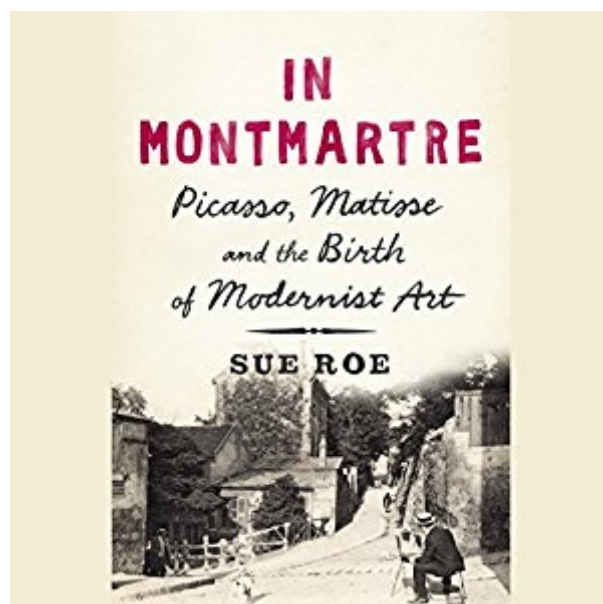


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In Montmartre: Picasso, Matisse And The Birth Of Modernist Art



Synopsis

A lively and deeply researched group biography of the figures who transformed the world of art in bohemian Paris in the first decade of the 20th century. In *Montmartre* is a colorful history of the birth of modernist art as it arose from one of the most astonishing collections of artistic talent ever assembled. It begins in October 1900, as a teenage Pablo Picasso, eager for fame and fortune, first makes his way up the hillside of Paris' famous windmill-topped district. Over the next decade, among the studios, salons, cafés, dance halls, and galleries of Montmartre, the young Spaniard joins the likes of Henri Matisse, André Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck, Georges Braque, Amedeo Modigliani, Constantin Brancusi, Gertrude Stein, and many more in revolutionizing artistic expression. Sue Roe has blended exceptional scholarship with graceful prose to write this remarkable group portrait of the men and women who profoundly changed the arts of painting, sculpture, dance, music, literature, and fashion. She describes the origins of movements like fauvism, cubism, and futurism and reconstructs the stories behind immortal paintings by Picasso and Matisse. Relating the colorful lives and complicated relationships of this dramatic bohemian scene, Roe illuminates the excitement of the moment when these bold experiments in artistic representation and performance began to take shape. A thrilling account, *In Montmartre* captures an extraordinary group on the cusp of fame and immortality. Through their stories, Roe brings to life one of the key moments in the history of art.

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Customer Reviews

Stepping back and thinking about the breathtaking gathering of talent in Montmartre at the turn of the 20th century: Picasso, Matisse, Cezanne, Monet (to name but a few) makes me think; 'If I could be a fly on the wall', which I believe is what Sue Roe had in mind when she penned this work. She takes us to the cafes, pubs, parks, streets and parties where they gathered, providing a rich, almost Dickensian view of the scene at the time. She also provides a good deal of biographical information on some of the well known artists as well as a peek at their relationships, rivalries, and struggles to survive as unknown artists. It is interesting to imagine these men painting portraits outside the Louvre, sketching posters for local pubs and events, working as graphic artists to scrape by. The background and context informs many well known works. You can almost see the scenes which many of them painted, or stood in when they painted. What is missing for me, and why I rated the book 4 stars, is their intellectual lives. We do get a glimpse of that, a view of the ideas, social and physical context, but I would love to know more about their exchanges, the conversations in the pubs, cafes and parks. I found the book to be well written, painting a vivid portrait of the scene, but long to know more about what went on behind it, their conversations and inner lives. That may well be asking too much of a book of this scope. That is, delving into the letters, intellectual lives of each of these men could fill thousands of pages. I do, however, wish there was more detail on their relationships and interactions, the flow of ideas. It does make one consider how much of a scaffold society can provide.

Sue Roe has assembled a vast amount of information about the first ten years of the 1900's in Paris, with particular attention on art and the great rivalry between two giants: Picasso and Matisse. The story starts in Montmartre: "The poor, the displaced, those who had known destitution, deprivation and suffering, seemed to find a natural home for their talents in Montmartre: the district was already suffused with its own distinctive melancholy." By 1910 the artists had moved on and Montmartre was "modernized": "The struggles of a few dedicated, near-destitute artists working in the broken-down shacks and hovels of rural Montmartre seemed to have created the foundations for the wider arena of modern art. In retrospect, the bohemian world of the artist in Montmartre in the first decade of the century may be seen as a kind of living parade, a brief dynamic, entertaining drama containing all of the seeds of the main, twentieth-century show -- and all of the fun of the fair." Roe's incredibly detailed, beautifully written book, describes that decade with great scholarship, all well documented in the footnotes. There are so many stories here, so much detail, that it is simply impossible to fairly summarize her accomplishment in a short Review. One small example, France at the beginning of cinema led the world in technology and artistry. But World War I had a

devastating effect, and it would be many years until it regained a level of mastery. Roe's book touches on those early days, in fascinating detail, covering not only the effect on society in general, but on artists in particular: "Picasso, in despair, announced that there was nothing left for him to live for: he had discovered photography.

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