



Reading American Art

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This anthology brings together 20 works of scholarship on the history of the visual arts in the United States from the colonial period to 1945. The selected essays - all written within the last two decades - reflect the interdisciplinary character of art historiography in America and the variety of approaches that contribute to the dynamism in the field. The authors take up diverse subjects - from colonial portraits to 19th-century sculptures of women to photographic images of New York - and invite those with a general knowledge of the history of American art to think more deeply about art and culture. Employing many interpretive methodologies, including iconology, social history, structuralism, psychobiography and feminist theory, the contributors to this volume combine close analysis of specific art objects or groups of objects with discussion of how these works of art operated within their cultural contexts. The authors consider the works of such artists as John Singleton Copley, Charles Willson Peale, Georgia O'Keeffe and Jackson Pollock as they assess how paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings and photographs have carried meaning within American society. And they investigate how the conceptualization, production and presentation of works of art both inform and are informed by prevailing attitudes towards the role of the arts and the artist in American culture.

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