



Art Power (MIT Press)

By Boris Groys

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Art has its own power in the world, and is as much a force in the power play of global politics today as it once was in the arena of cold war politics. Art, argues the distinguished theoretician Boris Groys, is hardly a powerless commodity subject to the art market's fiats of inclusion and exclusion. In *Art Power*, Groys examines modern and contemporary art according to its ideological function. Art, Groys writes, is produced and brought before the public in two ways -- as a commodity and as a tool of political propaganda. In the contemporary art scene, very little attention is paid to the latter function. Arguing for the inclusion of politically motivated art in contemporary art discourse, Groys considers art produced under totalitarianism, Socialism, and post-Communism. He also considers today's mainstream Western art -- which he finds behaving more and more according the norms of ideological propaganda: produced and exhibited for the masses at international exhibitions, biennials, and festivals. Contemporary art, Groys argues, demonstrates its power by appropriating the iconoclastic gestures directed against itself -- by positioning itself simultaneously as an image and as a critique of the image. In *Art Power*, Groys examines this fundamental appropriation that produces the paradoxical object of the modern artwork.

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Art Power (MIT Press) By Boris Groys Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #655873 in Books
- Published on: 2013-02-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .50" w x 6.00" l, .62 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 200 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Boris Groys is an extraordinarily gimlet-eyed observer of the impact visual art has on contemporary art-world institutions. Anyone interested in the balance of aesthetic and political power among artists, collectors, curators, and the audience needs to read Groys's lapidary essays.

(Gregg Horowitz, Department of Philosophy, Vanderbilt University)

This magisterial overview situates contemporary art - its aesthetic strategies, institutions and drives - within the deeper context of the Modernist revolution, urbanism, new technologies and the post communist era. Groys' combines revelatory analysis with philosophical questions that go to the heart of cultural production today.

(Iwona Blazwick, Director, Whitechapel Gallery)

Boris Groys produces more provocations, more paradoxes per page than any other critic. Here, in one short book, are radical propositions about religion (that it represents perfect 'opinionlessness' and is therefore the medium par excellence), the autonomy of art (that it is guaranteed by the absence of aesthetic judgment), political art (that it does not exist in contemporary art market), communist-era art (that it is invisible to the West because it lacked a market structure), art theory (that the hope of avoiding it entails a theory of race), and images of war and terror (that they are the new iconophilia, the new visual authority). All these unexpected propositions are made in the hope of a slow, complex, incremental return to authorship, authority, presence, and the sublime.

(James Elkins, author of *What Happened to Art Criticism?*)

By probing unacknowledged, repressed, or otherwise unexamined relationships that hover in the background of art-world conversation, *Art Power* recombines categories, reconfigures assumptions, and, in the end, reimagines what art writing can be.

(Matthew Jesse Jackson *Bookforum*)

It's a seemingly unlimited supply of surprising, even audacious truths that many invested in the art world might prefer not to think too hard about.

(*Canadian Art*)

The range of topics canvassed in *Art Power* is impressive.... All of these subjects have been comprehensively treated elsewhere, but rarely with Groys' penetrating eye for the unexpected upshot of such developments.

(*Frieze*)

The writings of Boris Groys create a discursive environment where art can be powerful. His commentaries on artistic activities turn aesthetics from a rhetoric of desire to a rhetoric of thinking. The critique replacing consumerism is finally transformed to a logic of the political, where his writing derives its own power.

(Peter Weibel)

About the Author

Boris Groys is Professor of Russian and Slavic Studies at New York University. He is the author of many books, including *Ilya Kabakov: The Man Who Flew into Space from His Apartment* (2006) and *Art Power* (2008), both published by the MIT Press.

Users Review

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