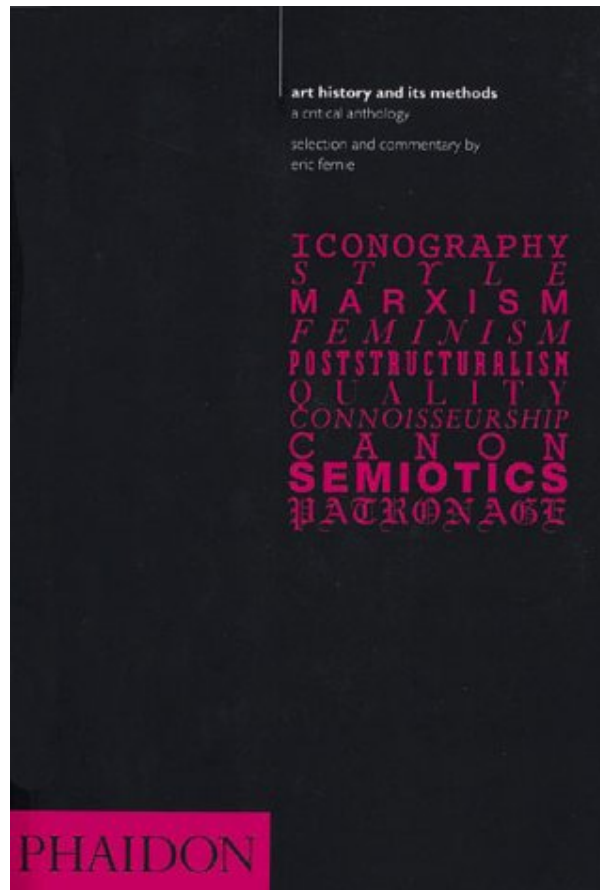
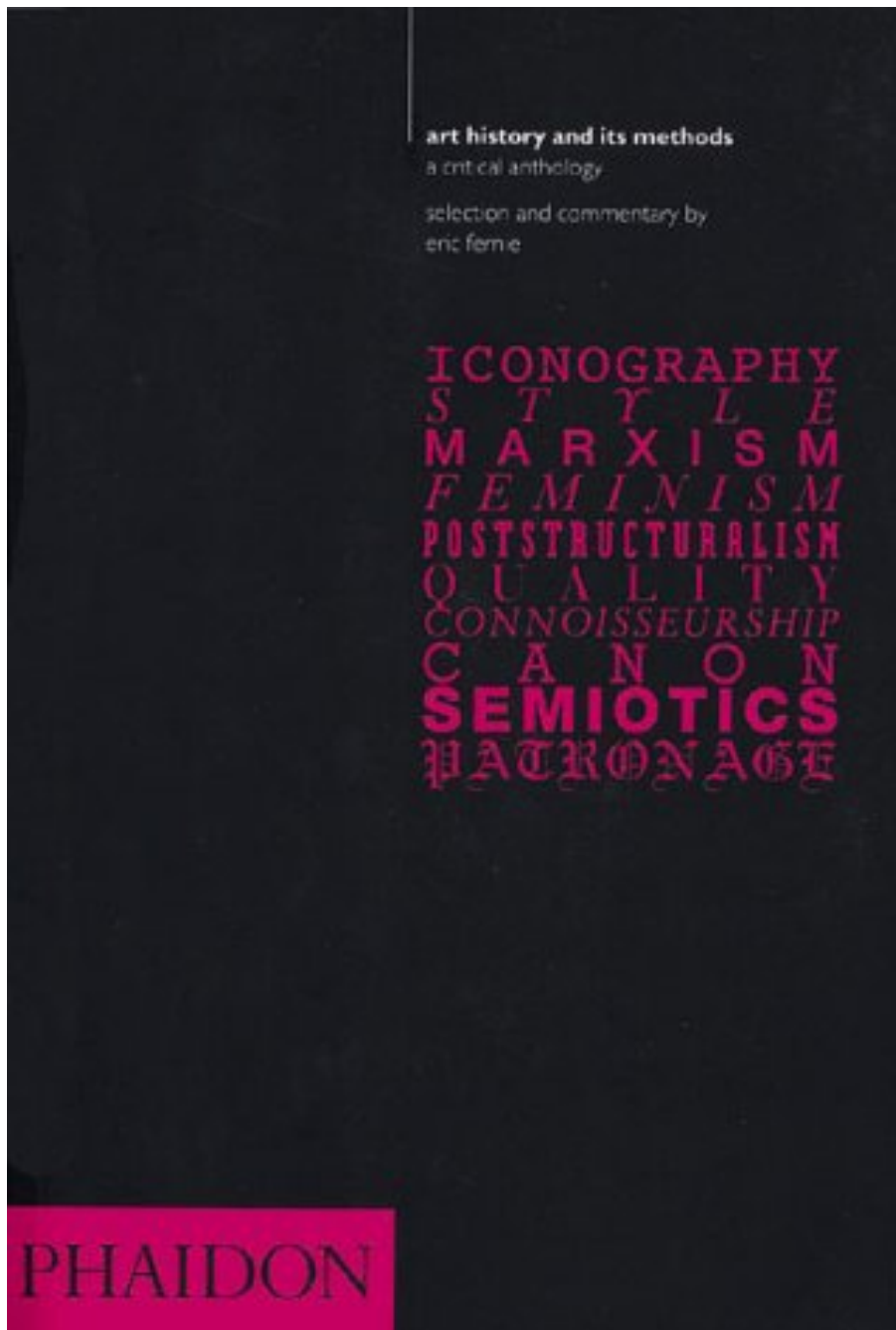


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Review

'A book destined to become a standard work.' (The Art Newspaper)

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Approaches to the history of art are probably more varied and more debated than in any other branch of history, and a study of different historical approaches has become an important component of student courses.

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Approaches to the history of art are probably more varied - and more debated - than in any other branch of history, and a study of different historical approaches is becoming an increasingly important component of many academic courses. This anthology of art-historical writings from the Renaissance to the present day has a particular focus, for key texts have been chosen in which the authors themselves reflect on the nature of their subject and on their own methods of inquiry. Included are texts by Vasari, Winckelmann, Burckhardt, Wolfflin, Panofsky, Gombrich and Pollock, among others. The introduction gives a summary of art-historical methods, and each of the texts is accompanied by a brief commentary which places it in context and discusses the issues it raises. Also provided is a critical glossary of art-historical terms, a brief biography of each of the historians, and a select bibliography.

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A great idea, but a disappointing book

By Anne-Marie Bouche

I bought this book because I wanted an anthology of "the best," classic articles on a variety of fields and from a variety of critical viewpoints, hoping to use it for my introductory art history course. But not only could one quarrel with the choices here, but the articles are abridged almost to the point of incomprehensibility and the footnotes are left out. This makes the collection unrepresentative of what it purports to be about, and useless in the classroom.

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

A review of "Art History and its Methods"

By carrie

Includes:

Giorgio Vasari, the lives of the artists, 1568,

Karel van Mander, Dutch and Flemish Painters, 1604,

Giovanni Bellori, the idea of the painter, the sculptor and the architect chosen from the higher natural beauties of nature, 1672,

Johann Winckelmann, history of ancient art, 1764,

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Von deutscher Baukunst, 1772,

Jakob Burckhardt, reflections on history, 1872,

Giovanni Morelli, Italian painters, 1880,

Alois Tieg: late Roman art industry, 1901,

Heinrich Wofflin, principles of art history, 1915,

Paul Frankl, principles of architectural history, 1914,

Roger Fry, reflections, 1920,

Henri Focillon, the world of forms, 1934,

Alfred H. Baff, chart of modern art, 1936,

Erwin Panofshky, the history of art as a humanistic discipline, 1940,

Nikolaus Pevsner, an outline of European architecture, 1943,

Arnold Hauser, the scope and limitations of sociology of art, 1959,

Susan Sontag, *against interpretation*, 1964,

E.H. Gombrich, *in search of cultural history*, 1967,

William Fagg, *studying primitive art*, 1973,

T.J. Clark, *the conditions of artistic creation*, 1974,

John Onians, *art history, Kinstegschichte and historia*, 1978,

Michael Baldwin, Charles Harrison and Mel Ramsden, *art history, art criticism and explanation*, 1981,  
Svetlana Alpers, *interpretation without representation, or the viewing of Las Meninas*, 1983,

Hans Belting, *the end of the history of art?*, 1984,

Griselda Pollock, *Feminist interventions in the history of Art*, 1988.

Olu Oguibe, *in the heart of darkness*, 1993

It is an excellent anthology, but it lacks colour plate images. Since it is a book about methods in art historical practice, the focus is much more directed to looking at texts. Yet, there are a few black and white images printed in the book that provide examples of the works being discussed. However, I would forfeit my desire for colour plates in light of the affordable price (appx. \$30 for almost 400 pages of quality reading) and its promise for longevity for being an oft-consulted book for a serious art historian. I am not sure why Fernie decided to omit the footnotes of the original essays, which makes this only a lead-in to the original texts. I would also like to see Fernie add more contemporary essays with subsequent editions, as the latest date of the essays included is 1993 (recent only in light of the 1995 publication date).

The theories shaping the widely varied practices of art history are highly contested, often misunderstood, and a 'hot topic' in many schools of academia. Eric Fernie has collected some of the most interesting writing, from the Renaissance to the contemporary, about methodology in the practice of art history, introducing each of the essays with a brief summary of its contents. Fernie's considerable ability to summarize and contextualize key points of dense texts in a thoughtful and accessible way makes the reader look forward to diving into this carefully laid out anthology of 27 classic texts about methodology in the arts (like Heinrich Wölfflin's 1915 "Principles of Art History" or Giorgio Vasari's 1568 "The Painter's Book"). Also included in this book is a useful and critical glossary of terms, written by Fernie. Demonstrating the wide variety of approaches taken by serious scholars over the ages, Fernie illuminates the rhizomatic way in which the discourse of art historical practice has unfolded over time, sometimes following an evolving line of developing thought, but sometimes showing how relatively 'new' ideas appear and disappear into the folds of culture's eternal mutation.

Fernie is likely trying to reach academic readers instead of a popular audience, but more specifically, he is likely trying to reach post-undergraduate-level academics. This idea rests on the observation that the content of the essays are quite serious, as well as being of the kind of historical overview that nonacademic, and even many undergrad students, in my opinion, might find difficult to put into perspective unless they have a solid background in both cultural and art history. This book is definitely not for everyone. Those seriously interested in art history, criticism, theory, the history of ideas, or research methodology would find this book most interesting. People who are looking for juicy images, coffee table classics, or simplified interpretations of classic art need not open this book, unless they want to challenge their understanding of how history,

methods of enquiry, and the subjectivity of the self inform higher-level understanding of art and art history.

2 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A \*Critical\* Anthology

By A Customer

Fernie's book is indeed a little gem, a compilation of most of the major players and critical thinkers that shaped the discipline of Art History as we know it today. The format is user-friendly, with an excellent table of contents, select bibliography, and index. The glossary in the back provides definitions that are indispensable for beginners and masters alike. His intros are succinct; they provide a historical context, and distill most of the main points of each reading into a short, interesting, and easy to digest summary.

The selected texts provide the reader with a good definition of some of the historical and contemporary differences between different schools of Art History and Art Criticism. The methods provided in this book are applicable to any humanistic discipline. While not totally comprehensive, the material presented does give an excellent starting point for further excursions into art historical methodology.

That said, Fernie does allow some of his own biases and methodologies to colour some of his introductions, and the selections of representative texts. The critical thinking of his readers needs to be applied to these aspects of the book, as much as the texts presented. However, all in all this is an excellent "History of Art History". I recommend this book highly to "students" (of any kind) interested in a higher understanding of art, art criticism, and historiography.

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