



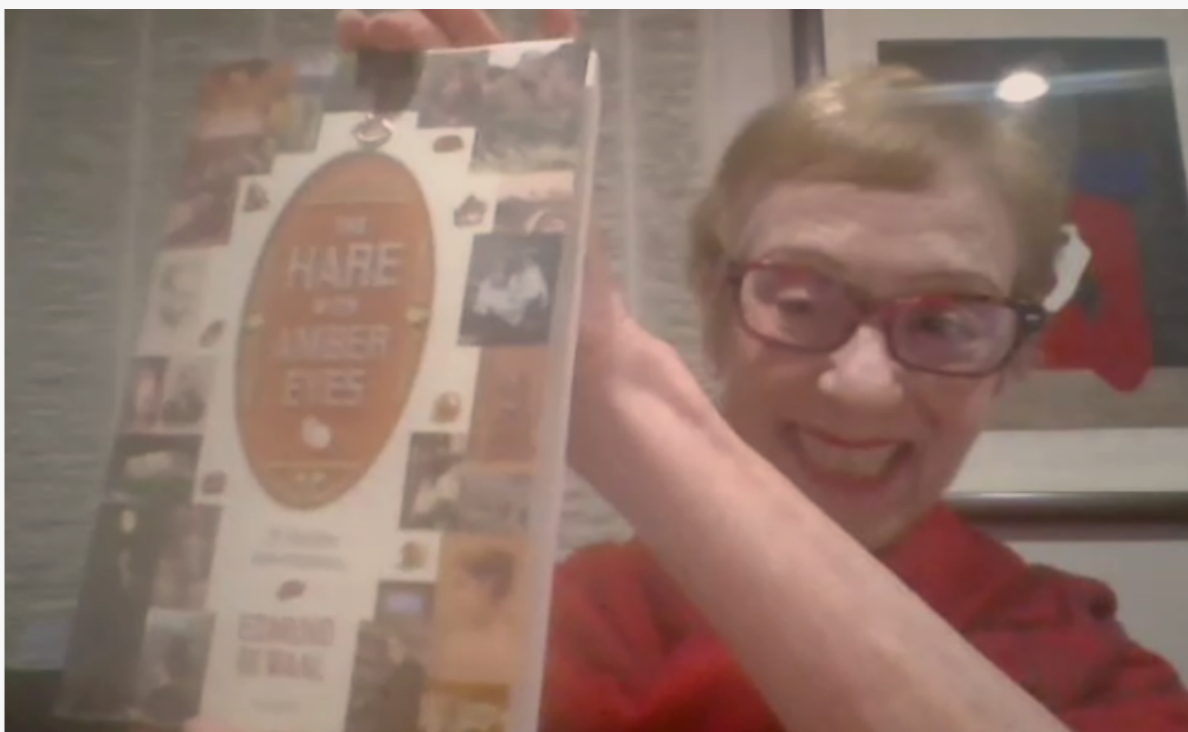
FOPSL Book Club: January 15, 2021

Book: *The Hare with Amber Eyes*

Author: Edmund de Waal

Discussion leader: Pearl Moskowitz

## Pearl Moskowitz Presents *The Hare with Amber Eyes*



In January, Pearl Moskowitz led the discussion of *The Hare with Amber Eyes* (2010), a memoir by the British ceramicist Edmund de Waal. His story centers

around the history of his family, the Ephrussi, a dynasty of European Jewish bankers and peers of the Rothschild family. Nearly all of the family's wealth was confiscated by the Nazis in 1938 except for a hidden collection of 264 Japanese netsuke (miniature sculptures) which were passed down through five generations and eventually to the author.

Mr. de Waal (born in 1964) is known for his large-scale installations of porcelain vessels. Following the publication of his memoir, he was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for Service to the Arts. His second book, *The White Road* (2015) traces his journey to discover the history of porcelain. To hear his voice and learn more about this latest journey into the history of porcelain watch this video: <https://youtu.be/qFi60R6b6oI>. In this 14.5-minute video he pulls out of his pocket an ivory hare with amber eyes netsuke and tells the story of how it became a part of his life: <https://youtu.be/pyUtRMgZLNl>.

Pearl focused on the numerous themes presented in the book like the search for aesthetic sensibility that runs through the generations of the Ephrussi family, anti-Semitism, and classism. Book club members discussed their familiarity with artists like Renoir and Klimt. Some had passed the Ephrussi Palace in Vienna. Other themes explored included the omnipresent color yellow, women's education, immigration, and assimilation.

I found a quote that seems to sum up what most agreed was a well-written and engaging book:

I have read this book for three book clubs now. It's a challenge to explain its appeal. If you love art history, especially French Impressionism, or how Japanese art came to 19th century Europe and 20th century America, this book will appeal to you. If you like to read about Jewish history, especially about Jews living in Odessa, Vienna and Paris in the 19th and 20th century before WWII, this book will grab your attention. If you are fascinated by the American occupation of Japan after the war, the book has insights for you too. If you're fascinated by Nazi art theft like *The Monuments Men* (the book, not the movie) and *The Woman in Gold* (the movie), then this book has stories for you. If you've ever tried to write your own families' history and wondered what kind of effort it takes, then this book is for you. If you love the PBS shows [Antiques Roadshow](#) and [Finding Your Roots](#), then this book is for you. – James Wallace Harris, blogger.

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