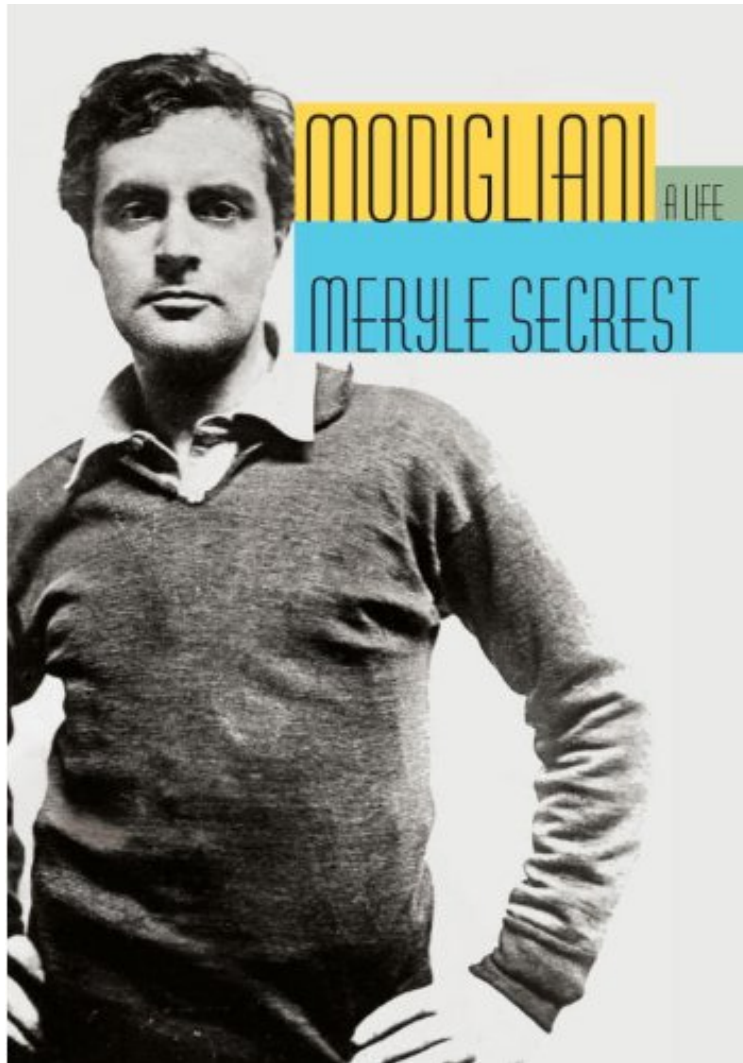


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Modigliani

Von Meryle Secrest

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Kurzbeschreibung People like us . . . have different rights, different values than do ordinary people because we have different needs which put us . . . above their moral standards. Modigliani Amedeo (Beloved of God) Modigliani was considered to be the quintessential bohemian artist, his legend almost as infamous as Van Goghs. In Modiglianis time, his work was seen as an oddity: contemporary with the Cubists but not part of their movement. His work was a link between such portraitists as Whistler, Sargent, and Toulouse-Lautrec and that of the Art Deco painters of the 1920s as well as the new approaches of Gauguin, Czanne, and Picasso. Jean Cocteau called Modigliani our aristocrat and said, There was something like a curse on this very noble boy. He was beautiful. Alcohol and misfortune took their toll on him. In this major new biography, Meryle Secrest, one of our most admired biographers whose work has been called enthralling (The Wall Street Journal); rich in detail, scrupulously researched, and sympathetically written (The New York of Books) now gives us a fully realized portrait of one of the twentieth centurys master painters and sculptors: his upbringing, a Sephardic Jew from an impoverished but genteel Italian family; his going to Paris to make his fortune; his striking good looks (How beautiful he was, my god how beautiful, said one of his models) . . . his training as an artist . . . and his influences, including the Italian Renaissance, particularly the art of Botticelli; Nietzsches theories of the artist as bermensch, divinely endowed, divinely inspired; the monochromatic backgrounds of Van Gogh and Czanne; the work of the Romanian sculptor Brancusi; and the primitive sculptures of Africa and Oceania with their simplified, masklike triangular faces, elongated silhouettes, puckered lips, low foreheads, and heads on exaggeratedly long necks. We see the ways in which Modiglianis long-kept-secret illness from tuberculosis (it almost killed him as a young man) affected his work and his attitude toward life ; how consumption caused him to embrace fatalism and idealism, creativity and death; and how he used alcohol and opium with laudanum as an antispasmodic to hide the symptoms of the disease and how, because of it, he came to be seen as a dissolute alcoholic. And throughout, we see the Paris that Modigliani lived in, a city in dynamic flux where art was still a noble cause; how Modigliani became part of a life in the streets and a world of art and artists then in a transforming revolution; Monet, Czanne, Degas, Renoir, et al. and others more radical Matisse, Derain, etc., all living within blocks of one another. Secrests book, written with unprecedented access to letters, diaries, and photographs never before seen, is an extraordinary revelation of a life lived in art . . . Here is Modigliani, the man and the artist, seemingly shy, delicate, a man on a desperate mission, masquerading as an alcoholic, cheating death again and again, and calculating what he had to do in order to go on working and concealing his secret for however much time remained . . . From the Hardcover edition. Pressestimmen "Secrest offers vividly detailed accounts of Parisian bohemia. . . She takes us on a fascinating, up-to-the-present tour of the artists posthumous history. . . particularly gripping in her description of the end of his life. . . Secrests book both preserves and alters [Modiglianis] legend. Modiglianis story is by far the most interesting thing about him. It is certainly the most complex thing, and Secrest lets the complexity unfold in complicated ways, probing it with a historians eye, dramatizing it with an advocates passion." Holland Cotter, The New York Times Book "[Secrest is an] adept biographer. . . a masterly account." Peter Schjeldahl, The New Yorker "An engaging writer and highly accomplished biographer the man [Secrest] portrays is far more complicated and interesting than his popular image." Suzanne Muchnic, Los Angeles Times "With a keen nose for canards and unprecedented access to primary materials, exemplary biographer Secrest revisits the life and achievement of artist Modigliani. . . Every aspect of Modiglianis life takes on new meaning, including his iconic portraits. . . Astute and gripping." Donna Seaman, Booklist (starred) Kurzbeschreibung People like us . . . have different rights, different values than do ordinary people because we have different needs which put us . . . above their moral standards. Modigliani Amedeo (Beloved of God) Modigliani was considered to be the quintessential bohemian artist, his legend almost as infamous as Van Goghs. In Modiglianis time, his work was seen as an oddity: contemporary with the Cubists but not part of their movement. 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