

Holiday Gift Guide

Hefty Volumes That Are as Captivating

Where books are concerned, I am something of an unreliable narrator — and only becoming more so. I love them as purveyors of knowledge, linguistic art and portable objects. I live among shelves and stacks of them. One pile is holding up my bedside table, which was a recent victim of book overload.

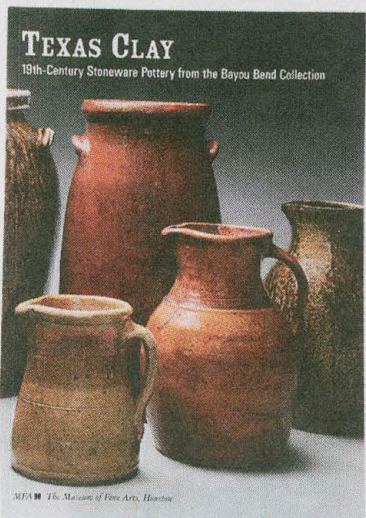
The problem is that I tend to start more books than I finish. My promiscuity may result from the forced skimming of exhibition catalogs on deadline, exacerbated by a short attention span. Also, for the art-centric, most art books are as important for their images as for their texts. Going through such volumes page by page — binge-looking — is a rewarding autodidactic pastime, a way to jump-start your familiarity with an artist's work, a culture's achievement or a specific art medium or genre. So the books recommended here are not ones that I have necessarily read word for word: They are volumes I am grateful to own, have learned from and will keep learning from.

ROBERTA SMITH

Picasso Sculpture Edited by Ann Temkin and Anne Umland; Museum of Modern Art; \$85

This fall's crop of outstanding museum exhibitions has been accompanied by some equally exceptional

German modernism — presently among one of art history's most expansive areas — is this tightly focused volume accompanying an exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (through Jan. 18). Its 14 essays examine from all sides the newly realistic painting style that sprang up in the wake of German Expressionism during the politically turbulent Weimar Republic. The multifarious style encompassed both radical and conservative strains and had a complex relationship to the period's photography, which is also covered. Like the show, the catalog features several little-known, often female artists who worked in both mediums.

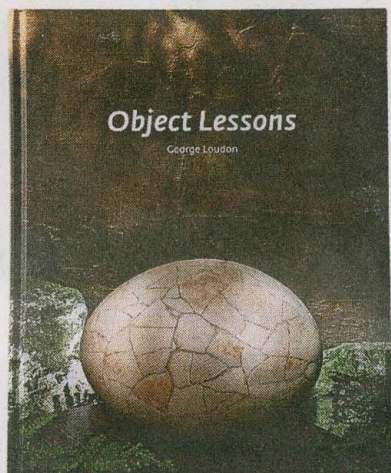


Berlin Metropolis: 1918-1933 Edited by Olaf Peters; Prestel/Neue Galerie; \$75

Neue Sachlichkeit and photography are only part of the "Berlin Metropolis" catalog and its exhibition, which is at the Neue Galerie in New York through Jan. 4, and broadly examines the artistic ferment of the Weimar period. Like "New Objectivity," this catalog is rich with essays by several contributors. Its wider, looser net also hauls in late German Expressionist paintings by Max Beckmann and Berlin Dada works by George Grosz and Hannah Höch, as well as movies by Fritz Lang; architecture; and examples of fashion, graphic and industrial design. It effectively outlines the far-reaching visual culture of Germany's first tragic attempt at democracy.

The Heroine Paint: After Frankenthaler Edited by Katy Siegel; Gagosian Gallery; \$40

One of my favorite exhibition catalogs of the year is this small handbook-size paperback, published on the occasion of "Pretty Raw: After and Around Helen Frankenthaler," an innovative



PHOTOGRAPH BY TONY CENICOLA/THE NEW YORK TIMES; WREATH BY CHARMSCHOOLCREATIONS

exhibition organized by Ms. Siegel at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., albeit published by the powerful New York gallery that represents the Frankenthaler estate. Replete with several essays as well as artists' statements, and inclusive of diverse mediums, this handy volume largely accomplishes what its cover line promises — "Stains, flows, decoration, play ambition: a different account of painting from the 1950s to the present day."

Making It Modern: The Folk Art Collection of Elie and Viola Nadelman By Margaret K. Hofer and Roberta J. M. Olson; New-York Historical Society Museum & Library/D Giles; \$65

This catalog, and the exhibition that occasions it, chronicles a grand collecting passion while examining one of the cornerstones of folk art study in the United States: the holdings amassed by the Polish-American sculptor Elie Nadelman and his wife, Viola Spiess Flannery, between the world wars. Ranging through six centuries and across 13 countries, it ultimately numbered 15,000 objects, many of which were displayed and open to the public at the Nadelmans' Riverdale estate in the Bronx. In 1937, its nucleus was purchased by the New-York Historical Society, which has organized the show. The catalog details the couple's acquisitions — including a list of the dealers they bought from and a map of those in Manhattan — and examines their influence on some of Nadelman's best work. It also includes an essay by their granddaughter, the art critic Cynthia Nadelman. The exhibition, at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History through Nov. 29 and coming to New York in May, should delight; its catalog presents a vanished world.

Texas Clay: 19th-Century Stoneware Pottery From the Bayou Bend Collection By Amy Kurlander; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; \$26.95

Books and catalogs that plunge us into unknown corners of familiar mediums can be thrilling, as exemplified by the highly concentrated "Texas Clay," which accompanied a recent exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston drawn from its Bayou Bend Collection and highlights a large recent gift. It records some 180 examples of plain-spoken stoneware jugs, jars, churns and pitchers made between 1850 and 1880 in different counties and regions in Texas, representing around 80 potteries and individual potters. Their utilitarian simplicity and alkaline, salt or slip glazes can evoke the random drips and speckles of Japanese ash-glaze ceramics.

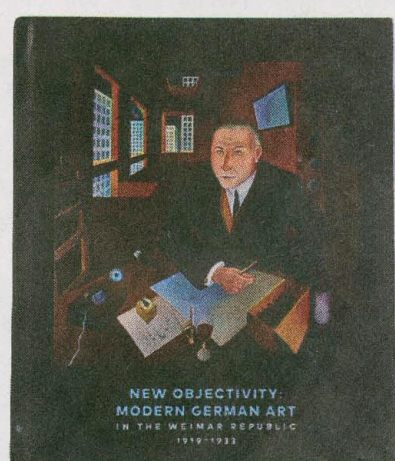
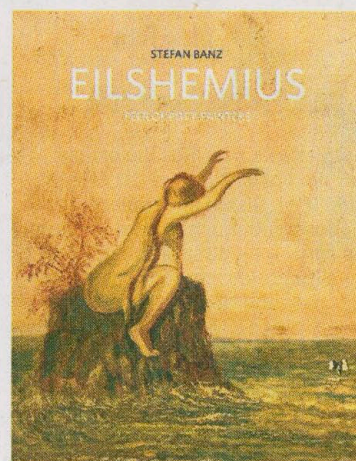
Object Lessons: The Visualisation of Nineteenth-Century Life Sciences By George Loudon; with Lynne Cooke and Robert McCracken Peck; Ridinghouse; \$36

This strange and handsome volume is primarily the work of George Loudon, a contemporary art collector from Britain who shifted his attention to acquiring the visual byproducts of



GAGOSIAN GALLERY AND BURT GLINN/MAGNUM PHOTOS

From left, Joan Mitchell, Helen Frankenthaler and Grace Hartigan in 1957.



the explosion of scientific knowledge in the late 18th and 19th centuries. Reproduced and annotated here are his finds: all manner of zoological and botanical illustrations and models (in wax, glass and papier mâché) created by scientists, artists and artisans as pedagogical tools, as well as illustrated books. There are single specimens, notably conjoined piglets, and collections, including shells, ferns and lichen.

Eilshemius: Peer of Poet-Painters By Stefan Banz, JRP/Ringier; \$100

Weighing in at nine pounds and 768 pages, Stefan Banz's book about the American painter Louis M. Eilshemius (1864-1941) is as much grand obsession as monograph. It seems to reproduce in color just about every known painting by this idiosyncratic, extremely prolific

artist, who specialized in awkward nymphs and nudes in landscapes, was alternately ridiculed and admired by the New York art world and was a friend of Marcel Duchamp. It also seems to include all reviews of his art that ran in New York newspapers during his lifetime, along with a great many of his responses in letters to their editors. Mr. Banz, a Swiss artist and curator, is founder of the Marcel Duchamp Kunsthalle, a small dollhouse-like museum in the courtyard of the Forestay Museum in Cully, Switzerland. This book should probably similarly be considered a disguised work of art. Again cover lines are pertinent: "Collected Documents: A Novel of Facts by and About Louis M. Eilshemius and a Study of his Influence on Marcel Duchamp."

publications. Topping my list is the Museum of Modern Art's "Picasso Sculpture." It appeals especially to those who search monographic catalogs primarily for the artist's chronology. MoMA's latest, hefty Picasso catalog is nearly all chronology. Following the exhibition's division, with each chapter headed by an introduction by Ann Temkin or Anne Umland, the show's curators, this extravagant timeline is the work of Luise Mahler, an assistant curator at MoMA, and Virginie Perdrisot, curator of sculptures and ceramics at the Musée National Picasso, Paris, with Rebecca Lowery, a fellow in MoMA's painting and sculpture department. Their impeccably detailed, heavily illustrated account proceeds work by work, tracking every aspect of Picasso's involvement with sculpture, and includes photographs of his studios and of exhibitions of his efforts. Touch down almost at any point, and you'll learn something new.

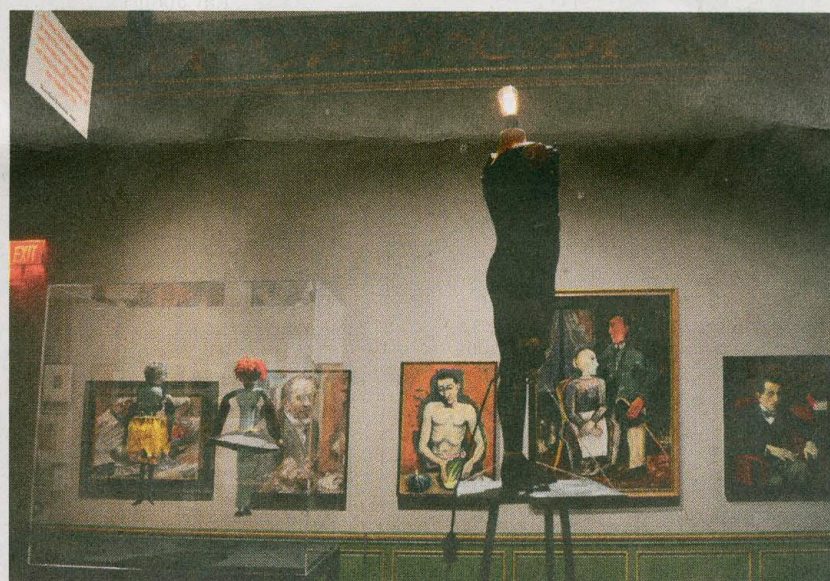
New Objectivity: Modern German Art in the Weimar Republic, 1919-1933 Edited by Stephanie Barron and Sabine Eckmann; Los Angeles County Museum of Art/Delmonico Books/Prestel; \$75

Among the latest publications on



NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A carving of a 19th-century New York fire chief in "Making It Modern."



PHILIP GREENBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Berlin Metropolis" at the Neue Galerie examines the Weimar period.



PHILIP GREENBERG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Museum of Modern Art's "Picasso Sculpture" show has a hefty catalog that is strong on chronology.