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Ellen Levy

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CRIMINAL INGENUITY



Moore, Cornell, Ashbery, and
the Struggle Between the Arts

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Ellen Levy : Criminal Ingenuity: Moore, Cornell, Ashbery, and the Struggle Between the Arts (Modernist Literature and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Criminal Ingenuity: Moore, Cornell, Ashbery, and the Struggle Between the Arts (Modernist Literature and Culture):

1 of 11 people found the following review helpful. A SCHOLARLY ASSESSMENT OF THREE ARTISTSBy

CHESTER PAGEI am fond of the work of Marianne Moore and Joseph Cornell, but find such academic analyses of their work uninteresting. I prefer going to the work of these artists directly and not having every aspect super analysed. This work will appeal only to other academics.

"Poetry was declining/ Painting advancing/ we were complaining/ it was '50," recalled poet Frank O'Hara in 1957. *Criminal Ingenuity* traces a series of linked moments in the history of this transfer of cultural power from the sphere of the word to that of the image. Ellen Levy explores the New York literary and art worlds in the years that bracket O'Hara's lament through close readings of the works and careers of poets Marianne Moore and John Ashbery and assemblage artist Joseph Cornell. In the course of these readings, Levy discusses such topics as the American debates around surrealism, the function of the "token woman" in artistic canons, and the role of the New York City Ballet in the development of mid-century modernism, and situates her central figures in relation to such colleagues and contemporaries as O'Hara, T. S. Eliot, Clement Greenberg, Walter Benjamin, and Lincoln Kirstein. Moore, Cornell, and Ashbery are connected by acquaintance and affinity-and above all, by the possession of what Moore calls "criminal ingenuity," a talent for situating themselves on the fault lines that fissure the realms of art, sexuality, and politics. As we consider their lives and works, Levy shows, the seemingly specialized question of the source and meaning of the struggle for power between art forms inexorably opens out to broader questions about social and artistic institutions and forces: the academy and the museum, professionalism and the market, and that institution of institutions, marriage.

"Essential reading for scholars of modernism and inter-arts comparisons, this wide-ranging study reframes mid-century modernism as a power struggle between poetry and painting. The three protagonists emerge not as victors in the struggle but as bystanders whose 'criminal ingenuity' resists the commodification and institutionalization of their respective arts." --Linda Leavell, Oklahoma State University
"This is a penetrating and ambitious study. Ellen Levy deploys some criminal ingenuity of her own as she tacks back and forth between institution critique on the one hand and close reading on the other, avoiding the sociological reductions of the one and the humanist idealizations of the other. The book is written with rare intelligence and passion, and these qualities show on every page." --Langdon Hammer, Yale University
About the Author Ellen Levy is Visiting Associate Professor at Pratt Institute.