



Bosch

Walter Bosling

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From heaven to hell

If **Hieronymus Bosch** (1450-1516) remains an enigma today, it is little wonder. Even his contemporaries found the Dutch painter's work difficult to decipher—and it still presents riddles to contemporary art historians. Part of the problem in analyzing his shocking and richly allegorical paintings is that virtually nothing is known of the artist himself, apart from his birthplace. There is no record of his life or training, no personal letters, diaries or notebooks, and no contemporary insights into his personality or his thoughts on the meaning of his art. Even his date of birth can only be guessed at, and that based on a drawing assumed to be a self-portrait, made shortly before his death in 1516, which supposedly shows the artist in his late sixties. Bosch remains as mysterious as the worlds he painted. Although rooted in the Old Dutch tradition, Bosch developed a highly subjective, richly suggestive formal language. With a mixture of religious humility and satanic wit, he illustrated both the joys of heaven and the cruelly imaginative tortures of hell. In his pictorial world teeming with surrealistic nightmares, the medieval imagination catches fire in a moment of final brilliance before succumbing to humanism and modern rationalism. Though the man himself remains a mystery, this book pulls together the elusive threads of Bosch's work into a cohesive and comprehensive analysis of his work and methods.

About the Series:

Each book in TASCHEN's Basic Art Series features: a detailed chronological summary of the life and oeuvre of the artist, covering his or her cultural and historical importance a concise biography approximately 100 colour illustrations with explanatory captions

Bosch Details

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From Reader Review Bosch for online ebook

TJ says

Very good book about Bosch's art. Very readable and interesting

Reza says

I came upon a photo of the Garden of Earthly Delights randomly on the internet and instantly got drawn to its weird imagery and symbolism. I've never been into art that much but thought I should learn more about Bosch. The first thing that surprised me about him was the century he lived in. I can't imagine how someone from the 15th century could paint a landscape that I would associate more with 20th century paintings. This book does a very good job of providing the historical, cultural, and religious background of Bosch's time. Furthermore, it analyzes each of Bosch's paintings to an extraordinary degree by explaining the symbolism of each significant object in the paintings. I also liked how it categorized the paintings based on themes like judgment day or saints instead of taking the easier way and organizing them by time period. Each theme in a way focused on a religious concept that was important to the people living in the middle ages.

Iryna Bochko says

Il libro non è male per crearsi un'idea generica su Bosch (Jeronimus van Aeken, detto Bosch). Ma non è abbastanza per chi vuole approfondire. L'ho letto perché stavo per visitare una mostra a Venezia, dedicata ai suoi dipinti.

Però per scoprire di più si deve andare al Museo del Prado di Madrid.

Pittore fiammingo ipingeva essere mostruosi, diavoli e demoni. Le sue opere sono spesso trasposizioni visive di giochi di parole e matfore verbali. Non è riconducibile a nessuna scuola in particolare. Bosch condivideva questo gusto per il mostruoso con la sua epoca, in cui le forme grottesche e innaturali esercitavano un certo fascino.

vi macdonald says

Bosch's paintings are some of the most brilliant and nightmarish creations I have ever had the pleasure of seeing.

Bosch's text doesn't really add anything to the overall package but it doesn't need to - these paintings speak for themselves, and what they say is brilliant, terrifying and sometimes hilarious.

Esther says

Gosch it's Bosch by Walter Boschling

Mariana Orantes says

El libro es una buena forma de acercarse a este genio. Por una parte, el autor retoma a otros autores que han hablado sobre el Bosco y los compara para ofrecer una visión amplia de la crítica. Después, ofrece interpretaciones de los mismos sobre algunas cosas, como los frutos y los peces del Jardín de las delicias para que el lector se mantenga al nivel simbólico que se ha estudiado sin caer en interpretaciones arbitrarias. Hace conexiones muy acertadas como la de los triunfos con El carro del heno y explica cosas sutiles que a veces se nos escapan de los cuadros de los santos. Pero también (y esto es muy interesante) admite que hay cosas que simplemente no se pueden explicar y que son la médula de los cuadros del Bosco. Finalmente él retrató los miedos de su época con un contacto casi intuitivo del inconciente y lo grotesco. Lo erótico sensual y lo tanático. Eso es lo que hace que, a tantos siglos, sus pinturas sean una obsesión. Mirarlas es ver todo un cuadro en movimiento que empieza en algo y va hacia algo. Por eso uno a veces mira una parte de un cuadro del Bosco, luego otra y otra, para regresar a la primera. Casi es imposible visualizar todo el cuadro si no es con ese movimiento que tienen las figuras. Los cuadros del Bosco se mueven. Son como ver un sueño, un sueño terrible.

Marco Gereda says

Las explicaciones de la vida y obra son buenas, con varias referencias históricas y geográficas... el esquema explicación - ilustración a 5 paginas adelante o atrás, corta la lectura al tener tantos detalles en las pinturas.

Roy Lotz says

The first time I visited the Prado I was stunned. At the time, I typically wasn't moved by visual art, but something clicked that day and I've been hooked ever since. It's very hard to choose among the treasures of the Prado, but of all the many masterful paintings in the museum my favorite is El Bosco's *Garden of Earthly Delights*.

For me, this painting is Dante's *Divine Comedy* made manifest. Bosch is the only painter I know who could equal that great poet's vision and imagination. The result is a landscape rich in symbolism and in visual delight. But Bosch's works are so enigmatic that you can't shake the suspicion (no doubt true) that you're missing a heck of a lot. Seeking a remedy, I bought this little book in the gift shop on the way out, in the hopes of learning more about this mysterious man's art.

Well, it turns out Bosch is mysterious to art historians as well as casual viewers. Not much is known about his life; and his symbolic language was sometimes so idiosyncratic that it is unclear what he meant. For a while it was even questioned whether he was an orthodox Catholic or some kind of heretic, but now it's believed that he was conventional in his religious views. Still, for me it is hard to accept that the central panel in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* is meant to portray human sexuality as sinful, since it's such a joyful and energetic painting. But what do I know?

The book itself is an attractive little volume. There are glossy color photographs of all of Bosch's works (there aren't many that can be confidently ascribed to his hand), as well as concise information and analysis provided by Walter Bosing. I believe the original language was German, though I read it in Spanish for

practice. My only disappointment with the book is its size. With Bosch's work, you really need it as big as you can get it, because there are so many delicious little details. But of course if this book were bigger it would have to be more expensive, and that would spoil the point of this kind of cheap, portable book.

At this very moment there is an exhibition happening in Bosch's hometown, in which nearly all of his works are collected. I am eagerly awaiting the exhibition to move to the Prado, which I think will happen in May. Until then, I will content myself with this superbly done virtual tour of Bosch's masterpiece, which I invite you to enjoy as well.

Detroit Killer Bob says

Penetrating look into the psyche of pre-Christian and late Medieval Catholic Europe before it was all swept away by the Protestant Reformation.

Melzanie says

totally rad representation.

Nathan Brennan says

A good little study of Bosch, With excellent quality reproductions. Probably better as an introduction to his work more than anything else, but a good read nonetheless.

Juan says

Overall, it is a very nice book. Just as other reviewers have said, Bosing's narrative is clear and also generous in space with the various interpretations that have been proposed for Bosch's paintings. The quality of the images is excellent, as one would expect from Taschen, and they are as thoroughly commented as a book this length allows. I think it is an outstanding first approach to this enigmatic painter.

That said, there are a few mildly annoying editing details that stain this book. First, there are works from other painters that the author refers to somewhat constantly which were not included. I would understand if they had not included all of them, but none? This does not prevent the understanding of the author's statements, but it would have made it a lot easier. Second, the distribution of the paintings throughout the book is really bad. I often found myself going back and forward several pages in order to see what the author was talking about, which got very annoying after a while. Finally, I found a lot of typos (more than 10) in the spanish edition.

Rick says

I bought this book at a used bookstore in Venice, Florida for \$3! I bought it primarily for the images of Bosch's paintings, many of which I hadn't seen before. But I also found the text informative (although there were some terrible grammatical errors), and in several cases I felt like I learned something because of the context provided by the text. As other people have commented, the illustrations are incredible, both in quality and content. It's a perfect introduction to Bosch and had me enthralled throughout.

Bernie says

As usual Taschen provided a book with great illustrations in a easy to handle hardback. These books are usually a good introduction to an artist but I feel this time it went further. I suppose because there is so little information on the artist Hieronymus Bosch it delved into the painting with more depth. I was fortunate enough to see the exhibition held in his home town Hertogenbosch celebrating the 500th anniversary of his death. This book helped me to have a better understanding of his work before I went to see the original work.

Shawn says

This book gets 5 stars for the quality of the reproductions. There are many works here I had never seen, and most of Bosch's work is accounted for. However, the text is a bit old-fashioned and academic. There is little about Bosch himself (possibly because there is not much information out there). There is a very nice putting of Bosch into historical context, especially of late Medieval Dutch Catholic art. The chapters are organized by Bosch's central themes, which allows a fine overview and comparison between early and late paintings and discussion of works attributed to but not by Bosch himself.
