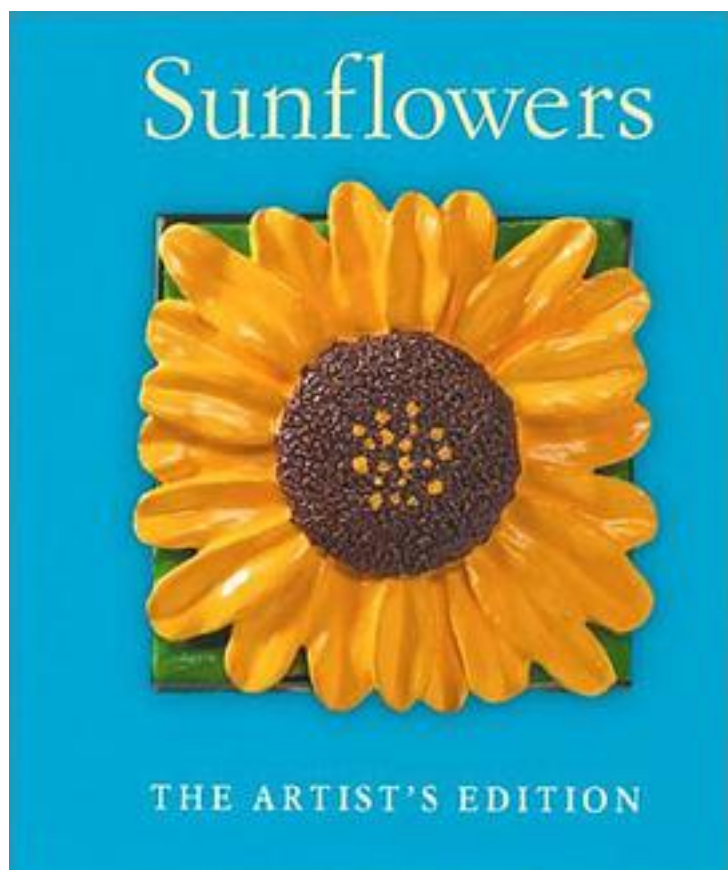


Sunflowers



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Air & Space magazine editor Pappalardo forms a touching relationship with a preternatural plant. The author's self-confessed obsession with sunflowers, coupled with an inquisitive mind, combine in a book about the plant's history and cultural impact that's full of interesting asides and little-known facts. Pappalardo gives credit to some of the lesser-known names who have championed the colorful flower's many

and varied uses. He charts the sunflower's discovery and gradual integration into various industries, outlining some historical instances in which these flowers have reared their pretty heads. One indelible image, from the German invasion of Russia in 1941, shows opposing tanks cutting down great swathes of sunflowers as they lumber into battle in the fields of Kursk. Pappalardo even makes a connection between sunflowers and the activities of Osama bin Laden, who owned a company in the Sudan that controlled most of the country's exports of sunflower-related products. These stories neatly counterbalance chapters on the plant's history, which introduce characters such as Charles Heiser, the "godfather of sunflower research"; Vasili Stepanovich Pustovoit, whose breeding and manipulation of sunflower seeds helped give them greater oil content, thus laying the foundations for a lucrative industry; and Peter the Great, who may or may not have been responsible for introducing the plant to Russia, thus dramatically influencing its future economy. In fact, Russia is central to all sunflower-related activity, according to the author, who spends a large portion of the book examining the evolution of the country's sunflower-oil industry. Fans of Mark Kurlansky's *Salt* (2002) should find much to enjoy here; Pappalardo demonstrates a similar dramatic flair as he makes a strong case for the sunflower's grip on humanity. Enjoyable and eye-opening. Kirkus Reviews

作者介绍:

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