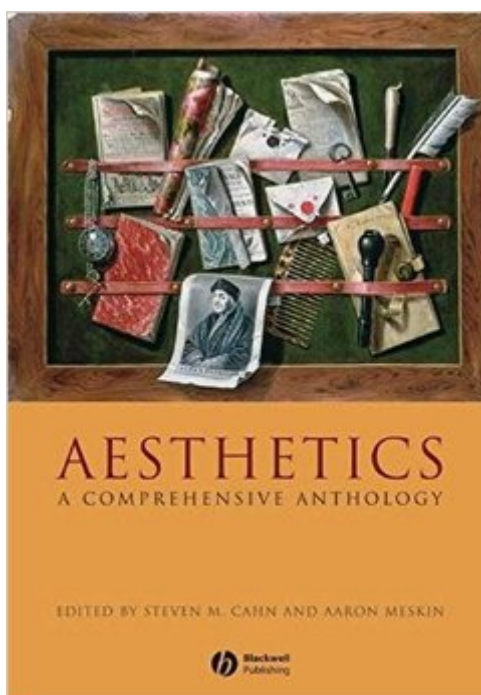


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Aesthetics: A Comprehensive Anthology



Synopsis

From Plato's *Ion* to works by contemporary philosophers, this anthology showcases classic texts to illuminate the development of philosophical thought about art and the aesthetic. This volume is the most comprehensive collection of readings on aesthetics and the philosophy of art currently available. Brings together the most significant writings in aesthetics and philosophy of art from the past 2500 years. Each section includes a useful introductory essay which provides an overview of developments in the field. Broken down into three sections: Historical Sources, Modern Theories, and Contemporary Aesthetics and Philosophy of Art. Thorough, systematic, and flexible, including two alternative tables of contents (historical and topical); an ideal textbook and guide to the field.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like most of the Blackwell anthologies I have experience with, this is very well put together and is a thorough (if not fully comprehensive) introduction to the most important and influential thinkers in aesthetics. I use it, along with some supplementary readings, in my aesthetics class, and focus there on the classical and modern readings - but I find it helpful that the book includes both a historical and a topical table of contents, so that you can read the selections chronologically or according to topics like "beauty" or "definitions of art" or "expression and emotion in the arts." When it comes to contemporary aesthetics, this book covers a wide range of the most influential thinkers in English-speaking and analytic aesthetics, while almost completely ignoring the work of Continental thinkers (apart from a few selections from critical theory and hermeneutics, which is treated here as "historical" and not contemporary). The most glaring omission is that there is nothing

here from Derrida, who did, after all, write a number of important and highly influential pieces on aesthetics (not to mention Deleuze, or Lyotard, or Baudrillard, or Ranciere...). Still, this is the most thorough text of its kind that I've seen and I wouldn't necessarily argue for omitting anything that is here in order to include those other things (since to do them justice would probably require another kind of book - best to consider this an "Anglo-American and Analytic Approaches to Aesthetics and their Historical Predecessors" anthology). Another thing that would make it more helpful as a textbook would be to have a very brief introduction to each selection, outlining the issues and the central contributions made within the selection to the field of aesthetics.

Overall, this anthology leaves very little to be desired by way of an introduction to Aesthetics. I will give a brief review as another reviewer has already provided the majority of what I would like to say: Pros: + The anthology covers many of the historical works (including some that were heavily influential but left out of other anthologies). I include works by philosophers such as Schopenhauer, whose work primarily served to influence Nietzsche, but also contributes far more than Nietzsche cares to use. + The length of the works in this anthology is an important detail. This anthology tries to provide a sample of each of the historical works so as to translate their main ideas. Yet, works such as *Art as Experience* and *The Critique of Judgment* have slightly longer lengths -- both because their authors were more prolific and because their ideas were not proposed concisely. Anyone with experience reading Kant understands that 10 pages of his critiques may as well be 40 pages of another book. The anthology does well to ensure that the reader has enough of each author to understand the primary (and numerous secondary) points of his or her work. + Medieval aesthetics are included among the historical section. I have enjoyed previous aesthetics anthologies (here, I am thinking of *Art and Its Significance*), but they have not included medieval works nor as many contemporary commentaries. The anthology presents both very well. Cons: - There is nothing by Derrida. Deconstruction was a very important shift in aesthetic and literary theory. It is a shame that the anthology left his work out.

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