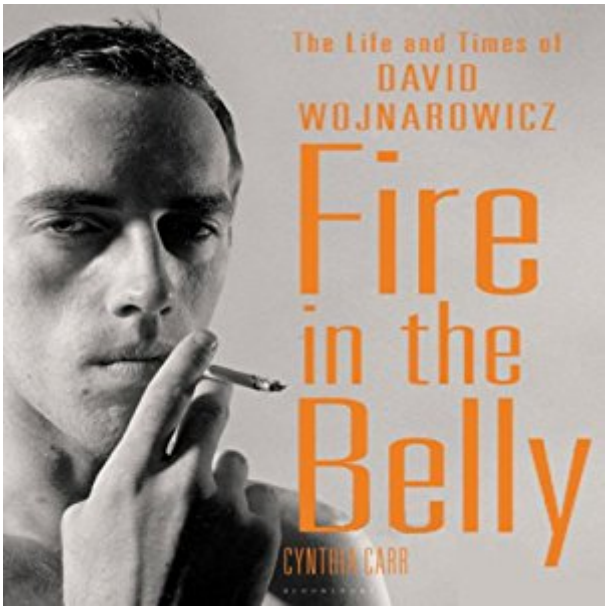
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# Fire In The Belly: The Life And Times Of David Wojnarowicz




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## Synopsis

David Wojnarowicz was an abused child, a teen runaway who barely finished high school, but he emerged as one of the most important voices of his generation. He found his tribe in New York's East Village, a neighborhood noted in the 1970s and '80s for drugs, blight, and a burgeoning art scene. His creativity spilled out in paintings, photographs, films, texts, installations, and in his life and its recounting - creating a sort of mythos around himself. His circle of East Village artists moved into the national spotlight just as the AIDS plague began its devastating advance, and as right-wing culture warriors reared their heads. As Wojnarowicz's reputation as an artist grew, so did his reputation as an agitator - because he dealt so openly with his homosexuality, so angrily with his circumstances as a Person With AIDS, and so fiercely with his would-be censors. Fire in the Belly is the untold story of a polarizing figure at a pivotal moment in American culture - and one of the most highly acclaimed biographies of the year.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fire in the Belly, the first biography of David Wojnarowicz, is perhaps the saddest and most devestating book you will read this year. It contains graphic descriptions of the child abuse Wojnarowicz suffered in a completely dysfunctional family circle, his life on the streets as a hustler and male prostitute, his combustible personality and addictions to cocaine and heroin, his poverty and hand-to-mouth existence. The book situates him in the context of the emerging East Village art scene, the arrival of the AIDS epidemic, the widespread loss of major cultural figures and the

important legal battles Wojnarowicz fought on behalf of the First Amendment and the gay community. Somehow, out of all this turmoil, the visceral energy of Wojnarowicz's paintings, photographs, performance art, books and films, emerges with the power of revelation. Wojnarowicz was essentially self-taught but he had the support of a major artistic presence, photographer Peter Hujar, who served as mentor and muse, friend, critic and (briefly) lover. The sections on Hujar are so evocative that the book almost becomes a dual biography. Since Wojnarowicz's death in 1992, his reputation as the central figure in the East Village scene has soared and critical reception of his art has evolved; he is now the beneficiary of what is sure to remain the pioneering and standard biography of a truly significant artist.

This book is an exhaustive look at the life of David Wojnarowicz. From the abusive parents and his life on the streets it's hard to see how he was going to make it through. But somehow he channeled his pain and anger into writing and then art. None of it is ever easy even when the success comes. And when things seem to finally be going in a happier direction the world around him seems to be collapsing with the newly emerging aids epidemic. I especially like the book for the insights it offers into the meaning and imagery of his visual art and for bringing the 80's east village art scene to life. His artwork seems to have taken a back seat to some of the splashier artists of the 1980's but for those interested in that period this is recommended.

I felt Carr's tone and style perfectly conveyed both Wojnarowicz's turblent life and the mixed, but often depressing, East Village times of the 80's. The book was an engaging read and Carr frequently told several versions of the same incident. I was sometimes furstrated by my inability to keep all of the characters straight, so to speak. Although there are a number of photographs of individuals and reproductions of the art, I felt this area of the book could have been a little better---more photos (and maybe better internal placement) of the people named would have helped me better associate a name with a face. Some additional scattering of art reproductions within the text would also have been nice. Four and a half stars.

I found this book fascinating. I previously knew nothing of David Wojnarowicz other than what I knew of the controversy surrounding the removal of his painting by the Smithsonian director. In fact, when my book club selected the book, I didn't immediately associate the artist's name with that controversy. I can't claim to like his art (but then there are some paintings by Dali and Picasso that I don't much care for either!) but I certainly know a great deal about him after finishing the book. It's

an amazing story and he is an amazing person, so different than my life even though we are both gay men. It is a tragedy that he died so young.

I read this book on my Kindle about half a year ago, and it has stuck with me since. The biographer does a fantastic job making Wojnarowicz a compelling subject and also makes a strong case for him as an important figure in American culture. Especially interesting is the comprehensive detailing of the rise and fall of the East Village art scene against the backdrop of AIDS. She manages to intertwine the personal with the historical in a seamless narrative of somebody who is both heroic and tragic. This book is well worth your attention. I look forward to re-reading it.

Fascinating and horrifying. Sheds light on a very dark time artistically in 80’s NYC. Recommended.

I have not read a book that touched me like this one in a very long time. The artist and his philosophy and his raw talent are all displayed in thisgorgeous book. If only I could have spent even ten minutes with him. I will never forget this book. If you love modern Art and you are familiarwith the AIDS years then buy this book and take a dark trip down the Rabbits Hole.

Cynthia Carr has written an amazing and well researched bio of David. She knew him and obviously cared a great deal about him. I knew David in his early years and he was sweet, shy and kind. I will read any writings by this author in the future. She is great. This is no stale bio, I was intrigued by all the people Ms Carr has written about in this book.

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