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BY ANNA HANKS

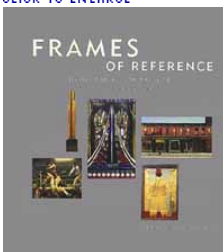
Frames of Reference: Looking at American Art, 1900-1950

edited by Beth Venn and Adam D. Weinberg

University of California Press, 224 pp., \$29.95 (paper)

They should have called it *Behind the Art: The Making of the Whitney Museum*. *Frames of Reference* is divided into three sections: a charming biography of Mrs. Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who founded the Whitney; a collection of 26 double-paged spreads that give the once-over-lightly to 26 Whitney works; and the final section, which covers 10 other significant Whitney works in satisfying college-art-history-seminar detail. That section, *American Icons Interpreted*, is the sort of thing that leads people to stay in college forever. Each of the 10 paintings has three thoughtful short essays explaining and clarifying works like William J. Glacken's *Hammerstein's Roof Garden*, Alexander Calder's *Circus*, and Edward Hopper's *Early Sunday Morning*. Like high-quality college lectures or a good documentary, these essays take you deeply into the paintings. While not a book for the art professional, *Frames* does do a nice job of covering the Whitney collection.

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