



Paint by Number: The How-To Craze that Swept the Nation

William L. Bird

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What is the fascination of paint by numbers? Is it the intoxicating and compulsive act of filling in small pools of color? Or the easy thrill of creating your own impressionist masterpiece? Or a fond nostalgic yearning for a craze that cut across national boundaries and age groups? Invented in 1951 by Dan Robbins-based on an idea used by Leonardo da Vinci to teach painting-the paint-by-number craze reached its zenith in the 1950s but continues even today as paints and kits are avidly collected, exhibited in galleries, and traded on eBay. In *Paint By Number*, author Larry Bird takes us on an unbelievable journey where art meets kitsch and popular and high cultures collide in a collage of home economics, leisure time fun, and art education, Bird revisits the hobby from the vantage point of the artists and entrepreneurs who created the popular paint kits, the critics who reviled them, and the consumers who enthusiastically filled them in and hung them in their homes. *Paint By Number* includes over 200 examples of paint-by-number ephemera and two pull-out paintings ready to be filled-in!

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