

Anic Thompson The Man Who Bet On Everything

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Anic Thompson The Man Who

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A unique volume, *Inventing Times Square* approaches the subject of twentieth-century American city culture through a multidimensional examination of one quintessential urban space: Times Square. Ranging in time from 1905, when the crossroad was given its present name, through to the current plans for redevelopment, the authors examine Times Square as economic hub, real estate bonanza, entertainment center, advertising medium, architectural experiment, and erotic netherworld. Though the volume centers on Times Square, the essays venture much further into urban history and American social history, revealing in the process how Times Square reflected—even epitomized—America as it became an urban consumer culture.

Five women have served as leaders of Muslim countries, namely Megawati Sukarnoputri (Vice President of Indonesia, 1991-2001 and President 2002-4), Benazir

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Bhutto (PM of Pakistan, 1988-90 and 1993-6), Sheikh Hasina (PM of Bangladesh, 1996-2001), Khaleda Zia (PM of Bangladesh, 1991-5 and 2001-6) and Tansu Çiller (PM of Turkey, 1993-6). This is an extraordinary record and somewhat of a challenge to the widespread perception that Muslim women are oppressed. Four of the women belonged to political families by birth or marriage, raising interesting questions about the extent to which this played a role alongside their skills and personal qualities in their rise to power. To what degree did culture rather than Islam aid and abet their roles, or indeed is it sustainable to distinguish Islam from culture. This study of the role of these five powerful Muslim women uses their life and work to explore relevant issues, such as the role of culture, gender in Islam and the nature of the Islamic state.

American genre painting flourished in the thirty years before the Civil War, a period of rapid social change that followed the election of President Andrew Jackson. It has long been assumed that these paintings--of farmers, western boatmen and trappers, blacks both slave and free, middle-class women, urban urchins, and other everyday folk--served as records of an innocent age, reflecting a Jacksonian optimism and faith in the common man. In this enlightening book Elizabeth Johns presents a different interpretation--arguing that genre paintings had a social function that related in a more significant and less idealistic way to the political and cultural life of the time. Analyzing works by William Sidney Mount, George Caleb Bingham, David Gilmore Blythe, Lilly Martin Spencer, and others, Johns reveals the humor and cynicism in the paintings and places them in the context of stories about the American character that appeared in sources ranging from almanacs and newspapers to joke books and political caricature. She compares the productions of American painters with those of earlier Dutch, English, and French genre artists, showing the distinctive interests of American viewers. Arguing that art is socially constructed to meet the interests of its patrons and viewers, she demonstrates that the audience for American genre paintings consisted of New Yorkers with a highly developed ambition for political and social leadership, who enjoyed setting up citizens of the new democracy as targets of satire or condescension to satisfy their need for superiority. It was this network of social hierarchies and prejudices--and not a blissful celebration of American democracy--that informed the look and the richly ambiguous content of genre painting.

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