

Introduction to Susan Orlean. 1:33 min. Interview: Raymond Elman. Post-Production: Javier Romero. Music: David Gwyn Jones, Zapsplat. Recorded via Zoom. 1/7/2022, Miami.

Susan Orlean: Author + Staff Writer, *The New Yorker*

By Elman + Romero

Editor's Note:

From SUSAN ORLEAN's Lips

"What can I tell you? I am the product of a happy and relatively uneventful childhood in Cleveland, Ohio (back when the Indians were still a lousy team, and before they became a really good team and then again became a somewhat lousy team, although I have hope again...). This was followed by a happy and relatively squandered college career at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (back when Ann Arbor hosted a Hash Bash every spring). I studied literature and history and always dreamed of being a writer, but had no idea of how you went about being a writer – or at least the kind of writer I wanted to be: someone who wrote long stories about interesting things, rather than news stories about short-lived events. There is no guidebook to becoming that kind of writer, so I assumed I'd end up doing something practical like going to law school, much as the thought of it made me cringe. After college, I moved to Portland, Oregon (back when Portland was cappuccino-free) to kill some time before the inevitable trek to law school – and amazingly enough I lucked into a writing job at a tiny now-defunct monthly magazine. That led to a job at an alternative newsweekly in Portland where I wrote music reviews and feature pieces. While I was in Portland, Mt. St. Helens erupted; I started writing for **Rolling Stone** and the **Village Voice**; I learned to cross-country ski; I failed to learn how to cook.

I moved to Boston in 1982 (back before they built the Ted Williams Tunnel and long before the Red Sox reversed the curse). I wrote for the **Boston Phoenix** and the **Boston Globe**, and started work on my first book, "Saturday Night." Four years later I moved to New York. I learned how to order take-out food; wrote "**The Orchid Thief**;" became a staff writer at **The New Yorker**; got married. A few years ago, we moved to Los Angeles—kind of by accident, but, as it turns out, a happy accident, and for the time being we're staying put.

These days, I spend most of my time writing for *The New Yorker* and working on books. My side projects? I do a weekly column for *Medium*, run a book club on *Literati*, have lots of speaking engagements, and do some television writing, including a stint on *How to With John Wilson* (HBO) and the forthcoming adaptation of "The Library Book."

— Susan Orlean

The videos below were **recorded via Zoom**, are organized by Success Factor, and run between 18 seconds and 10 minutes. Click on any video. You must be connected to the Internet to view the videos.

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:

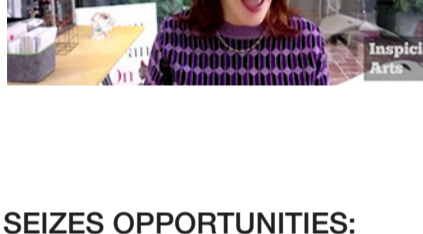
0:44 sec.



Where did you grow up and what was your first awareness of art of any discipline?

CREATES A UNIQUE PERSONAL BRAND:

2:04 min.



Where did you go to school, and when did you first realize that you had both a passion and talent for writing?

SEIZES OPPORTUNITIES:

10:05 min.



What was your career path from college to The New Yorker magazine?

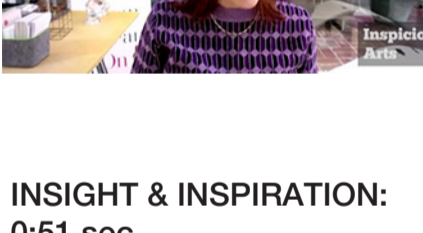
SERENDIPITY: 1:48 min.



One of the things I find most interesting about your book, "The Orchid Thief," is your detailed history of orchids in the 19th century. Was that history included in your New Yorker article?

EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES:

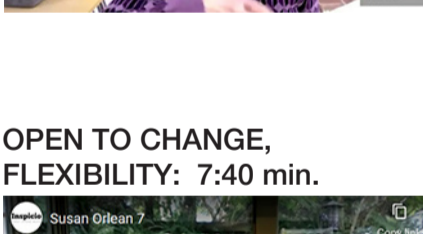
0:18 sec.



Were you living in Florida while you were writing your article and book?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:

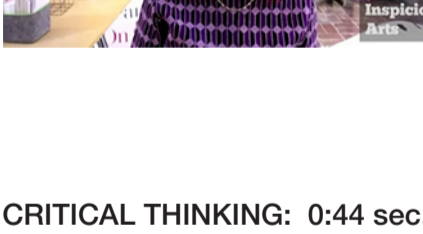
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Did you spend time in Miami while you were researching "The Orchid Thief"?

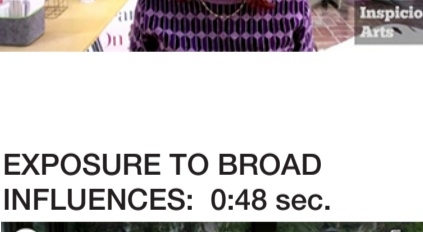
OPEN TO CHANGE, FLEXIBILITY:

7:40 min.



How did "The Orchid Thief" become a movie?

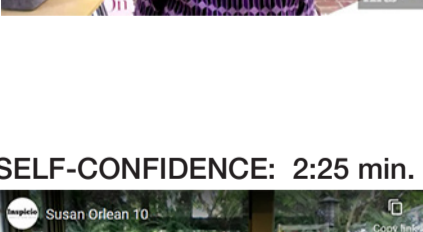
CRITICAL THINKING: 0:44 sec.



I assume you don't know any other "real" people who have been portrayed by Meryl Streep in a film?

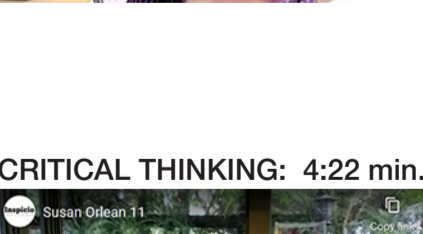
EXPOSURE TO BROAD INFLUENCES:

0:48 sec.



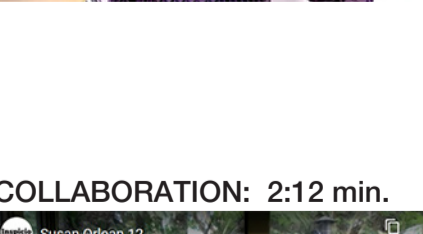
How did you meet Carrie Fisher and Nora Ephron?

SELF-CONFIDENCE: 2:25 min.



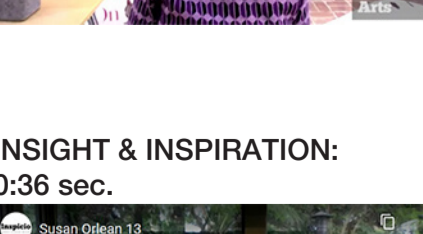
How did your life change following the overwhelming success of your book and the subsequent movie?

CRITICAL THINKING: 4:22 min.



One of the most interesting things about you is that it doesn't matter what topic you're writing about. You're such a talented writer that you find a way to make any story interesting for everyone. Do you share my opinion of you?

COLLABORATION: 2:12 min.



I know a lot of people who wrote for The New Yorker and they used to tell stories that embodied a sense of camaraderie and joie de vivre. Does that still exist at The New Yorker?

INSIGHT & INSPIRATION:

0:36 sec.



Your new beat at The New Yorker is writing an obit column. Are you discovering new material that will inspire future Susan Orlean books?