



An Artist of the Floating World

By Kazuo Ishiguro

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I is for Ishiguro. Masuji Ono saw misery in his homeland and became unwilling to spend his skills solely in the celebration of physical beauty. Instead, he envisioned a strong and powerful nation of the future, and he put his painting to work in the service of the movement that led Japan into World War II. Now, as the mature Masuji Ono struggles through the spiritual wreckage of that war, his memories of the “floating world” of his youth, full of pleasure and promise, serve as an escape from, a punishment for—and a justification of—his entire life. Drifting without honor in Japan’s postwar society, which indicts him for its defeat and reviles him for his aesthetics, he relives the passage through his personal history that makes him both a hero and a coward but, above all, a human being. *An Artist of the Floating World* is a sensual and profoundly convincing portrait of the artist as an aging man. At once a multigenerational tale and a samurai death poem written in English, it is also a saga of the clash of the old and new orders, blending classical and contemporary iconography with compassion and wit.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In *An Artist of the Floating World*, Kazuo Ishiguro offers readers of the English language an authentic look at postwar Japan, "a floating world" of changing cultural behaviors, shifting societal patterns and troubling questions. Ishiguro, who was born in Nagasaki in 1954 but moved to England in 1960, writes the story of Masuji Ono, a bohemian artist and purveyor of the night life who became a propagandist for Japanese imperialism during the war. But the war is over. Japan lost, Ono's wife and son have been killed, and many young people blame the imperialists for leading the country to disaster. What's left for Ono? Ishiguro's treatment of this story earned a 1986 Whitbread Prize.

From Publishers Weekly

Like figures on a Japanese screen, the painter Masuji Ono and his daughters Setsuko and Noriko are fixed in the formal attitudes that even their private conversations reflect. In the postwar 1940, the father is a relic of traditional Japan, of teahouses, geishas and patterned gardens not yet destroyed by industry and Westernized thinking. He is unable to communicate with his daughters, unsure of the propriety of his wartime nationalism yet unwilling to exchange it for what seem to him doubtful modern values. His thoughts turn to the optimism of his student days, to uncertainties and disappointments that were mitigated by his sense of a prevailing order, now nowhere apparent. He cannot fathom why his daughters treat him with a disdain that approaches rudeness, why they imply that he and his kind were responsible for the war that killed so many sons, his own among them. And so, despite the rigidity of Ishiguro's prose which matches Ono's inflexibility the once famous artist gathers pathos as he moves through the pages of a novel that is both a reminder and a warning. Ishiguro wrote *A Pale View of Hills*.

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From Library Journal

It is postwar Japan and a now retired and seemingly discredited painter, Sensei Ono, reflects on his career, the limits to loyalties between teachers and students, and the life of art. Occasions such as the forthcoming engagement of his daughter (which involves investigations into the family background) bring his involvement with the political campaigns of the prewar regime painfully to the fore of his consciousness. Should he have remained a traditional painter of the floating world of geishas, tea houses, and such? Do his high-minded intentions excuse his propaganda posters? Should an artist follow an aesthetic of pure art or of social involvement? How does a person or a society come to terms with mistakes of the past? This new novel by the author of *A Pale View of Hills* will appeal to the thoughtful reader. Recommended. Carl Vogel, San Francisco P.L.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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don't like reading through a book? Sometime, man feel need book once they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you will want this An Artist of the Floating World.

Dawn Bliss:

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Keith Kemp:

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