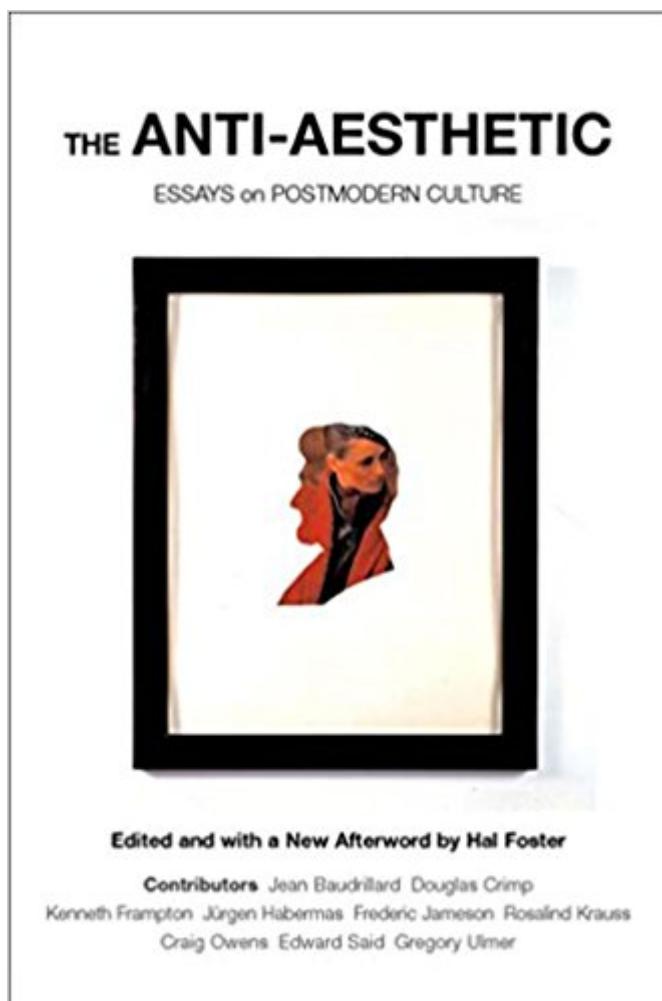


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# The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays On Postmodern Culture



## Synopsis

For the past thirty years, Hal Foster has pushed the boundaries of cultural criticism, establishing a vantage point from which the seemingly disparate agendas of artists, patrons, and critics have a telling coherence. In *The Anti-Aesthetic*, preeminent critics such as Jean Baudrillard, Rosalind Krauss, Fredric Jameson, and Edward Said consider the full range of postmodern cultural production, from the writing of John Cage, to Cindy Sherman's film stills, to Barbara Kruger's collages. With a redesigned cover and a new afterword that situates the book in relation to contemporary criticism, *The Anti-Aesthetic* provides a strong introduction for newcomers and a point of reference for those already engaged in discussions of postmodern art, culture, and criticism. Includes a new afterword by Hal Foster and 12 black and white photographs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Essential." •Glyn Banks, Studio International "[M]ay have initiated the rising wave of books that both criticize modernist art and take new critical approaches to art in general." •Vantage Point "[P]robably the most useful, serious and rewarding anthology of its kind." •Art in America

Hal Foster is the Townsend Martin '17 Professor of Art and Archaeology at Princeton University.

I love this

Primary text related to the Post-Modern disease.

The Anti-Aesthetic is truly an impressive anthology. The essays by Baudrillard and Frampton alone are enough to merit the purchase.

for my college student

IT gave some interesting points. It made you think, really just needed it to pass my class. Three more words -- couldn't say anything else

The majority of the essays are well-written in an approachable rhetoric that can be understood by a reader with relatively limited knowledge of the subject-matter. It also serves as a concise anthology of essays written by some of the leading critical thinkers in this area, making this both an excellent introductory book as well as a collection worthy to be on the expert's shelf.

Collection of essays on postmodernism and various examples thereof. Consumed this particular text during my 2000-2001 stint at SMCM, working my way through my SMP, trying to create reasonably plausible art students in my novel.

Pros: Here is a collection of what some people thought about various art-forms in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. The selection is broad, and at least a few of them are written to a conclusion, so can be said to have relevance. As for the thinking, it varies, with a few noteworthy exceptions that provide quite astute observations and predictions. For example, one essay compares the museum to the mausoleum for cultures that have perished, and upon entering a museum I see nothing but the objects from people that no longer exist. Or the essay on the continuing vagueness of sculpture, to the point where piles of string and holes in the ground qualify, leading ultimately to the loss of the art-form as subject of skill and expertise. Indeed, there are things to think about here, and if a book essays doesn't do that, it really is a poor selection. Cons: On the other hand, there are essays here that defy description, either in execution or in conclusion. As one essay comments, many critics suffer from the very frailties they expose, and this is true of most of those presented here. The sense of pathos and futility is palpable throughout as each essayist is undermined by the prevailing culture they are trying to describe. One author even goes so far as to point out that his essay is only

going to be read by a certain intellectual elite, and that elite all buy each others' stuff, which perpetuates their own myopic view, for the public lacks the necessary lexicon of obscure terms to make sense of, or even care about, the prevailing influences of literature and art. To be commercially viable, however, this is the nature of their world, and that world is more affected by the outside than the inside, so they end up mystifying the process to remain relevant. Conclusion: The ideas are good, but the esoteric nature of the discussions renders 2/3 of the print trivial. This might be thought of as the opposite of Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" in that the language is so specific to describe the creative product of post-modernism that it escapes context entirely and some terms are found in these essays and never used again. This is a post-modern product, wherein categories cease to be clear and any foundation in critical discourse or previous authority is abandoned. One essay is literally a continuous barrage of quotations from other contemporary scholars, without ever stating anything authentically, which another essay points out as the post-modern mode of pastiche. The essays aren't devoid of meaning, then just often parody or caricature themselves as if it were a private joke that the reader is expected to understand. This will enlighten you to what postmodernism is about - unfortunately it explains at length its own trivial nature.

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