

KISS OF THE ART GODS
A Memoir by Dan Corbin
Book Review by Caroline Grayson, November 2016

Background

A life-changing flood. A failing farm. A controversial war. A struggle for identity. *Kiss of the Art Gods* is a memoir authored by successful figurative sculptor Dan Corbin. His story is set against the backdrop of the industrial 50's, followed by the turbulent 60's and 70's. Corbin's book explores his journey from the experiences of childhood up through his success as an artist.

Critique

Corbin's writing reflects his journey. His boyhood was filled with tactile exploration. In his idyllic young days growing up on a farm with two brothers, he had ample opportunity experience with abandon everything from mud pits to peach orchards; and from mechanics to an early fascination with fire. As he grows up and the harsh realities of life invade, his story periodically follows rabbit trails; seemingly unrelated paths and bursts of memory, which later in his story make sense.

Corbin's youthful stint as a wino was an exercise that served him well later as he learned to contemplate those around him and adjust his behaviors according to what he saw. At times this came across as detachment. Was he an observer of living history or an active participant? This quiet conflict played out when, after serving in the military, he later became a passive participant in war demonstrations.

As he discovered and developed his artistic talents, the circuitous nature of his experiences comes together. The intense observation and tactile exploration of his life became the key to his success. Before I read *Kiss of the Art Gods*, I was a fan of this artist. Afterward, I realized I had fallen in love with Danny, the boy. It is clear he is still inside the man.

Conclusion

This book was an interesting read and an inadvertent commentary on a conflicted time in American's history. Our lives are shaped by our families, our experiences, and the choices we make along the way. Corbin's story is much like his art. Experiential, meandering, at time esoteric and ultimately, simply beautiful.