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.

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’?