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Contemporary Art in the Light of History

Erwin Rosenthal

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Contemporary Art in the Light of History Erwin Rosenthal
Erwin Rosenthal's *Contemporary Art in the Light of History*, originally published in 1971, is a small masterpiece of writing on the art of the twentieth century. A scholar of medieval art by training and a prominent antiquarian bookseller, Rosenthal, who died in l981, was equally entranced by modern art, particularly abstraction. His three linked essays in this book—"Contemporary Art in the Light of History," "Art and Technology," and "Art Theories and Manifestos, Old and New"—set out a path to understanding modern art through its affinities with the art of the past.

Rosenthal engages with some of the enduring aesthetic questions: How do new forms and new artistic vocabularies respond to the deepest human needs and impulses? What is the relationship between artistic theory and artistic expression? Nicolas Poussin's mythological landscapes, Paul Klee's graphic abstractions, Bridget Riley's op-art compositions—these and many other examples from centuries of painting, sculpture, poetry, and music take us, in these pages, on a fascinating cultural journey with a sophisticated and lucid guide. Rosenthal's explorations of the theory and practice of twentieth-century artists bring us directly into the minds and studios of modern artists. What is more, like his previous *The Changing Concept of Reality in Art*, already republished by Arcade, this book invites us into a great intimacy with the origins of art.

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