

The Life and Art of Anne Eisner An American Artist between Cultures

by Christie McDonald

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This biography, the first on the artist, reveals Eisner's experience of living in different cultures: from her early years and artistic career in New York, through living at the edge of the Ituri Forest in the ex-Belgian Congo (now Democratic Republic of the Congo), to her return to New York.

Eisner came of age in the 1930s and 1940s, with the struggle among artists and intellectuals to combat fascism and create a better world. Leaving behind a successful career as a painter, Anne followed anthropologist Patrick Putnam, with whom she fell in love, to the multi-cultural community of Epulu.

As an American woman and painter, her focus on cultural and aesthetic values, her belief in freedom and equality, brought an eccentric perspective to the colonial context.

Unanticipated challenges forced her to think about who she was, as she agreed to marry under unfamiliar conditions, became one of the mothers, hosted researchers and tourists, and attempted to care for Putnam in his tragic decline. That her art sustained her throughout as a discipline (sketching, drawing, painting) reveals to what extent Anne was able to express joy in creativity; the beauty of her art testifies to its transformative power.

The biography is based on letters, journals, and documents. It is enriched by black and white photographs and color plates illustrating Eisner's art painted in New York and Congo.

"In this radiant biography, the painter Anne Eisner springs to life as a figure of formidable originality... Christie McDonald's heroic, feminist work restores Eisner as artist and as a key anthropological observer of her time." –

Rosanna Warren, author of *Max Jacob: A Life in Art and Letters*

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