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Twilight: Losing Sight, Gaining Insight

Von Henry Grunwald

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Von Henry Grunwald : Twilight: Losing Sight, Gaining Insight before purchasing it in order to gage whether or

not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Twilight: Losing Sight, Gaining Insight*:

KurzbeschreibungIn 1992, when Henry Grunwald missed a glass into which he was pouring water, he assumed that he needed new eyeglasses, not that the incident was a harbinger of darker times. But in fact Grunwald was entering the early stages of macular degeneration -- a gradual loss of sight that affects almost 15 million Americans yet remains poorly understood and is, so far, incurable. Now, in *Twilight*, Grunwald chronicles his experience of disability: the clouding of his sight, and the daily struggle to overcome its physical and psychological implications; the discovery of what medicine can and cannot do to restore sight; his compulsion to understand how the eye works, its evolution, and its symbolic meaning in culture and art. Grunwald gives us an autobiography of the eye -- his visual awakening as a child and young man, and again as an older man who, facing the loss of sight, feels a growing wonder at the most ordinary acts of seeing. This is a story not merely about seeing but about living; not merely about losing sight but about gaining insight. It is a remarkable meditation..deHaving worn eyeglasses for most of his life, Henry Grunwald merely thought a new prescription was in order when he tried to pour himself some water one day and completely missed the glass. A visit to the eye doctor revealed much more: Grunwald was in the early stages of macular degeneration, an incurable condition that causes increasingly blurred vision and near blindness. His condition was first diagnosed in 1992; he can now discern only fuzzy shapes and colors, while reading has become the "visual equivalent of struggling for breath." To a man who has devoted his life to the written word, the inability to read and write on his own was particularly difficult to accept. With time and effort, however, acceptance did arrive, and *Twilight: Losing Sight, Gaining Insight* is an elegant memoir of the lessons learned from his debilitating illness. A former editor in chief of *Time, Inc.*, author of *One Man's America*, and once the U.S. ambassador to his native Austria, Grunwald first confronted his illness like the first-rate journalist he is. He gathered information, read widely, and questioned the experts, amassing an eclectic blend of fascinating tidbits regarding the history of the eye, as well as discussions on art, culture, and mythology. He meanders from light-sensitive primitive organisms to the latest surgical wizardry to ancient Egyptian remedies for eye maladies (the innards of yellow frogs and the milk of women who had borne only boys apparently worked wonders). He also discovers that Henry James, James Thurber, and Jorge Luis Borges all suffered from a similar loss of sight, as did Michelangelo and Monet. There must be some comfort in knowing one is in good company. In learning more about the ailment, he ultimately learns more about himself, and it is this introspection that gives this book its subtle beauty. He learns to pay more attention to ordinary objects--the gleam of brass fixtures, the sleek contour of tools, the elegance of machines--as well as to gaze anew at the familiar faces of friends and family. He even uses his blurred vision as a way to interpret beloved paintings differently. Looking backward, he restructures visual memories into a "kaleidoscope of the past" that is beyond the whims of his failing eyes. Though he candidly discusses his fears, anger, and depression, with particular attention paid to his lost independence and reliance on others, his attitude on the whole is admirable. And he manages to retain a sense of humor. In one passage he recalls how he once extended a handshake to what he believed to be the maitre d' at a restaurant, only to be told that he had greeted a large statue of a monkey instead. Grunwald's absorbing memoir is an eloquent reminder that the eyes are not the only instruments with which to discern beauty. In many respects, his loss of sight served only to sharpen his vision. --Shawn Carkonen.comHaving worn eyeglasses for most of his life, Henry Grunwald merely thought a new prescription was in order when he tried to pour himself some water one day and completely missed the glass. A visit to the eye doctor revealed much more: Grunwald was in the early stages of macular degeneration, an incurable condition that causes increasingly blurred vision and near blindness. His condition was first diagnosed in 1992; he can now discern only fuzzy shapes and colors, while reading has become the "visual equivalent of struggling for breath." 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