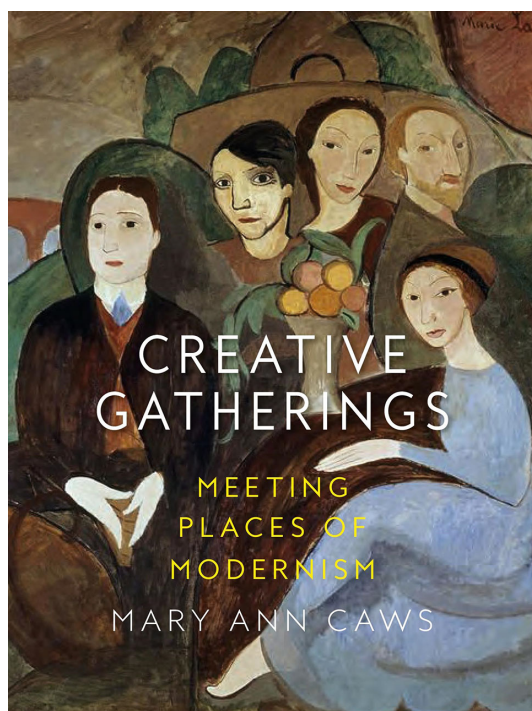


## Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism

by Mary Ann Caws. The University of Chicago Press, August 2019. 288 p. ill. ISBN 9781789140552 (h/c), \$35.00.

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Creative Gatherings: Meeting Places of Modernism adds depth to the discussion about gathering spaces in relation to creative output, artistic movements, and inspiration among artists and writers. Author Mary Ann Caws, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Graduate School of the City University of New York, defines the significance of setting in providing an atmosphere for the kind of collaborations that resulted in movements, manifestos, novels, poetry, and artwork. Caws stresses the importance of “table” conversation in creative activity, and delineates various gathering places including art colonies and academies, and tabling places such as cafes, pubs, and bars. The unique, somewhat personal perspective provided in the narrative reflects the sort of conversation one may have at a tabling place or artist commune. The author affectionately describes places and events with all the clarity of an experienced traveler, scholar, and storyteller.

The author’s narrative seems to meander through the locations and events described in the text, and occasionally offers tidbits of personal experiences. Each gathering place described in the book garners its own short chapter. Caws provides historical and geographical context, often including contemporary images of the locations, which are as varied as the Cabaret Voltaire in Zürich, Black Mountain College in North Carolina, and the Académie Julian in Paris. Caws draws upon primary sources for the text, noting in the introduction, “Of particular interest are the first-person accounts of gathering places and their hangings-out, including their descriptions.” Site descriptions contain observations made by the artists and writers who visited or inhabited the locations. In addition, the author includes the perspectives of the

owners of meeting places, who often purchased a building with the idea of forming some sort of creative enclave.

The book hosts an abundance of color and black and white illustrations. Images of artwork, photographs of people and places, and primary source materials including photograph inscriptions, sketches, and posters are printed on high quality paper that lends clarity and brilliance to the illustrations. The author provides a bibliography with citations divided by location/chapter. The book also includes an introduction, detailed references, and an index.

Caws' latest publication would benefit a wide range of scholars who are interested in modern art movements, cross-disciplinary study of creative production, and more specifically, the impact of gathering places on artistic ingenuity. The book almost reads like a travel guide; one could imagine themselves taking it on exploratory walks through Paris, Venice, or Prague. However, the comfortable tone of the narrative should not deter librarians from including this volume in their collections. *Creative Gatherings* belongs in both academic and specialized art libraries, as well as on personal bookshelves.