

## Annotated Bibliography on Willem de Kooning

### Source 1:

Magazine article

Burlington Magazine (U.K)

Vol. 142, no. 1167, June 2000, pp. 398 -9

Article: '*Willem de Kooning*'

Author: Richard Shiff

This magazine article from the Burlington Magazine is an article about the artist, his history as an artist and opinions and facts about his paintings, there are three illustrations of his paintings in colour; one of them is large and the other two small. The paintings are all de Kooning's later paintings. The language used in this article seems more informed and intelligent than the other two magazine articles in my bibliography. It gives a lot of interesting topics within his life and his artistic techniques, such as when it says that he worked as a freelance commercial illustrator before he 'became the measure of everyone else's style'. The article ends with a conclusion which speaks of his work and career as a whole. It is longer than the other magazine articles.

I found this piece very useful and interesting in finding out about the artist and a little of his background. It also gave me useful insight into techniques and the theory behind his art. It would be useful to someone who was exploring the abstract expressionist movement but maybe not for someone who wasn't that informed on the subject of art, or more specifically modern art due to its references to other artists like Robert Rauschenberg. The article is less opinionated than other magazine articles I have read and it also tells you that the author is a scholar at the University of Texas at Austin which is a good way of knowing that it is a fairly reliable source of information.

### Source 2:

Magazine article  
Artnews (U.S.A.)  
Vol.100, no.1, Jan. 2001, pp. 151  
Article: '*Willem de Kooning*'  
Author: Alfred Mac Adam

This magazine article is reviewing an exhibition of Willem de Kooning's. It is not a very lengthy piece but relatively informative. It contains individual descriptions of each of the artist's pieces exhibited and also a little background on the artist himself. The writing on the paintings is of a fairly academic nature using such phrases as '*Two-Women* (1964) best exemplifies de Kooning's technique of allusion, homage, and parody.' It deals with the physical, theoretical and abstract aspects of the paintings. It then sums up the review by giving a general conclusion on the exhibition which is responded to positively. There are two colour illustrations on the page which are small in size, the paintings are the ones analysed in the article.

The review struck me as a fairly intelligent piece of writing and would be useful, specifically to the viewing of that particular exhibition. The writing does seem to focus more on one of the pieces rather than the exhibition as a whole which might not be so helpful if the reader wanted to know about the exhibition generally. There does not seem to be any real criticism of the work, rather the good points have been focussed on, this may be because the magazine was looking to sell the exhibition rather than review its good and bad points. Also, the paintings represented in the pictures are too small to pick out any real detail and the article as a whole is short in length. There is no information on the author in this article.

**Source 3:**

Magazine article  
Art in America (U.S.A.)  
Vol. 90, no. 1, Jan. 2002, pp.105 -6  
Article: '*Willem de Kooning and John Chamberlain at PaceWildenstein* '  
Author: Richard Kalina

This magazine article is specifically a review of an exhibition of de Kooning's paintings along with John Chamberlain's sculptures at PaceWildenstein. It gives details of the show as a whole and compares both artists work quite generally. The article talks of the theory of the art movement and its appeal to the author. This article discusses the experience of the exhibition as a whole rather than each artist's particular work, although it does cover that too but very briefly. It gives one colour illustration of a Willem de Kooning painting standing next to a John Chamberlain sculpture, but neither painting nor sculpture is close enough or large enough to view properly. I think the illustration is trying to give an impression of the comparison between the two artists.

The article is short and quite informed; it does not really give much valuable information or criticism on Willem de Kooning as such but does describe the atmosphere and the viewer's feelings about the exhibition in well structured and descriptive language. I did not find this article that useful in finding out about the artist but found some of the imagery and descriptions of the art movement and the show intriguing. There is no information on the author in this article either.

#### **Source 4:**

Book

*Willem de Kooning: The late paintings, The 1980s*

Produced by: The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Minneapolis:  
Walker Art Centre, 1995

This book is an account of Willem de Kooning's late career. It includes many illustrations of his paintings; most of them are in colour and are large good quality illustrations. There are also illustrations of the details of some of the paintings. The book is 144 pages long. There is a director's foreword which tells the reader the details of the book; it talks about how it came about, who was involved in the project and why it was written. The sources used in gathering the information in the book are well respected and reliable; the book 'was organized collaboratively by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis'. The content of the book is very informative and consists of many critics opinions. It gives details of the artist's background, life, artistic influences and his career. It also talks

separately about his individual pieces of art as well as a separate section consisting of good resolution colour images of his late paintings.

This book was interesting and I found it an exciting read. It was very useful in telling me about Willem de Kooning as an artist and a man. I found out many interesting facts and opinions on his art and the art movement of his time. It gave some interesting details on general culture in 'the Eighties' as well which I was interested in greatly. The exhibition history, bibliography and notes were also useful in discovering about my chosen subject. In general, a very well presented and well documented account on the subject which I enjoyed intellectually and personally.

### **Source 5:**

Book

*Willem de Kooning: Reflections in the Studio*

Author: Edvard Lieber

New York: H. N. Abrams, 2000

This book is a piece of writing on the life and works of Willem de Kooning, focusing on his life. It is divided into five parts. The first is the preface which gives a personal account of how the author first discovered the work of this artist and in what ways it has influenced him. It is a short section and tells of how the author met the artist and his wife (who is also an artist herself) and established a friendship with the two.

The second section is called 'Anecdotes', it is a general history of the artist and goes into extensive detail later on in his life. There is a piece of writing of each important year in the life of the subjects starting from the divorce of his parents when he was a small child in 1907 and ending in 1988 when it says simply "Sitting in one of his twin rocking chairs, Bill (Willem) gazed around the studio at his recent paintings and said, "Sometimes I'm afraid of yellow."

The third section is entitled plates and is a section consisting of illustrations, some colour, some black and white (for dramatic effect rather than necessity). Most of the illustrations are of him rather than just of his work. In many photos he is working on a piece but they are all taken in the privacy of his own home.

The fourth section is notes from the main text which are quite detailed (fifteen pages long), the fifth is a list of illustrated works of art and the sixth is acknowledgements to people who have helped the author.

The book is written from the point of view of a friend to the artist rather than a fellow artist or art critic; therefore it is not heavily laden with particularly intellectual artistic insight and detail, but is rather an account of his view of the artist as well as a personal account of his life. I found this source very interesting and I discovered many things about the life, background and psychology of Willem de Kooning. However it did not give me many new pieces of information on his artwork.

### **Source 6:**

Internet article

*Willem de Kooning*

[www.brain-juice.com](http://www.brain-juice.com)

Author: unknown

This article is from an internet site which gives information on lots of 20<sup>th</sup> century art, film, history, literature and music. It is roughly 1, 600 words in length and is a general summary of his life along with a brief summary on the theory of his later works. The emphasis is on events in his life and the article gives a few names of paintings with links to other sites related to them. The author of the piece is not mentioned and there are no illustrations of his work, only one small black and white photo of his face in the top left hand corner.

The language used in the piece is informative but does not have any real depth to it, it is not particularly intellectual language and gives only the details and references. It is merely a list of facts which have probably been taken from one or many other sources. I did not find out anything new or interesting from this source and had no idea who had written it, there were links to other sites which contained other bits and pieces on information, many of them non-specific and probably put there to fill a criteria so that the main site can state that it has many sources of information on 20<sup>th</sup> century art, film, history, literature and music. There was no bibliography or indication of sources or influences and did not help me in finding out in any detail about the artist. It would

be useful for someone who needed to know the very basics pieces of information on Willem de Kooning.

**Conclusion:**

To conclude, I would say that there is a lot of literature available on Willem de Kooning but is varied in usefulness and validity. I think that because he is one of the more well-known modern artists there are a lot of people who have things to say about him however well-informed they are. Most of the well-informed available literature on him is in art magazines and although the books available are the best and most researched information, there are not that many. There seems to be a hierarchy of available literature which corresponds to one of my own theories about culture which is that quality is not popular; that is to say there are lots of articles which have little or no useful or informed content and a small but very well informed range of literature available on the artist.

The least helpful piece of information on Willem de Kooning was the article on the website *www.brain-juice.com*. The most useful piece of literature in terms of discovering about the art of Willem de Kooning was the book ‘*Willem de Kooning: The late paintings, The 1980s*’, and the most useful and interesting piece about the artist was ‘*Willem de Kooning: Reflections in the Studio*’.