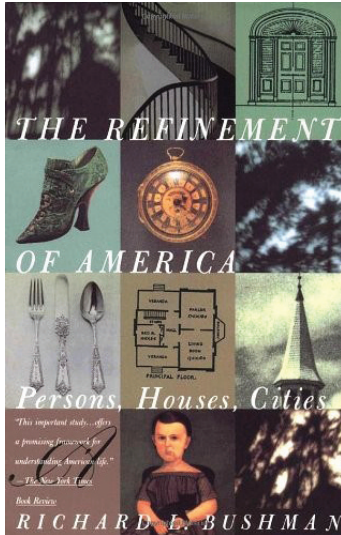


May 2015

Reading Guide: *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities: Part 1* by Richard L. Bushman (1992)

1. How would you explain Richard Bushman's ideas about gentility to someone who had not read the book? What part of his evidence did you find most compelling?
2. Will you look at museum collections or architecture from the 1700s differently after reading this book? What has changed for you?
3. What did you find most surprising or thought provoking in *The Refinement of America*?
4. Do you see parallels with modern life in the discussion of gentility and material culture? If so, where?
5. For those who read *Age of Comfort*, where do Joan DeJean and Richard Bushman agree about changes in material life in the 1600s and 1700s? Where do they disagree? Do you find one argument more compelling, or do you think they complement each other?
6. After completing the first half, are you interested in reading the second half of the book? What do you think Bushman will argue about American refinement in the 1800s?
7. What kind of reader do you think would enjoy this book? Why?
8. Are there related books, museum exhibitions, websites, or other resources that you would like to share with fellow readers of this book?

Author Biography

Richard Bushman is Gouverneur Morris Professor Emeritus of History and specializes in the social and cultural history of the United States. He received his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Harvard University. His publications include: *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (1967); *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (1985); *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (1992); and *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling* (2005). (From Columbia University website)

Other Related Texts

If you liked *The Refinement of America*, you may enjoy these other books (*descriptions courtesy of Amazon.com*):

- *A New Nation of Goods: The Material Culture of Early America*
by David Jaffee (2011)

In the nineteenth century, middle-class Americans embraced a new culture of domestic consumption, one that centered on chairs and clocks as well as family portraits and books. How did that new world of goods, represented by Victorian parlors filled with overstuffed furniture and daguerreotype portraits, come into being? *A New Nation of Goods* offers a collective biography of the post-Revolutionary generation, gathering together the case studies of producers and consumers who embraced these changes, those who opposed them, or, most significantly, those who fashioned the myriad small changes that coalesced into a new Victorian cultural order.

- *Holy Things and Profane: Anglican Parish Churches in Colonial Virginia*
by Dell Upton (1997)
In this prize-winning book, Dell Upton interweaves architectural and cultural history to create a vivid new picture of colonial Virginia. Lavishly illustrated with photographs and drawings, the book examines the architecture, decoration, and furniture of Virginia's Anglican churches and puts them in the context of eighteenth-century life and society.
- *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence*
by T. H. Breen (2005)
The Marketplace of Revolution offers a boldly innovative interpretation of the mobilization of ordinary Americans on the eve of independence. Breen explores how colonists who came from very different ethnic and religious backgrounds managed to overcome difference and create a common cause capable of galvanizing resistance. In a richly interdisciplinary narrative that weaves insights into a changing material culture with analysis of popular political protests, Breen shows how virtual strangers managed to communicate a sense of trust that effectively united men and women long before they had established a nation of their own.
- *Early American Decorative Arts, 1620–1860*
by Rosemary T. Krill (2010)
Early American Decorative Arts, 1620–1860 elucidates the principles of public interpretation, explains how to analyze objects, and defines the concept of style. Eighteen chapters provide comprehensive descriptions of decorative arts including furniture, ceramics, textiles, paintings and prints, metalwork, glass, and other objects.

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