Very Short Introductions online

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Ancient Egyptian Art and Architecture: A Very Short Introduction
Christina Riggs

Print Publication Year: 2014 Published Online: Oct 2014 Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: book

What did Egyptian art and architecture mean to the people who first made and used it—and why has it had such an enduring appeal? Ancient Egyptian Art and Architecture: A Very Short Introduction explores the visual arts produced in Egypt over a span of some 4,000 years. The stories behind these objects and buildings have much to tell us about how people in ancient Egypt lived their lives in relation to each other, the natural environment, and the world of the gods. Demonstrating how ancient Egypt has fascinated Western audiences over the centuries, this VSI considers the relationship between ancient Egypt and the modern world.

Art History: A Very Short Introduction
Dana Arnold

Print Publication Year: 2004 Published Online: Sep 2013 Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: book

Art History: A Very Short Introduction provides the tools necessary to study art history. The challenge of using verbal and written language to analyse visual form and experience is explored, and the different ways of writing about art are examined. Topics covered include the canon of art history, the role of the gallery, ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions, and the emergence of social histories of art (feminist or ‘queer’ art history, for example). The traditional emphasis on Western periods and styles of art can obscure other critical approaches, as well as exclude art from non-western cultures, and this is discussed. The glossary can be used in conjunction with gallery visits to further enhance understanding.

Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction
Cynthia Freeland

Print Publication Year: 2003 Published Online: Sep 2013 Publisher: Oxford University Press
Item type: book
In today's art world many strange, even shocking, things qualify as art. Art Theory: A Very Short Introduction discusses beauty, blood, culture, money, museums, sex, and politics, clarifying contemporary and historical accounts of the nature, function, and interpretation of the arts. It examines art on the Web, video art, museum CD-ROMs, and various theorists of the new media and of postmodern art. It surveys the latest research on the brain's role in perceiving art and engages with the big debates surrounding our responses to art, examining why innovation and controversy are valued in the arts.

The Avant Garde: A Very Short Introduction
David Cottington

The Avant Garde: A Very Short Introduction explores the concept of the ‘avant-garde’ and examines its wider context through the development of western modernity, capitalist culture, and the global impact of both. The avant-garde is perhaps the most important and influential concept in the history of modern culture. What is the relation between the ‘avant-garde’ and ‘avant-garde’ qualities in a work of art, design, architecture, or any other cultural product? What does avant-gardism mean? Now that contemporary art has broken all taboos and is at the centre of a billion-pound art market, is there still an ‘avant-garde’? If so, what is the point of it and who are the artists concerned?

Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction
Julian Stallabrass

Contemporary Art: A Very Short Introduction takes us inside the international art world to argue that behind contemporary art's variety and apparent unpredictability lies a grim uniformity. Its mysteries are all too easily explained, its depths much shallower than they seem. Contemporary art is supposed to be a realm of freedom where artists shock, break taboos, flout generally received ideas, and switch between confronting viewers with works of great emotional profundity and jaw-dropping triviality. But away from shock tactics in the gallery, there are many unanswered questions. Who is really running the art world? What effect has America’s growing political and cultural dominance had on art?

Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction
David Hopkins
Dada and Surrealism: A Very Short Introduction focuses on the many debates surrounding these movements: the Marquis de Sade's Surrealist deification, issues of quality, the idea of the ‘readymade’, attitudes towards the city, the impact of Freud, attitudes to women, and primitivism. Where does the Dadaist obsession with the body-as-mechanism come from? Why are the Surrealists obsessed with the fetishized/eroticized body? Dada and Surrealism continue to have a huge influence on cultural practice, especially in contemporary art, with its obsession with sexuality, fetishism, and shock tactics. A huge range of media is employed by both movements (collage, painting, found objects, performance art, photography, film), but there are aesthetic differences between them.

Design: A Very Short Introduction
John Heskett

Design: A Very Short Introduction transforms the way we think about design. How does design affect our everyday activities? Do we appreciate its place in our daily lives? Simple objects, such as a spoon, can have their design modified to meet the needs of specific cultural behaviour. Different cultures and individuals personalize objects. Good design combines ‘need’ and ‘desire’ in the form of a practical object that reflects the user's identity and aspirations. How do major companies such as Nokia, Ford, and Sony approach design? How can design humanize new technology?

Modern Art: A Very Short Introduction
David Cottington

Modern Art: A Very Short Introduction 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 Demoiselles, and Tracey Emin's Bed, (1999); and the role of the dealer. Public interest in modern art continues to grow, as witnessed by the spectacular success of Tate Modern and the Bilbao Guggenheim. What makes a work of art qualify as modern (or fail to)? How is this selection made? What is the relationship between modern and contemporary art? Is ‘postmodernist’ art no longer modern, or just no longer modernist? Why, and what does this claim mean, both for art and the idea of ‘the modern’?

Photography: A Very Short Introduction
Steve Edwards

Photography: A Very Short Introduction transforms our understanding of what is meant by the term ‘photography’. What is ‘photography’? What is the relationship between photography and art? And what is the role of the photographer in the making and meaning of photographs?
Photography: A Very Short Introduction examines the definition, importance, and meaning of photography by combining a sense of the historical development of photography with an analysis of its purpose and meaning within a wider cultural context. Photographs are everywhere, in print and online. They are an integral part of our daily lives from sensationalist images in tabloid papers, to snapshots, to art-photography displayed in galleries and sold through international art markets. How important are photographs to our cultural lives? How do we look and think about photographs? How truthful are photographs?

Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction
Geraldine A Johnson

Renaissance Art: A Very Short Introduction provides a broad cultural-historical context for some of the Renaissance's most famous artists and works of art, introducing both famous and lesser-known artists, patrons and works of art within the cultural and historical context of Renaissance Europe. Botticelli, Holbein, Leonardo, Dürer, and Michelangelo are familiar names, but who were these artists, why did they produce such memorable images, and how would their original beholders have viewed these objects? Was the Renaissance only about great masters and masterpieces, or were ‘mistresses’ also involved, such as women artists and patrons? And what about the ‘minor’-pieces that Renaissance men and women would have encountered in homes, churches and civic spaces?

Typography: A Very Short Introduction
Paul Luna

Typography: A Very Short Introduction offers a broad definition of typography as design for reading, whether in print or on screens, where a set of visual choices are taken to make a written message more accessible, more easily transmitted, more significant, or more attractive. Considering the development of letterforms and the shapes of letter we use, it discusses the history behind our modern day letters and fonts, before considering the issues behind key typographic decisions, and the differences between printed and on-screen typography. Presenting any piece of typography as a fundamental design choice, this Very Short Introduction introduces the options available today, and explores the reasons why key typographic decisions are made.