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978-1-107-69398-2 - Abstract Art Against Autonomy: Infection, Resistance, and Cure Since the 60s

Mark A. Cheetham

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ABSTRACT ART AGAINST AUTONOMY

Abstract Art Against Autonomy gives a revisionary account of abstract art since the decline of formalist paradigms in the 1960s. The narratives of purity and autonomy that ruled avant-garde abstraction in the mid-20th century have been opposed and eclipsed by practices of impurity. Driving this change is a discourse of biological infection that overturns the once-assumed goal of aesthetic autonomy. Cheetham identifies Kazimir Malevich's medical model of the infectious "additional element" as a source for and powerful trope through which to understand recent abstraction in its paradigmatic form, the monochrome, and in its less researched manifestations. He claims that abstract art remains a vital contributor to contemporary culture, but that it performs differently from its predecessors and cannot be adequately assessed without such new models of understanding.

Examining abstract art since the 1960s within a narrative of infection, resistance, and cure provides the opportunity to rethink abstraction's appearances within and beyond its traditional frames of reference. The book links in new ways artists whose work extends and complicates the traditions of abstract art, including Yves Klein, Robert Rauschenberg, Lucio Fontana, James Turrell, Robert Smithson, Gerhard Richter, Christian Eckart, Olafur Eliasson, Peter Halley, Jessica Stockholder, Lydia Dona, General Idea, and Taras Polataiko.

Mark A. Cheetham is professor of art history and director of the Canadian Studies Program at the University of Toronto. A recipient of fellowships and grants from The John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, he is the author and coeditor of seven books, including *Kant, Art, and Art History*, *The Subjects of Art History*, *The Rhetoric of Purity*, and *Theory Between the Disciplines: Authority/ Vision/ Politics*.

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For

Elizabeth D. Harvey

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