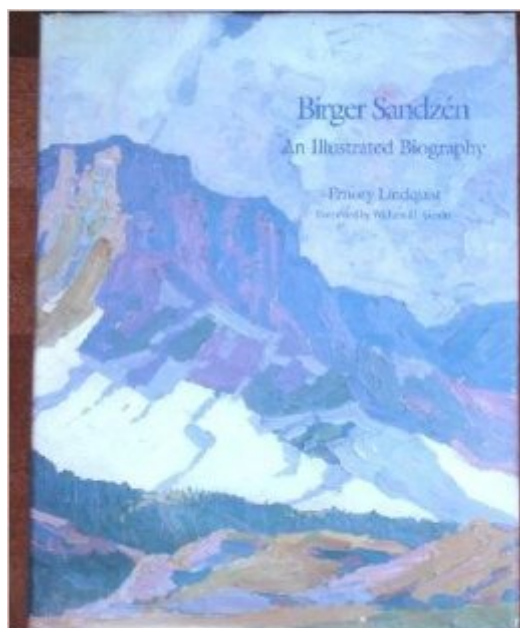


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Birger Sandzen: An Illustrated Biography



Synopsis

Explaining why he sold his works of art at moderate prices, Birger Sandzen not only revealed his philosophy on art but offered a glimpse of his philosophy on life. "It is just as well to let them go and meet people", he said, "rather than sit here with too high prices and out of touch with the world". Combining biography - based on excerpts from letters, interviews and critical art reviews - with a selection of the artist's work, Emory Lindquist brings to life Birger Sandzen, who used bold brush strokes and brilliant colours to express the landscapes he admired and generosity, humour and diligence to express himself. More than just an artist, Sandzen was a gifted teacher, linguist and translator, musician, and devoted husband and father. He kept in touch with art trends and fellow artists; travelled throughout the United States, Mexico and Europe; wrote articles on art and short stories; and read widely on social, economic and international developments. Despite gaining a prosperous international reputation as an artist - his works have appeared in more than 600 exhibitions in the United States and Europe - the European-trained artist chose to live in Lindsborg, Kansas, rather than New York, the heart of the American art world. Although Sandzen and what was then called the modern school were somewhat of an anomaly on the prairie, he did not regret living in the Midwest. "How artists are able to work in the confusion of New York is a mystery to me...My individuality and freedom I cannot give up", he wrote. Sandzen found his artistic freedom along Kansas rivers, on Colorado mountains and in southwestern deserts. Where others saw lifeless aridity or uninspiring treeless expanses, Sandzen would find "huge boulders or fantastic fortresses and castles". Along a Kansas creek he would envision "perpendicular sandstone walls, high and gay coloured palaces, minarets and temple ruins against the sparkling greenish blue sky". In 1894, 23-year-old Birger Sandzen set sail from his native Sweden for a two- or three-year teaching appointment at Bethany College in Lindsborg. Two years stretched into 60 and resulted in a legacy that left a lasting impression not only on Sandzen's students but on everyone who views his illuminating images.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

He would have wanted to be remembered most as a teacher and friend; he was that and more to those that were fortunate enough to have known him. Such was the life of the great Swedish artist Birger Sandzen. In a glowing tribute to the man and his work, Emory Lindquist has managed to capture the essence of who he was and what he has meant to Kansas art. An absolutely beautiful account of his art and influence. Sandzen was a one of a kind visionary of the beauty that surrounds us in everyday life and nature. A first rate work by a learned historian, and obvious devotee, of Sandzen.

Birger SandzÃ©n (1871-1954) is widely regarded as the preeminent artist in the history of the state of Kansas. Born and educated in Sweden, he emigrated to America in 1894 to accept a teaching position at Bethany College in Lindsborg. He taught there for over 50 years, and remained in Lindsborg until his death. He had a profound impact on the development of the arts in Kansas, yet his influence spread far beyond the borders of the state. He produced a prodigious output of paintings and prints which were exhibited both nationally and internationally. Despite its subtitle, this volume is not a biography in the traditional sense. It is a retrospective tribute in which biography plays a small part. The events and accomplishments of SandzÃ©n's life are not related chronologically, but rather organized thematically into a series of essays. The first three chapters are biographical in nature, but successive chapters focus on individual aspects of his career such as teaching method, travel, family and friends, painting technique, printmaking, critical response to his work, and the establishment of the Birger SandzÃ©n Memorial Gallery at Bethany College. In the treatment of his subject, author Emory Lindquist is relentlessly laudatory. He has not come to bury SandzÃ©n, but to praise him. From reading this book one would suspect that SandzÃ©n never committed a sin, no one ever had anything bad to say about him, and the only hardship he ever faced was death itself. Two mind-numbing chapters of excerpts from exhibition reviews cite heaps worth of adulation, garnished with less than a handful of sentences even remotely critical of the

artist's work. Nevertheless, I enjoyed this book in spite of its lack of objectivity. What Lindquist does well is capture Sandz's infectious excitement and enthusiasm for art and education. Despite isolating himself in a remote outpost on the prairies, Sandz managed to execute works of art that rivaled those produced in the great art centers of the world and earned the respect of critics worldwide. Though he devoted himself to interpreting the landscapes of Kansas, the Rocky Mountains, and the Southwest, he never became an American regionalist painter. He built his own individual style upon a tripod of Nordic traditions, French impressionism, and German expressionism. Sandz brought high artistic and intellectual standards to a small town in central Kansas, and with the help of friends and colleagues established at Lindsborg his own little Parnassus on the Plains. This volume is heavily illustrated with both historical photos of the artist and pictures of his work. To those unfamiliar with Sandz's art, his painting style could best be described as a combination of Van Gogh with a fatter brush and Monet on steroids. No printed page could ever do justice to Sandz's brilliant colors, but the 49 color plates included here succeed admirably. The 26 black and white figures reproduce his prints and drawings absolutely beautifully. In addition to presenting a lovely gallery of the artist's work, this book is the most authoritative resource we have on Sandz and his inspiring accomplishments as an artist and educator. For that, it is a book to be respected and treasured.

Excellent book for the collector, art historian or art student interested in the "Van Gogh of America". As one of America's foremost buyers of Birger Sandzen paintings, I highly recommend this book. [...]

In the July issue of 2010 Southwest Art magazine, a small article appeared indicating the Palm Springs Art Museum (CA) was hosting a Birger Sandzen exhibit through Sept. 12, 2010. The illustrated biography (most likely paper back) is available for \$42.00. Please forgive me, for pointing this out to interested folks but the \$265 for a new hard back is a steep price to pay in these economic times.

If you have been a Sandzen fan for a while, this book with its juicy color photos is what everyone has been craving. COLOR, COLOR, COLOR....every artist should have a look at just a few pages to get an idea of what it means to paint in color,...or with color. The artists palette is usually a unique handling of color and Sandzen's pinks, oranges, greens and yellows are hypnotizing. If you are interested in Sandzen's printmaking, see my other review on his graphic works, but if you are

looking for a very nice life overview of an under-rated artist,..give it a go!!!

Beautiful book with many color & b/w illustrations of paintings and prints which clearly displays Sandzen's mastery of both mediums! Swedish born and trained Sandzen was one of America's leading post-impressionists and the only one of whom I know whose landscape subjects are entirely Western. A great buy!

I have done several studies of Birger Sandzen's work, this book helps in understanding him. Perhaps I will do some more now that I have new reference material.

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