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The Interpretation of Pictures

Mark Roskill

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The Interpretation of Pictures

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The Interpretation of Pictures Mark Roskill
This volume examines the ways pictures are interpreted, discussing the practices of interpretation that inform the modern discipline of art history in contrast to those that prevailed in earlier periods. As an introductory text on the traditions and principles of interpretation, the book explores key methods in a clear, untechnical fashion and shows how the personalities and backgrounds of particular art historians have contributed to the character of their writings.

Based on case studies from the fifteenth century to the present, the work begins with a discussion of the rhetoric of artwriting. Chapter 1 defines art history as a profession in which interpretation is a basic act, exploring the terms of discourse that follow from this premise and explaining how persuasiveness and sometimes consensus on the meaning of an art object are achieved. Chapter 2 focuses on imagery and creative processes, showing how interpretation can bridge the personal aspect of meaning with the communal and social aspects. Chapter 3 looks at the relationship of interpretation to various institutions of art history, especially museums. Discussing the issue of indeterminacy, the author questions whether there is any given or "core" identity to an art object apart from those attributed to it by particular interpreters.

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