

The Cone Sisters of Baltimore: Collecting at Full Tilt

Ellen B. Hirschland, Nancy Hirschland Ramage



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The Cone Sisters of Baltimore: Collecting at Full Tilt Ellen B. Hirschland, Nancy Hirschland Ramage Over a period of fifty years, sisters Claribel and Etta Cone amassed one of the most acclaimed collections of late-nineteenth and twentieth-century art in America. Dr. Claribel and Miss Etta were two halves of an idiosyncratic team—Claribel bold and assertive and Etta reflective and sensitive—who used the fortunes of their German Jewish immigrant family to seek out works that inspired and pleased them, regardless of public opinion and with only self-taught expertise.

This richly illustrated biography documents their lives from a unique perspective: that of their great-niece, who wrote this book with her daughter. Ellen B. Hirschland and Nancy Hirschland Ramage delve into Claribel's and Etta's world, following the sisters through letters and personal stories as they travel to meet some of the artists whose works would turn their adjoining apartments into a gallery. They bought art by Manet, Gauguin, and Cézanne, as well as of Picasso and Matisse, whom they came to know well. The sisters' experiences in Paris from 1901 through the 1920s provide an exceptional view of the bright artistic ferment in the city at that time. They were two Victorian women from Baltimore buying avant-garde masterpieces, attending salons with friends Gertrude and Leo Stein, and building a collection that would initially enrage the conservative people around them. Only with time would their keen eyes and unwavering taste prove them right.

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Michele Brown:

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