

[PDF] John James Audubon: The Making Of An American

Richard Rhodes - pdf download free book

Books Details:

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Author: Richard Rhodes

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Born in 1785 in Saint Domingue (now Haiti), the bastard son of a French naval officer and a chambermaid, Audubon was taken to France by his father and then sent to America in 1803 to escape conscription into Napoleon's army. He began drawing birds as a child, and in America this passion grew into an obsession. His business ventures failed, and he was often short of money, but for him, birds overshadowed everything except his devotion to his wife, Lucy, who encouraged him in all his endeavors and supported the family when he went on quests for new birds to paint. Traveling into the American wilderness, Audubon, completely at home on the frontier, observed birds endlessly, and in 1826 set off for Europe to spend years promoting his multi-volume *Birds of America*. His life makes an engaging story, and Pulitzer Prize winner Rhodes (*The Making of*

the Atomic Bomb) chronicles every aspect of it, the commonplace as well as the audacious, in this thoroughly researched biography. Rhodes's prose style is subtle, enlivened by passages from Audubon's own letters and journals, and he presents an agreeable picture of a man who charmed almost everyone he met, remained devoted to his wife even though he abandoned her for years at a time and was not above lying about his birth and other details of his life. Perhaps most important, Rhodes succeeds in shedding light on how Audubon perfected his ability to capture in his depictions of birds so much life and emotion that they transcend traditional wildlife painting. Illus. throughout; 16 pages of photos not seen by *PW*.

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From Scientific American "The sharp cries of gulls wheeling above the East River docks welcomed the handsome young Frenchman to America." Born in 1785 the illegitimate son of a French planter on Saint Domingue (now Haiti) and raised in France, the handsome young man transformed himself into the consummate American. Rhodes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Making of the Atomic Bomb*, traces this journey with insight ("studying birds was how he mastered the world, and himself") and vivid language. In particular, Audubon's wife, Lucy--a beautiful, adventurous Englishwoman whom he met shortly after arriving in America--emerges as a full, and patient, partner in Audubon's single-minded enterprise to develop a technique that would breathe life back into the birds he drew and to catalogue the birds of North America in a "collection not only valuable to the scientific class, but pleasing to every person." The book includes several color reproductions to remind us just how well Audubon succeeded. If this biography inspires you to read more about birds, two other recent books stand out: *The Race to Save the Lord God Bird*, by Phillip Hoose (Melanie Kroupa Books, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), and *On the Wing: To the Edge of the Earth with the Peregrine Falcon*, by Alan Tennant (Alfred A. Knopf, 2004).

Editors of Scientific American --This text refers to the edition.

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