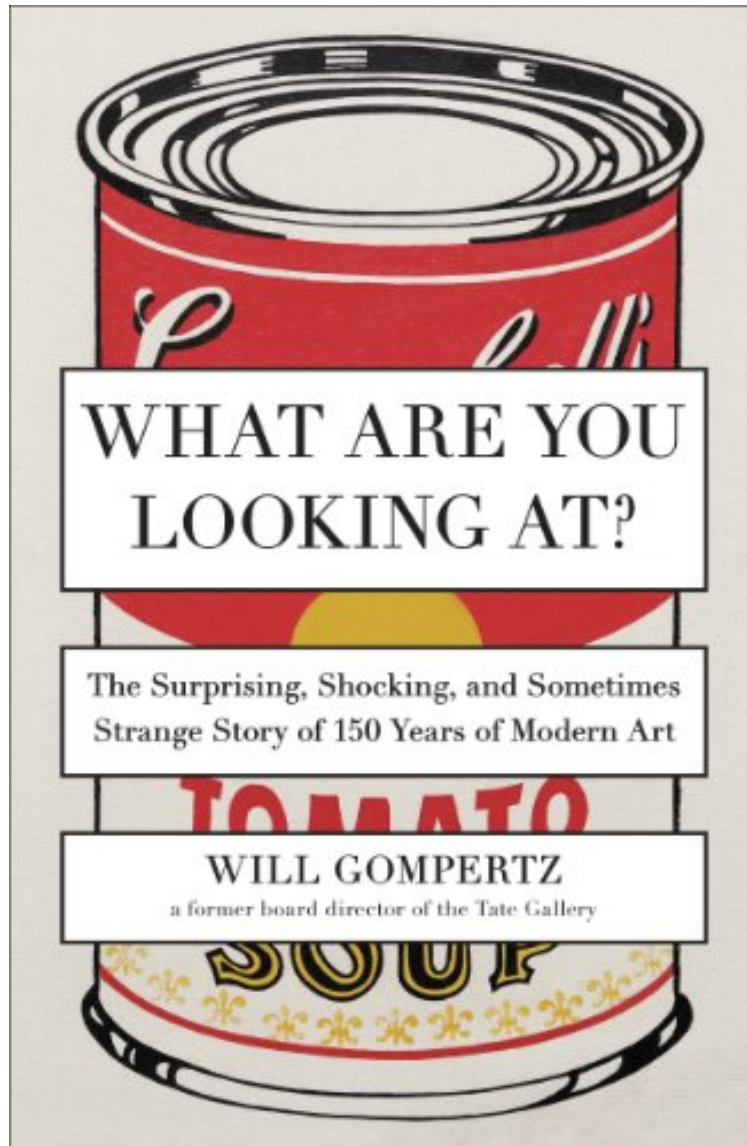


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## What Are You Looking At?: The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art

*Will Gompertz*

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**Will Gompertz : What Are You Looking At?: The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised What Are You Looking At?: The Surprising, Shocking, and Sometimes Strange Story of 150 Years of Modern Art:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Uneven but EnjoyableBy WHWhen Gompertz lets his personality

show and the anecdotes flow, his prose and this book floats and flies; when he pauses at times for drier academic asides (or to simply fill in a historical gap where he has little interest or passion), it slows. As a whole, this book is a terrific and informative survey of the history of (Western) modern art, albeit with some extremely well-written sections especially at the bookends (Impressionism and the last two decades) and some that are unclear, rushed or dragged out (Dadaism, Fauvism). One shortcoming in this one (and frankly most work): almost no representation by non Western artists (except for political showman Ai Weiwei of course...)4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. informative and very readableBy Charles D.Gompertz is a knowledgeable and entertaining writer. WAYLA offers a very coherent explanation of the puzzle of modern art --why works with very little technical virtuosity would be so well regarded, including why collectors and museums would pay such absurd prices. I learned a lot from this book. It introduced me to some art and some artists that I really enjoy. It confirmed some of my cynical presumptions about the art business but it also opened my mind.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Very enjoyable overview of modern artBy Sheryl NonnenbergI really enjoyed this book; it was informative without being pretentious, as many art history books can be. The author very clearly charts the evolution of modern art from Impressionism forward, in everyday terms and language that everyone can understand (no boring Artspeak). It was fun, amusing and really kept my interest. I would highly recommend it to anyone with an interest in art.

For skeptics, art lovers, and the millions of us who visit art galleries every year and dash and are confused and dash; What Are You Looking At? by former director of London's Tate Gallery Will Gompertz is a wonderfully lively, accessible narrative history of Modern Art, from Impressionism to the present day. What is modern art? Who started it? Why do we either love it or loathe it? And why is it such big money? Join BBC Arts Editor Will Gompertz on a dazzling tour that will change the way you look at modern art forever. From Monet's water lilies to Van Gogh's sunflowers, from Warhol's soup cans to Hirst's pickled shark, hear the stories behind the masterpieces, meet the artists as they really were, and discover the real point of modern art. You will learn: not all conceptual art is bollocks; Picasso is king (but Cezanne is better); Pollock is no drip; Dali painted with his moustache; a urinal changed the course of art; why your 5-year-old really couldn't do it. Refreshing, irreverent and always straightforward, What Are You Looking At? cuts through the pretentious art speak and asks all the basic questions that you were too afraid to ask. Your next trip to the art gallery is going to be a little less intimidating and a lot more interesting. With his offbeat humor, down-to-earth storytelling, and flair for odd details that spark insights, Will Gompertz is the perfect tour guide for modern art. His book doesn't tell us if a work of art is good; it gives us the knowledge to decide for ourselves.

From Booklist \*Starred \* Gompertz succeeds in his stated mission to take a "personal, informative, anecdotal, and accessible" approach to defining the full spectrum of modern art movements, beginning with impressionism, by portraying the instigating artists and explaining what they were up to and why. A former director of the Tate in London, and currently the arts editor at the BBC, Gompertz is adept at elucidating complex aesthetic ideas and artistic techniques and linking revolutionary art movements to social upheaval (war, communism, the Holocaust) and scientific and technological developments (quantum physics, television, the atom bomb). He revels in the creative, multidisciplinary synergy surrounding such key figures as Monet, Picasso, de Kooning, and Warhol. And he daringly takes a novelist's approach to such foundational acts as Duchamp's purchase of a urinal in New York City in 1917 to create a "readymade" sculpture that embodied the pivotal realization that if an artist says something is a work of art, it is. Gompertz adeptly divides each broad movement into its intriguing subgroups and includes many more artists, critics, and dealers than the usual suspects. His dissections of performance and conceptual art are uniquely clarifying, and he even coins a keenly apt term for such current provocateurs as Damien Hirst and Jeff Koons: the "entrepreneurialists." A deeply enlightening and buoyant history of modern art and beyond. -- Donna Seaman Will Gompertz is the best teacher you never had \* Guardian \* Gompertz has written an energetic and comprehensive romp through modern art -- Independent Gompertz flicks through a mental Rolodex of the world's most famous images and describes them with a freshness and vividness that brings them to life \* The Times \* Robert Hughes's The Shock of the New redone a la Bill Bryson ... few are the histories of modern art that name-check Beyonce, David Foster Wallace and Susan Boyle, or describe the saturnine Paul Cezanne as the 'Cool Hand Luke of the Parisian avant garde' ... Filters out all jargon and pretension and filters in plenty of fun ... A richly detailed and highly entertaining history from Delacroix to Damien Hirst \*\*\*\* \* Telegraph \* Gompertz writes about difficult things - the birth of conceptualism, the link between the pyramidal compositions of Gericault's Raft of the Medusa and Delacroix's Liberty Leading the People - without letting on that they are difficult ... this romp through art from the 1860s to now is both hugely accessible and old-fashionedly educative \* Independent on Sunday \* A lively train-ride through the art movements of the modern period ... While he doesn't dumb down the subject, he does take a fresh, energetic approach ... He explains movements and "isms" with clarity and humour \* Scotsman \* About the Author As the BBC's Arts Editor, Will Gompertz has interviewed and observed many of the world's leading artists, directors, novelists, musicians, actors and designers. Creativity Magazine in New York ranked him as one of the 50 most original thinkers in the world. He is the author of the international bestselling art history book What Are You Looking

At? which has been published in over 15 languages.