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Art Matters

Peter de Bolla



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In the face of a great work of art, we so often stand mute, struck dumb. Is this a function—perhaps the first and foremost—of aesthetic experience? Or do we lack the words to say what we feel? Countering current assumptions that art is valued only according to taste or ideology, Peter de Bolla gives a voice—and vocabulary—to the wonder art can inspire. Working toward a better understanding of what it is to be profoundly moved by a work of art, he forces us to reconsider the importance of art works and the singular nature and value of our experience of them.

In many ways a "practical aesthetics," *Art Matters* proceeds by way of example. Through chapters attending to three works of art—Barnett Newman's painting *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, pianist Glenn Gould's second recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, and William Wordsworth's poem *"We Are Seven"*—de Bolla plots a personal history of aesthetic experience that opens up the general forms of art appreciation. His book invites us to a closer encounter with art, and to a deeper appreciation and clearer expression of what such an encounter might hold.

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