This volume brings together new essays from distinguished scholars in a variety of disciplines – philosophy, history, literary studies, art history – to explore various ways in which aesthetics, politics, and the arts interact with one another. Politics is an elastic concept, covering an oceanic breadth of mechanisms for conducting relations among variously empowered groups, and these essays offer a range of perspectives, including nations, classes, and gendered subjects, which examine the imbrication of politics with arts. Together they demonstrate the need to counteract the reductionist view of the relationship between politics and the arts which prevails in various ways in both philosophy and critical theory, and suggest that the irreducibility of the aesthetic must prompt us to reconceive the political as it relates to human cultural activity.
CAMBRIDGE STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY AND THE ARTS

Series editors

SALIM KEMAL and IVAN GASKELL

Politics and aesthetics in the arts
“Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and the Arts” is a forum for examining issues common to philosophy and critical disciplines that deal with the history of art, literature, film, music and drama. In order to inform and advance both critical practice and philosophical approaches, the series analyses the aims, procedures, language and results of inquiry in the critical fields, and examines philosophical theories by reference to the needs of arts disciplines. This interaction of ideas and findings, and the ensuing discussion, brings into focus new perspectives and expands the terms in which the debate is conducted.
Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts

Edited by

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Editors’ acknowledgments

There are many people we should like to thank, too many to list here. Jane Baston and Jane Whitehead, as always; Leo, Sara, and Rahim, as always; William and Kathryn Robinson. We would like to thank our Advisory Board members and the other readers and advisors on particular papers for the series, and those who have encouraged us through reviews, citations, and proposals for journals and further volumes. Perhaps it is fitting that a topic such as the relation of politics to aesthetics, so open to contention, so provocative of passion, and in some people’s minds so entrenched in a system of received opinions and prejudices, should conclude the series. Throughout we have sought not only to bring together philosophers from both the analytical and continental schools, and theoretically minded practitioners of many other human science disciplines to consider common problems, but also to choose problems that in themselves challenge the theoretical status quo. The results have not fitted in with any existing orthodoxy, nor, we suspect, made many people feel more comfortable with their existing theoretical commitments. Our own choices have been informed by both politics and aesthetics: a politics and an aesthetics of surprise, quiet defiance, and disconcertion. With sincere thanks to all who have taken part in the series we now take our leave.