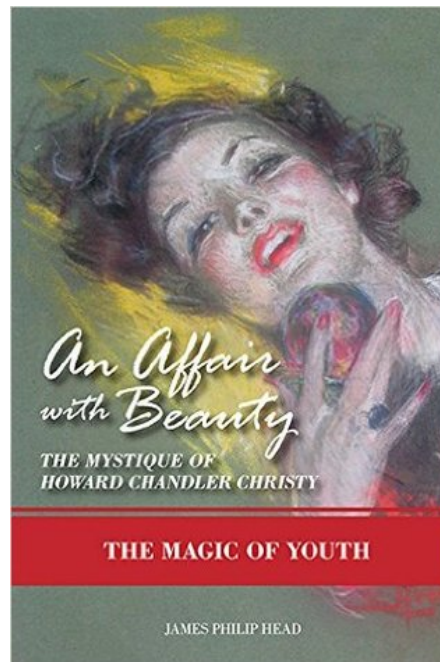




An Affair with Beauty: The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy: The Magic of Youth

James Philip Head

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Fame, fortune, and beautiful models--Howard Chandler Christy had them all.

Christy was the most famous American painter of the Jazz Age, a time when an elite brotherhood of New York artists dominated the publishing world. Christy had eclipsed all of them with his "Christy Girl," an idealized woman who redefined beauty, influenced fashion, and inspired generations of women.

The Magic of Youth is the first book in An Affair with Beauty -- The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy, a biographical trilogy of the artist's epic life as told primarily through the eyes of his second wife, Nancy, a former Cosmopolitan model once considered to be one of the most beautiful women in America. As she reflects on her life, Nancy tells of first meeting Christy in 1912 and becoming his top model. She is captivated by his irresistible charm and the glamour of his enchanting world, but discovers that things are not always what they seem and even the great Christy has scandalous secrets.

An Affair with Beauty: The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy: The Magic of Youth Details

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From Reader Review An Affair with Beauty: The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy: The Magic of Youth for online ebook

Judy says

Not my usual genre but very interesting story in a very rich and colorful time in history.

Anna says

Nancy Palmer had clear ideas when she was a teenager of 16 years: thanks to her beauty she decided to leave her parents and her old life. She wanted in fact, to become a Gibson girl. So, the first step? The Big Apple.

At that time the most famous painter and illustrator in New York City was mr. Gibson. Portraying myriads of girls, Gibson was in grade to influence thanks to his drawings, paintings and illustrations the American culture and style course.

Nancy arrived to NYC and arranged a meeting with Gibson, although Gibson told her he preferred to recommend her to Christy if she wouldn't mind. Adding: if he will bring you to Ohio where he is born you will return as Mrs. Christy.

It's an effervescent book this first memoirs part, An Affair with Beauty - The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy - The Magic of Youth - cover91991-medium written by James Philip Head and published by North Loop Books. A trilogy, this one the first part.

Once at the university Head discovered a gilt-edged folio of Charles Gibson's The Social Ladder, starting to fall in love immediately for these illustrations. Illustrations of beautiful girls, Gibson was the first so-called "Illustrator of Beauty."

Although Head interested by Gibson's work later he became fascinated by the art of Howard Chandler Christy, personification of the American Dream. Poor, thanks to his talent Christy became one of the most relevant, acclaimed and stunning artist of his time.

Since there, James Head researched for people and illustrations and places and museums, knocking at doors always opened, interviewing wagons of relatives, friends, and people in contact with the painter and illustrator. At the end he decided to write with this material some books.

As also Nancy did, Howard Christy as said, left his house in Ohio for moving his first steps as illustrator in NYC.

His teacher incredibly enthusiastic for this devoted and very talented pupil, the young man became very soon one of the main illustrators of the most prestigious and big magazines in New York City. It says all of his genuine talent and geniality, although for example Christy said once to a very young Nancy that talent all alone wouldn't never have paid. Training a talented person the best thing for obtaining the best.

After a while, and continuing we can say for all his life this process of researching for beauty and beautiful women for paintings and illustrations, Christy developed the desire also to portray famous people and situations. Actors, actresses, various Presidents of the Usa, senators, Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator. Christy portrayed everyone.

Born at the end of 1800, the fatal meeting with Nancy Palmer and their marriage.

Nancy remembers in the book that at the time of their first meeting he was 39 but he demonstrated 25 years and he was absolutely the most beautiful man she had every seen in all her life.

The first time he met him, well I guess it was a sort of dream to her, at the old Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

In itself the book is explored and narrated in first person choosing the privileged voice, eyes and spirit of the second-wife of the famous illustrator: Nancy Palmer Christy.

Mrs.Christy will remember firstly the day of the departure of her husband in 1942. 80 year, Christy was born in 1872 although he always thought he was born in 1873. Nancy remembers he hadn't lost his enthusiasm for life.

According to Christy three words will follow people for their entire life: Youth, Age and Beauty.

Youth, as also said Lorenzo De' Medici, pretty quickly will pass away leaving the place at other Life's seasons. The second word let us think we are not anymore that young the word: "Age." Age means that we can start to compare the "dear old times" with the the newest people's ones. But so, should we start to be sad because we are more adult? No because age brings wisdom, a different capacity of seeing things under other perspectives, because it's a normal growth of body and spirit.

Of course Mrs Nancy said some of their friends complained a lot sometimes for not being anymore as young as they were, but not them.

What will remain so of this life and what will be searched for all the life from Man? Beauty. Beauty in fact is not dirty, offensive, immoral, but harmonic, immortal and in peace with the universe and good for our souls and our feelings.

This philosophy inspired all Christy's life.

The book opens officially, after an introduction on the works of Christy with the heart attack and unexpected departure of the creative.

They didn't wait something so abruptly and dramatic, tells Nancy Christy although Christy had suffered of a heart attack one night closely to Christmas in 1941. He sorted out that first heart attack successfully.

Nancy remembers the touching moments followed the news of the heart attack of her husband.

Once returned home Christy started to receive every sorta of gifts,flowers, baskets of food, stay-well cards from the most diversified and famous people. Christy was a friend of reverend Norman Vincent Peale and he wrote him beautiful and encouraging words.

It was a day like another one, when Christy asked to his wife to go to the bank. Mrs Christy left the husband with one of their maid and a dear beloved friend for discovering at her return that her husband, the reason of her life was passed away.

Nancy Christy lived devastatingly moments. She felt a cold spot in a room for example, and she lived per years with the memory of her husband without to search other company. The funeral will take a lot of pages because Nancy Christy interested to remember all the most important and famous participants at the funeral.

Then, fresh air, absolutely another atmosphere, her first meeting with her future husband, and her trip with him in Ohio, a trip for discovering a place the artist loved a lot, but also for understand him and his soul much better.

The scheme of the book starts with the end of this illustrator and with the beginning of the romantic story with Nancy. I found it stylistically captivating.

It's an old-fashioned atmosphere, nostalgic, the structure of the book is precious, and also the English language extremely cured. Not the common English you find in modern books, but an old-fashioned style, precious as life once was precious.

The character of Nancy Christy wonderfully well portrayed by the writer for sure.

I can't wait to read the second book of this trilogy.

I thanks Netgalley for this beautiful book.

Laurie Atkinson says

What was it like to be a "rock star" public figure during the Gilded Age? We find out in James Philip Head's interpretive biography, *An Affair With Beauty* -- a remarkable debut work.

Head artfully paints a lush portrait of Gilded Age life in the company of gifted illustrator Howard Chandler Christy (1872-1952), whose career rapidly skyrocketed during his youth, enabling him to achieve "rock star" status for his time. In his era, Christy was the most famous illustrator in America.

I read this elegant book during a single train ride from Richmond to Manhattan and simply could not put it down. Interpreting the artist's life story is the voice of Christy's beloved second wife, Nancy Palmer Christy, a former *Cosmopolitan* model who was once considered one of the most beautiful women in America during the early 20th century. Head brilliantly employs flashback and frame narration that may remind one of such classic novels as *The Great Gatsby* and *Brideshead Revisted*, or such cinematic works as *Citizen Kane* and *Sunset Boulevard*. Head shows great talent as a writer. He knows how to deliver a biographical work without the usual psychological-analytical mumbo jumbo that one finds in contemporary biographies about artists. He doesn't intrude upon the reader with modern opinions but skillfully and poetically weaves facts into his tale.

Even more rare is Head's deft ability to keep the reader's curiosity continually piqued with the rags-to-riches tale of Christy's life. The artist emerged from humble beginnings. He grew up on an Ohio farm, and as a teenager, ventured to New York City to become an artist. Thereafter, he secured a livelihood as magazine illustrator, first gaining acclaim for his sketches of Teddy Roosevelt's *Rough Riders* in the *Spanish-American War* and later becoming a sought-after illustrator of books, magazines, and posters. Inspired by Gibson, Christy created the "Christy Girl" -- "an idealized portrayal of feminine perfection intermixed with independence and confidence," who was "virtuous, athletic, secure, graceful, and determined." He helped judge the first Miss America pageant in 1921, and subsequent ones, too. In 1921, he turned to the more prestigious field of portrait painting, and his clients included celebrities, movie stars, presidents, princes and living legends. This artistic shift catapulted Christy into stardom, precipitating great demand for his work at a hefty price that few could afford. Christy was also commissioned to produce historically commemorative works, the most notable being "The Scene at the Signing of the Constitution of the United States" (1940),

which was installed in the east stairwell of the U.S. Capitol.

Head spent more than a decade absorbing the pages of Nancy Palmer Christy's old diaries, fishing through dusty archives, and interviewing Christy's former models and relatives -- most of whom are now deceased. The book benefits greatly from his meticulous research. Notably, the book contains 62 black and white and color photos, which is unusual for printed works today.

Head's work is a trilogy, so I eagerly anticipate Books II and III now and hope that he speeds them to market. To my Goodreads Friends, if you appreciate American cultural history, biographies/memoirs, fashion and art/illustration, this book is a must-read. Romance lovers will find the poetic narrative intriguing as well and I suspect there will be even more romance in the next installments. If you loved *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Loving Frank* or *The Paris Wife*, this book is for you -- especially because it is a well-told true story of a once celebrated, larger-than-life star.

LEARETTA PARRETT says

Throughout history, the fascinating stories of far too many well-known individuals often disappear into obscurity. Such might have been the case with American artist and illustrator, Howard Chandler Christy, who was the most famous painter of the Jazz Age. With *The Magic of Youth*, the first book of an interpretative biographical trilogy entitled *An Affair with Beauty - The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy*, James Philip Head brings Christy back to life. Mr. Head tells a rich story filled with true characters -- including some very famous people -- and many interesting places and events. Using a first-person viewpoint narrative, Mr. Head creates a true non-fiction novel, placing the reader into the high heels of Nancy Palmer, a young woman who rises from the depths of a Poughkeepsie cigar factory to become Christy's top model -- a "Christy Girl" and a New York socialite. She models for *Cosmopolitan* magazine and, we learn, eventually becomes one of the most beautiful women in America in the 1910s, 1920s, and 1930s.

The narrative is so well constructed and pitch perfect that one feels as if one is actually watching everything that had unfolded years ago. In addition, Mr. Head's use of rapid, unattributed dialogue, in which the participants can be readily identified, is a brilliant style that lends itself to being more realistic and authentic than the usual "he said / she said" prose that one finds. I eagerly look forward to when the second book has been released . . . and then the third. If you enjoy Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, you will love this true story.

Danielle Urban says

An Affair with Beauty by James Philip Head is a nonfiction book about an artist and illustrator who redefined the American idol of beauty for women everywhere. Women flocked to him like a moth to a flame. The famous illustrator within these pages brings to life Howard Chandler Christy. His work is famous. He definitely was married and well liked. I found it interesting reliving his entire life through the words and retelling by James Philip Head. The theme hidden deep within this book is youth and beauty. Howard Chandler Christy always managed to portray that within his artwork. Reading this book, was like stepping back into history into the illustrator's shoes. James Philip Head has done an incredible job in bringing to life the artist's life's story. Fascinating journey indeed. Overall, I highly recommend it to readers.

Rhonda says

Oh my, where do I start? This book was educational, entertaining, engrossing and enthralling. I absolutely loved the insight into the life of Howard Chandler Christy and Nancy Christy. Having had the pleasure of hearing Mr. Head introduce his book in 2009, I was anxious for its release, it was everything and more that what I had hoped for. I enjoyed the historical details and the many illustrations and photos. I can't wait for the next book in the trilogy.

Kristine says

An Affair with Beauty by James Philip Head is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in mid-June.

Fanciful, oozing with compliments and emotion, this book is part biography, part artistic retrospective, and a very, very big part imagined monologue about Christy from his wife/model, Nancy Palmer Christy. Head takes pains to recognize actual written and verbal quotes with quotation marks, which makes all of Palmer Christy's ruminated quotes to be shown in italics; all a little much.

Paula Conway says

I'm not sure which story I like best: the author discovering the "Gibson Girl" drawings in college, setting him on a course to learn more about the mysterious Howard Chandler Christy, or the book itself. The author writes from the perspective of Christy's second wife, Nancy, which in itself is just incredible, and it is a page-turner. Beautifully and artistically told, you are taken back in time through the pages of this book with all five senses. It's also Hollywood all the way; it has everything: sex, scandal, intrigue, with all the twists and turns you would expect in a great Hollywood novel. Make a steaming hot cup of tea and snuggle up to a big box of chocolates for this one!

AudioBookReviewer says

My original *The Magic of Youth* audiobook review and many others can be found at [Audiobook Reviewer](#).

The Magic of Youth: An Affair with Beauty: The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy by James Philip Head was a difficult listen for me. The first hour provided over-the-top gushing compliments, flattery, and was more in line with the Yale vs. Duke basketball game from this year's NCAA tournament. Twitter showed no one cares about the wealthy and privileged doing really well. With the basketball game, however, at least there was conflict, a winner and a loser. In the first part of this book, conflict was noticeably absent; it was a glorious homage to a painter and husband, with no flaws (until much later.)

The writing is beautiful, artistic, and lucid. But the author's portrait is of a second model wife admiring her husband and thinking about the troubles of her neighbors from their Manhattan home overlooking New York's Central Park, the story falls flat. The author works hard to separate what Nancy Palmer Christy said and what he imagined, but either way, conflict drives a story and I don't think most readers would wait that long to get there.

While Howard Chandler Christy was a famous American painter, and the "Christy Girl", an icon, in 2016, I think this story falls short as a read for the general public. Eventually, the book gets to the inevitable issues, but a good editor should have recommended the author start in media res. The story is about a painter, so inevitably, using audio will be a challenge to begin with. I would have recommended the story be told backwards, from painting to painter, from brush to quill.

Still, there is a golden nostalgia to the book; sometimes the lexis seems erudite, sometimes sophomoric. But the author stays in form throughout the story, working to develop a picture of life we might ascribe to in fame and fortune. I look to *The Great Gatsby* as a way to take away everything from the protagonist while giving him everything. Unfortunately, this book gave everything too easily and waited too long to take it away. I know this compares a great fiction to a non-fiction, but I think it's the organization of the book that keeps it out of the gallery.

A few might be interested in Howard Chandler Christy who are already fans, but I don't think this base would expand much from this novel. If you like art, this book is a maybe listen, if you don't, the book will confirm the stereotypes.

About the Narrator

Pamela Almand, the narrator, provides a warm reading, really saving the audiobook. Her pacing and speech provide a blanket to tuck each scene in. I would highly recommend her work with fellow narrator Scott Thomas in the novel *In Movement There Is Peace: Stumbling 500 Miles Along the Way to the Spirit*

Audiobook was provided for review by the narrator.

Simona Nielsen says

I was surprised with how this memoir was put together and told. I normally don't read/listen to memoirs/biographies, but this was an compelling story. As an artist myself, I also learned to see many things through another artist's eyes. It's definitely a book I'm going to listen to more than once!

The painter, Howard Chandler Christy's story is told by his wife Nancy, who had kept many diaries documenting her life with him. Howard Chandler Christy was obsessed with beauty and painting beautiful people. His special visual talent made him famous all over the world. The writing is compelling, beautiful and lyrical and my ears were swimming with imaginative vocabulary.

The story was narrated by Pamela Almand and she did an outstanding job. Her voice pulls you into the world of Christy and you're captivated from the first moment. It's not easy to narrate a non-fiction story, but Pamela nailed it.

*This book was gifted to me in exchange for an honest review.

Jean Gonnella says

THE BEST BIOGRAPHY I HAVE EVER LISTENED TOO!!

Most biographies can be dry and boring. They are typically told in third person and chronologically. An Affair with Beauty - - The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy: The Magic of Youth is certainly not one

of them. This is perhaps the best biography I have ever read.

The Magic of Youth is the first book in an epic trilogy of the life of Howard Chandler Christy, an illustrator-turned-portrait painter who influenced fashion, redefined how women were perceived, captured the pulse of the nation, and immortalized some of the greatest men and women in America and Europe during the first part of the 20th century. Christy's life is told in first person through the eyes of his beautiful second wife, Nancy, a woman who, like himself, rose to fame and fortune from virtually nothing. Nancy is Howard's muse, and longs to tell the story of how they met as she strolls through Central Park on a fall evening in 1969. She remembers the day in 1952 when he died and the mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, which she covers up to preserve her rank in society. She laments her lonely days in seclusion after his star-studded funeral. Sitting in her apartment in solitude, she returns back to the spring of 1912, when she was first introduced to Mr. Christy, and he whisks her back to his mansion in Ohio. It is there that she learns of his childhood and his early days as a painter, but she also encounters his first wife, Maebelle, and discovers hints of his sordid past and of a court battle with his wife, revealing secrets and scandals that no doubt will be revealed in the coming two installments.

Head does an excellent job creating a non-fiction story that sounds like novel by interweaving facts with dialogue, a difficult task for even a seasoned writer let alone a debut author. The narrative is sumptuous and oftentimes poetic, allowing one to return back to an earlier, more refined time when elegance and beauty reigned. His use of symbolism and themes such as youth, beauty, illusions, truth, and remembrance provide universal aphorisms that will surely make this series a classic.

As the voice of Nancy Palmer Christy, Pam Almand, a 2016 Audie Award finalist, is superb. Her tone is warm and embracing. Her speech is properly modulated, and her character voices (of Howard, his parents, the caretaker, and others) are exceptional.

A fantastic book and audiobook for those who love the early 20th century, particularly those who have interests in art, illustration, fashion, history, and even romance. I can't wait to read the next book.

Reader Views says

Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (06/16)

Article first published as Book Review: 'An Affair With Beauty' by James Philip Head on Blogcritics.

"An Affair with Beauty – The Mystique of Howard Chandler Christy: The Magic of Youth," is the first book in a trilogy by James Philip Head about the legendary artist Howard Chandler Christy. Howard is most famous for creating "The Christy Girl," who was meant to represent the beautiful traits of the women from that era. His main inspiration was his beloved second wife, Nancy Palmer Christy. From the 1910s to the 1930s, she was thought to be one of the most beautiful women of that time. The author tells Howard's story from the perspective of his wife. In this first book, we learn about how Howard's achievements with painting people who later became historical legends and his love for painting beautiful women. Howard is also known for illustrating historical events that took place in the United States.

Incorporating vivid detail, photographs, and illustrations into this story, the author brings the Jazz era to life. Being able to see photographs of Howard from his childhood into his old age really helps illustrate the man he was. Having an opportunity to see his paintings and illustrations allowed me to see that while I recognized his famous works, I never knew the artist. He truly played a huge role in illustrating a great deal of American history. Whether he was painting The Signing of the United Nations Charter, or doing a portrait of a famous historical legend like General Douglas MacArthur, he truly knew how to capture the essence of the times. His Christy girls also brought the idea of the beauty of the women, at that time, to life.

By telling this story from the wife's perspective, the author is also able to capture more of who Howard

Chandler Christy really was, at least from her perspective. She was fairly naïve when she met him. He helped introduce her to the upper crust of society. She does well in making an entrance into this world and, she is able to walk us into his past, especially since she was able to visit where he was raised. Nancy Palmer Christy clearly adored her husband and was supportive of his endeavors. Looking through her eyes, we also get to meet his first wife who seems like a very complicated character. Outliving him, Nancy learns a lot more about who he was as she goes through his paperwork while handling his estate. Stepping into the beginning and the end of his life, I am intrigued to see what the next two books will offer regarding Howard's experiences in the middle parts.

The author, James Philip Head, truly has a gift for writing. His talent to write in vivid detail brings Howard Chandler Christy's story to life. Having been able to interview people that knew Christy also creates a more intriguing story. Christy was an artist that went from rags to riches and he appeared to have no problems stepping into the upper echelons of society. His friends, many of whom were legends in their own right, appeared to be very loyal to him. He wasn't just an artist, he was a legend. "An Affair with Beauty" is highly recommended reading for people who enjoy biographies, art history, and books about the history of the United States.

Tricia E says

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I grew up in Zanesville/Duncan Falls/Philo area and didn't know any of this history. I found it fascinating to realize all of this took place in my hometown. My mom and I had recently been to the Zanesville Art Museum and saw some of Christy's paintings and my mom was telling me that he was from there. That is the first I had ever heard of it. Then I got this book. Can't wait for the next two!

Theresa England says

An affair With Beauty

I was at the book signing at the Barracks on Saturday, but, just had time to sit in my chair with a cup of tea and get into it. Sat up till 1 AM reading ! I didn't want to put it down to refresh the tea when the cup was empty.

My great-grandmother, grandmother and mother were raised in the area and filled my head with Christy stories for years as I grew up. I always thought I'd loved to have known him. I've lived close to the Barracks since 1973, and to read it is like walking to familiar places around me.

I purchased your book for me and my grown grand-daughter, also a Christy fan, but find that this isn't a "girly" book, but a book my husband will also enjoy do to the history of the area that is so much a part of it. I thank you for your work in sharing something noble with the world and wish you all the best.

Melodie Hayes says

Author Jim Head transports the reader back in time and into the lives of Howard Chandler Christy via his wife Nancy's narrative. Who could have known the magnitude of this man's life and all those he affected? Each chapter brings out more of the vast influence of Christy and the ongoing questions of beauty, immortality, and illusion. The photos and illustrations take us right back to Christy's life and the writing is

captivating. I can't wait for the next episode! Intriguing questions and mysteries remain unanswered and the reader is left wanting more! I highly recommend this book!
