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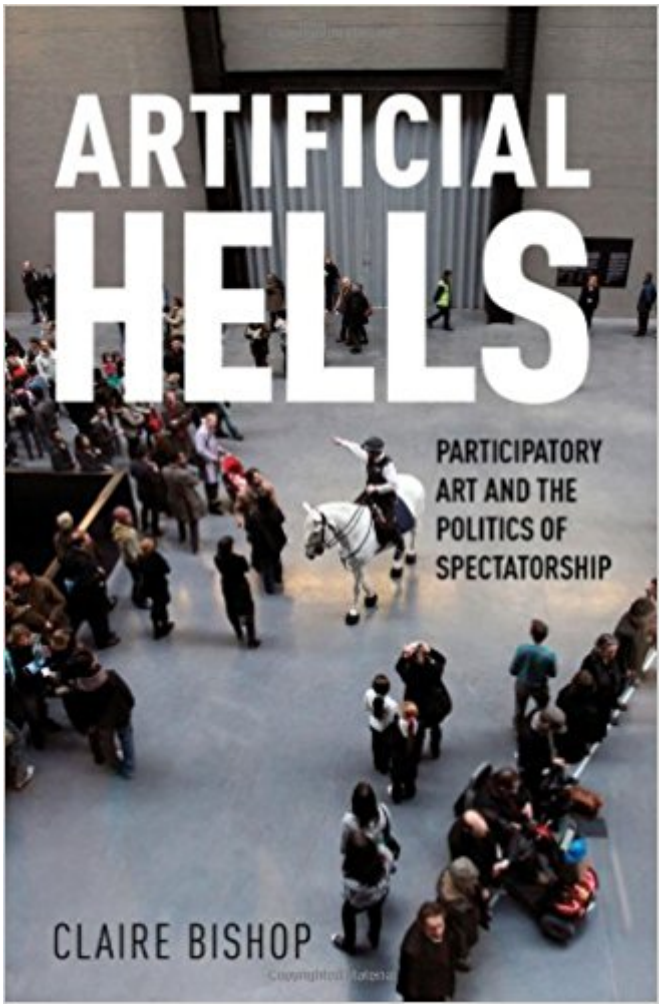
Artificial Hells: Participatory Art And The Politics Of Spectatorship



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Synopsis

Since the 1990s, critics and curators have broadly accepted the notion that participatory art is the ultimate political art: that by encouraging an audience to take part an artist can promote new emancipatory social relations. Around the world, the champions of this form of expression are numerous, ranging from art historians such as Grant Kester, curators such as Nicolas Bourriaud and Nato Thompson, to performance theorists such as Shannon Jackson. Artificial Hells is the first historical and theoretical overview of socially engaged participatory art, known in the US as â œsocial practice.â • Claire Bishop follows the trajectory of twentieth-century art and examines key moments in the development of a participatory aesthetic. This itinerary takes in Futurism and Dada; the Situationist International; Happenings in Eastern Europe, Argentina and Paris; the 1970s Community Arts Movement; and the Artists Placement Group. It concludes with a discussion of long-term educational projects by contemporary artists such as Thomas Hirschhorn, Tania Bruguera, Pawe? Althamer and Paul Chan.Since her controversial essay in Artforum in 2006, Claire Bishop has been one of the few to challenge the political and aesthetic ambitions of participatory art. In Artificial Hells, she not only scrutinizes the emancipatory claims made for these projects, but also provides an alternative to the ethical (rather than artistic) criteria invited by such artworks. Artificial Hells calls for a less prescriptive approach to art and politics, and for more compelling, troubling and bolder forms of participatory art and criticism.

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Customer Reviews

â œClaire Bishop has articulated an important historical overview of the global emergence of

participatory art ... Her controversial and thought-provoking conclusions courageously trouble our assumptions about the effectiveness of political artworks, questioning their oppositional quality, their effects on the audiences they reach, and their relation to the institutions that promote them.â •â ”Frank Jewett Mather Award, 2013â œBishopâ ™s arguments are convincingly supported and potentially very contentious...A critically challenging work of vital scholarship.â •â ”Publishers Weeklyâ œAn essential title for contemporary art history scholars and students as well as anyone who has witnessed a participatory art â ˆhappeningâ ™ and thought, â ˆNow thatâ ™s art!â ™ or â ˆThatâ ™s art?â ™â •â ”Library Journalâ œBishop seeks a standard for judging participatory works...She draws on the writings of French philosopher Jacques RanciÃ¨re to argue that art must maintain a degree of autonomy and unreadability in order to resist co-option by the political and economic forces intent on imposing a false social consensus.â •â ”Eleanor Heartney, Art in Americaâ œPellucidâ •â ”Alexander Provan, New York Observerâ œThe good intentions of contemporary artists frequently pave a road to hell. Claire Bishop follows their descent into the inferno and invites her readers to share her fascination with what she finds along the way. Artificial Hells combines vast historical knowledge with a precise analysis of individual artistic practices. So much so that at the end of her new book we have begun to fall in love with hellâ ”under the condition that it remains artificial.â •â ”Boris Groys, author of Art Power

Claire Bishop is Associate Professor in the History of Art department at the CUNY Graduate Center, New York. She is the author of Installation Art: A Critical History; Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship; and editor of Participation. in 2008 she co-curated the exhibition â œDouble Agentâ • at the ICA. She is a regular contributor to Artforum, October, Tate Etc, IDEA, and other international art magazines.

great for history and trauma

Claire Bishop convincingly raises questions about "social practice" art by providing a detailed historical overview along with a thorough examination of contemporary work in the field. "Artificial Hells" successfully clarifies what art is and what it is not.

Artifical Hells is a must read book, not only for arts’followers. Bishop’s point of view is a clever and unique one.

I can’t read this book on my mac. I’ve chatted with tech support and they know its a problem but they can’t fix it. I can’t even select the book on Kindle for Mac or the whole thing freezes up. I’ve read bits of the book on my iPhone, and it seems like a great book, but I don’t have any other way to publicly complain about this problem. Sorry Claire! Kindle Tech! Get your act together!!!

Unquestionably informative and chronologically coherent, Bishop’s book is great for the advanced scholar or connoisseur of performance and socially engaged art. That said, there’s a lot of information with tendrils across centuries as well as mediums, and the language is very forthright in presenting Bishop’s opinions; so, it’s potentially a bit daunting for those new to the subject.

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