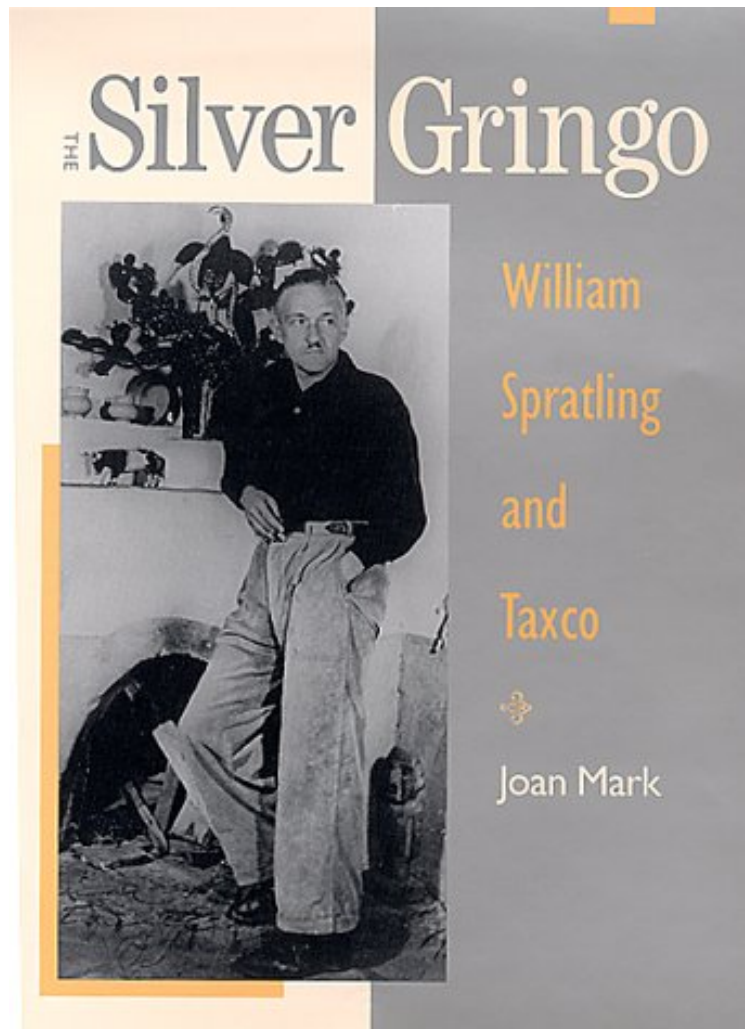


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The Silver Gringo: William Spratling and Taxco

Joan T. Mark

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Joan T. Mark : The Silver Gringo: William Spratling and Taxco before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Silver Gringo: William Spratling and Taxco:

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A good overview into the life of William SpratlingBy JDiverDon Guillermo, as he was known in Taxco, was an American architect who came upon an impoverished if beautiful Mexican village in the mountains of the state of Guerrero. Stimulated by financial desperation and a challenge from a friend, he hired a silversmith from nearby Iguala and kicked off the renaissance of Mexican silverwork- initially from a table in his house, and ultimately a large workshop turning out exemplary tin, copper, weaving, furniture and, of course, silver. Almost all the smiths who carried out the Taxco tradition were trained in the Spratling workshop.This eminently readable book tells the tale, though it is certainly not one of those comprehensive 600-page biographies, nor

does it become overly speculative about a man who was respected and loved for his creativity and for giving impulse to a craft that made the community relatively wealthy, but also made some mistakes and enemies. (Yep, he was special, and very human!) That is, in my opinion, part of its charm. This book is a bit topical, yet it manages to convey the excitement of the resurrection of a Mexican village that became an entrepot of artists, writers and would-be revolutionaries, and- for good and for bad- a huge tourist destination. It gives more than a glimmer of the many facets of Don Guillermo / Bill Spratling, a man who intended to find respite and refuge, resuscitated a community and gave many livelihood, and largely withdrew from that same community in his last years. This is written from a perspective of someone who was privileged to know Taxco, since as a youngster I hung around the talleres- especially of Hector Aguilar and the Castillo family- developing a love of Mexican silver and some rudimentary smithing skills of my own. 11 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Little Spratling By A Customer This pricy but slim volume (126 actual pages of text and photos), is written like a freshman essay. There are facts, but little that illuminates or gives insight into this unusual personality who founded the silver industry in Taxco. It is neither insightful or clever and a biography must have one of these characteristics. Much research seems to have been done, but with little result.

A biography of the legendary American expatriate, silver designer, artist, architect, writer, and bon vivant.

From Library Journal Mark, a research associate at Harvard's Peabody Museum and author of four anthropological titles, here focuses on a singular cultural phenomenon. William Spratling, an American writer, illustrator, and draftsman who lived in Taxco, Mexico, from 1929 until his death in 1967, almost single-handedly transformed an impoverished mining town into a prosperous silver manufacturing center. The simple elegance that made his work so popular (and now collectible) owed much to the influence of the ancient Mexican artifacts he amassed. Based on exhaustive research, interviews, and photographic study, Mark's book details Spratling's successful production and marketing of fine-quality, hand-crafted silver jewelry and related items. Mark's work succeeds more as a business history than as a biography, perhaps because of the intensely private nature of the man, but her approach is both scholarly and accessible. Most public and academic libraries will welcome this complement to the few available works on Mexican silverwork. -Rex Klett, Mitchell Community Coll., Statesville, NC Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. "The simple elegance that made [Spratling's] work so popular (and now collectible) owed much to the influence of the ancient Mexican artifacts he amassed. Based on exhaustive research, interviews, and photographic study, Mark's book details Spratling's successful production and marketing of fine-quality, hand-crafted silver jewelry and related items. . . . her approach is both scholarly and accessible." About the Author Joan Mark is a research associate in the History of Anthropology at the Peabody Museum, Harvard University. She is the author of four other books and lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.