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David Cottington

# THE AVANT-GARDE

A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD

David Cottington

THE AVANT-  
GARDE  
藏書章  
A Very Short Introduction

OXFORD  
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Ravi Roy  
NETWORKS Guido Caldarelli and  
Michele Catanzaro  
THE NEW TESTAMENT  
Luke Timothy Johnson  
THE NEW TESTAMENT AS  
LITERATURE Kyle Keefer  
NEWTON Robert Iliffe  
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NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN  
Christopher Harvie and  
H. C. G. Matthew  
THE NORMAN CONQUEST  
George Garnett  
NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS  
Theda Perdue and  
Michael D. Green  
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Marc Mulholland  
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Joseph M. Siracusa  
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Michael D. Coogan  
THE ORCHESTRA D. Kern Holoman  
ORGANIZATIONS Mary Jo Hatch

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Christopher Butler  
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Freda McManus  
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THE QUAKERS Pink Dandelion  
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John Polkinghorne  
RACISM Ali Rattansi  
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 THE SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTION  
     Lawrence M. Principe  
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 SIKHISM Eleanor Nesbitt  
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     and Russell G. Foster  
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     ANTHROPOLOGY  
     John Monaghan and Peter Just  
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 SUPERCONDUCTIVITY  
     Stephen Blundell  
 TERRORISM Charles Townshend  
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 THOMAS AQUINAS Fergus Kerr  
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     Kenneth O. Morgan  
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     Jussi M. Hanhimäki  
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# List of illustrations

- 1 *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, 1886 (oil on canvas), by Georges Pierre Seurat, (1859–91) **11**  
The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, USA / The Bridgeman Art Library
- 2 *Still Life*, 1920, by Charles-Édouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier), (1887–1965). Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA). Oil on canvas, 31 7/8 x 39 1/4' (80.9 x 99.7 cm). Van Gogh Purchase Fund. 261.1937 **58**  
© 2012. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence © FLC/ ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012
- 3 *Cut with the Kitchen Knife Dada through the Last Weimar Beer-Belly Cultural Epoch of Germany*, 1919, by Hannah Höch. Photomontage. Preubischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin: Nationalgalerie **61**  
Photo: akg-images/ Erich Lessing
- 4 *Rayograph*, 1922, by Man Ray (1890–1976). Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA). Gelatin silver print (photogram), 9 3/8 x 6 15/16' (23.8 x 17.9 cm). Gift of James Thrall Soby. 112.1941 **62**  
© 2012. Digital image, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York/ Scala, Florence. © Man Ray Trust/ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012
- 5 *Photogram*, c. 1924, by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895–1946). Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA). Gelatin silver print, 14 5/16 x 10 9/16" (36.3 x 26.9 cm). Given anonymously. Acc. n.: 493.1939 **64**  
© 2012. Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence © Hattula Moholy-Nagy/ DACS 2012
- 6 *Model for the Monument to the III International*, 1919–20, by Vladimir Tatlin **71**  
© 2012. Photo Scala, Florence/BPK, Bildagentur fuer Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Berlin

- 7 *Construction with Guitar Player*, 1913, by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973). Photograph by Picasso **76**

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- 8 Guillaume Apollinaire calligramme 'It's Raining' **82**

© The British Library Board. 01483. bb.13, page 62

- 9 Jackson Pollock painting 1950. Photo by Hans Namuth **90**

© The Estate of Hans Namuth. Photo: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian/Art Resource/Scala, Florence

- 10 A fashion shoot by Cecil Beaton for *Vogue*, 1951 **91**

© The Pollock-Krasner Foundation ARS, NY and DACS, London 2012. Photo © Condé Nast Archive/Corbis

- 11 *Refuge Wear City Intervention, London East End*, 1998, by Lucy Orta. Lambda photograph, laminated on Dibond. Photo by John Akehurst, courtesy of the Artists **96**

© 2012 by Lucy+Jorge Orta

- 12 *Liberty Leading the People*, 1830, by Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863) **99**

Photo: © IAM/akg/World History Archive

- 13 Cover of the exhibition catalogue *Cubism and Abstract Art* by Alfred H Barr, MoMA 1936 **104**

Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

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# ART HISTORY

## A Very Short Introduction

Dana Arnold

This clear and concise new introduction examines all the major debates and issues using a wide range of well-known examples. It discusses the challenge of using verbal and written language to analyse a visual form. Dana Arnold also examines the many different ways of writing about art, and the changing boundaries of the subject of art history. This book explains how the traditional emphasis on periods and styles originates in western art production and the problems that can arise from this.

A wide variety of topics are explored such as the canon of Art History, the role of the gallery, 'blockbuster' exhibitions, the emergence of social histories of art (Feminist Art History or Queer Art History, for example), the impact of photography, and the development of Art History using artefacts such as the altarpiece, the portrait, or pornography, to explore social and cultural issues such as taste, religion, and politics.

# MODERN ART

## A Very Short Introduction

David Cottington

Public interest in modern art continues to grow, as witnessed by the spectacular success of Tate Modern and the Bilbao Guggenheim. This book offers information and ideas about modern art, while explaining its contemporary relevance and history. Cottington also focuses on interrogating the idea of 'modern' art by asking questions such as: what has made a work of art *qualify* as modern (or fail to)? How has this selection been made? What is the relationship between modern and contemporary art? Is 'postmodernist' art no longer modern, or just no longer modernist?

Cottington examines many key aspects of this subject, including the issue of controversy in modern art, from Manet's *Dejeuner sur L'Herbe* (1863) to Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger*, and Tracey Emin's *Bed*, (1999).

# POSTMODERNISM

## A Very Short Introduction

Christopher Butler

Postmodernism has become the buzzword of contemporary society over the last decade. But how can it be defined? In this Very Short Introduction Christopher Butler lithely challenges and explores the key ideas of posmodernism, and their engagement with literature, the visual arts, film, architecture, and music. He treats artists, intellectuals, critics, and social scientists' as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party' – a party which includes such members as Jacques Derrida, Salman Rushdie, Thomas Pynchon, David Bowie, and Micheal Craig-Martin – creating a vastly entertaining framework in which to unravel the mysteries of the 'postmodern condition', from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct.

'a preeminently sance, lucid, and concise statement about the central issues, the key examples, and the notorious derilections of postmodernism. I feel a fresh wind blowing away the miasma coiling around the topic'.

Ihab Hassan, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

# Contents

List of illustrations xi

Introduction 1

1 Origins: emergence and consolidation 1820–1914 22

2 Professionalisms and politics between the wars 48

3 Consumerism and co-option 75

4 The avant-garde and revolution 98

Conclusion 117

Further reading 125

Index 131



# Introduction

Question: What do these have in common: hair design, art and artists, property lettings, fashion, letterboxes, jazz music, bicycle saddles, fast cars, consulting engineers, T-shirts, and lifestyle coaching? Answer: in a recent trawl by this author on the internet, particular instances of these all shared the designation 'avant-garde', either as descriptions of them or as part of their brand names. This range the use of 'avant-garde' is striking. And for anyone interested in contemporary culture, and in the ways in which it constantly changes, it is worth noting, I would suggest, for three reasons. First, because clearly it is a buzzword, a term that is used because of its current power to bestow on certain things and practices in the cultural marketplace an instant 'up-to-dateness' that seeks to distinguish them from their competitors. Second, because it is apparently empty of meaning beyond this very 'up-to-dateness': what it appears to point to is no specific quality other than the value our (western?) culture places on newness, on contemporaneity. And third, because if the term 'avant-garde' is as readily available as this, to signal such newness, then it has already become a cliché—has already been 'co-opted' for an *expectation* of the very qualities of *un*-expectedness that the 'new' is supposed to bring, and that make it new; which makes it something of a contradiction in terms.