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Modern Art, Revised And Updated (3rd Edition)



Synopsis

Richly illustrated and clearly focused, this book surveys the genesis, development, and culmination of modern European/American painting, sculpture, architecture, and conceptual art "from Post-Impressionism through the most recent developments in the 1990s. It avoids the typical encyclopedic approach of surveys in favor of examining selected but highly representative works in greater depth and from an enlarged spectrum of critical discourse. Organized along chronological lines, topics explore the ideas, forms, events, artists, and works "with each chapter devoted to a style, movement, or decade" from Cézanne, Seurat, Gauguin, and Van Gogh through Minimalism and the general reaction known as Post-Modernism. Ideal for readers with a general interest in art.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is the text that I am required to read for my Art History course, so I might have some bias based on the fact that I'm being forced to read it, however in general I don't take much issue with required texts. I just find this book excruciating for multiple reasons: 1) Poor Organization Image information is not directly next to the image. I am forced to hunt through a bunch of headings to discover the proper credits. When the author references an image that is not on that particular page or chapter, he does so by number (not page number, image number which is progressive throughout the book ranging from 1-877 over 452 pages) creating an annoying and time-consuming hunting game if I don't remember or know the image referenced. In addition to poor image organization, dates are poorly organized. Years and names are thrown around left and right, with no particular order, making it hard to really know what came before what. Information could definitely

be organized better. (Or they could at least improve and make more accessible their timeline)²
LanguageAs many before me have written, this book is verbose for no reason. Sentences run long and are loaded with multiple clauses that themselves have multiple subjects and verbs, making it hard to follow what the author is saying. I will stare blankly at sentences, reading and rereading them multiple times before I can get the semblance of a meaning. I also find that diction/word choice is very poor--or perhaps elitist would be a better term. The text has a variety of French terminology that is integrated without being defined. Because of four years of French I understand them, but I wonder how it affects people without this advantage. Adjectives, adverbs and verbs also suffer from poor selection.

After a while the obvious bias of the authors against the German expressionists becomes unbearable. In chapter 7, we learn that the Fauves were representatives of "French Expressionism" and "the century's first expressionist artists", before "the Teutonizing of the term". (page 101)
Secondly, the authors insist on anglicizing the names of German art movements such as Die Brücke ("The Bridge") or Der Blaue Reiter ("The Blue Rider"), while the Fauves remain simply the Fauves, not "The Wild Beasts". The authors are very eager to imply that everything the German expressionists did was an impulsive and superficial reaction to the godlike creations of Henri Matisse. Some more choice examples, which speak for themselves: "In many respects so similar to the Fauve works of Matisse, the Expressionist art first produced in 20th-century Germany is readily distinguishable from that of the French master by the clear absence of the latter's balance of intellectual control and response to an harmonious natural world... German artists, however, enjoyed a far less effective and moderating tradition of realism, and thus had little taste for pragmatism and logical analysis, processes inherited from the humanist enlightenment and firmly fixed as the solid underpinning of French artistic values." (112) "...German artists contemporary with the Fauve experiment could respond only superficially to the formalist aesthetic then dominant in France." (112) "Max Pechstein... had the greatest commercial success, possibly because he responded to the influence of French art and hence was more decorative and less brutal than his associates.

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