



Art 101

Gardner's Art through the Ages by Richard G. Tansey; Fred S. Kleiner; History of Art by H. W. Janson; Art in History by Larry Silver; Art History by Marilyn Stokstad

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Art 101

MARK MILLER GRAHAM

Smithson: *The Collected Writings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 100.

2. David Bourdon, "What on Earth," *Life* 66, no. 16 (April 25, 1969): 80.

3. Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man: Shaping the Environment from Prehistory to the Present Day*, 3d ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995).

4. Perhaps. But Tiberghien is oblivious to the discrepancy between the *Earthworks* cover stating "Doubleday Science Fiction" (which was published in 1966) and Smithson's account of purchasing a "Signet paperback" (Flam, *Robert Smithson*, 68), so this image may not have been on his edition.

5. Tiberghien, as well as Shapiro, describes the *Spiral Jetty* as continually under water, thus inaccessible. Not so: depending on the extent of spring rains, by late summer or early fall it generally emerges from the evaporated lake. Call the nearby Golden Spike Monument for current conditions.

6. Originally published in *October* 10 (Fall 1979), Craig Owens's essay has been reprinted in *Beyond Recognition*, ed. Scott Bryson et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 40–51. Unaware of Owens's text, my own review was similarly titled "Earthworks and Earthwords," *Artweek* (March 29, 1980): 19.

7. Owens, "Earthwords," in *Beyond Recognition*, 45.

8. His contrast between Clement Greenberg's call for a "self-criticism . . . carried on in a spontaneous and subliminal way" (p. 34) and art's "unmistakable turn to self-consciousness" (p. 35) in the mid-1960s would have been stronger if he had known that Greenberg's "Modernist Painting" had not "first appeared in 1965" (p. 35), but in the *Arts Yearbook*, 1960.

9. Jessica Prinz, "Words in Abime: Smithson's Labyrinth of Signs," *Art Discourse/Discourse in Art* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 79–123.

10. *Writings of Robert Smithson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).

11. Eugenie Tsai, *Robert Smithson Unearthed*, exh. cat. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

12. "Most critics cannot endure the suspension of boundaries between what Ehrenzweig calls the 'self and the non-self'" (Smithson, "Sedimentation," 100).

13. When quoting Smithson, both Shapiro and Flam cite solely the page number of each anthology, making it impossible for the reader to know the quote's year or circumstances without also having that anthology at hand. I hope those who quote from these newly available texts will cite specific titles as well as the anthology itself.

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Richard G. Tansey and Fred S. Kleiner.

Gardner's Art through the Ages, 10th ed. Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt Brace College, 1996. 1,200 pp.; many color and b/w ills. \$68.00

H. W. Janson. *History of Art*, rev. and

expanded by Anthony F. Janson, 5th ed. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995. 960 pp.; 741 color ills., 525 b/w. \$60.00

Larry Silver. *Art in History*. New York: Abbeville, 1993. 496 pp.; 213 color ills., 387 b/w. \$50.00

Marilyn Stokstad. *Art History*. New York: Harry N. Abrams with Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1995. 1,668 pp.; 761 color ills., 864 b/w. \$60.00

In writing this review I have kept in mind questions that colleagues might ask if considering one of these texts. Should I change texts? Can I make better use of a text? Are there any reasonable alternatives to the small number of survey texts? In the real world of the classroom, introductions to art history are frequently vital enrollment engines. The effect of a text, whether it's inviting or off-putting, may carry some weight; decisions to change a text may not be casual ones. For the record, my own teaching responsibilities in a three-quarter introduction to art history have been mostly pre-Renaissance; my degree backgrounds are pre-Columbian and medieval.

The Gardner and Janson texts were first published in 1926 and 1962 respectively; the former is now in its tenth edition, and the latter is in its fifth. To understand how old they are, consider that Janson's *History of Art* is now almost as old as Gardner's *Art through the Ages* was when Janson first appeared. Their age is beginning to show. Although each has been much revised for its current edition, changes mostly concern the addition of various devices to help students. Each also has updated coverage of contemporary art and more illustrations. Less

changed in each book is the text itself. In fact, substantial portions are unchanged from earlier editions. Both books exude a marked sense of fatigue; even the new writing sometimes has a tired quality. In both Gardner and Janson I think this comes from the authors' embrace of a dilemma. The current authors want to retain what they see as traditional values, and also be politically correct. They want to maintain a paradigm of art history based on the universal intelligibility of style and style-driven history, and at the same time they must respond to pressures for change, for being consistently up to date by adding a few more contemporary works, for example, and—here's the problem—at least acknowledge the existence of profoundly different sensibilities elsewhere in art history.

The gap is widening between Gardner's and Janson's style-centered vision of art history, on the one hand, and the larger discipline's visions of multiple and contending art histories, on the other. As the gap grows, the tensions and fractures created by simultaneously trying to adhere to the old, and to grudgingly admit the new, become ever more obvious. In the new preface to Gardner, this dilemma takes the form of an unexpected attack on anthropology:

Works of art become value-free, cultural artifacts to be interpreted according to anthropological structures: sociopolitical, psychosocial, racial, ethnic, gender, and material, thought of as determined by the power and privilege enjoyed by dominant patronages. Postmodern "critical theory" would redefine the history of art, its styles, periods, and canons, in terms of contemporary ideological agendas that, for a survey of the subject, cannot help but be tendentious (pp. v–vi).

This is as transparent a proclamation of an "ideological agenda" as one is likely to encounter in this genre. The remarks on cultural anthropology seem unfair, an effort to blame the wrong people. After all, it is really other art historians whose ideas the current authors oppose. Their efforts to

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ject "sociopolitical and psychosocial" concerns, race, ethnicity, gender, and materiality from art history at any level are the cultural dimensions of a reactionary politics. At bottom, they seem to fundamentally misunderstand anthropology, which, in my view, is certainly not "value-free." Anthropology, more than some disciplines, is able to live with difference. There is a world of difference between being value free, which I would equate with being amoral, and being able intellectually to tolerate other values and, perhaps most important here, allow those who hold them to speak, whether we like what they have to say or not. But I suspect that the current authors of Gardner see the authentic values of art mostly in terms of defending tradition and canons of great works, rather the way that some Southerners used to oppose civil rights in the name of tradition. And like that world, the world of traditional art historical values lamented by the current authors, Richard Tansey and Fred Kleiner, is waning as well.

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But once one gets past the conservative politics of the beginning of Gardner, it is sometimes good traditional art history. The book's selection of illustrations is still better than what some of its competitors offer. Both pictures and maps are generally reproduced better in this edition than in previous ones, though Gardner is still probably the least well produced of the four books considered here. I have doubts about the usefulness of historical timelines, because I think they encourage students to remain comfortable with an outmoded notion of history.

Prospective adopters of Gardner should read carefully the beginning of chapter 28, "The Later Twentieth Century," especially the sections called Post-Imperialism: Questions of Culture; Traditional Cultures and the New Cultures of Protest; Political Equality and Cultural Equivalence; Egalitarian Multiculturalism in Postmodern Art; and Deconstruction. These sections amount to something more than a vision of art history self-charged with upholding traditional values and the right to make value judgments of universal force. They outline a conservative global politics with scant space for the artistic visions of other cultures. Perhaps it is the authors' lack of familiarity with their antagonists that allows them to pair Foucault with Derrida as a father of deconstruction. Nevertheless, there is a coherent politics here, and it is very conservative. Exemplars of poststructuralist or postmodernist scholarship are anonymously stereotyped, and thus trivialized, as the feminist critic or the ethnically committed critic. Thus their admission into the very privileged narrative of art history in the new Gardner is as little more than puppets of ideology. The vision of art history in the new Gardner is the same as in the old, only more outspoken. It is an art history of style and chronology, oddly able to uphold values and remain ideology free, while the representatives of the new have no values but are steeped in ideology.

One final point: the decision to use on the jacket a detail of Correggio's *Jupiter and Io*, focusing on the orgasm of Io, strikes me as unwise. The myth is first of all the story of the seduction of a mortal priestess of Hera/Juno by Zeus/Jupiter, and thus it is bound to raise the question of how art and myth work to construct an ideology of the natural rights of men over women. Then, in the text, Io is called a "willing nymph," which is doubly wrong, for she was neither. In fact, ancient sources allow us to understand Io as a prototype of the feminine subject as object. Jealous Hera/Juno assigned Argos Panoptes, "Argos the All-Seeing," to stand watch over Io lest Zeus/Jupiter return for more sport. Thus, Io's sexuality was regulated through masculine surveillance. I doubt that the jacket of the new Gardner was meant as a sly gift to gender-sensitive art historians. More likely, it's a publisher's decision gone awry.

Any art historian could go on for pages, carping about this or that inclusion or omission or comparison, or about questionable readings of works, and so on. But carrying through a critique only on that level amounts to a validation of paradigms of art history and its teaching that belong to the past, and that are demonstrably in conflict with the best work in the field today. So in the end, the new Gardner remains a traditional, authoritarian vision of art history.

Anthony F. Janson has, as he says in his preface, tried both to maintain his father's vision of art history with its emphasis on formal matters, and to bring his book up to date by acknowledging other models of art history. The younger Janson's remarks on this score are more tolerant and less abrasive than those of Tansey and Kleiner in the new Gardner. Janson's comments on Marxism, psychology, feminism, multiculturalism, and deconstruction are more balanced than Tansey and Kleiner's. He also explains that the new edition covers only Western art because of space limitations, and because he feels that non-Western art is less amenable to his formalistic approach. I don't agree at all with his reasoning, but I respect his decision, because at least he avoids the trivialization that usually characterizes the inclusion of the non-Western two-thirds of the world in such texts. Parity is never achieved, and the inevitable imbalance serves only to reinforce the dominance of Western art. For example, limiting all of *The Rest of the World* (India and the subcontinent, China, Korea, Japan, the Americas, the Pacific, and Africa) to 155 pages in five chapters of the new Gardner also sends a message, one implying that the introduction to art history should maintain the dominance of the West. One obvious and simple alternative is to grant the rest their own courses. Janson's somewhat shorter text could also more easily be supplemented with books on Asia, pre-Columbian America, etc.

On some other points Janson also seems

to me a better text than Gardner. Janson offers more support for students, which includes a selection of primary sources that range from *The Pyramid Texts* of ancient Egypt to an interview with contemporary artist Cindy Sherman. These documents were chosen by Dale Kinney for ancient and medieval art, and by Bradford R. Collins for Renaissance through modern art. Gardner includes a pronunciation guide, which Janson lacks, but Janson has timelines that may actually be useful. The modern timeline in Janson even mentions AIDS and the contemporary art world, about which Gardner is silent. There is no consciousness of gay and lesbian artists and art about them, nor of gay and lesbian perspectives in art history, in any of these texts. Janson's bibliography is smaller but better organized, and, unlike Gardner, even mentions a few key texts of postmodernism, enough at least to guide the professor or the student to the right place in the library. Finally, as an example of book design, Janson is attractive in a traditional manner, and its photographs are good in color register and tonality. In contrast, Gardner seems to me in need of a good redesign.

Larry Silver's *Art in History* is less than half as long as either Janson or Gardner. Its smaller scale provides a sharper focus than any of the other books reviewed here. Silver explains the purpose of his book clearly: "It was written with a specific goal in mind: to present works of art with a greater depth of treatment and a more historical and contextual view of their audiences and cultures than most survey volumes" (p. 11). His views on the canon follow:

Nor should the smaller roster of artists in the earlier chapters be taken to indicate that the author is wedded to a "canon" of what used to be called "key monuments in the history of art." But textbooks do need to introduce prevailing traditions, and this one has chosen to concentrate on major political and economic centers from ancient Egypt to modern New York. Power attracts artists and in turn promotes the artists who succeed within that power structure. The cliché tells us that there is a reason why tourist attractions get to be tourist attractions; in similar fashion, canonical Western artists got their omnipresence and cultural status for a reason, although here such a reason will more often be tied to considerations of their patrons and their audiences at centers of power. (This is not a book that will ever couch such a canon in terms of "quality" or universal appeal.) (p. 11; parentheses and emphasis in the original.)

Silver's might be the ideal book for a (hurried) one-term introduction to Western art or for a more leisurely one-semester course. Probably it does not have enough material for a year-long (i.e., three quarters, terms, or trimesters, or two semesters) course. Still, this is the book that I like the best because I prefer to teach fewer works in

wider and deeper context, and because I like how Silver chose and organized his topics to investigate relations between art and power. And, as a pre-Columbianist, I applaud Silver's attitude to other cultures. He includes them in his short mini-chapters, which he calls "Views from Outside":

These "Views from Outside" do not purport to be comprehensive. It is insulting and token to find single chapters on "Far Eastern Art" or "Primitive Alternatives" inserted into most survey volumes, as if those cultures could still be covered comprehensively in a single chapter, even in a similar volume that lumped them all together like those chapters (p. 11).

Surprisingly, for a text focused on context, *Art in History* devotes relatively more of its space to illustrations than any of the other texts under consideration here; the photographs are generally good, although in my copy contrast in color and black-and-white figures is a bit overdone. The book has a glossary and an ample bibliography.

Marilyn Stokstad's *Art History* was announced a year or two ago as a "contextual" successor to the more style-centered texts such as Gardner and Janson. Having the same name as the British journal is helpful, too, and probably not an accident. *Art History* is now more of a teamwork product than originally announced. By my count, Stokstad and her collaborator, Marion Spears Grayson, wrote fifteen chapters. Stokstad, with the assistance of Jill Leslie Furst, wrote three more. Marilyn M. Rhie, with the assistance of Sonya Y. M. Rhie, wrote two chapters; Chut-sing Li, Christopher D. Roy, and Stephen Addiss each wrote two chapters; and Bradford R. Collins wrote three.

Art History's aims are clearly set out in the preface: "What is needed is a new text for a new generation of teachers and students, a text that balances formalist traditions with the newer interests of contextual art history and also meets the needs of a diverse and fast-changing student population." "Contextual" is the watchword here: "Throughout the text we treat the visual arts not in a vacuum but within the essential contexts of history, geography, politics, religion, and culture; and we carefully define the parameters—social, religious, political, and cultural—that either constrained or liberated individual artists" (p. 6).

The author(s) of the preface promise that the attitude toward the canon in this book will be respectful but not obsequious. *Art History* also proclaims its intention to be notably more open and tolerant about material and media hierarchies and about the fine arts versus crafts distinction, so belabored in the new Gardner.

This book employs its new contextual approach to the art history survey surprisingly well, I think. For example, chapter 7 is called "Early Christian, Jewish, and Byzantine Art," and

this may be the first time that such a text has attempted to convey the complex indebtedness of early Christianity to Judaism that is so prominent in art, ritual, and music. *Art History* also displays a new evenhandedness about the interrelations of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It recognizes that centrality is not totality, even to the point of eschewing Before Christ and anno domini for Before Common Era and Common Era—a small point, perhaps, but as America and its art history classrooms become less predominantly Christian, accommodations will have to be made in many places.

There are some problems. Rather than limiting the discussion of the origins of art making to Paleolithic Europe, why not discuss the earliest art from other parts of the world, such as Mexico and China together, and treat the emergence of art making as the multifaceted problem that it is? If Europe enjoys temporal priority in representational imagery, let's discuss it. It is probably typical of art history's emphasis on states and "high cultures" that in the chapter on ancient Egypt, the imagery of the crucial Predynastic era is limited to one of the red on buff jars with a boat scene. Absent is the long series of stone palettes (and knives with similar imagery) that are the artistic progenitors of the Narmer Palette. It is hard to construct a coherent narrative of Predynastic art when the Narmer Palette stands alone. The iconographic theme of the construction of order out of chaos cannot emerge without the artifacts that gave vision to that new order. Art history's fixation on key monuments and masterpieces as being "representative," rather than on monuments in series, exemplifies the survey approach, where art history is a succession of great works, minus their series. This is how, again and again, it is possible to claim extrahistorical standing for masterpieces.

The chapter on Greek art has the strong and weak points of this book. Overall it is an excellent presentation. Prehistory, democracy, religion, sanctuaries, deities, and chronology are all discussed even before beginning with the Geometric period. After this, there are excellent annotated architectural plans, and elevations of the orders. The deemphasis on works in series is apparent in the treatment of Archaic sculpture, where there are only two kouroi (New York, Anavysos) and three korai (Berlin Keratea, Peplos, Chios). More creative book design might have provided featured illustrations and smaller reproductions, so that both uniqueness and typicality could be better displayed.

The treatment of the art of the Americas is disappointing. I think there should be more material, first of all, because we live in the Americas, and because Latin America and Latin Americans are politically and culturally important to the United States. The absence of colonial Latin American art, and the near absence of modern Latin American art, is unfortunate, and this will

not be helpful to art historians who may have students of Latin American origin. Many Indians still live in the Americas, and it would be nice to be able to present, for example, contemporary Mayan and Andean weaving in their particular contexts as well. More specifically, the treatment of pre-Columbian art is weak. Settlements in the Mexican Gulf Coast region long predate the emergence of the Olmec political capitals around 1200 BCE. Missing from the otherwise very good discussion of the Gulf Coast Olmec is the issue of the problem of equating art styles with ethnicity. There are two Olmec art traditions. There is the mostly monumental Olmec art of the Gulf Coast, and there is the widely distributed but poorly documented Olmec portable art, much of it in precious jade. Archaeologists are still unclear about how the two traditions relate, and unclear about the political implications of these shared artistic values.

There are some errors to be fixed for the next edition. The land of the Maya does not include eastern Honduras and eastern El Salvador. The 26th ruler of Tikal is Ah Cacao, not Au Cacao. The photograph of the sarcophagus lid of the Palenque ruler Pacal is reversed. In lower Central America, in Costa Rica, Diquis is not an archaeological culture, but a region, and chiefdoms are not extended family groups but confederated villages. The chiefdoms here did produce monumental sculpture, as life-size stone figures and as colossal stone spheres. And the presence of a drum and (probably) either a flute or a lime spatula is not sufficient to identify a figure as a shaman; such items would have been owned by nearly every adult male in this region.

On the whole, *Art History* succeeds well. For one thing, this book seems to explain things more clearly than does any other text. Very little is taken for granted except the reader's intelligence, and I saw no signs of arrogance, of "teaching down" to the student. The authors understand context very liberally here, so that the text has a profusion of tools for students. There are both brief and expanded tables of contents, a user's guide called "Use Notes," and a "Starter Kit" that sets out some basic terms and concepts in illustrated, schematic fashion. Numerous sidebars provide capsule discussions of periods, chronological parallels, and specific points ranging from the Power of Naming (the first) to Appropriation and Video Art (the last two). There is a glossary as well as a voluminous bibliography for general subject areas and specific chapters. The design of the book is very busy, and not very elegant, but it is decidedly nonlinear. What comes to mind is something like a printed analogue of hypertext with online help. Did the book's designers expect the book to be more visual, less linear? I don't know. Continuous reading will be difficult because the narrative is so often interrupted by sidebars. These designed-in shifts of focus might more closely mesh with the expectations of students whose

Art since 1940

MARTICA SAWIN

Jonathan Fineberg. *Art since 1940: Strategies of Being.* New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995. 496 pp.; 277 color ill., 345 b/w. \$60.00

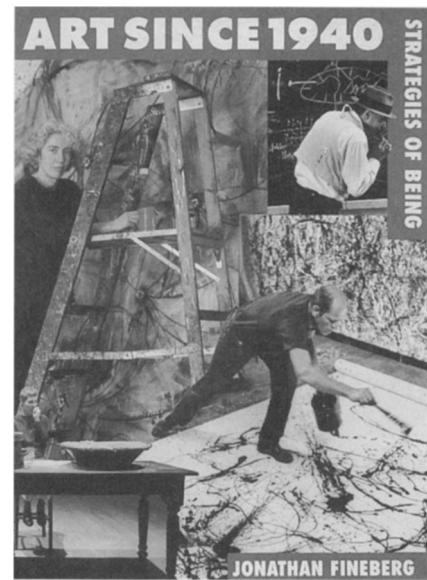
ideas of linearity come from television and video.

None of these texts reveal a developed sense that art and the habits of vision are instrumental in the construction of reality, that vision is culturally contingent in very profound ways. This is an issue comparable to the critical focus on the act of reading that invaded the teaching of English several decades ago, and it begins to suggest how damaging Tansey and Kleiner's (in the new Gardner) efforts to deflect any sympathetic art historical engagement with anthropology might be. Perhaps art historians should hang out more with their colleagues in English and anthropology. It couldn't hurt.

By extension, there is little sense that the role of the author is a problem for art history at the introductory level. By contrast, this is where I think the problem of authorship is most crucial. In these books, the author/artist and the reader/viewer are considered as transparent roles, assumed automatically and without reflection. But in both English and anthropology it is common to consider that such roles are determined by a dense network of the communication and translation of messages coded according to class, gender, ethnicity, language, geography, and so on. These, of course, are dimensions of the multiculturalism so deplored in the new Gardner. Their absence, indeed their persona non grata status, explains why at the introductory level art history so often constructs its narratives from formalism and anecdote. Janson represents traditional art historical conservatism; it is an acceptable alternative in a pluralistic society. Janson *films* carries forward the respect for tradition established by Janson *père* in the first edition in 1962, but in a way that leaves bridges to his antagonists intact. Silver most closely approximates my vision of an art history introduction broadly construed as a Foucauldian art history centered on authorship, power, and gender. Stokstad's collaborative enterprise probably represents the discipline's near-term future. It may be the last true comprehensive survey text before Bill Gates learns that there is money to be made in art history texts. Meanwhile, we at least have a choice, and that's good news for students and teachers alike.

What do the following have in common: Rauschenberg on roller skates in his dance piece *Pelican*, Pollock in his famous stretching crouch, Elizabeth Murray, brush in hand on a paint-spattered stepladder, Christo shouting and gesturing from a rubber raft in Biscayne Bay, and Joseph Beuys drawing on a blackboard while intoning into a microphone? Answer: they are all components of a montage on the dust jacket of Jonathan Fineberg's *Art since 1940: Strategies of Being*. Remember when one painting, most often Picasso's *Demoiselles d'Avignon* or Robert Delaunay's *Sun Discs*, sufficed for the cover of a book on twentieth-century art? For the later part of the century no mere artwork will do. Instead a cluster of artists in action, taking their cues from Namuth's Pollock, are shown "strategizing being." The jacket, quite properly, is a clue to the strategy of the author, who has conceived his book as a collection of "heroic narratives," which is to say that he focuses on the artist as an individual, rather than on stylistic groupings, theoretical constructs, or judgmental hierarchies.

I started reading *Art since 1940* from the standpoint of a teacher looking for a viable book for use in courses in later twentieth-century art. Having struggled for thirty years to guide students through the frenetic art production of the last half century without benefit of adequate texts and reproductions, I welcomed the clamorous montage on the dust jacket, envisioning an end to illegal photocopies, to arbitrary choices based on available slides and reproductions, and to wrestling with my conscience over personal biases in matters of contemporary art. Fineberg did not disappoint me, as have several earlier, less graceful and less knowledgeable attempts at getting the art of the last fifty years into a manageable volume. Everything one could need for a semester's gallop through the accelerating changes of the past five decades is contained between the covers of this lively book: more than six hundred illustrations, a generous number of them in high quality color; a deft interweaving of ideas and issues with descriptions of the artworks that direct the eye to the adjacent images; salient biographical facts and a sprinkling of anecdotes that help personalize the procession of names; and a breaking up of the survey format through the interspersing of longer sections focusing on key individuals, such as the fourteen pages on Jasper Johns. Best of all, although it is clear that the author is thoroughly conversant with all the influential theo-



ries in recent art criticism, his own lucid, readable prose will not pose stumbling blocks for the average undergraduate.

Soon, however, I stopped reading with my mind on the fifteen-week semester, the syllabus, or the various ways of involving students with the book. Instead I became immersed in leafing backwards and forwards through a half-century's art production, clarifying my own imperfect recollections of how things had happened, reading the illuminating sections that treat certain artists in depth, and reliving the years of headlong change reflected in the artworks. I can think of no better way, short of flipping through five hundred issues of *Artnews* of the 1940s and 1950s and *Artforum* or *Art in America* of later decades, and maybe not even then, to more efficiently and compactly review the ambitious, ingenious, irreverent, and sometimes exasperating art of our time.

A dynamic layout, occasional photographs of artists in action, and dramatic juxtapositions keep eye and mind moving and engender a sense of open-endedness quite different from a "this led to that" survey format. Nor is the art treated as hermetic, a progression of styles existing in a vacuum; events in music and dance as well as in the political arena intersect with the artworks in a variety of ways. Although the material is tightly organized under clear topic headings that will facilitate student use of the book, one does not get the sense that a lot of recalcitrant artworks have been crammed into an arbitrary structure for the sake of a textbook format. In short, while it could be helpful to someone reviewing for comprehensive exams, this is a good book for the general art public reaching middle age who would like to see where they've been, as well as for students who need to know how we got where we are.

Fineberg starts out by fitting Courbet into the role of prototype for "a paradigm of the

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