

The Book of the Heart



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著者:Louisa Young

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'A ravishing, celebratory and funny history of the human heart. Disarming, canny and beguiling, it deserves to become a cult book.' Independent 'There is a universal human fascination with the heart which no other organ has inspired -- not the brain, not the eyes. The heart is simply a lump of muscle, a pump, and yet it is the home of love, and courage, and religion, and soul, and almost any other human feeling you care to think of.' This is Louisa Young's starting point, and she goes on to produce a book that is readable, erudite, funny, intriguing, stimulating and made to be given, from the heart, as a gift. The book is in four parts (like the heart): The Physical Heart; The Religious Heart; The Heart in Art; and The Written Heart. The first part covers, amongst other things, anatomy and the history of ideas about how the heart works; weaknesses of the heart and disease; surgery and transplants; and other animals' hearts -- the heart as the seat of life. The second has the Bleeding Heart of Christ; pagan sacrifice; saints' attributes; the heart in Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism etc -- the heart as the seat of the soul. The third looks at votive art, the 'heart/fruit thing'; sublimated visual hearts; kitsch; advertising and logos; cartoons -- the heart as visual symbol. The fourth explores expressions of love in literature, from the Greeks' musings on eros and agape via myths and legends and the invention of courtly romance to the romantic novel; also song lyrics -- the heart in writing.

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