

Gill, Anton  
ART LOVER: A Biography of Peggy Guggenheim  
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An inclusive account of one of the foremost driving influences in modern art.

While most of what are termed artistic movements have their genesis in cultural happenstance, author Gill presents an airtight case for the much rarer instance of the individual patron who single-handedly, and single-mindedly, determines history's course. Born Marguerite, daughter of Benjamin, and niece of the more famous Solomon R. Guggenheim, Peggy gained her first exposure to the world of the avant-garde as an unpaid clerk in her cousin Harold Loeb's Sunwise Turn Bookshop in New York City in 1920. She took immediately to the intellectual and artistic circles into which she was introduced and, two years later, married collagist and sculptor Laurence Vail while in Paris. Vail was only one of the many artists she added to her collection of lovers, a propensity she blamed on the early loss of her father, who went down with RMS *Titanic* in 1912, which left her "searching for a father ever since." To his credit, Gill, author of several other nonfiction historical works, refuses to take such remarks at face value. Instead, he weighs them against other testimony, noting that this "complex, anarchic, remarkable woman" was "not particularly introspective." She soon found herself at the center of Parisian bohemian and American expatriate society, forming durable friendships with Samuel Beckett, Marcel Duchamp, Constantin Brancusi and other notable avant-gardists. She established the gallery Guggenheim Jeune, with an emphasis on contemporary art, in London in 1938. On the eve of World War II she accelerated her purchases, buying "a picture a day," thereby amassing one of the most extensive private collections of modern art. Fleeing to New York with future husband Max Ernst, the German surrealist, Peggy formed the gallery Art of This Century, which featured exhibitions by then relatively unknown artists Robert Motherwell, Jackson Pollock, and Mark Rothko. She returned to her beloved Venice in 1948 where her home, the eighteenth century Palazzo Venier dei Leoni, became the permanent site of the Peggy Guggenheim Collection upon her death in 1979.

This volume provides balanced yet juicy material for both the serious aficionado of modern art and the follower of celebrity.

(8 pages of black-and-white photo inserts, not seen)