

Homo Aestheticus Where Art Comes From And Why

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◆Dissanayake argues that art was central to human evolutionary adaptation and that the aesthetic faculty is a basic psychological component of every human being. In her view, art is intimately linked to the origins of religious practices and to ceremonies of birth, death, transition, and transcendence. Drawing on her years in Sri Lanka, Nigeria, and Papua New Guinea, she gives examples of painting, song, dance, and drama as behaviors that enable participants to grasp and reinforce what is important to their cognitive world.◆◆Publishers Weekly◆Homo Aestheticus offers a wealth of original and critical thinking. It will inform and irritate specialist, student, and lay reader alike.◆◆American Anthropologist◆A thoughtful, elegant, and provocative analysis of aesthetic behavior in the development of our species◆one that acknowledges its roots in the work of prior thinkers while opening new vistas for those yet to come. If you're reading just one book on art anthropology this year, make it hers.◆◆Anthropology and Humanism

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To Ellen Dissanayake, the arts are biologically evolved propensities of human nature: their fundamental features helped early humans adapt to their environment and reproduce themselves successfully over generations. In *Art and Intimacy* she argues for the joint evolutionary origin of art and intimacy, what we commonly call love. It all begins with the human trait of birthing immature and helpless infants. To ensure that mothers find their demanding babies worth caring for, humans evolved to be lovable and to attune themselves to others from the moment of birth. The ways in which mother and infant respond to each other are rhythmically patterned vocalizations and exaggerated face and body movements that Dissanayake calls rhythms and sensory modes. Rhythms and modes also give rise to the arts. Because humans are born predisposed to respond to and use rhythmic-modal signals, societies everywhere have elaborated them further as music, mime, dance, and display, in rituals which instill and reinforce valued cultural beliefs. Just as rhythms and modes coordinate and unify the mother-infant pair, in ceremonies they coordinate and unify members of a group. Today we humans live in environments very different from those of our ancestors. They used ceremonies (the arts) to address matters of serious concern, such as health, prosperity, and fecundity, that affected their survival. Now we tend to dismiss the arts, to see them as superfluous, only for an elite. But if we are biologically predisposed to participate in artlike behavior, then we actually need the arts. Even -- or perhaps especially -- in our fast-paced, sophisticated modern lives, the arts encourage us to show that we care about important things.

Every human society displays some form of behavior that can be called "art," and in most societies other than our own the arts play an integral part in social life. Those who wish to understand art in its broadest sense, as a universal human endowment, need to go beyond modern Western elitist notions that disregard other cultures and ignore the human species' four-million-year evolutionary history. This book offers a new and unprecedentedly comprehensive theory of the evolutionary significance of art. Art, meaning not only visual art, but music, poetic language, dance, and performance, is for the first time regarded from a biobehavioral or ethical viewpoint. It is shown to be a biological necessity in human existence and fundamental characteristic of the human species. In this provocative study, Ellen Dissanayake examines art along with play and ritual as human behaviors that "make special," and proposes that making special is an inherited tendency as intrinsic to the human species as speech and toolmaking. She claims that the arts evolved as means of making socially important activities memorable and pleasurable, and thus have been essential to human survival. Avoiding simplism and reductionism, this original synthetic approach permits a fresh look at old questions about the origins, nature, purpose, and value of art. It crosses disciplinary boundaries and integrates a number of diverse fields: human ethology; evolutionary biology; the psychology and philosophy of art; physical and cultural anthropology; "primitive" and prehistoric art; Western cultural history; and children's art. The final chapter, "From Tradition to Aestheticism," explores some of the ways in which modern Western society has diverged from other societies--particularly the type of society in which human beings evolved--and considers the effects of the aberrance on our art and our attitudes toward art. This book is addressed to readers who have a concerned interest in the arts or in human nature and the state of modern society.

Can subjective, individual taste be reconciled with an objective, universal standard? In *Homo Aestheticus*, Luc Ferry argues that this central problem of aesthetic theory is fundamentally related to the political problem of democratic individualism. Ferry's treatise begins in the mid-1600s with the simultaneous invention of the notions of taste (the essence of art as subjective pleasure) and modern democracy (the idea of the State as a consensus among individuals). He explores the differences between subjectivity and individuality by examining aesthetic theory as developed first by Kant's predecessors and then by Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche, and proponents of the avant-garde. Ferry discerns two "moments" of the avant-garde aesthetic: the hyperindividualistic iconoclasm of creating something entirely new, and the hyperrealistic striving to achieve an extraordinary truth. The tension between these two, Ferry argues, preserves an essential element of the Enlightenment concern for reconciling the subjective and the objective—a problem that is at once aesthetic, ethical, and political. Rejecting postmodern proposals for either a radical break with or return to tradition, Ferry embraces a postmodernism that recasts Enlightenment notions of value as a new intersubjectivity. His original analysis of the growth and decline of the twentieth-century avant-garde movement sheds new light on the connections between aesthetics, ethics, and political theory.

Individuals seek ways to repress the sense of violence within themselves and often resort to medial channels. The hunger of the individual for violence is a trigger for the generation of violent content by media, owners of political power, owners of religious power, etc. However, this content is produced considering the individual's sensitivities. Thus, violence is aestheticized. Aesthetics of violence appear in different fields and in different forms. In order to analyze it, an interdisciplinary perspective is required. The *Handbook of Research on Aestheticization of Violence, Horror, and Power* brings together two different concepts that seem incompatible— aesthetics and violence—and focuses on the basic motives of aestheticizing and presenting violence in different fields and genres, as well as the role of audience reception. Seeking to reveal this togetherness with different methods, research, analyses, and findings in different fields that include media, urban design, art, and mythology, the book covers the aestheticization of fear, power, and violence in such mediums as public relations, digital games, and performance art. This comprehensive reference is an ideal source for researchers, academicians, and students working in the fields of media, culture, art, politics, architecture, aesthetics, history, cultural anthropology, and more.

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Beautifully illustrated and vividly written, "Inner Vision" explores how different areas of the brain shape responses to visual arts. 84 color illustrations. 8 halftones. 30 line illustrations.

The earliest rock art in the Americas as elsewhere is geometric or abstract. Until *Early Rock Art in the American West*, however, no book-length study has been devoted to the deep antiquity and amazing range of geometrics and the fascinating questions that arise from their ubiquity and variety. Why did they precede representational marks? What is known about their origins and functions? Why and how did humans begin to make marks, and what does this practice tell us about the early human mind? With some two hundred striking color images and discussions of chronology, dating, sites, and styles, this pioneering investigation of abstract geometrics on stone (as well as bone, ivory, and shell) explores its wide-ranging subject from the perspectives of ethnology, evolutionary biology, cognitive archaeology, and the psychology of artmaking. The authors' unique approach instills a greater respect for a largely unknown and underappreciated form of paleoart, suggesting that before humans became *Homo symbolicus* or even *Homo religiosus*, they were mark-makers *Homo aestheticus*.

"George Hagman looks anew at psychoanalytic ideas about art and beauty through the lens of current developmental psychology that recognizes the importance of attachment and affiliative motivational systems. In dialogue with theorists such as Freud, Ehrenzweig, Kris, Rank, Winnicott, Kohut, and many others, Hagman brings the psychoanalytic understanding of aesthetic experience into the 21st century. He amends and extends old concepts and offers a wealth of stimulating new ideas regarding the creative process, the ideal, beauty, ugliness, and -perhaps his most original contribution-the sublime. Especially welcome is his grounding of aesthetic experience in intersubjectivity and health rather than individualism and pathology. His emphasis on form rather than the content of an individual's aesthetic experience is a stimulating new direction for psychoanalytic theory of art. With this work Hagman stands in the company of his predecessors with this deeply-learned, sensitively conceived, and provocative general theory of human aesthetic experience." Ellen Dissanayake, author of "Art and Intimacy: How the Arts Began" and "Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes From and Why."

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