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978-0-521-83640-1 - Cezanne/Pissarro, Johns/Rauschenberg: Comparative Studies on Intersubjectivity in Modern Art

Joachim Pissarro

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CÉZANNE/PISSARRO, JOHNS/RAUSCHENBERG: COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON INTERSUBJECTIVITY IN MODERN ART

This book presents a comparative study of two pairs of collaborative artists who worked closely with one another for years. The first pair, Cézanne and Pissarro, contributed to the emergence of modernism. The second pair, Johns and Rauschenberg, contributed to the demise of modernism. In each case, the two artists entered into a rich and challenging artistic exchange and reaped enormous benefits from this interaction. Joachim Pissarro's comparative study suggests that these interactive dialogues were of great significance for each artist. Taking a cue from philosophers Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, he suggests that the individual is the result of reciprocal encounters: he argues that modern subjectivity is essentially open to others (intersubjective). Paradoxically, the *modernist* tradition has largely presented each of these four artists in isolation. This book thus also offers a critique of modernism as a monological ideology that resisted thinking about art in plural terms.

Joachim Pissarro is a curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. He is the author of many articles and books on aspects of modern art from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries, and he has contributed to several exhibition catalogues, most recently *Pioneering Modern Art: Paul Cézanne and Camille Pissarro 1865–1885* at The Museum of Modern Art in New York.

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In memory of my mother.

To my wife and my son.

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This book claims that the modern era – fraught with daunting challenges as it is – is still very much alive.

It rehearses two intuitions: the first from Kant, that one does not think (or create) as well alone as with others; the second from Fichte, that *my* freedom becomes explicit through the mediation of intersubjectivity, that is, that the condition of possibility of my freedom (especially here, as an artist) is that it be *recognized* by somebody else, and vice versa – a very timely concept today.

These two powerful intuitions are embodied throughout the making of modern art in the last two centuries: to take a metaphor close to Jasper Johns, it always takes two to *tango*. This book argues that, from beginning to end, modern art has been taking form through powerful artistic interchanges – such as the two examples (Cézanne/Pissarro and Johns/Rauschenberg) studied here.

Intersubjectivity is the subject of this book; it has also made this book possible. My vivid and warmest thanks go to Richard Schiff, as well as Michael Charlesworth, John Clarke, and Linda Henderson for accepting to read a very different and much larger version of this text as a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Texas at Austin. I am also very grateful to Richard Brettell and Tzvetan Todorov for shaping up and critiquing the initial argument that led to this book. The theoretical argument of this book owes much to many people, namely Alain Renaut, Jean-Marc and Luc Ferry, Jean-Claude Lebensztejn, Yves Michaud, and Tzvetan Todorov, in France; Jürgen Habermas in Germany; and Michael Holquist, Thomas McCarthy, and Rudolf Makkreel, in this country. Thomas Crow, Elizabeth Easton, John Elderfield, Richard S. Field, Romy Golan, Jonathan Katz, Karen Lang, Fred Orton, Adrian Piper, Nan Rosenthal, Jennifer Russell, Richard Schiff, Claire Snollaerts, James Traub, Jayne Warman, Jonathan Weinberg, and Christopher Wood: each generously and critically contributed to various stages of this work. My warmest appreciation goes to Guy and Alec Wildenstein, of the Wildenstein Institute, and to Richard Rubin, Jack Flam, and Joan Banach, of the Dedalus Foundation, for their unwavering support throughout my research on this book.

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