

# Art and Aesthetics



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Under what social conditions do particular sorts of arts and aesthetics arise and flourish, and under what conditions do they decline and disappear? What types of artistic and aesthetic practices exist outside of museums, galleries, and other high-cultural institutions? In what ways are social relations and broader cultural forces embedded within particular artworks, or specific artistic genres and forms? What roles can--and do--aesthetic orientations and artistic processes and products play in social life? In what ways are arts and aesthetics socially organized, regulated, distributed, and utilized? How are 'art worlds' connected to other major social institutions, such as politics and the economy, and has art become just an offshoot of consumer and celebrity culture? Serious work on dizzying questions such as these has a long pedigree, stretching back at least to the writings of Giambattista Vico and Madame de Staël in the eighteenth century. Very simply put, both these authors were concerned with tracing the manifold relations that can pertain between the arts--and, more broadly, 'aesthetics'--on the one hand, and 'society' on the other. Since then, social

scientists in many disciplines have had compelling things to say about art and aesthetics. In some disciplines--such as anthropology--this is a fact of long standing, while in others--like human geography--it is of more recent provenance. But the most striking recent surge of interest in the area has taken place in sociology, where never before have cultural forces and phenomena been so centrally on the research agenda. Addressing the need for an authoritative reference work to make sense of this rapidly growing and ever more complex corpus of scholarly literature, *Art and Aesthetics* is a new title in the Routledge series, *Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*. Edited by two leading scholars, this new Major Work from Routledge brings together in four volumes foundational and the very best cutting-edge scholarship to provide a synoptic view of all the key issues and current debates. In particular, this new collection brings together for the first time the most important research on how social relations are embodied in artistic and aesthetic products and processes, and how these in turn can affect social life and societal organization. Rooted in sociology, but also embracing a broad range of diverse contributions from other disciplines--such as anthropology, philosophy, art history, cultural studies, media studies, film studies, gender studies, and postcolonial studies--*Art and Aesthetics* demonstrates the great vitality of this area of research and teaching. It highlights both how social scientists are increasingly developing sophisticated ways of understanding artistic and aesthetic issues, and also how scholars in the humanities are drawing upon social-scientific ideas and methods in order more fully to engage with such matters than hitherto was possible. *Art and Aesthetics* is fully indexed and has a comprehensive introduction, newly written by the editors, which places the material in its historical and intellectual context. It is an essential work of reference and is destined to be valued by scholars and students interested in the relations between arts, aesthetics, culture, and society as a vital one-stop research and pedagogic resource.

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