



Formalism and Historicity: Models and Methods in Twentieth-Century Art (October Books)

By Benjamin H. D. Buchloh

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These influential essays by the noted critic and art historian Benjamin Buchloh have had a significant impact on the theory and practice of art history. Written over the course of three decades and now collected in one volume, they trace a history of crucial artistic transitions, iterations, and paradigmatic shifts in the twentieth century, considering both the evolution and emergence of artistic forms and the specific historical moment in which they occurred.

Buchloh's subject matter ranges through various moments in the history of twentieth-century American and European art, from the moment of the *retour à l'ordre* of 1915 to developments in the Soviet Union in the 1920s to the beginnings of Conceptual art in the late 1960s to the appropriation artists of the 1980s. He discusses conflicts resulting from historical repetitions (such as the monochrome and collage/montage aesthetics in the 1910s, 1950s, and 1980s), the emergence of crucial neo-avantgarde typologies, and the resuscitation of obsolete genres (including the portrait and landscape, revived by 1980s photography). Although these essays are less monographic than those in Buchloh's earlier collection, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*, two essays in this volume are devoted to Marcel Broodthaers, whose work remains central to Buchloh's theoretical concerns. Engaging with both formal and historical paradigms, Buchloh situates himself productively between the force fields of formal theory and historical narrative, embracing the discrepancies and contradictions between them and within individual artistic trajectories.

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Editorial Review

Review

Sometimes it is good to recall things. It is very good to recall Benjamin Buchloh's struggle with 'critical art' in the 1980s and the beginning of its co-optation by a hungry capitalist/consumerist world. This series of essays from the past magnificently illuminates and clarifies what we have become as a society and cultural world. Reading these crucial texts produced by one of the last remaining real art critics, one is given a helpful set of sharp critical tools for understanding our contemporary world and the struggles of artists within it. Buchloh's forceful and almost psychoanalytical introduction reminds us that we still need to scream, to shout, to wake up, and to refuse, in our changed world, the increasingly successful new motto of the global art market: 'Whatever.'

(Serge Guilbaut, Professor Emeritus of Art History, Visual Art and Theory, University of British Columbia)

The writing of Benjamin H. D. Buchloh has been foundational for the entire discussion around avant-garde and contemporary art. To have these essays in one volume is a gift, a world of thought to absorb, ponder, and debate.

(Thomas Crow, Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art, New York University)

In this, the second volume of his collected essays, each one as seminal and mold-breaking as the next, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh is unflinching in his diagnosis of the predicament of art in the long twentieth century. *Formalism and Historicity* demonstrates the fascinating development -- and the sheer critical brilliance and importance -- of Buchloh's own thought. Intensely attuned to art's formal as well as historical conditions, this book is a may-day call for art, and his astonishingly vivid historical analysis was never more urgently needed.

(Briony Fer, Professor of History of Art, University College London)

One of the pleasures of reading the art historian Benjamin Buchloh is that he is the rare academic who is unafraid of loud arguments. His new book of collected essays, *Formalism and Historicity*, is full of searing assaults.

(*The Art Newspaper*)

Buchloh's critical model, so brilliantly chronicled in *Formalism and Historicity*, will loom large....

(Graham Bader *Artforum*)

About the Author

Benjamin H. D. Buchloh is Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Modern Art in the Department of History of Art

and Architecture at Harvard University and an editor of October magazine. He is the author of *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (MIT Press) and other books.

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