



Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School

Rebecca Zurier

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Picturing the City takes an innovative look at the group of urban realists known as the Ashcan School, and at the booming cultures of vision and representation in early twentieth-century New York. Offering fresh insights into the development of modern cities and modern art in America, Rebecca Zurier considers what it meant to live in a city where strangers habitually watched each other and public life seemed to consist of continual display, as new classes of immigrants and working women claimed their places in the metropolis. Through her study of six artists—George Bellows, William Glackens, Robert Henri, George Luks, Everett Shinn, and John Sloan—Zurier illuminates the quest for new forms of realism to describe changes in urban life, commercial culture, and codes of social conduct in the early 1900s.

Synthesizing visual and literary analysis with urban cultural history, *Picturing the City* focuses new attention on the materiality and design process of pictures. The author scrutinizes all manner of visual activity, from the pandemonium of comics to the mise-en-scene of early movies, from the mark of an individual pen stroke to a glance on the street, from illustrators' manuals to ambitious paintings that became icons of American art. By situating the Ashcan School within its proper visual culture, Zurier opens up the question of what the artists' "realism" meant at a time when many other forms of representation, including journalism and cinema, were competing to define "real life" in New York City.

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