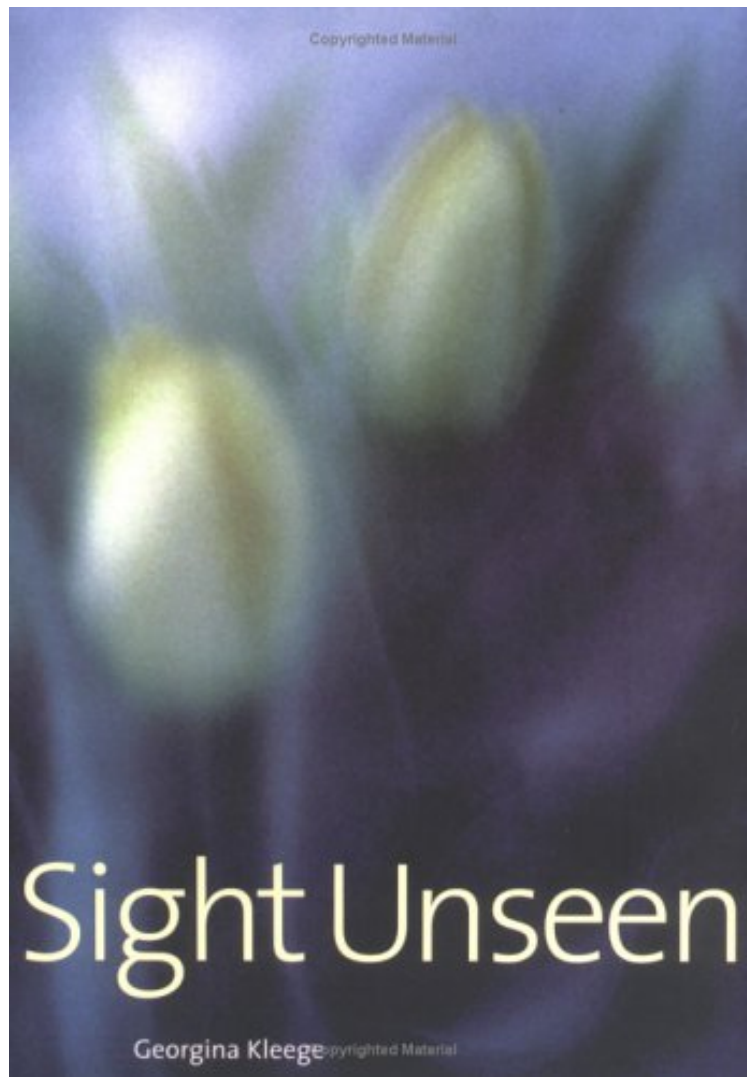


(Free pdf) Sight Unseen

Sight Unseen

Georgina Kleege

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Georgina Kleege : Sight Unseen before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sight Unseen:

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Mesmerizing, intelligent, and graceful
By A Customer
This book explodes with insights, both personal and social. It is the best description I've read of how a legally blind person negotiates the world, from reading a written text to learning braille, to confronting prejudices that insist upon a distinction between legally ("not really blind") and totally blind. The essay that takes the author to the home of Louis Braille, weaving in his poignant story with her own, is nothing short of remarkable. It's no surprise that these page-turning essays have won awards.
11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Sight Unseen- Insight and

IssuesBy Karin DruLike many people who have read this book, I am legally blind. It was recommended to me by a friend who has very good vision. Comparing notes with her was particularly educational. The perspectives of a sighted person and a blind person on the text turn out to be not all that different. This book has incredible ups and downs. First- the ups. Kleege's description of what a blind person sees is incredible, perhaps the best I have ever read. People who haven't had to worry about it are under such misconceptions. A lot of people think that if you can see- kind of- that what you see is a blur. Even the cover of this book appears to tell us the same thing, but that's far from true for everyone. The author makes the point that the designation of what constitutes legal blindness really was a pretty random decision. Who says 20/20 is normal? How many people do you know who use some kind of correction? Given that, how normal can it possibly be? Also, just because someone is legally blind, they may use their vision so efficiently that you don't know until they tell you that there's anything different about them. Ms. Kleege reports this experience in her own life. Conversely, someone who is legally blind may not use their vision at all. Also, her descriptions of the process of making sense of visual information is well done and should help to explain to people who don't know exactly how sight works, how different it can be for various people. My favorite of the points made by this book, however, has got to be that the fact that you can see something, doesn't mean you're not blind; doesn't make it not a good idea to learn Braille. Many of us with some useable sight were refused this tool as children. Frankly, if you can't read print at all without pain, this encourages illiteracy. Kleege is spreading the word that Braille is NOT a foreign language- it's just another way to perceive the alphabet that we already know. She raises the question of whether audio books constitute reading in the same way that reading print or Braille do. (given that it stimulates different parts of your brain, I'd argue no, although like Kleege, I think it's a useful tool at times.) Now for the downs. Kleege can be really disparaging of sighted people. There are subtle and less subtle digs and jabs all over the book. She puts words into the mouths of passing strangers, extending a real encounter into a possible outcome, making assumptions about what the sighted person would have said if she'd said something different, herself. Honestly not every sighted person is a complete jerk, or ignorant about how sight works. She asserts that a mother will stop a child from staring at a blind person because if you don't look at something unpleasant, it will go away. No, mothers do that because it's very rude to stare! My sighted friend was really offended by the middle of the book and actually exclaimed "well, so sorry I can SEE!" Her take on Oedipus' blindness, I thought, was overly dramatic. Kleege regards it as symbolic castration, setting the stage for the way people perceive blindness to this day. Frankly, Oedipus wasn't Freudian until Freud. If Oedipus had meant to castrate himself, given that this is a classical story and they didn't mince words- he would have. I also thought some of her arguments with modern cinema were perhaps a bit harsh. Not that really bad stereotypes don't exist. Movies like "Jennifer 8", portraying blind people as needy of institutionalisation and completely helpless when confronted by a sighted crazy, are a real problem. The blind aren't the only people stereotyped in Hollywood, though. One could argue that the heroine was helpless as much because she was a woman in a horror movie as that she was blind. Also, wasn't the protagonist in "Scent of a Woman" more stereotypically bachelorish than blind? True, a lot of movies were clearly directed by people who have never met a blind person. However, the unmoving stare employed by many film directors to typify the blind, which Kleege finds so offensive- exists. If one has been blind since birth, one sometimes lacks body language, never having observed it. If one lacks eyes, why blink to moisten them? Sometimes one forgets. All in all, I really enjoyed this book, even though I periodically wanted to yell "OH, come ON! Get over it!" I'd recommend it to the blind who have not found anyone with whom to relate, lately, or the sighted who want to understand. And one more thing- anyone who gets embarrassed because they just said "Hey, look at this!" to a blind person. . . It's ok. We do it too. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Beautifully Written: a True Depiction of the Blind By Meredith L. Burton I'd like to start this review by stating that I am a totally blind individual. Although this fact should not convey that I am an expert in writing about vision as is Mrs. Kleege, I wanted to set the stage before beginning my discussion of this book. I found Ms. Kleege's writing to be academic yet never incomprehensible. Her personal anecdotes were very enjoyable to read. Although I have never seen, Kleege began losing her sight at the age of eleven as the result of macular degeneration. She describes in detail the degree of vision she has and how she is perceived by most people to be sighted because she can "fake it". "Sight Unseen" chronicles Kleege's gradual decision to drop the pretense in a sometimes frightened or hostile world that views sight as something essential. Kleege explores how all of our culture, (language, movies, literature, ETC.), has served to paint a less-than flattering view of those without sight. The word "blind" has many negative connotations and is associated with sin, evil, darkness, ineptitude, and so much more. I did feel in some instances that Kleege was being overcritical of sighted individuals. By the way: all blind people say, "See you later," or, "It's great to see you". All of us are ordinary people created to make a difference. Sight or lack thereof should be of no consequence. Of course, I'm not naive, and I know advocacy is essential. My favorite part of the book is Part 3, in which Kleege explores the joy of reading, (Braille and books on audio). I found myself laughing out loud and relating to her with every word in this section. Like her, I love the versatility of different readers narrating the same story, and the self-discoveries awaiting you with each new book that becomes available. Braille was my gateway to the world and broke my barriers of fear and shyness. The section where Kleege discusses her visit to the home of Louis Braille was particularly moving. And, like the author, I love to read in the dark. The only other thing I'll say is that I did take

umbrage to Kleege's criticism of Christ's healing of the blind men in Scripture. She implies that touching their eyes was a form of degradation. Quite the contrary. Christ gave those men back their dignity. In a culture that isolated the disabled and treated them with derision, Christ broke all the social taboos and said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14-6), and "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (John 8-12). This book is worth the read. Please give it a chance. God bless you all.

This elegantly written book offers an unexpected and unprecedented account of blindness and sight. Legally blind since the age of eleven, Georgina Kleege draws on her experiences to offer a detailed testimony of visual impairment both her own view of the world and the world's view of the blind. I hope to turn the reader's gaze outward, to say not only "Here's what I see" but also "Here's what you see," to show both what's unique and what's universal, Kleege writes. Kleege describes the negative social status of the blind, analyzes stereotypes of the blind that have been perpetuated by movies, and discusses how blindness has been portrayed in literature. She vividly conveys the visual experience of someone with severely impaired sight and explains what she can see and what she cannot (and how her inability to achieve eye contact in a society that prizes that form of connection has affected her). Finally she tells of the various ways she reads, and the freedom she felt when she stopped concealing her blindness and acquired skills, such as reading braille, as part of a new, blind identity. Without sentimentality or clichés, Kleege offers us the opportunity to imagine life without sight.

From Publishers Weekly In this blend of memoir and pointed cultural criticism, novelist (Home for the Summer), essayist and translator Kleege describes how she has come to terms with being blind in a world that fears and stigmatizes blindness. In 1967, at the age of 11, she was diagnosed with macular degeneration, told there was no cure or hope of improvement and declared legally blind. So Kleege, who is able to discern some light, color, movement and form, learned to hide her impairment. In school, she memorized pages of text in anticipation of being asked to read aloud, and determined what school friends were seeing by their tone of voice. With erudition that only partially belies her fury, Kleege goes on to explore the cultural meanings of blindness, dismantling negative stereotypes about the blind, including those perpetuated by such Hollywood films as *Wait Until Dark* and *The Paradine Case* and novels such as *Eden Close*. She also contrasts her visual experiences with those of the fully sighted and explains how, as a writer for whom reading was central, she has developed workable reading techniques. Although she was discouraged from learning braille as a child because she had "too much sight," Kleege now considers it a useful and pleasurable supplement to recorded tapes and magnification devices. Although sometimes didactic, Kleege gives readers an enlightening look at life with marginal eyesight. Agent, Mildred Marmur. (Mar.) FYI: Readers interested in this title might also enjoy *Planet of the Blind* by Stephen Kuusisto. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Novelist and essayist Kleege sees less than ten percent of what a normally sighted person does. Her brooding "coming out narrative" consists of eight essays detailing the experiences of a legally blind person in a sighted world. Kleege first considers the negative cultural attitudes toward blindness and how the disability is depicted in films and literature. She describes in bruising detail how and what she is able to see and recalls the years that she and her disappointed parents (both artists) spent concealing her condition. In the final chapters, Kleege describes the methods she uses to read, including recorded books and Braille, a recently acquired skill that she feels has allowed her to accept her condition and "announce my blindness without apology." Although a sense of unfairness underpins this intense memoir, Kleege's skill at articulating her personal struggle does enable one to appreciate what a blind person "sees." Recommended for most libraries and anyone associated with the visually impaired. ?Carol Ann McAllister, Coll. of William Mary Lib., Williamsburg, VA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author Georgina Kleege is a novelist, essayist, and translator. Her most recent book is the novel *Home for the Summer*. She has taught writing and literature courses at the University of Oklahoma and at The Ohio State University.