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# Art Since 1900: 1900 To 1944 (Third Edition) (Vol. 1)



## Synopsis

Five of the most influential and provocative art historians of our time have come together to provide a comprehensive history of art in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. *Art Since 1900* introduces students to the key theoretical approaches to modern and contemporary art. A flexible year-by-year structure and extensive cross-referencing allow teachers and students to pursue a chronological approach and/or to study the currents of art since 1900 by medium, theme, country, or region. This completely updated and expanded third edition contains over 125 essays, each focusing on a crucial event in the history of art from 1900 to the present. Ten new essays cover subjects such as Moscow conceptualism, abstract film, postmodern architecture, and queer art, as well as artists from emerging economies and the impact of the market on current art practice. Text boxes provide further information on key figures and issues. Five introductions explain the different methods of art history at work in the book. There are two roundtable discussions between the authors, and all reference material has been updated. 233 full-color and 188 black-and-white illustrations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Hal Foster is Townsend Martin Professor of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University. A co-editor of *October* magazine and books, he is the editor of *The Anti-Aesthetic*, and the author of *Design and Crime, Recording, The Return of the Real, Compulsive Beauty* and *The Art-Architecture Complex*. Rosalind Krauss is University Professor of Modern Art and Theory at Columbia University. Yve-Alain Bois is an author and professor of Art History at the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, New Jersey. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh is the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of

Modern Art at Harvard University. David Joselit worked as a curator at The Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston from 1983 to 1989 where he co-organized several exhibitions including "Dissent: The Issue of Modern Art in Boston," "Endgame: Reference and Simulation in Recent Painting and Sculpture," and "The British Edge." He is Distinguished Professor of the History of Art at Yale University. Joselit is the author of *Infinite Regress: Marcel Duchamp 1910-1941*, *Feedback: Art and Politics in the Age of Television*, and *American Art Since 1945*.

This two volume set is justifiably considered "the one book on 20th Century art to read, if you can only read one." It covers the century exhaustively, without managing to bore or slide too far into pretension. No easy task, that.

Art Since 1900 opens each chapter with a momentous event in art history, and the first one is Sigmund Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. Using the events as a springboard, we see how modern art began (according to the authors) with new ideas on thinking. Radical styles in painting actually began years earlier in Paris, with Van Gogh and Gauguin pushing the limits of acceptability, but in this book it was Gustav Klimt's open defiance of the establishment. Klimt's dark subject matter is a proof, along with Freud's work, that Vienna could be a place of rebel thinking. Preceded by artists like Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec, known for bizarre colors and strange subject matter, we can deduce that modern art was decades in the making. Another source of the change in taste, according to the first chapter, is the rejection of cliché. Years earlier, Auguste Rodin created his famous *Balzac* statue as a formless column, with no indication that the subject was a writer (*Balzac* wears a bathrobe, because he often wrote late at night.) Similarly, Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* removed the original plan to include a sailor (the client) and the medical student with a skull (*memento mori*). The chapter does not go into detail about the African symbolism in the painting, though it's discussed in another essay titled *Dread, Desire, and the Demoiselles*. The second volume (it's a two-book set) begins in 1945, when New York City and Chicago were becoming ground zero for the art world. Paris and Vienna were no longer the art capitals of the world, thanks to WWII driving the artists out, but keep in mind that years earlier, Paris and Vienna had pushed out Venice, Florence, and Rome. Where Paris was known for Chagall and Picasso, New York was now home to Pollock, De Kooning, and Mark Rothko, many of whom began in the WPA era. The authors make use of contemporary journalism, with sources from Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg in the chapter on American abstract-impressionism, followed by realism making a comeback. I'd read a

similar book, titled Art Since 1945, back when I was in college. It ended with the 1980's artists like Haring and Basquiat (both of whom were proteges of Warhol) and Barbara Kruger. In every generation the textbook gets bigger, giving more attention to artists who, fifteen years ago, got no love. Take for instance Nicole Eisenman, whose 1996 works are included here, but would not have been included in this book in 2000. The Young British Artists are another movement that got more extensive coverage since their 1990's debut. However, the book's discussion of their origin is a bit slim, attributing them to Margaret Thatcher's increased support for business, and the resulting British nouveau-riche class that sponsored Britain's emerging artists. It is an accepted fact that early 20th century Britain didn't have millionaires like Guggenheim and Rockefeller who bankrolled modern art, so Britain's artists were a bit slower in their emergence. It wasn't until the 90's that the new British upper class would sponsor artists like Damien Hirst and Rachel Whiteread. I remember the YBA show at the Brooklyn Museum back in 2000, where Charles Saachi displayed his collection, aptly titled *Sensation*, as a way of introducing NY's audiences to his country's artists. It was like The Armory show 90 years earlier, where American audiences were introduced to Europe's modern art. However, I was not ignorant of the YBA before the Saachi show; I'd seen the Chapman Brothers show at the Gagosian, and Whiteread's pieces were displayed publicly back in 1994. Mayor Giuliani's harsh criticism of Chris Offili's *Holy Virgin Mary With Elephant Dung* only added to the publicity. The use of newsworthy events to begin each chapter makes sense, given that history will always be the biggest influence on art, and not the other way around. You have changes in economics, which leads to patronage, and then you have museums that can launch an artist's career by giving him/her a platform. Not discussed in the book, though I would like to see it, is the subject of the artist neighborhoods in different countries. New York City had Soho, and I don't know what the equivalent would be in London or Beijing. Chinese artist like Ai Wei Wei come at the end of the book, with a small entry, though Asian artists have been gaining ground for 15 years. I would read this book alongside *Sanctuary* (the studios of the YBA) and *Dark Matter* (how art has gone from commercialism to activism) in order to gain an understanding of the role of art in modern history. The authors make no effort to hide the fact that the scholarship is Eurocentric at the beginning, and US-centered after 1945. However, the USA had the Ashcan school in the years before 1945, with artists like George Bellows and his boxer painting, and then you had Edward Hopper's streetscapes, but these guys don't really come into play in the book. They were well-known in the USA, but rarely got any attention in Britain or Europe. I doubt that any of the artwork's

in the Metropolitan Museum's American Wing are well known outside of the USA. Let me sum up by saying that this book can satisfy an entire course on modern art. It makes great effort to include non-US artists, though there's little attention to artists from Latin America, the Middle East, Australia, or Africa. That could change, however, and I imagine this book will need a third volume in the next decade.

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