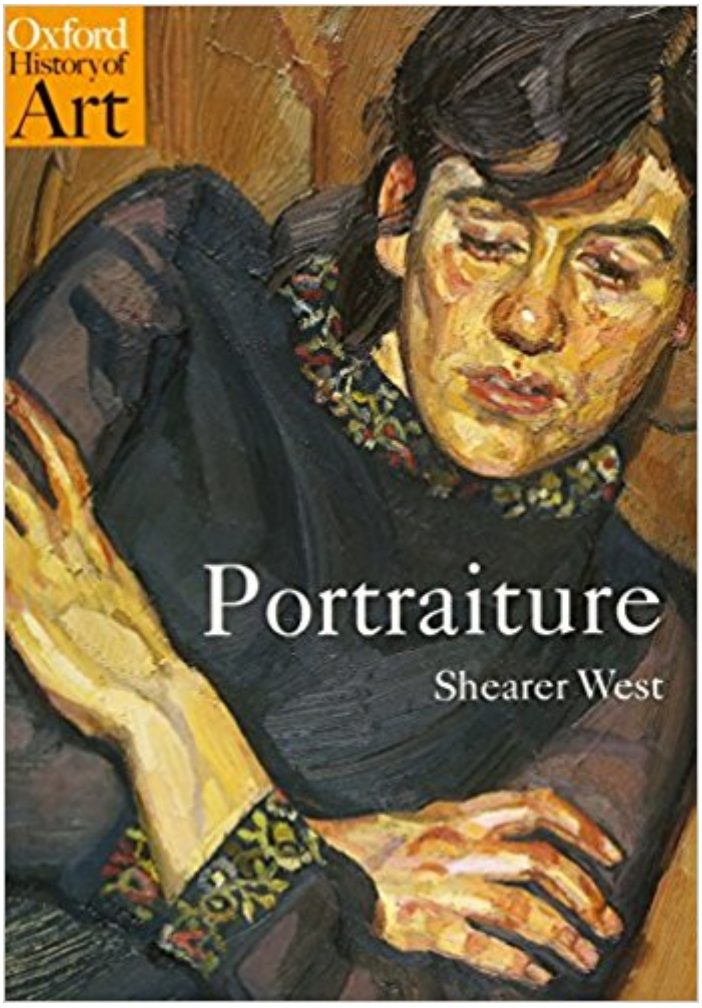
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Portraiture (Oxford History Of Art)



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Synopsis

This fascinating new addition to the acclaimed Oxford History of Art series explores the world of portraiture from a number of vantage points, and asks key questions about its nature. How has portraiture changed over the centuries? How have portraits represented their subjects, and how have they been interpreted? The book provides a clear, yet thorough overview of the history of portraiture in terms of social, political, economic, and psychological factors over a broad time span. Issues such as identity, modernity, and gender are considered within their cultural and historical contexts. Shearer West uncovers intriguing aspects of portraiture-a genre that has often been seen as purely representational, featuring examples from African tribes to Renaissance princes, and from "stars" such as David and Victoria Beckham to everyday people. West examines the many meanings and uses of portraits throughout the ages and includes a wide range of artists from Botticelli to Picasso, and Hans Holbein to Frida Kahlo. In the process, she reveals the faces of the past in an exciting new way. Beautifully illustrated throughout, this book is a unique and accessible introduction to the history of portraiture.

Book Information

Series: Oxford History of Art
Paperback: 256 pages
Publisher: Oxford University Press; 1 edition (May 6, 2004)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0192842587
ISBN-13: 978-0192842589
Product Dimensions: 9.3 x 0.6 x 6.5 inches
Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)
Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews
Best Sellers Rank: #266,736 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #47 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > Themes > Portraits #50 inÃ Â Books > Arts & Photography > Painting > Portraits #471 inÃ Â Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Art History

Customer Reviews

`a fascinating book...gorgeous examples'Independent

Shearer West is Professor of Art History at the University of Birmingham. Her books include Chagall (Bison, 1990), The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and

Kemble (Pinter, 1991), The Visual Arts in Germany 1890-1940 (Manchester UP, 2000), and Fin de Sie'cle: Art and Society in an Age of Uncertainty (Overlook, 1993). She is also the editor of The Bloomsbury Guide to Art (Bloomsbury, 1996).

This is an excellent survey of portrait art from ancient to modern times with a great bibliography, lots of references, and good illustrations. I appreciated the historic timeline and a list of websites for further research.I'd recommend this book for anyone interested in portraiture. As a portrait artist I thoroughly enjoyed it. For some reason, art historians have largely ignored portraiture as a field of research.My only criticism is that I found the book a bit dry, lacking creative insight and humor. The emphasis on painting, at the expense of drawing and sculpture is also a notable shortcoming.

This is a better written essay than the plates which are not always true color rendition. I would have like more plates.

The next time that I teach portrait painting, I will require that students purchase this book. It is a good overview, providing general themes as well as specific examples. An early chapter on the functions of portraiture, for instance, covers the full breadth of what a portrait can be or mean, and underscores that a portrait is much more than a likeness.

Solid text and clear writing.

Informed and informative. Even reading just the introduction will help the reader articulate notions surrounding portraiture.

I study and teach art history. This is an excellent introduction to portraiture. It is clearly written, and while it is partially chronological within each chapter, it is more a discussion of the issues involved in using physical means to represent personality and interior states than it is a survey of existing portraits. It is one of few portraiture surveys that addresses things like gender (of both artist and sitter). While it, like other portraiture surveys, skips medieval and non-western images of individuals, the focus on thematic issues makes it widely applicable.

This is an interesting review of the complexitie of portraiture. The book is well-structured and researched, with very good illustrations. It is irritating that the captions repeat much of what is

already in the text, but omit to mention where the paintings are held. However, my biggest reservation about the book is the almost total absence of fresh insights or interesting perspectives. The author seems more concerned with mentioning all the various academic points of view than providing her own thoughts. Pity.

If you are an art lover, connoisseur, art history student, fashion designer, or someone who wants to explore the mysterious world of portraiture this book is an excellent choice. The author assumed the difficult task of providing a clear, comprehensive overview of the history of portraits and portraiture from the ancient world, through the Renaissance to modern art.I would give this book the best rating possible. You ask why? The answer is simple. As an art lover, I am particularly interested in the evolution of portraits and portraiture of the Renaissance and Baroque and this book covers the whole range of my interest and beyond. In this lavishly illustrated book the author, Shearer West, explains why the portrait as a work of art occupies the central position in art history, gives easy to remember definitions of portraits and portraiture, and studies the diversity of portrait forms and functions. She discusses in-depth how portraiture changed and developed over the centuries and paints a unique, intriguing relationship of artist, sitters, patron/s and viewer. She also reveals who and why commissioned the portraits and how a portrait can reflect and represent the social status of the sitter (rich or poor, powerful or subjugated, professional or servant) in different historical periods. The history of portraiture could not be completed without a broad-range of methods and tricks, sometimes very funny, used by artists to present themselves to the publicity. Her investigation of the complexities of contemporary ortraiture, of the 1950's onwards, is clear and convincing. This fascinating book is enriched with 146 high quality illustrations with well written, highly informative commentary to each painting.

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