

The Battle for Realism



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James Hyman

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Art historian James Hyman takes a fresh look at the crucial years after the Second World War when attempts were made to revive European culture and debates about the future of art were fierce. The author proposes that realism in Europe during the early Cold War years occupied a radical vanguard position and stood in opposition to the competing claims made for American Abstract Expressionism. He examines two

distinct visions of realism - social realism and Modernist realism - and explores their political implications and ideological significance. Hyman argues that this Battle for Realism shaped and internationalised British art and addresses a range of artists, from Modernist realists such as Auerbach, Bacon, Freud, Kossoff, Moore and Sutherland to social realists Hogarth, de Francia and the 'kitchen-sink painters'. He also illuminates the impact of foreign and emigre artists on British culture, addressing artists such as Giacometti, Guttuso and Picasso, and examining the claims made for London as an art centre to rival the Ecole de Paris and the New York School. Hyman draws on contemporary critical writing to give fresh insights into the art debates of the period and gives new prominence to the central roles of the critics John Berger and David Sylvester.

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