



Quicklet on Steve Martin's *An Object of Beauty*

Vivian Wagner

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ABOUT THE BOOK

I love Steve Martin's *An Object of Beauty* for the same reasons I love the novels of Edith Wharton. It's about a doomed heroine who seeks to make her fortune and seems to have the world by the tail, even as she and society both have fatal flaws that lead to her downfall. It's full of richly-detailed characters and descriptions of the turn-of-the-twenty-first-century art world, and it is a true portrait of the modern age.

An Object of Beauty also includes a number of full-color reproductions of paintings, which are central to the book's story-telling and plot. The reproductions – including James Tissot's *La Mondaine*, Ed Ruscha's *Los Angeles County Museum on Fire*, Joseph Beuys' *Felt Suit*, and many others – are almost as much fun to look at as the novel is to read, and they flesh out the storytelling in surprising ways. I found myself going back and forth between reading the novel and looking at the images of art, and this back-and-forth motion between text and image is one of the novel's primary delights.

This is a novel for people who love novels and art. It's a pleasure to read, and it leaves you wanting more of this story. When I first read it, I wanted to go back and read all of Edith Wharton's repertoire again, and I know it will do the same for other readers. Anyone who enjoys nineteenth-century novels of manners will enjoy this novel, and it's all the more enjoyable because it updates those story lines and brings them to life in the modern era.

MEET THE AUTHOR

Freelance writer Vivian Wagner has wide-ranging interests, from technology and business to music and motorcycles. She writes features regularly for ECT News Network, and her work has also appeared in *American Profile*, *Entrepreneur*, *Bluegrass Unlimited*, and many other publications. She is also the author of *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings*, and *8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel 2010). For more about her, visit her website at www.vivianwagner.net.

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

An Object of Beauty is divided in three sections. Part I begins by introducing the voice of the narrator, Daniel Franks. It opens with Daniel giving us a sense of who he is, as a relatively distant, and yet involved, narrator: “I am tired, so very tired of thinking about Lacey Yeager, yet I worry that unless I write her story down, and see it bound and tidy on my bookshelf, I will be unable to write about anything else.”

The occasion of this writing – trying to get down the story of Lacey once and for all – returns throughout the novel, as the narrator tries to come to terms with his complicated feelings for Lacey. This first book sets up their rocky relationship, and it also shows us the beginnings of Lacey's career in the art world of New York in the 1990s, where she works in the basement of Sotheby's preparing paintings for auction.

She and Daniel share some features of their careers, since they're both involved in art, though he's more

interested in the aesthetics, whereas she gradually becomes more interested in the monetary value of that art. When the story opens, they're both 23 years old, fresh out of college, and eager to make it in the big world. This first part of the novel shows Lacey coming of age, becoming an adult, and growing beyond the furniture and boyfriends of her past.

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

Steve Martin's An Object of Beauty

+ Personal Introduction

+ About the Author

+ About the Book

+ Overall Summary

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