



Fairfield Porter: A Life in Art

Mr. Justin Spring

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Fairfield Porter, a painter who produced realist work in the midst of the Abstract Expressionist movement, was hailed by John Ashbery in 1983 as "perhaps the major American artist of this century." This intimate literary and intellectual biography of Porter tells his life story -- integrating it with his art, art criticism, and poetry -- and in so doing explains Ashbery's claim. Drawing extensively on Porter's correspondence and on interviews with members of his circle, Justin Spring chronicles Porter's upbringing in a wealthy family; his education at Harvard; his youthful travels in Europe and Stalinist Russia; his marriage to Anne Channing Porter, a poet; his work as a painter and critic in New York; and his association with major figures of the American modernist movement, both artists (Alfred Stieglitz, John Marin, Willem de Kooning, and Alex Katz) and poets (John Wheelwright, Kenneth Rexroth, Frank O'Hara, and, finally, James Schuyler, who lived with the Porters for over a decade). Spring presents a balanced picture of Porter as a fascinating, talented, but troubled man who lived a politicized, bohemian life, struggled to raise a family of five while dealing with a bisexual identity, and triumphed only late in life as a painter and critic. Twenty-five years after his death, Porter remains highly regarded within the art world but little known outside it. This absorbing biography will give him the public recognition he so richly deserves.

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