



American Art: A Cultural History

By David Bjelajac, King Pu Laurence

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Drawing on socio-economic and political studies as well as histories of religion, science, literature, and popular culture, this book explores the diverse, conflicted history of American art and architecture within the United States from the European voyages of discovery and colonial conquest to the present dawn of a new millennium. Thematically interrelating the visual arts to other material artifacts and cultural practices, it text examines how artists and architects produced artwork that visually expressed various social and political values. Covering the years between 1492 and 2002, chapter titles include The Invention and Mapping of America, Religious Rituals and the Visual Arts in Colonial America, Art and the Consumer Revolution in Colonial America, Revolutionary Icons and the Representation of Republican Virtue, National Identity and Private Interests in Antebellum America, Art and Commerce in the Gilded Age, Modernist Art and Politics, Modernism/Postmodernism and the Survival of a Critical Vision, and Globalization and the Culture Wars. For individuals interested in a survey of American art.

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Editorial Review

From the Back Cover

In this provocative, newly revised, and expanded survey, David Bjelajac punctures the idea of a uniquely American way of seeing or representation. Instead, he sifts painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, and contemporary new media within a broader material culture, documenting a visual history characterized by conflict and diversity—from European colonial settlement to the themed environments of Disney and art exhibitions in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in America.

Though broadly chronological, the book is structured around various themes, such as the animating power of religious imagery in the seventeenth century, the cultivation of republican virtue in the eighteenth century, and a split national identity in the Civil War era. Later chapters document the rise of a conflicted Avant-Garde, the populism and public art of the Depression years, and Modernist art and Postmodernist pluralism during the Cold War. The book concludes with a new chapter on globalization and the culture wars from the 1980s to 2003. Famous works by established names such as John Singleton Copley, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Mathew Brady, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Georgia C)'Keeffe, Jackson Pollock, Judy Chicago, and Robert Gober are freshly interpreted next to vernacular imagery—a Masonic apron, an earthenware mug, a Quaker sampler, a satirical cartoon, or a labor union poster.

Dismissing the idea of art as a stately evolution of styles or "-isms", the author sees America's visual culture as an arena in which conflicting notions of class, gender, race, and regional allegiance are fought. Stepping outside traditional art-historical discourse, he launches boldly into the realms of politics, religion, science, literature, and popular culture in order to analyze individual art works within their specific historical contexts. Throughout, using generous quotations from primary sources, Bjelajac pays close attention to how contemporary artists, audiences, and beholders from different backgrounds have talked about specific works, the nature of art, and the artist's role in American society.

About the Author

David Bjelajac is professor of art and the human sciences at The George Washington University. He is the author of two monographs on Washington Allston, including *Washington Allston, Secret Societies, and the Alchemy of Anglo-American Painting*. He has contributed a chapter on "William Sidney Mount and the Hermetic Tradition in American Art" to *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (eds. David Morgan and Sally M. Promey).

Users Review

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James Stover:

Here thing why that American Art: A Cultural History are different and trusted to be yours. First of all reading a book is good but it depends in the content of it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. American Art: A Cultural History giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any

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