



Violet Oakley: An Artist's Life

Bailey Van Hook

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Violet Oakley: An Artist's Life is the first full-length biography of Violet Oakley (1874–1961), the only major female artist of the beaux-arts mural movement in the United States, as well as an illustrator, stained glass artist, portraitist and author. There is much human interest here: a pampered and spoiled young woman who suddenly finds herself in near poverty, forced to make a living in illustration to support her parents; a sensitive and idealistic young woman who, in a desperate attempt to save her neurasthenic father, embraces Christian Science, a religion derided by her family and friends; a 28 year old woman who receives one of the plum commissions of the era, a mural cycle in the Pennsylvania State Capitol, in a field dominated by much older and predominantly male artists; a woman in her forties who although professionally successful finds herself very much alone and bonds with her student, Edith Emerson; a friend of artists like dancer Ruth St. Denis and violinist Albert Spalding who nevertheless was supremely conscious of social mores, the “Miss Oakley” of the *Social Register* who preferred the company of upper class to bohemian society; the tireless self-promoter who traveled abroad to become the unofficial visual historian of the League of Nations yet who ironically was increasingly regarded as a local artist.

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