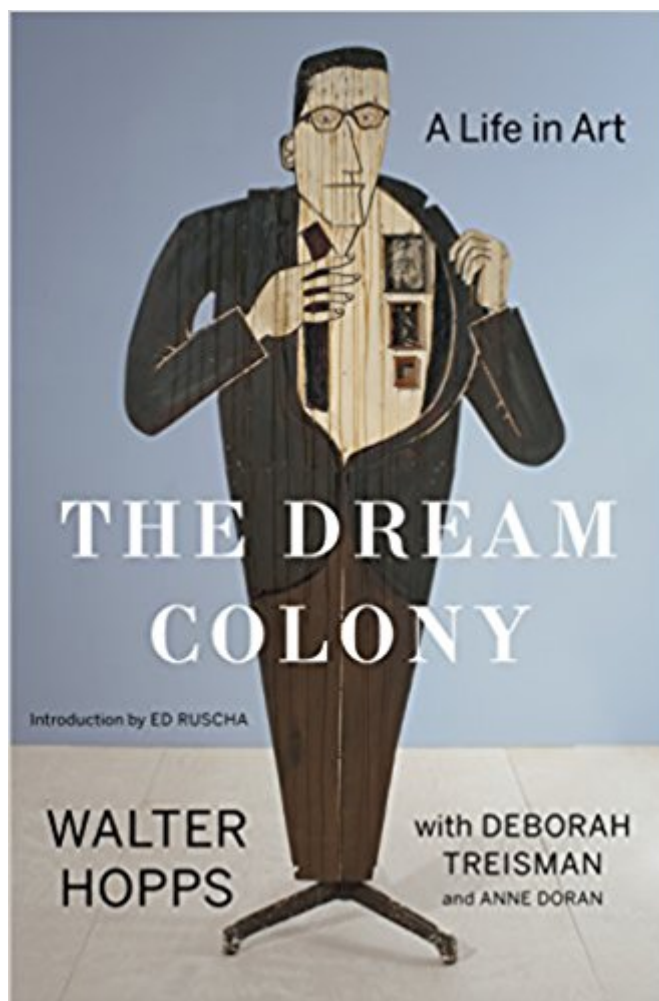


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# The Dream Colony: A Life In Art



## Synopsis

A panoramic look at art in America in the second half of the twentieth century, through the eyes of the visionary curator who helped shape it. An innovative, iconoclastic curator of contemporary art, Walter Hopps founded his first gallery in L.A. at the age of twenty-one. At twenty-four, he opened the Ferus Gallery with then-unknown artist Edward Kienholz, where he turned the spotlight on a new generation of West Coast artists. Ferus was also the first gallery ever to show Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans and was shut down by the L.A. vice squad for a show of Wallace Berman's edgy art. At the Pasadena Art Museum in the sixties, Hopps mounted the first museum retrospectives of Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Cornell and the first museum exhibition of Pop Art--before it was even known as Pop Art. In 1967, when Hopps became the director of Washington's Corcoran Gallery of Art at age thirty-four, the New York Times hailed him as "the most gifted museum man on the West Coast (and, in the field of contemporary art, possibly in the nation)." He was also arguably the most unpredictable, an eccentric genius who was chronically late. (His staff at the Corcoran had a button made that said WALTER HOPPS WILL BE HERE IN TWENTY MINUTES.) Erratic in his work habits, he was never erratic in his commitment to art. Hopps died in 2005, after decades at the Menil Collection of art in Houston for which he was the founding director. A few years before that, he began work on this book. With an introduction by legendary Pop artist Ed Ruscha, *The Dream Colony* is a vivid, personal, surprising, irreverent, and enlightening account of his life and of some of the greatest artistic minds of the twentieth century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In *The Dream Colony: A Life in Art*, [Walter Hopps's] lively posthumous memoir, we learn all manner of detail from Hopps's life . . . A very good read." - Wall Street Journal

"Stories flow from every page: about his talented and eccentric family in Los Angeles of the 1920s-30s; reminiscences of artists famous and obscure; of art collectors and institutions. Learned but far from stuffy, Hopps merged life and career into one passionate, improvisatory, gonzo experience, his voice and personality present here." - Library Journal

"A scintillating and revelatory volume . . . Hopps was a genuine original whose influence will continue to radiate." - Booklist

"For those unfamiliar with Hopps, this semi-auto-biographical story will be even more delightful--if only for the anecdotes and images . . . [*The Dream Colony*] should be treasured by art enthusiasts of all stripes." - ArtNet

"Walter Hopps was everyone's model of what a curator should be. His landmark exhibitions stay in the mind's eye decades later. Now we have his memoir, a record of Walter's unique personality, his astonishing range of interests and curiosities, and the depth of his feeling for and commitment to the art of his time. Essential reading." - David Salle

"Walter Hopps was a celebrated museum curator and director, but he had many of the qualities of an artist--he was original, he was inspired, and he was famously late for appointments. He knew the best stories about artists, or at least about Marcel Duchamp, Joseph Cornell, Robert Rauschenberg and other members of the avant-garde with whom he worked closely. His memoir offers an unusually intimate glimpse at the post-war American art scene. For once, you didn't have to be there, because Hopps was there and tells all." - Deborah Solomon, author of *AMERICAN MIRROR: THE LIFE AND ART OF NORMAN ROCKWELL*

"*The Dream Colony* immediately provides its reader with the exhilarating conviction that you are in the presence of both the craziest and most sane person you will ever be lucky enough to know. Walter Hopps's prodigious gifts as a storyteller are every bit the equal to the adventures that defined a singularly brilliant and deeply principled life in art." - Ann Temkin, Chief Curator of Painting and Sculpture, Museum of Modern Art, New York

"Walter Hopps was one of the greatest talkers I've ever known, and he's at his quirky best in *The Dream Colony*--a superb evocation of the art world he knew and loved, and a joy to read." - Calvin Tomkins, *NEW YORKER* staff writer and author of *DUCHAMP: A BIOGRAPHY*

"Walter Hopps, the marvelous mad maven of modern art in America, was one clean gleam of a man--never less than completely inspired and always witty in the extreme. Treisman and Doran have accomplished a small miracle, delivering his voice pitch-perfect to the page. Truly like capturing lightning in a bottle!" - Lawrence Weschler, author of *WAVES PASSING IN THE NIGHT*

Walter Hopps (1932–2005) was a curator and museum director who worked at the Pasadena Art

Museum, the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian's National Collection of Fine Arts, the Menil Collection, which he helped create, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Deborah Treisman has been the fiction editor of the New Yorker since 2003, and was deputy fiction editor for six years before that. She hosts the award-winning New Yorker Fiction Podcast, and was the editor of the anthology *20 Under 40: Stories from The New Yorker*. From 1994 to 1997 she was the managing editor of the art and literary quarterly *Grand Street*, for which Hopps was the art editor. Anne Doran has written for *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *ARTnews*, *Atlantica*, and *Time Out New York*. From 1996 to 2004 she was an editor at *Grand Street*. Her artwork has been shown in New York at *Invisible-Exports* and the *New Museum of Contemporary Art*, and in Europe at the *Stedelijk Museum* and the *Centre Georges Pompidou*, among other venues.

Loved learning more about Walter Hopps and this era of art from a west coast perspective since he was one of the prime movers of the scene. There is much more that needs to be researched and written about before more of the major players are gone. The personalities, characters, motivations, ambitions, and the way it unfolded are fascinating to me. The author did a great job of putting it all together through the interviews and imperfect documents she had to work with. Anyone interested in pop art history will want to have read this book. Anyone remotely involved with making and showing art will get a sense of comradery from these pages. Anyone interested in Duchamp and his influence on art to this day will want to read the stories uncovered in this book. The story about Walter and Duchamp's *The Green Box* alone is worth the price of admission and sparks fireworks in my imagination.

What a pleasure reading about a not-so-long-ago art world where the art itself seemed to matter more than money. Walter Hopps, along with Richard Bellamy and Ivan Karp, formed the "Big 3" of "art prophets" who remain the unsung heroes of their times. *The Dream Colony* does a wonderful job of telling you why Walter Hopps mattered. Highly recommended.

Very enjoyable read especially if you want background into the history of post WWII art of Los Angeles. Walter Hopps was a force without disrupting any of the scene but educating collectors and artists about the many connections he saw as possible and viable. Other books on LA art and with focus on *Ferus Gallery* such as *"Out of Sight"* are good references to add to this reading. Nice to see LA art finally being considered as more than surf, sand and girls, although that is present.

If you like art of the 20th century, this book is for you. A memoir with excellent chapters on Barnett Newman, Robert Rauschenberg, Joseph Cornell and Marcel Duchamp. An impressive career and a good writer.

Great read.....if you love art, especially modern.

walter hopps was a genius. so glad this book is finally out.

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