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Show Time: The 50 Most Influential Exhibitions Of Contemporary Art



Synopsis

This monumental new book explores the recent history of exhibition-making, looking at the radical shifts that have taken place in the practice of curating contemporary art over the last 20 years. Tracing a history of curating through its most innovative shows, renowned curator Jens Hoffmann selects the 50 key exhibitions that have most significantly shaped the practice of both artists and curators. Chosen from the plethora of exhibitions, biennials and art events that have sprung up across the world since the 1990s, each exhibition reviewed here has triggered profound changes in curatorial practice, and reanimated the potential of contemporary art. The book includes an international roster of curators, and exhibition venues that span the globe, from the USA, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa to France, Germany, the Netherlands, Turkey and Spain. It is comprised of nine themed sections, including: "New Lands" (on shows such as Magiciens de la Terre, The Short Century and After the Wall); "Biennial Years" (which documents influential biennials such as the Documentas [10, 11, 13] and the Berlin and São Paulo Biennials); "New Forms" (including experiments in exhibition-making such as Do It and NowHere); "Others Everywhere" (on identity politics shows such as In a Different Light, Phantom Sightings and the 1993 Whitney Biennial); "Tomorrow's Talents Today" (on influential group exhibitions of emerging artists such as Helter Skelter and Sensation); and "History" (on historical surveys such as Inside the Visible, Global Conceptualism and WACK!). A bold proposition for the future of exhibition culture as well as a means of making the recent past accessible, Show Time is essential reading for any student of curating or museum studies, for professional curators and for all those interested in one of today's most dynamic forms of cultural production. Jens Hoffmann is an exhibition maker and writer based in New York. He is Deputy Director and Head of Exhibitions and Public Programs at The Jewish Museum, New York. He has curated and co-curated a number of large-scale exhibitions, including the 2nd San Juan Triennial (2009), the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011) and the 9th Shanghai Biennial (2012).

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Customer Reviews

A total waste of money. I was expecting a range of good documentary illustrations of these exhibitions, alongside some (brief) introductory essays discussing the importance of each exhibition. This seems a totally reasonable expectation. What I received was a book that literally seemed to have been created by an algorithm: aside from the briefest of blurbs on the exhibition (more detailed information could be sourced off wikipedia!), the rest of the text was just a laundry list of names and numerical data on each show that seems completely useless for 99% of readers, whether those in the art world, in academics, or just a curious public. All this might have been acceptable if it had been a picture book of excellent illustrations, but here too it was awful: each exhibition gets a single, usually unrepresentative illustration. Between the short and awful text, and the few and awful illustrations, I felt like I had just wasted \$35. Seriously, you will get better information through a random web search than you will find in this book. At the same time, I had ordered "Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions that Made Art History: 1962-2002" by Bruce Altshuler, and that - while more expensive - is absolutely everything that this book was not. The illustrations within Altshuler's book are many and well-represent the exhibitions, and his ample texts are clear and authoritative. His is the book you want. It's beautiful and scholarly both. Hoffmann's is neither. I have immense respect for Hoffmann's work as a curator, so I have to believe this book was something that was basically thrown together by unpaid interns which he then put his name on. Unfortunate.

I recently discovered Show Time on but ended up buying it from my local bookstore. Overall this publication packs a huge amount of information in a concise, affordable package. It serves (for me) as an excellent introduction to the most important contemporary art exhibitions of the past twenty years. Depending on where you are coming from you may not agree with all the choices or feel that it doesn't dive deep enough into the critical reaction to the shows themselves, but if you simply want to get a crash course on the state of the contemporary art exhibition this should be your first stop. The book's design is a bit dry and I do wish it had more reproductions to flesh out the experience,

but overall I think it is one of few publications that covers such ground in a wide reaching way. I also found the roundtable interview to be quite interesting as well. Given its directness, I imagine it should be extremely useful to both undergraduate and grad students. Along with Salon to Biennial, Biennials and Beyond, On Curating, and A Brief History of Curating, Show Time is definitely recommended for anyone interested in contemporary art, curating, and global exhibitions.

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