



Mary Holmes: Paintings and Ideas

Addi Somekh

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A great teacher inspires a new and authentic understanding of the world. The artist and art history professor Mary Holmes, whose career spanned seven decades, was such a teacher. Keenly sensitive to the nature of art and the complexities of life, she communicated her perceptions with the authority of a sage and the timing of a great comic. Her mythological paintings of virtues and gifts of the spirit such as faith, hope and self-discipline make visible those invisible realities, providing insight into the relation between our physical and spiritual lives. In 2000, when Mary was 90, Addi Somekh spent some 80 hours interviewing her at her hilltop farm near Santa Cruz, California. Those interviews form the heart of this book, which is the first to gather Mary's reflections on her paintings and on themes she developed during her teaching career - from the way art affects people to their need to lead meaningful lives. The paintings, as well as the remarkable chapel, labyrinth, and other structures built on her farm in the 1990s, are exquisitely rendered in 60 full-color photographs by Charlie Eckert. More than a dozen documentary photographs also grace the text. Rounding out the volume is a lucid biographical sketch by Gideon Rappaport.

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