



ABC READING CLUB 2021-2022

May 24- Villa Air-Bel: World War II, Escape, and a House in Marseille by Rosemary Sullivan

France, 1940. The once glittering boulevards of Paris teem with spies, collaborators, and the Gestapo now that France has fallen to Hitler's Wermacht. For Andre; Breton, Max Ernst, Marc Chagall, Consuelo de Saint-Exupery, and scores of other cultural elite who have been denounced as enemies of the Third Reich the fear of imminent arrest, deportation, and death defines their daily life. Their only salvation is the Villa Air-Bel, a chateau outside Marseille where a group of young people will go to extraordinary lengths to keep them alive.

July 26- The Forest Lover by Susan Vreeland (fictional account of Emily Carr)

In her acclaimed novels, Susan Vreeland has given us portraits of painting and life that are as dazzling as their artistic subjects. Now, in *The Forest Lover*, she traces the courageous life and career of Emily Carr, who—more than Georgia O'Keeffe or Frida Kahlo—blazed a path for modern women artists. Overcoming the confines of Victorian culture, Carr became a major force in modern art by capturing an untamed British Columbia and its indigenous peoples just before industrialization changed them forever. From illegal potlatches in tribal communities to artists' studios in pre-World War I Paris, Vreeland tells her story with gusto and suspense, giving us a glorious novel that will appeal to lovers of art, native cultures, and lush historical fiction.

September 27- Leonardo and the Last Supper by Ross King

In 1495, Leonardo da Vinci began what would become one of history's most influential works of art-The Last Supper. After a decade at the court of Lodovico Sforza, the duke of Milan, Leonardo was at a low point: at forty-three, he had failed, despite a number of prestigious commissions, to complete anything that truly fulfilled his astonishing promise. His latest failure was a giant bronze horse to honor Sforza's father, made with material expropriated by the military. The commission to paint The Last Supper was a small compensation, and his odds of completing it weren't promising: he hadn't worked on such a large painting and had no experience in the standard mural medium of fresco.

November 29- Master Pieces: The Curator's Game by Thomas Hoving

As Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for a decade, Thomas Hoving brought art to a new level of public awareness by pioneering such blockbuster shows as the King Tut exhibit. Early in his career, Hoving was introduced to the "curator's game." Each week, he and his contemporaries met to examine details of larger museum masterpieces. Whoever correctly identified the detail in context won free coffee: the losers paid. In an imaginative adaptation of this exercise, Hoving introduces us to the challenge and the fun of identifying art, and to the rewards of familiarity with the great works. A section of paintings accompanied by brief essays introduces a range of artists, themes, techniques, and styles, while progressively demanding "clues" are provided to help identify visual details in context. No experience is necessary to play this game. Readers at all levels will discover the fun of identifying and remembering great art.

January 31, 2022- Sargent's Women: Four Lives Behind the Canvas by Donna M. Lucey

In this seductive, multilayered biography, based on original letters and diaries, Donna M. Lucey illuminates four extraordinary women painted by the iconic high-society portraitist John Singer Sargent. With uncanny intuition, Sargent hinted at the mysteries and passions that unfolded in his subjects' lives.

Elsie Palmer traveled between her father's Rocky Mountain castle and the medieval English manor house where her mother took refuge, surrounded by artists, writers, and actors. Elsie hid labyrinthine passions, including her love for a man who would betray her. As the veiled Sally Fairchild—beautiful and commanding—emerged on Sargent's canvas, the power of his artistry lured her sister, Lucia, into a Bohemian life. The saintly Elizabeth Chanler embarked on a surreptitious love affair with her best friend's husband. And the iron-willed Isabella Stewart Gardner scandalized Boston society and became Sargent's greatest patron and friend.

March 28- The Collector of Lives: Giorgio Vasari and the Invention of Art by Ingrid Rowland and Noah Charney

Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574) was a man of many talents—a sculptor, painter, architect, writer, and scholar—but he is best known for *Lives of the Artists*, the classic account that singlehandedly invented the genre of artistic biography and established the canon of Italian Renaissance art. Before Vasari's extraordinary book, art was considered a technical skill rather than an intellectual pursuit, and artists were mere decorators and craftsmen. It was through Vasari's visionary writings that artists like Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo came to be regarded as great masters of life as well as art, their creative genius celebrated as a divine gift. Their enduring reputations testify to Vasari's profound yet unspoken influence on western culture.

An advisor to kings and pontiffs—and a confidant to Titian, Donatello, and more—Vasari enjoyed an exhilarating career amid the thrilling culture of Renaissance Italy. In *The Collector of Lives*, Ingrid Rowland and Noah Charney offer a lively and inviting introduction to this pivotal figure in art history, and immerse readers in the world of the Medici of Florence and the popes of Rome. A narrative of intrigue, scandal, and colorful artistic rivalry, this vivid biography shows the great works of western art taking shape under Vasari's keen eye—and reveals how one Renaissance scholar completely redefined how we look at art.

**All book discussions are held on the last
Monday of each month at 11:30 am**