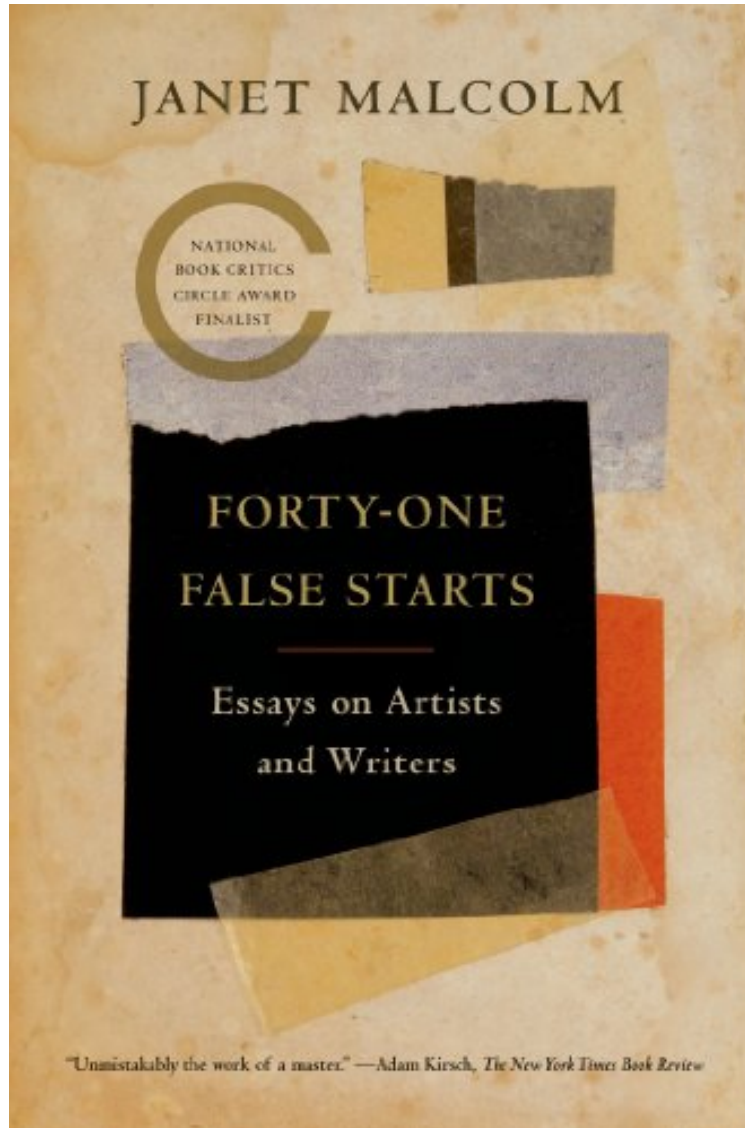


[Free read ebook] Forty-one False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers

Forty-one False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers

Janet Malcolm

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Janet Malcolm : Forty-one False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Forty-one False Starts: Essays on Artists and Writers:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Best nonfiction writer working today By Robert Agee I like reading about the art world and creativity and even if I didn't I would like to read what Janet Malcolm writes about it. It was a nice surprise to find that one of the players in her art world drama had gone to my high school in Cincinnati and I always wondered what happened to him. The role of esoteric art critic in New York City seems to be a natural extension of who he was as an outspoken, rebellious student in an elite, college preparatory high school in the Midwest. I also find it interesting when anybody can make some sense out of the mishmash of what I view as the New

York City art world. I believe Tom Wolfe is correct when he said that the word makes the message in the art world. It is not what you see is what you get it is what you see is formed by the art critic you are listening to about that piece of artwork. 14 of 17 people found the following review helpful. More of a deaf ear than I remember from the NYRBBY Kylo Ginsberg I mostly know Janet Malcolm from reading (some of) her essays in the New York Review of Books and the New Yorker. And truth be told, the only one I remembered was the essay that became the book *Iphigenia in Forest Hills*. In short, I frankly bought this on pedigree and vague memories of good writing, a bad premise. So I put this book down after the first 5 essays, 2 on artists, 3 on writers. The first one, which gives the book its title, was entertaining, but she clearly got carried away with the *notion* of her essay (the 41 false starts reflecting on and relating to Salle's work), to the ultimate expense of her actual subject. The second, on Struth, gave me some hope as it was actually pretty good, albeit on an artist I know nothing about. Her writing on writers was all strikeouts for me: she doesn't get Wharton at all, her Woolf/Bloomsbury piece wasn't much more than an abbreviated biography, and her Salinger piece was momentarily un insightful. So I had to put this down. If there's a theme here, it's that Malcolm gets entranced with some idea or notion and, with that idea in hand, is as likely as not to misread her subject, or to forget them, or occasionally to notice something about them. Unfortunately, that last option just wasn't happening often enough. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Cornelia Veenendaal Essays as fine as the collage on the cover, also by the writer.

A National Book Critics Circle Finalist for Criticism A deeply Malcolmian volume on painters, photographers, writers, and critics. Janet Malcolm's *In the Freud Archives* and *The Journalist and the Murderer*, as well as her books about Sylvia Plath and Gertrude Stein, are canonical in the realm of nonfiction; as is the title essay of this collection, with its forty-one "false starts," or serial attempts to capture the essence of the painter David Salle, which becomes a dazzling portrait of an artist. Malcolm is "among the most intellectually provocative of authors," writes David Lehman in *The Boston Globe*, "able to turn epiphanies of perception into explosions of insight." Here, in *Forty-one False Starts*, Malcolm brings together essays published over the course of several decades (largely in *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*) that reflect her preoccupation with artists and their work. Her subjects are painters, photographers, writers, and critics. She explores Bloomsbury's obsessive desire to create things visual and literary; the "passionate collaborations" behind Edward Weston's nudes; and the character of the German art photographer Thomas Struth, who is "haunted by the Nazi past," yet whose photographs have "a lightness of spirit." In "The Woman Who Hated Women," Malcolm delves beneath the "onyx surface" of Edith Wharton's fiction, while in "Advanced Placement" she relishes the black comedy of the Gossip Girl novels of Cecily von Ziegesar. In "Salinger's Cigarettes," Malcolm writes that "the pettiness, vulgarity, banality, and vanity that few of us are free of, and thus can tolerate in others, are like ragweed for Salinger's helplessly uncontaminated heroes and heroines." "Over and over," as Ian Frazier writes in his introduction, "she has demonstrated that nonfiction; a book of reporting, an article in a magazine, something we see every day; can rise to the highest level of literature." One of Publishers Weekly's Best Nonfiction Books of 2013

From Booklist Malcolm's sentences are joy rides, exhilarating and alarming. Her vocabulary is crisp, savory, and stinging. Her inquisitiveness is red-hot, she is devilishly funny, and her interpretations of the lives and creations of artists and writers are electrifying. In her twelfth book, the prizewinning journalist, biographer, and essayist has gathered 16 substantial, mind-whirling pieces that span several decades and encompass the fertile range and reach of her ardent inquiries. The bravura form of her diabolically clever title essay embodies the cat-and-mouse strategies of journalist and subject as Malcolm tries to get a handle on artist David Salle. Malcolm's passionate curiosity about the ambiguities of portraiture shapes her portraits of photographers Julia Margaret Cameron, Diane Arbus, and Thomas Struth as well as "Edward Weston's Women." She discusses why we remain enthralled by Bloomsbury ("These people are so alive") and affirms and defends Salinger's genius. Taking avid pleasure in the hunt for understanding, Malcolm stalks and pounces with high intellectual appetite and moxie, then artfully crafts brainy, zestful, and nourishing dispatches from the ever-mysterious worlds of art and literature. --Donna Seaman [A] master of the profile...alluring, pointed, singularly perceptive tellings. (*The New Yorker*) Forty-One False Starts [is] a powerfully distinctive and very entertaining literary experience. . . what the reader remembers is Janet Malcolm: her cool intelligence, her psychoanalytic knack for noticing and her talent for withdrawing in order to let her subjects hang themselves with their own words. . . These short pieces [are] unmistakably the work of a master. (Adam Kirsch, *The New York Times*) Forty-One False Starts is a remarkable and, in its strange way, gripping piece of work. It achieves the rare feat of communicating something valuable about the largely ineffable 'creative process.' (Zoe Heller, *The New York Review of Books*) [An] invigorating new collection . . . keenly intelligent journalism that feels, always, as if it had been written by a human being, one with a beating heart, a moral compass, a wide-ranging curiosity, and a point of view. (Laura Collins-Hughes, *The Boston Globe*) Even if you've been reading Janet Malcolm for years, the critical appreciations collected in *Forty-One False Starts* may surprise you. The title essay is (or pretends to be) a series of scrapped beginnings to her profile of the painter David Salle, a giant of the art world in vulnerable mid-career. If you

want to write magazine prose, this alone should make you buy the book. Ranging from Bloomsbury to Edward Weston to J.D. Salinger, the entire book is full of stylistic daring, fine distinctions, and bold judgments set down at the speed of thought. (Lorin Stein *The Paris* online)[Malcolm's] portraits of the storytellers . . . are glorious. Without any diminishment of her critical eye, she seems like she's having more fun--when she describes Gene Stratton-Porter writing deranged children's books, or Julia Margaret Cameron admiring England's finest beards, or Blair Waldorf sulking over caviar at the Plaza. (Molly Fischer *The New York Observer*)Janet Malcolm offers a penetrating new collection of essays . . . She's so penetrating, in fact--and her writing so seductive and entertaining--that I always begin reading her books in a kind of critical defensive crouch. . . She might be the most gifted scene-setter in American journalism. . . She's so deft an observer--so rich are her descriptions and insights--that you might find yourself rushing through a piece and only remarking afterward how fine her sentences are. (Michael Robbins *The Chicago Tribune*)Malcolm has solidified her reputation as a guide who can expertly help readers through, as her *New Yorker* colleague Ian Frazier writes in the introduction to *Forty-One False Starts*, 'a good big mess.' One is the sheer pleasure of her rich descriptive power, her sentences turned like spindles on a lathe. There is the historical interest: reminders of who was once fashionable, should one care. There is the cruelly perfect aim of her insults. But there is, above all, the unequalled glimpse into the mind of Malcolm the critic, which is as close as we're likely to get to the mind of Malcolm, one of our smartest, best writers, someone whose personal inscrutability and elusiveness I regret all the time. (Mark Oppenheimer *The Nation*)Malcolm's severity, her terrifying neutrality--like a teacher who is capable of handling even her most despised pupils no differently than the ones she secretly adores--is part of what makes her a brilliant writer. It is also why her writing does not occasion adolescent reverence and why her image is not printed in fashion magazines. You discover Didion in high school and you read her on the beach. Malcolm you discover in college--or after--and read before you do your own work....[She] is a priestly figure; an aura of quiet surrounds her work. She is always in control....Reading even the most cerebral of her sentences, you feel smart by association rather than dumb by comparison. (Alice Gregory Slate)Bringing together a quarter-century's worth of subtle, sharply observed essays on artists and writers, this collection chronicles not just life events and artistic influences, but also the amorphous subjectivity of biography itself . . . These unstinting essays investigate how a consensus forms relating to a body of work or an artistic movement, how attitudes toward art change over time, and how artistic legacies are managed--or mismanaged--by children and heirs. (*Publishers Weekly* (starred review and pick of the week))About the AuthorJANET MALCOLM is widely considered to be America's pre-eminent literary journalist. She is a staff writer for the *New Yorker* and the author of several critically acclaimed books, including *In the Freud Archives*, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, *Reading Chekhov: A Critical Journey* and *The Silent Woman: Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*, all published by Granta. She won the PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award in Biography for *Two Lives: Gertrude and Alice* [Yale University Press] in 2008. She lives in New York.