yet painstakingly exact word-painting... Something refreshing, and humble, informs Maso's eclectic approach." Even readers normally shy about poetry, but who have some knowledge of Kahlo's life and work, will find Maso's work accessible and rewarding. There are enough concrete clues within the work for more traditional readers to latch onto as an opening into this rich work.

Hol Art Books

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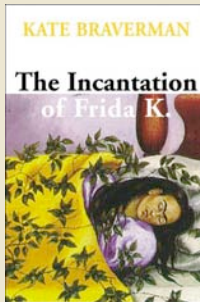
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Upcoming

Exhibitions



and the unreal is blurry at best.

Other Books of Note:

- *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*, Hayden Herrera (2002, HarperCollins, \$24.95, 9780060085896).
- *Frida by Frida*, Raquel Tibol ed. (2007, R.M. Editorial, \$25, 9789685208468). The letters and writings of the artist.
- *Frida Kahlo*, Elizabeth Carpenter, et al. (2007, Walker Art Center, \$49.95, 9780935640885). Catalogue to the exhibition.

And finally on the growing list of great Frida Kahlo fiction and poetry books, *The Incantation of Frida K.*, by **Kate Braverman** (2004, Seven Stories Press, \$11.95, 9781583225714) is a hallucinatory, morphine-induced first-person account of Frida Kahlo's last days, by Kahlo herself. Though still heavily influenced by the real biography of the artist, this novel is perhaps the most fictional and, in many ways, the most poetic of the Kahlo books. Not unlike Kahlo's own paintings, the line drawn here between the real

Moved by Art



scholarship. From the second chapter:

Pictures & Tears, by **James Elkins** (2004, Routledge, \$22.95, 9780415970532) examines personal accounts of being moved to tears by art, -- from his own experiences and from some 400 letters and emails he received after an open call to share similar experiences. In his characteristically embracing and open style, Elkins tries to make sense of the seemingly increasingly rare phenomena of being moved to tears by visual art and chart its place in the more dry tradition of art

"I want to find instances of genuinely powerful responses to pictures, reactions so forceful and unexpected that they can't be hushed up. I want to know what happens when a painting suddenly means much more than the dry information on the museum label, or the intellectual symbols and stories in books of art history. When a painting is not a game, when it no longer matters who knows more about the painter, then painting can be an art that might actually deserve the high value we put on it. I am fascinated by that possibility..."

Among the many Elkins works booksellers should feel confident in recommending to customers interested in art, *What Painting Is* (2000, Routledge, \$21.95, 9780415926621) and *The Object Stares Back* (1997, Harcourt, \$15, 9780156004978) chief among them, *Pictures & Tears* should rank among the top.

And for those looking for their own experiences with art that moves, the following are some of the works highlighted in Elkins text and the places to go see them.

Artworks from the text:

- New York, [Bellini's St. Francis in the Desert](#)
- Houston, [The Rothko Chapel](#)
- Chicago, [Bouts' Mater Dolorosa](#)
- Minneapolis, [Van Gogh's Olive Trees](#)
- Tokyo, [Nachi Waterfall](#)
- London, [Piero della Francesca's The Nativity](#)
- Paris, [Winged Victory of Samothrace](#)
- Madrid, [Goya's Third of May, 1808](#)
- St. Petersburg, [David Caspar Friedrich's Memories of the Riesengebirge](#)

Portland, Oregon
[The Dancer: Degas, Forain, and Toulouse-Lautrec](#)
Feb 2 - May 11
The Portland Art Museum

Chicago
[Gordon Matta Clark: You Are the Measure *](#)
Feb 2 - May 4
Museum of Contemporary Art

San Diego
[Kindred Spirits: Asher B. Durand and the American Landscape *](#)
Feb 2 - Apr 27
San Diego Museum of Art

New York
[Jasper Johns: Gray *](#)
Feb 5 - May 4
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Washington DC
[Recognize! Hip Hop and Contemporary Portraiture](#)
Feb 8 - Sept 1
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian

Atlanta
[Georgia O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle](#)
Feb 9 - May 4
High Museum of Art

Dallas
[J. M. W. Turner *](#)
Feb 10 - May 18
Dallas Museum of Art

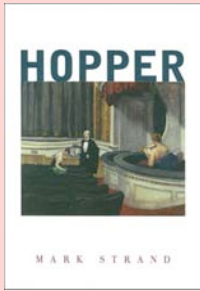
New York
[Poussin and Nature: Arcadian Visions *](#)
Feb 12 - May 11
Metropolitan Museum of Art

New York
[Cai Guo-Qiang: I Want to Believe *](#)
Feb - May 1
Guggenheim Museum

* Catalogues available. [Download the complete list of these and all books from the Hol Bulletin.](#)

Simple Looking

EDWARD HOPPER



Having first opened at the [Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#) last summer, the big Edward Hopper exhibition is now finishing its run at the [National Gallery of Art](#) in DC (closing January 21) and will open for its final run, at [The Art Institute of Chicago](#) next month (February 16-May 11).

Along with the new exhibition catalogue, and Gail Levin's authoritative biography (details on both below), don't overlook ***Hopper, by Mark Strand*** (2001, Knopf, \$15, 9780375709715). First published in 1994 and coming in under 100 pages, this thin volume is a master-class on how concentrated observation and simple description can lead to meaningful discovery and understanding.

It's a wonderful little book formed simply with a couple dozen 1-2 page meditations on various Hopper paintings. Strand is perhaps best known for his poetry, but the fact that his prose here is so nice to read is made even more remarkable by the fact that its simple vocabulary and direct telling resonate so perfectly with Hopper's work. The words tell a story not only in their content, but in their form as well.

Other Books of Note:

- *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, Gail Levin (2007, Rizzoli, \$40, 9780847829309). Revised from the 1995 biography.
- *Edward Hopper*, Carol Troyen, et al. (2007, MFA Publications, \$65, 9780878467129). Catalogue for the exhibition.

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The great power of books is to educate and to entertain. And while many of the books we read toward these ends are on subjects we're already interested in, it's important to try to slip in a few books on things you might not normally consider. Take for example, a book on an 18th-century American portraitist, and another on a Medieval ivory cross.



Gilbert Stuart, by James Thomas Flexner is a brief biography on the painter most famous for his portraits of George Washington. A serious subject, but as it turns out Stuart was a bit of a hell-raiser and you can see a carousing and rebellious side in the surface of the best of his many portraits, even those of stodgy old Washington. James Thomas Flexner is Washington's Pulitzer-winning biographer and this

Stuart biography is the kind that will send you to the nearest museum to look again at portraits you'd previously passed over for having seemed lifeless and dull. [Read more about this project and download a sample of the text.](#)

King of the Confessors, by Thomas Hoving

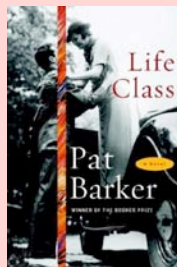
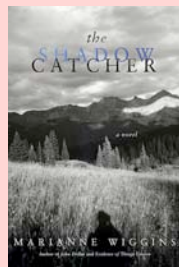
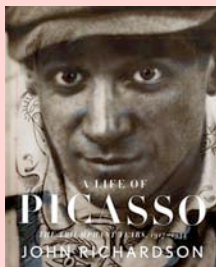


...ing by the *Spectator*, by Thomas Hoving is as much an art thriller as one could hope for, yet again, its subject is one not many would normally find themselves drawn to: a Medieval ivory cross. Hoving, then curator and later director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, has written a number of very popular books on art and art history, and this, among his first, is a gripping story and a compelling look at a museum antiquities acquisition. A topic that remains most certainly in the news today. [Read more about this project and download a sample of the text.](#)

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Best of 2007

3RD VOLUME OF A PICASSO BIOGRAPHY,
A NOVEL ON PHOTOGRAPHER EDWARD CURTIS,
& ONE ON ARTISTS DURING WORLD WAR I



Every year end brings innumerable "Best Of" lists. And though quite a few books about art were recognized in all (you can find them the sidebar of our site whatishol.com) three stood out:

The first two made appearances on half a dozen different lists: ***A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years, 1917-1932***, by **John Richardson** (2007, Knopf, \$40, 9780307266651), the third volume of Richardson's celebrated biography of the artist; and on the fiction end, ***The Shadow Catcher***, by **Marianne Wiggins** (2007, Simon & Schuster, \$25, 9780743265201), a novel surrounding photographer [Edward Curtis](#).

The third not to be missed is ***Life Class***, by **Pat Barker** (January 2008, Doubleday, \$23.95, 9780385524353), which received nods from both the *Globe and Mail*, and *The Guardian*. What's most interesting about this title it that it's only being released in the U.S. for the first time this month. So U.S. readers will be getting their first crack at a title that's already generated great interest elsewhere. Watch for it.

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