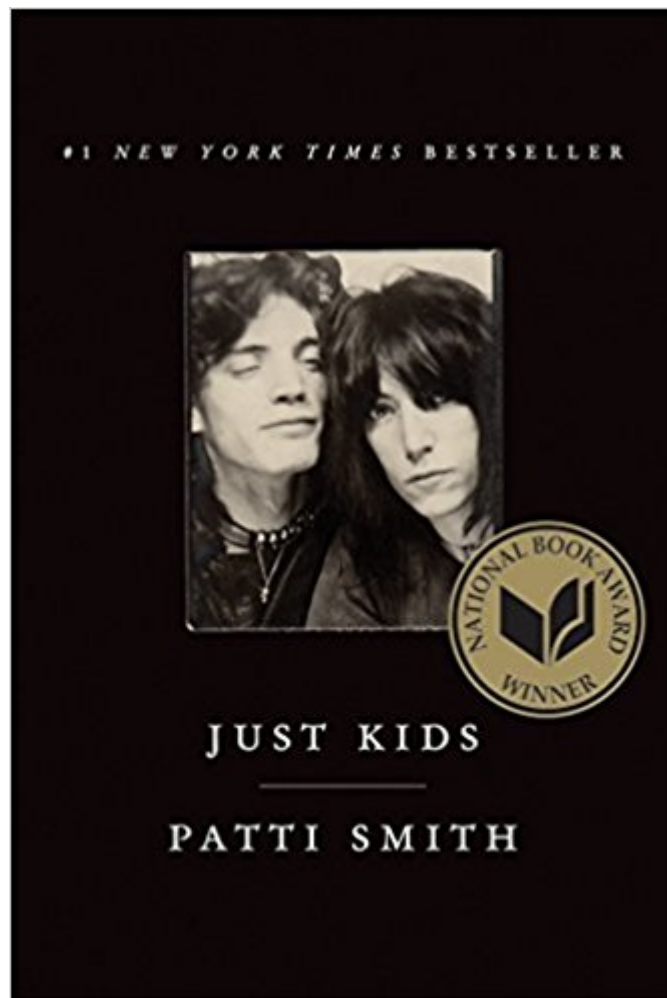


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Just Kids



Synopsis

In *Just Kids*, Patti Smith's first book of prose, the legendary American artist offers a never-before-seen glimpse of her remarkable relationship with photographer Robert Mapplethorpe in the epochal days of New York City and the Chelsea Hotel in the late sixties and seventies. An honest and moving story of youth and friendship, Smith brings the same unique, lyrical quality to *Just Kids* as she has to the rest of her formidable body of work—from her influential 1975 album *Horses* to her visual art and poetry.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Best Books of the Month, January 2010: Patti Smith and Robert Mapplethorpe weren't always famous, but they always thought they would be. They found each other, adrift but determined, on the streets of New York City in the late '60s and made a pact to keep each other afloat until they found their voices--or the world was ready to hear them. Lovers first and then friends as Mapplethorpe discovered he was gay, they divided their dimes between art supplies and Coney Island hot dogs. Mapplethorpe was quicker to find his metier, with a Polaroid and then a Hasselblad, but Smith was the first to fame, transformed, to her friend's delight, from a poet into a rock star. (Mapplethorpe soon became famous too--and notorious--before his death from AIDS in 1989.) Smith's memoir of their friendship, *Just Kids*, is tender and artful, open-eyed but surprisingly decorous, with the oracular style familiar from her anthems like "Because the Night," "Gloria," and "Dancing Barefoot" balanced by her powers of observation and memory for everyday details like the

price of automat sandwiches and the shabby, welcoming fellow bohemians of the Chelsea Hotel, among whose ranks these baby Rimbauds found their way. --Tom Nissley --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. In 1967, 21-year-old singer-song writer Smith, determined to make art her life and dissatisfied with the lack of opportunities in Philadelphia to live this life, left her family behind for a new life in Brooklyn. When she discovered that the friends with whom she was to have lived had moved, she soon found herself homeless, jobless, and hungry. Through a series of events, she met a young man named Robert Mapplethorpe who changed her life—and in her typically lyrical and poignant manner Smith describes the start of a romance and lifelong friendship with this man: It was the summer Coltrane died. Flower children raised their arms... and Jimi Hendrix set his guitar in flames in Monterey. It was the summer of Elvira Madigan, and the summer of love.... This beautifully crafted love letter to her friend (who died in 1989) functions as a memento mori of a relationship fueled by a passion for art and writing. Smith transports readers to what seemed like halcyon days for art and artists in New York as she shares tales of the denizens of Max's Kansas City, the Hotel Chelsea, Scribner's, Brentano's, and Strand bookstores. In the lobby of the Chelsea, where she and Mapplethorpe lived for many years, she got to know William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and Johnny Winter. Most affecting in this tender and tough memoir, however, is her deep love for Mapplethorpe and her abiding belief in his genius. Smith's elegant eulogy helps to explain the chaos and the creativity so embedded in that earlier time and in Mapplethorpe's life and work. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

We had a large and enthusiastic book group meet at The LGBT Center in NYC to Smith's memoir of punk NYC and her long but tragic relationship with the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe. Everyone either liked the book or loved it. I think we actually have better discussions when there's some minor disagreement, but this was a very pleasant and, for many of us, a rather nostalgic evening. There were a few comments that Patti's style of writing was simple and repetitive at times, which could be distracting. We all agreed that the writing was tender and sweet, wistful in its poetry, especially considering that it covers some difficult times for Patti and Robert Mapplethorpe and the punk period in general. It's all very down to earth and human. "Just Kids" is a perfect period piece. It describes a specific scene from the inside and gives some minor insights into the places and characters that dominated the art and music communities at the time. The connection between Patti and Robert

was strong, and their mutual connection to the art and music world was equally strong. Patti admired the worlds of Mickey Spillane, Arthur Rimbaud, and Jean Genet, but it was Robert who lived the adventure. It was not the most positive or endearing portrait of Robert, but was ultimately very moving. Robert was a striver and wanted to be rich and famous. It almost seems like Patti gently fell into her role as a poet and musician; "Just Kids" doesn't describe her struggle, just that she knew that she was going to be an artist - and eventually was. For those of us who have lived in NYC for a while, and especially those of us who lived (or visited) NYC during that period, a map would be an interesting addition to the book. Many of the places that Patti describes are very close together. In addition to this being a punk memoir, it's also often a neighborhood memoir. I think that if there was one point of contention about "Just Kids," it was Patti's reluctance to discuss sex. She was screwing Robert Mapplethorpe at the beginning and much of his photography was very sexually explicit, so it seems a bit old fashioned or puritanical that Patti would avoid it so strenuously. Both she and Robert were Catholics, but they took very different approaches to it in their artistic development. Ultimately, "Just Kids" - as the title suggests - is a story about how two artists lost their childhood innocent sense of wonder and turned into famous artists, and finally how Robert lost his life and Patti lost her friend.

Recommended to me by my sister who has a degree in English literature. Wow. Lovely homage to Robert Mapplethorpe. Patti simply and clearly and beautifully states the story of her life which is downright fascinating. My life might have been more like hers if I had the courage to risk being a "starving artist". While I might not always resonate with her aesthetics, and I do not believe that artists must necessarily suffer to be great, I do admire her profound devotion to art and to living a meaningful life. I would recommend this book to anyone, but especially to artists. Regarding negative reviewers who objected to "name dropping", I don't get it. Do they include famous names when telling their own stories? For example, (Spoiler alert): I would feel SO deprived if Patti had not eventually revealed that "Slim" the cowboy in her story was in fact, Sam Sheppard. Who would not want to know that? Would they criticize Sam Sheppard for "dropping" Patti's name? To each his own I guess. I hope you read the book and judge for yourself.

Patti Smith can be incredibly eloquent when she actually decides to give us a window into herself. Unfortunately, for most of this memoir, she doesn't choose to do that. Her book suffers from discontinuity - all of a sudden she is married and has left New York - what has precipitated this? She gives us frustrating hints about conflicts in her life, then paints them over with a rose-colored brush.

Men asking her for money? VD from someone who cheats on her? Oh well. Married man who leaves her? What the heck. Mapplethorpe is no longer attracted to women but still wants to sleep with her? She feels flattered that he still finds her attractive. Her new husband? "A king among men." Why? Where are the real feelings? Not here. The strongest part of the memoir is the beginning, when she talks about the kind of person she was as a child, and about the magic she felt upon meeting Mapplethorpe. Soon, her story dissolves into endless details about what she is wearing and who was at Max's as well as a surfeit of random French references that come off as insufferably pretentious. She didn't like a film because it "wasn't French enough." If you want to get a real window into Smith, just listen to her beautiful Memorial Song for Mapplethorpe. That will tell you more about her than this book.

This is a great example of not judging a book by its cover. I never knew much about Patti Smith, but what I thought I knew was completely wrong. Her writing is beautiful and I love the picture she paints of the New York art scene in the sixties and seventies. After reading this I listened to her interview on Alec Baldwin's podcast and it just confirmed how wrong my judgement of her (based mainly on photos) was. Even though I was only vaguely familiar with a lot of the people she mentions, it made me want to learn more.

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