



The Memory Palace of Isabella Stewart Gardner

Patricia Vigderman

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“A searching, sensitive, and engagingly witty meditation.” —Lyndall Gordon

“What a great pleasure this gorgeous little book has given me! It should be offered everywhere indeed, and at every museum shop on earth.” —Honor Moore

A fascinating meditation on art and personality, Patricia Vigderman’s exploration of Isabella Stewart Gardner’s famous Boston museum radiates out from its subject to investigate Gardner’s legacy of luxury and willfulness. Isabella Gardner’s high spirits and aesthetic pleasure, her women friends and female power, her friendships with the adventurers and aesthetes of her world, are gathered into this engrossing investigation of patronage and passion. Blending biography, memoir, philosophy, and detective story, *The Memory Palace* is more than a tribute to the museum and the woman; it is an altogether new genre. Vigderman’s witty and intimate quest for her subject sets a literary precedent for the appreciation of artistic imagination. Loosening up the past, entering its mysteries and its memories, she reminds us that we change our lives when we begin a relationship with art.

Patricia Vigderman grew up in Washington, D.C., and Europe. She graduated from Vassar College, after which a circuitous course led her through editing, translating, freelance journalism, teaching, marriage, motherhood, divorce, a doctoral dissertation (on nineteenth-century novels as film, as history, and as autobiography), and a lot of time in museums. Her recent writing has appeared in *The Georgia Review*, *Harvard Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Raritan*, *Seneca Review*, and *Southwest Review*. She divides her year between Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Gambier, Ohio, where she teaches in the English department at Kenyon College. She is married to the writer Lewis Hyde.

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