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## Bad Boy: An Uncensored Account of One Artist's Coming of Age Details

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## From Reader Review Bad Boy: An Uncensored Account of One Artist's Coming of Age for online ebook

### Margaret says

2+1/2 stars

I was never a big fan of Fischl's art but read a review somewhere that got me to pick his book up and give it a try. This book is not particularly well written but it is pretty fascinating. Fischl is very revealing in his analysis of his own artistic practice and the art of others. He writes about his place in the art world and his self doubts about his painting throughout his career, a lot of which I can relate to. After reading this book, I had to adjust my opinion of Eric Fischl. There is a lot more to him than what he puts on the canvas. It's similar to what they say about good baseball managers. The best baseball managers were not the best players during their playing days but the time they spent on the bench was well served. They were able to observe and analyze the game and its technique.

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### Cleveland says

An irresistible, irrepressible chance to ride along with Eric Fischl on his roller coaster ride of a life and career. Such highs and lows, all related with candor, insight, wit, and heart. It's a rare chance to get to know a fine artist all over again, this time through a new medium.

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### Sue Altman says

This book was a solid 5 until the last 10%. Then I felt it really slowed down. However, I still rated it a 5 because the first 90% was so extraordinary. A real must for artists and art lovers.

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### Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

I don't follow art, but I'm intrigued by art. So I chose to read and review this book without any knowledge whatsoever of Fischl or his art. (Surely, you say, you could have at least thought about the implications of the title and could have done a quick Google search. Oh wise one, yes, I could have and should have.)

Call me ugly names if you will, but Fischl's art is not my cuppa-tea. His art is disturbing. Very disturbing.

All of which I learned after finally doing a quick Google search. After I'd already committed to reading and reviewing the book (my bad...if you will please excuse the pun).

It was with great reluctance that I decided to go ahead and try chapter one. I was surprised to find Fisch is a solid writer (well, apparently Fischl with the help of Michael Stone is a solid writer), able to put together enough pages about how art came to him (he isn't really sure how it came to him) and about his dysfunctional family-of-origin and about his attempts to get past his alcoholic mother and about how he established happy grownup relationships to make a nice book. Yes, there is the usual celebrity name-dropping and pages of

photos of that disturbing art, but I must admit that Bad Boy is a compelling story.

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### **Peter Melancon says**

I didn't know who Eric Fischl is or his artwork but I picked up the book because of the cover. The book is really about how an artist deals with vast amounts of emotions and paints them on canvas. He then explores how others feel about his work and the ridiculous amounts of money paintings sell for.

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### **Mandy says**

Loved this book. Really enjoyed how Fischl made the creative process come alive. Was also surprised by how much painting compares to writing. Highly recommend this book for any creatives out there or anyone who enjoys a good memoir.

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### **Matthew Langley says**

starts out great - last third is a bit of a dud. Not to be snarky, but much like his paintings.

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### **Peter Wise says**

Excellent narrative on Eric Fischl's evolution as an artist without the chest thumping from painters of the 80s one might expect. His writing is not exactly self-effacing but that would be a disappointment, too. It remains right in the soft spot where he chronicles his personal life, professional development and the social context that surrounds it from his own viewpoint, naturally colored by his own opinions on the latter. This is a very good book indeed for artists to read because much of what he says resonates perfectly with less successful artists like myself, and those of us who grew up in the 60s. His personal story is of great interest and told in a non-sentimental way ... and with some humor despite the darkness. I recommend this to the general reader and especially to any artists who want to take time away from their easels.

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### **Julie says**

I really enjoyed this book. As an artist, it's good to read the story of another, much more successful artist and see that his struggles are the same, though on a much larger (and more lucrative) scale. His contemporaries and friends, the dealers, collectors and artists he talks about read like my senior seminar art history class in contemporary art. A thoughtful and honest autobiography.

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### **Bill McCloskey says**

I really enjoyed this book. Eric came up 7 or 8 years ahead of me but we followed similar trajectories. I was work at the Whitney the night of his opening there in 1986, the scene that opens the book.

And like me, the 87 stock market crash eventually caught up with the art market. I was non established, despite having two one man shows in the east village. Eric was a rich and famous artist, living the dream. In the 90's I moved into computer graphics and a whole new world, Eric continued to paint.

I don't think I've read a work on art that so well describes the creative process, the visions one has, as this book. The high flying years over, Eric came to terms with his work and life as the years progressed. The book settles down abit as we hit the "Steve Martin" years. But still a joy to read all the way through.

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## Elizabeth Sobieski says

A woman lies in bed, legs akimbo, worrying a toenail; bars of light illuminate her nakedness, while a boy of 10 or 12 stares at her sex and conceals a ladies purse behind his back. *Bad Boy* is both a pivotal painting by Eric Fischl and the title of his memoir, to be released by Crown in May.

Fischl first came to prominence in the heady early 1980s with a series of artworks that seemed to depict suburban angst; voyeurism and subversion layered between the sheets of American dreams. They were unforgettable images: a young boy masturbating into a kiddie pool, a nude father embracing his naked toddler daughter (an ocean view providing background), a slim black servant bathing a blond boy-child. And Fischl, along with other artists labeled "neo-Expressionists," including his dear friend David Salle and his former *bête noir* Julian Schnabel, were stars of New York City's incandescent art world.

eric fischl

Captivatingly written (with Michael Stone), employing the same candor that produced these arresting narrative paintings, we see a portrait of the artist as a young boy in the '50s and '60s, on Long Island and in Arizona, victim of a brilliant, beautiful, narcissistic, violent alcoholic mother, an eventual and perhaps inevitable suicide. He enters CalArts at its inception in 1970, which somehow, before it even has a campus, is immediately a Zeitgeistian center, with Fischl, Salle, and Ross Bleckner enrolled, and professors John Baldessari, Nam June Paik and Judy Chicago. Art can be almost anything here, though figurative painting is not what Eric Fischl is taught. Fischl develops as an artist, leaving behind early abstraction, needing to depict emotion, gathering confidence and technique in Nova Scotia and Chicago, painting on glassine, layering translucent storytelling images, before erupting with the daring canvases of the 80s, a time when painting had long been declared dead.

Celebrity and money enter his life, along with cocaine sparked nights. Artists become like rock stars. Within a decade, Fischl's and friends' period of supernovadom passes. And yet wonderful works continue to emerge from his studio, images of India and powerful fleshy sculptures.

Fischl laments much of the contemporary art world as a passionless marketplace and is especially dismissive of artists Jeff Koons and Damian Hirst, who "were making work that I didn't respect," and dealer (now MOCA director) Jeffrey Deitch: "Going into his gallery was like going into a daycare center for artists with their art toys strewn everywhere."

As tough as he can be toward others, he is also brutal with himself. While still supremely successful, still

sought by museums and connoisseurs, and still producing work that excites him, he quotes a collector of his, a man he respects, telling him, "You've got to face it, man. You didn't make the cut," post 1980s.

Along with Fischl's self-portrait in print, *Bad Boy* includes numerous short essays from family and friends, including Steve Martin, Mike Nichols and Fischl's estimable dealer of 29 years, Mary Boone. It's intriguing to see how memory sometimes works. Eric and his sister lay claim to different years for their father's death. Fischl recalls a fight with David Salle, culminating in the two artists not speaking for several years as having taken place on the streets of TriBeCa, and Salle states that the rupture occurred in Magoo's bar.

For anyone seeking an understanding of the contemporary art world, *Bad Boy* is a fascinating read. Fischl, who has often taught and lectured, skillfully and non-pedantically describes his work, his technique, the people and places that have inspired him, and readily admits to being highly competitive with other artists, not seeing himself as some highfalutin isolated preciosity. And as his approach to art is so emotive, his need to relate to the viewer so profound, we feel his passion in his words as well as his pictures. And he owns up to what his paintings have sold for, a taboo subject for most artists, more taboo than any art they make.

Has Eric Fischl been a *Bad Boy*? Not especially. There were some amusing hijinks, but the artist hasn't touched cocaine or alcohol in 25 years. For aficionados of Fischl's work, there are reveals. The model for the woman in "*Bad Boy*" was his wife, the lyrical landscape painter April Gornik. The couple has been together since 1975. And his descriptions of his interconnectedness with Gornik and his friends (and competitors) shows a man succeeding in relating to themes of male sensitivity and identity that have long compelled him in his work.

Disclaimer: I once interviewed the eloquent Eric Fischl at his spectacular home in Sag Harbor, Long Island, for *The Art Economist Magazine*, our discourse focusing on the subject of "*America: Now and Here*", Fischl's passion project, in which trucks containing works by over one hundred major artists (including poets, playwrights, and filmmakers) would tour the hinterlands. Fischl baked the most delicious olive bread I have ever tasted; it was not a bribe (as this book was yet to be written!). And sadly, so far "*America: Now and Here*" has not received the financing it needs; its tours were abbreviated.

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### **Sketchbook says**

Pretentious blather, but quite harmless. How Eric Superfischl got very rich and took cocaine and met tons of famous ppl and gives celeb parties in the Hammies. He is now fat.

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### **Antonio Depietro says**

interesting artist and very relatable. i think i want to paint something this weekend.

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### **John Seed says**

Fischl's new book -- which mixes autobiography, art world anecdotes and aesthetic self-justifications -- is clearly written and well argued. He had good help with the project as he worked with a co-author (Michael Stone) and turned to friends, including comedian/writer Steve Martin, to give him feedback on the drafts in progress. The book has some very frank and revealing moments, including Fischl's descriptions of his

mother's alcoholism and eventual suicide. In one stark anecdote Fischl describes how he tried to "reason with her" after the family faced a financial setback: "She'd rather be dead, my mother said, than face the sterility of suburban life without booze."

As I made my way through Bad Boy, I was struck by the book's tone of sincerity, which brought up a question for me: just how heartfelt are Fischl's works?

If you are going to find this book convincing, you will need to believe that Fischl really has been coming from a place of genuine emotion, as opposed to tweaking the public with images that were and are calculatedly sensational. Bad Boy argues for the former. Fischl goes to great lengths to explain that his early life was painful and disjointed, and that his career and oeuvre are about a personal quest for catharsis and wholeness.

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### **Alyson Stanfield says**

Excellent! A must-read for artists!

My full video review is here: <http://www.artbizblog.com/2013/07/fis...>

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