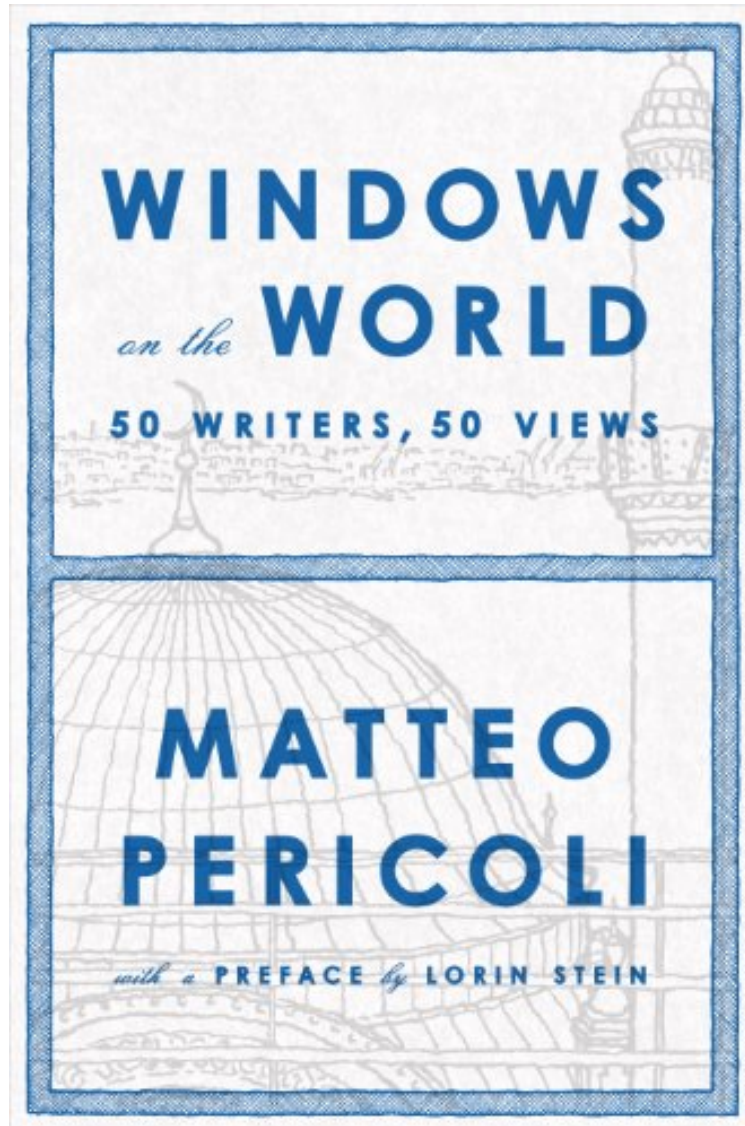


(Download free pdf) Windows on the World: Fifty Writers, Fifty Views

Windows on the World: Fifty Writers, Fifty Views

Matteo Pericoli

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Matteo Pericoli : Windows on the World: Fifty Writers, Fifty Views before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Windows on the World: Fifty Writers, Fifty Views:

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By Kent L Anderson
Not my favorite book. Ok but not as great as expected.

Fifty of the world's greatest writers share their views in collaboration with the artist Matteo Pericoli, expanding our own views on place, creativity, and the meaning of home. All of us, at some point in our daily lives, have found ourselves looking out the window. We pause in our work, tune out of a conversation, and turn toward the outside. Our eyes simply gaze, without seeing, at a landscape whose familiarity becomes the customary ground for distraction: the usual rooftops, the familiar trees, a distant crane. The way of life for most of us in the twenty-first century means that we spend most of our time indoors, in an urban environment, and our awareness of the outside world comes via, and thanks to, a framed glass hole in the wall. In *Windows on the World: Fifty Writers, Fifty Views*, architect and artist Matteo Pericoli brilliantly explores this concept alongside fifty of our most beloved writers from across the globe. By pairing drawings of window views with texts that reveal—either physically or metaphorically—what the drawings cannot, *Windows on the World* offers a perceptual journey through the world as seen through the windows of prominent writers: Orhan Pamuk in Istanbul, Daniel Kehlmann in Berlin, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in Lagos, John Jeremiah Sullivan in Wilmington, North Carolina, Nadine Gordimer in Johannesburg, Xi Chuan in Beijing. Taken together, the views—geography and perspective, location and voice—resonate with and play off each other. Working from a series of meticulous photographs and other notes from authors' homes and offices, Pericoli creates a pen-and-ink illustration of each window and the view it frames. Many readers know Pericoli's work from his acclaimed series for *The New York Times* and later for *The Paris Review Daily*, which have a devoted following. Now, *Windows on the World* collects from Pericoli's body of work and features fifteen never-before-seen windows in one gorgeously designed volume, as well as a preface from the *Paris Review's* editor Lorin Stein. As we delve into what each writer's view may or may not share with the others', as we look at the map and explore unfamiliar views of cities from around the world, a new kind of map begins to take shape. *Windows on the World* is a profound and eye-opening look inside the worlds of writers, reminding us that the things we see every day are woven into our selves and our imaginations, making us keener and more inquisitive observers of our own worlds.

Los Angeles of Books: "At their best, the drawings and texts in *Windows on the World* make writers real and human...while still leaving room for mystery and fantasy." Shelf Awareness: "A diverse, fascinating collection." Library Journal: "[*Windows on the World*] is a great read for those interested in the lives of writers, lovers of memoir, and anyone with a touch of wanderlust. A fun conversation starter and introduction to writers from around the world." About the Author Matteo Pericoli was born in Milan, where he graduated from the Polytechnic School of Architecture. He moved to New York in 1995, where he has worked as an architect, illustrator, author, journalist, and teacher. He now lives with his wife and daughter in Turin, Italy, where he teaches architecture to creative writing students at the Scuola Holden. His books include *Manhattan Unfurled* and *The City Out My Window*. Excerpt. copy; Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. PREFACE Can you picture John Kennedy Toole, the author of *A Confederacy of Dunces*? I can't. Say his name and I see his hero, Ignatius Reilly. How about Willa Cather? What comes to mind isn't a person at all—it's raindrops in New Mexico exploding with a splash, as if they were hollow and full of air. What did Barbara Pym look like, or Rex Stout, or Boris Pasternak, or the other writers whose paperbacks filled our parents' bedside tables? In most cases we have no idea, because until recently, the author photo was relatively rare. You could sell a million copies and still, to those million readers, you'd be a name without a face. Things are different now. Nearly every first novel comes with a glamour shot, not to mention a publicity campaign on Facebook. The very tweeters have their selfies. We still talk about a writer's "vision," but in practice we have turned the lens around, and turned the seer into something seen. Matteo Pericoli's drawings recall us, in the homeliest, most literal way, to the writer's true business, and the reader's. Each window represents a point of view and a point of origin. Here's what the writer sees when he or she looks up from the computer; here's the native landscape of the writing. If you want an image that will link the creation to its source, Pericoli suggests, this is the image you should reach for. Not the face, but the vision—or as close as we can come. To look out another person's window, from his or her workspace, may tell us nothing about the work, and yet the space—in its particularity, its foreignness, its intimacy—is an irresistible metaphor for the creative mind; the view, a metaphor for the eye. It is crucial that these window views should be rendered in pen and ink, in lines, rather than in photographs (even though Pericoli works from snapshots, dozens per window). In his own writing and teaching, Pericoli likes to stress the kinship between draftsman and writer, starting with the importance of the line. His own line is descriptive, meticulous, suspenseful—one slip of the pen and hours of labor could be lost, or else the "mistake" becomes part of the drawing. Labor, it seems to me, is one of Pericoli's hidden subjects. That is part of the meaning of the hundreds of leaves on a tree, or the windows of a high-rise: They record the work it took to see them, and this work stands as a sort of visual correlative, or illustration, of the work his writers

do. Of course, most writers tune out the view from day to day. In the words of Etgar Keret, "When I write, what I see around me is the landscape of my story. I only get to enjoy the real one when I'm done." I think Pericoli has drawn the views of writers at least partly because they are seers as opposed to lookers—because they blind themselves to their surroundings as a matter of practice. The drawings are addressed, first of all, to them, and their written responses are no small part of the pleasure this book has to offer. Each of these drawings seems to contain a set of instructions: If you were to look out this window—if you really looked—here is how you might begin to put the mess in order. Yet the order Pericoli assigns is warm and forgiving. His omniscience has a human cast. His clapboards wobble in their outlines. He takes obvious delight in the curves of a garden chair, or a jar left out in the rain, or laundry flapping on a clothesline. He prefers messy back lots to what he calls (somewhat disdainfully) "photogenic views." He knows that we are attached to the very sight we overlook, whether it's a tract housing in Galway or a government building in Ulaanbaatar. These are the everyday things we see, as it were blindly, because they are part of us. Some of the writers in these pages are household names. Many you will never have heard of, and a few live in places you might have trouble finding on a map. That, it seems to me, is part of the idea behind this book. Here are streets and alleys you won't recognize that someone else calls home and takes for granted; look long enough and they will make your own surroundings more interesting to you. In Pericoli's sympathetic—you might say writerly—acts of attention, the exotic becomes familiar, and the familiar is made visible again.

WINDOWS ON THE WORLD
MATTEO PERICOLI

It has been ten years since the day I paused in front of my Upper West Side window and noticed something. And felt something: an urge to take the view with me. I had looked out that window for seven years, day after day, taking in that particular arrangement of buildings, and now my wife and I were about to move out of our one-bedroom apartment. Without my knowing it, that view had become my most familiar image of the city. It had become mine. And I would never see it again. It is hard to pay close attention to those things that are part of our daily routines. "They will still be there tomorrow." It is often when we are about to lose them or have just lost them that we realize their importance. It struck me as odd that I hadn't paid more attention to my view. That oversight made me wonder how we live and perceive what is outside our windows. About how we live and perceive, period. For me, a window and its view represent a "reset button" of sorts. An instant, like the blinking of an eye, when I allow my brain and my thoughts to pause by wordlessly wandering outdoors, through the glass, with no obligation to analyze and, so to speak, to report back to my conscious self. My eyes simply gaze, without seeing, at a landscape whose subconscious familiarity allows for distraction: the usual rooftops, the well-known moldings, the nearby courtyard, a distant hill. I look passively through the sheet of glass, which is a point both of contact and of separation between me and the world. So, on that day in 2004, I finally paid attention to my window view. I tried photographing it but soon realized that the photos didn't work. They were not able to convey my view, but simply what was outside the window. And so I drew it, frame and all, on a large sheet of brown wrapping paper using pencils and oil pastels, and noticed for the first time the quantity of things I didn't know that I had been looking at for so long. Where had they been hiding in my brain? Since then, I've spent years drawing window views. Between 2004 and 2008, while I was doing research for a book on New York City, I came to realize that writers often find themselves in a similar position to mine: Stuck at a desk for hours on end, they either position themselves near a window in order to take in as much as possible, or they consciously choose to protect themselves from it. And when I would ask writers to describe their views, something extraordinary happened: All the elements that I had been able to capture in my drawings were complemented (or, perhaps, even augmented) by their words. This was the simple premise of the "Windows on the World" series, which started in 2010 in the New York Times and continued in the Paris Daily: drawings of writers' window views from around the world accompanied by their text—lines and words united by a physical point of view. The fifty drawings in this book (some never published before) offer an observational platform, an "opening," you could say, a place to rest and meditate during a fifty-leg journey around the world.