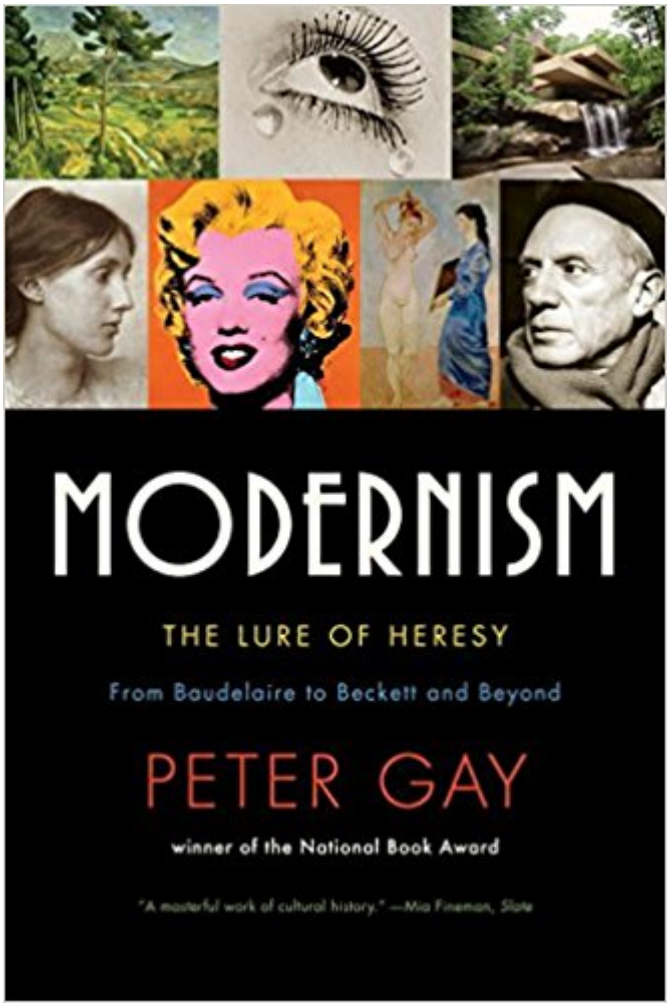
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Modernism: The Lure Of Heresy



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“Rich, learned, briskly written, maddening yet necessary study.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â ¢Lee Siegel, New York Times Book Review Peter Gay explores the shocking modernist rebellion that, beginning in the 1840s, transformed art, literature, music, and film. Modernism presents a thrilling pageant of heretics that includes Oscar Wilde, Pablo Picasso, D. W. Griffiths, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Walter Gropius, Arnold Schoenberg, and (of course!) Andy Warhol. 16 pages of four-color illustrations and 92 black-and-white illustrations throughout

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Putting a Freudian view of life as an arena of conflict at the center of a view of modernism, this outspoken study tracks the avant-garde across a wide array of high cultureÃ¢â ¬â •literature, music and dance, painting and sculpture, architecture and film. Conventional Victorians, according to Gay, found the belief in art for art’s sake of libertine and aesthete Oscar Wilde as much a perversion as his homosexuality. But even fans often get it wrong, says Gay, embracing Edvard Munch’s most famous painting, The Scream, as the quintessential symbol of modern angst, while Munch meant his nightmarish vision as a confession of his own inner state. And thanks to generous patrons, the oeuvre of anti-artist Marcel Duchamp, an enemy of museums, is featured prominently at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Modernism isn’t a single style, Gay shows: in literature, Ulysses’s wordy, sensual world stands in direct opposition to Virginia Woolf’s in Mrs. Dalloway, spare and

cool. This latest from Gay (National Book Award winner for The Enlightenment) isn't a monumental or definitive treatise but a highly personal, arbitrary and invigorating collection of mini-essays that view a variety of artistic works from a fresh perspective. 16 pages of color, and b&w illus.. (Nov.)
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Ã¢â ¬Å"ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s done so gracefully, and engagingly, that even as I raced to finish before our interview, I couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t make myself skim.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Katie Bolick, Boston GlobeÃ¢â ¬Å"A masterful work of cultural history . . . and itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s truly a pleasure to read.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Mia Fineman, SlateÃ¢â ¬Å"A sweeping survey . . . offering shrewd analyses.Ã¢â ¬Â• - William Grimes, The New York TimesÃ¢â ¬Å"Peter Gay is perhaps our leading historian of culture and ideas.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Tim Rutten, Los Angeles TimesÃ¢â ¬Å"An ambitious survey . . . [by] a superior popularizer.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Michael Dirda, Washington Post

There are two ways to approach something of the nature of the subject of Modernism: from the outside, which lends to a text that is more a factual history, and from the inside, which makes for a more ideational history. While the subtitle of the book, "The Lure of Heresy," might give the idea that it is the latter, it is very much the former. For example, Gay opens up the section on Painting and Sculpture with a survey of self-portraiture by Modernist painters, which very much dwells in what I would say is Gay's central idea: that Modernism was a turning in by artists toward an exploration of the self. But the ideational aspect never goes much deeper than demonstrating a general trend. If you are looking for something more toward an engagement with the aesthetics and theories of Modernists, or a more indepth exploration of that idea of turning toward the self, then this might not what you are looking for.This is not what I would consider a "scholarly" text. It is a history presented to a more general audience. (And one of the blurbs above speaks of Gay as a "superior popularizer.") If you are looking for the former, this might not be for you.In fact, the book very much has the feel (and there are moments in the first part that hint at this) that in writing this Gay was confronted with the option of either addressing his central ideas in depth using many pages to do so or more presenting a more cursory and more casually readable exploration, and he chose the latter. Which is not at all a criticism of the book. Nor are the two previous points. I am simply here describing the book for those who are thinking of purchasing it without looking within it first. While this is a very enjoyable book, personally while reading it I was wanting to close it and move to something like Bradbury and McFarlane's book of the same name -- which is much more of a scholarly presentation.Let me be clear, however, I do not mean to say this is a coffee table history.

Gay is presenting his idea as to what was/is Modernism. And it is an interesting idea, one that finds its currents more in the psyche of the artists than in the characteristics of the their work, which to me is the correct path. (Though, I am very curious to know what a person who knows little about Modernism would take away from this book. I wonder if the limits of the text create false ideas -- like an undervaluing of the Symbolists.) If you are looking for a lighter introduction to or survey of Modernism, this might be worth the price of admission.If I have one negative, it is that the book seems very uneven in its use of illustrations. The opening section introducing the ideas of the book has many, and then, when the book gets to the meat of the matter, they disappear almost entirely. One would think it would be the other way around. (In fact, it hints to me that the book as published may not be the book for which Gay was aiming.)I give it four stars, though 3 1/2 would be more accurate.

I think this is an excellent history of modernism.

good overview

An absolutely brilliant study of Modernism from various cultural perspectivesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •truly a pleasure to read for scholars and anyone interested in the period.

Book in great condition, thank you!

Very good overview of modernism. Highly accessible style.

This is a good book. The illustrations are very helpful. The author makes his case.

This book isn’t an art history book. It’s more than that, it tries to make sense of the modern movement and reveals the deep unease at the core of the movement.

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