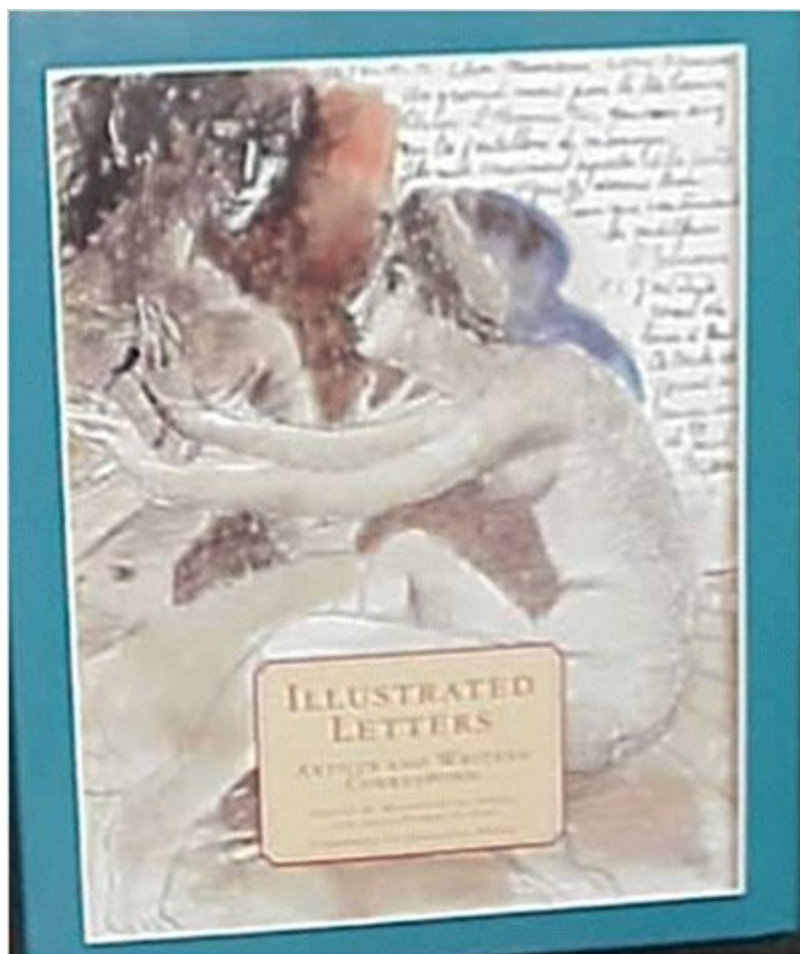


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Illustrated Letters: Artists And Writers Correspond



Synopsis

Foreword by Francine Prose. Translated from the French by John Goodman. Bound in the publisher's original blue cloth with the spine stamped in gilt.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This plentifully illustrated volume contains beautiful drawings accompanying letters sent by (among others) van Gogh, Mir?, and Picasso. Most of the drawings (as well as the letters that contain them) have never before been printed--and, although they fail to reveal much of anything new about the artists who made them, they are interesting, spontaneous, and delightful. As for text, de Ayala (an independent historian) and Gu?no (formerly of France's Biblioth?que Nationale) provide a good bibliography, an index, and the text of the letters, which are sometimes difficult to read in the reproductions. An amusing coffee-table book for general readeres.-Martin Chasin, *Adult Inst.*, Bridgeport, CT Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The sight of a handwritten letter amid junk mail and bills quickens the heart, but letters have always been longed for and treasured, especially when correspondents combined word with image. Sixty illustrated letters by nineteenth-and early-twentieth-century European artists and writers are presented in this magnificent volume, and, as Francine Prose observes in her engaging foreword, reading these letters is like watching someone switch fluently between two languages. The editors provide biographical contexts for both the text of the letter and the accompanying drawings, which

vary from mere doodles and cartoons, such as George Sand's teasing sketch accompanying a plea for money, to Victor Hugo's dramatic letter in which the text breaks on the edges of his powerful drawing of Ghent's town square. It is to be expected that the letters of Delacroix, Corot, Van Gogh, Gauguin, and Manet are beautifully illustrated, but the drawing skills of Colette, Turgenev, Mallarme, and Charles Giraud come as a surprise, proving that for some blessed individuals, creativity has no bounds. Donna Seaman

Unfortunately most letters were by Frenchmen

Illustrated Letters may not eliminate e-mails, but it is chock full of wonderful original drawings and paintings done by friends or relatives that made the letter special since the effect was the same as receiving a gift..

I loved this book-- I have had it on my wish list for a long, long time and my wonderful husband gave it (and three other books) to me for my birthday. It was so hard to not ignore everyone and just read it! There are letters from van Gogh, Gaugin, Collete-- all these famous people who corresponded with oftentimes other famous people. It really gives us a deeper understanding of who these people were by seeing what they wrote and how they interpreted their lives. It is helping my daughter's French-- many letters are in French (with translations!) as well as giving us perspective on their lives and the times the writers were in. I have never sent a blank note to anyone and now that I see how these letters are cherished years later, I resolve to keep up with my own work!

The artists' musings in these provocative letters give us a fascinating insight into their fears and hopes, accompanied by charming and apparently impromptu sketches in watercolor and pen-and-ink drawings. Abrams as always has produced a first-class book. If there is any criticism to be made it is that some of the longer letters are completed in the appendix, making for some clumsy back-and-forth thumbing. Otherwise the editors have come up with some wonderful examples of the genre with illustrations ranging from elegant to fragile. This is a substantial volume that offers many absorbing hours of looking and reading.

When looking at the history, or attempting to discover the history of artists books and journals certainly one would want to include this well appointed book in one's library. It is an enriching experience to savour little bits of correspondence, renderings and illustrated journals of every man,

but to be able to also explore the correspond and journals of the well known makes for a bonus. I thoroughly enjoyed receiving this book as a gift and recommend it as a gift to journalers, sketchers and all those visual.

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