

Falling Upwards



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From renowned critic Lee Siegel--hailed as a model of "original thinking and passionate writing"--a sometimes scathing, always thrilling examination of the state of contemporary art and culture, and beyond... "Sex and the City," Saul Bellow, Eyes Wide Shut, Dante and the American self, Barbara Kingsolver, acting in Hollywood, Soviet painting in Soho, Angels in America, Jane Austen in the present, J.K. Rowling--nothing escapes Lee Siegel's incandescent eye. Siegel possesses an intellectual range and independent perspective unmatched by his peers, and Falling Upwards brings together the best of his essays, all of them rich with the trades mark wit and intelligence that have won him many friends and a few enemies. In these essential writings, Siegel deftly uses the occasion of a book, film, painting, or television show not merely to appraise it, but to make sense of life in a way that is more defiant of impoverished cultural "norms" than most contemporary artistic expression. Guided by the belief that a calculating self-interest in art-making diminishes the prospects for the imagination in life, Siegel celebrates authentic sensibilities and lambasts manufactured sentiments. With uncanny insight, yet also with incomparable logic and analytical rigor, he has invented a new idiom in which the language of criticism embodies the playful, creative, synthesizing power that has been largely abdicated by the arts in our time. In writing about works of culture, Siegel has created a standard by

which to judge them.

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目录:

[Falling Upwards 下载链接1](#)

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