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Art And Culture: Critical Essays



Synopsis

"Clement Greenberg is, internationally, the best-known American art critic popularly considered to be the man who put American vanguard painting and sculpture on the world map. . . . An important book for everyone interested in modern painting and sculpture." —The New York Times

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Customer Reviews

Clement Greenberg is, internationally, the best-known American art critic popularly considered to be the man who put American vanguard painting and sculpture on the world map. . . . An important book for everyone interested in modern painting and sculpture. -The New York Times

'This book should be read by anyone who is interested in modern painting and is willing to look at its spectrum through the vision of a tough-minded, rightfully opinionated critic.' -Washington Post

Very good selection of essays giving an overview of Clement Greenberg's thoughts and philosophy.

so far so good, as advertised, satisfied customer, thanks.

One may agree or disagree with Clement Greenberg's ideas, such as the importance of the medium (paint, canvas) over the content (subject matter), the fact that avant-garde art is by essence elitist and preoccupies itself with itself (art for art's sake), as a reaction against the ever invading and

nefarious presence of kitsch (art for the masses), or the idea that what matters is the end-product, the work of art itself, as an object, with physical characteristics (what he calls "the resistance of the medium"). Yet, what remains from these seminal essays is an original definition of modernism, a vision of American art from the 1950's that was to shape much of what was to be created in New York in the following decade, and words that turn art criticism into an art in its own right.

excellent information, but difficult read for someone with no background.

Greenberg is the best writer on Modern art. The longer essays are indispensable information. They can be read over and over again.

This product was horrible, I'm very dissatisfied in my purchase, there is writing all over the book. MILDEW on the bottom. I want to return this and get a new one because it is hindering my ability to read for my class. Absolutely disgusted.

Clement Greenberg, who died in 1994, is still considered by many to have been the greatest American art critic of the 20th Century. Even today his work continues to be discussed, supported and attacked by many of the cognoscenti of the art world. "Art and Culture" is a collection of his essays that he edited for publication in 1961. The book is divided into five parts: culture in general; art in Paris; art in general; art in the United States; and literature. Most of the essays are quite short and eminently readable. In an essay on T.S. Eliot, Greenberg praised the critical skills of the poet, noting that Eliot speaks of the facts of a work rather than an interpretation, and this was the same approach that Greenberg took. Greenberg's basic thesis was that the essential quality of painting that distinguished it from other arts was the surface of the work, and that modern painting was moving more and more from looking into the depth of the image to a concern with the plane of the painting, citing among other things, the abandonment of perspective, cubism's attempt to reduce the subject to a single plane, and the disappearance of shading which gives depth to a picture. For those who have never considered this thesis, applying it to styles from cubism to abstract expressionism to color field painting should certainly provide new insights into such work. Even if one doesn't agree with Greenberg's thesis, his writing is so clear and easy to follow that it is worth reading just for his style. After the convoluted writing of critics like Michael Fried, it is a relief to find that thought about art need not be obscure. The essays include short pieces on artists from Renoir and Cezanne to Hans Hoffman and Milton Avery. There are also longer essays like the famous

"Avant-Garde and Kitsch" that stirred up lengthy and famous continuing discussions by critics and art historians, like T.J. Clark's "Clement Greenberg's Theory of Art." It may be that the battle ground has shifted in art criticism with the return to more representational forms of painting and post-modernism's attack on the purpose of art itself, but an understanding of these current skirmishes in the culture wars will certainly benefit from an understanding of modernism in painting, and no one has done that more clearly or succinctly than Clement Greenberg.

Clement Greenberg was an art- historian and literary- critic who had major influence on the artistic world of his time. He is also a writer rich in ideas whose analyses and interpretations add new dimensions to the meaning of the works he interprets. In this work of collected essays he writes upon the forebearers of modernity, Renoir , Picasso, Braque, Soutine, Chagall . He also writes about more modern artists Marin, David Smith. He also writes on TS. Eliot, and on Kafka. In a sense Greenberg was one of the critics who helped define ' modern art'. In this he equated modern art with the 'avant garde'. The avant garde artists were for him those for whom the subject of art had become art itself. The artists and poets he focused upon he understood as being without a kind of secure public that for a period of time in Western Art had supported the 'elite work' which is art. In this he saw Yeats, Rilke, Stevens as Rimbaud, Mallarme, and Valery poets whose real effort was in an effort to make a world of their own art- language and form. We are now nearly half a century since Greenberg wrote these seminal essays. And it seems that while he may well have helped define a moment in the history of Art and even of Literature , Time and History have not stood still. And the question of a content in art and literature which comes from human life and experience, and too relates to our social reality is still with us, and has returned in greater strength. And this while it also possible to maintain that Greenberg's interpretative line really only partly defined the world of for instance a Stevens or a Yeats whose fictional and imaginative universes were too anchored in Key West and Sligo and other real spaces of our own dark beautiful and recalcitrant earth.

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