



Revelation of Modernism: Responses to Cultural Crises in Fin-de-siecle Painting

Albert Boime

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Among postimpressionist painters, Van Gogh, Seurat, Cézanne, and Gauguin produced a remarkable body of work that responded to a cultural and spiritual crisis in the avant-garde world—influences that pushed them toward an increasing reliance on science, literature, and occultism. In *Revelation of Modernism*, renowned art historian Albert Boime reappraises specific works by these masters from a perspective more appreciative of the individuals' inner conflicts, offering the art world a new understanding of a period fraught with apocalyptic fears and existential anxieties.

Building on the seminal observations of Sven Lövgrén from a half-century ago, Boime rejects popular notions of “art for art’s sake” and rethinks an entire movement to suggest that history, rather than expressive urge, is the driving force that shapes art. He reconsiders familiar masterpieces from a fresh perspective, situating the art in the contexts of history both real and speculative, of contemporary philosophy, and of science to depict modernism as a development that ultimately failed.

Boime expands on what we think we know about these figures and produces startling new revelations about their work. From the political history of Seurat’s *Parade de cirque* to the astronomical foundations of Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*, he draws analogies between literary sources and social, personal, and political strategies that have eluded most art historians. He offers a richer and more complex vision of Cézanne, considering the artist as an Old Testament figure in search of the Promised Landscape. And he provides a particularly detailed look at Gauguin—on whom Boime has never previously published—that takes a closer look at the artist’s *The Vision after the Sermon* and its allusions to Eliphas Lévi’s writings, sheds light on the sources for *From whence do we come?* and offers new thoughts about Gauguin’s various self-portraits.

Boime’s latest contribution further testifies to his status as one of our most important living art historians. As entertaining as it is eloquent, *Revelation of Modernism* is a bold and groundbreaking work that should be required reading for all who wish to understand the contradictory origins and development of modernism and its role in history.

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