

### Art Has No History!: The Making and Unmaking of Modern Art



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In this stimulating collection of essays, John Roberts draws together a wide range of work on some of the most important artists of the post-war period. Written by leading art historians and artist-writers, the essays take a sharply critical look at the construction of modern art history. The artists discussed include Francis Picabia, Robert Smithson, Ad Reinhardt, Andy Warhol, Gerhard Richter, Mary Kelly, Cindy Sherman, Victor Burgin and Laurie Anderson.

The extensive influence of post-structuralism on all schools of art history has brought about a widespread derogation of questions around intentionality and social agency. Free-ranging textual interpretation has come to outweigh causal analysis. *Art Has No History!* reverses this bias. Putting the artist *back* into art history, the essays reinstate the claims for historical materialism as a theory of the conflictual socialization of individuals. Acknowledging the dissemblances involved in the representations of artistic invention, the book challenges the self-image of traditional art history and the radical New Art History alike.

In his introduction, John Roberts gives a fascinating account of the vicissitudes of Marxist writing on art, from Max Raphael and Arnold Hauser to T.J. Clark and Griselda Pollock. Placing the debates on intention and agency in their wider political context, he refers to what he calls "the continuing influence of historical materialism on the best Anglophone art writing today." *Art Has No History!* is a lively and iconoclastic contribution to that tradition.

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