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David Carrier

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David Carrier : Artwriting before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Artwriting:

Artwriting is a philosophical study of the history of recent American art criticism. Carrier argues that an artwork can be understood only relative to interpretation, a function of criticism. But unlike art history, art criticism cannot arrive at a consensus about what makes a "true" interpretation of an artwork. Criticism can only appeal to the persuasiveness of alternative critical narratives in determining an artwork's meaning and value. Carrier begins by comparing Greenberg's theory of modernism to Ernst Gombrich's history of the naturalistic tradition and shows that genealogies of art styles are not adequate bases for choosing between art interpretations. He then demonstrates why Michael Fried's and Adrian Stokes' alternative antihistorical attempts to ground art interpretation in the presentness of an artwork are also inadequate. Explaining how art critics interested in structuralism have begun to overcome the limitations of these approaches leads Carrier to contemporary criticism. All of these viewpoints, he concludes, have been superseded in part by an awareness that today the role of criticism can be understood only in relation to the art market system in which critics as well as artists, dealers, collectors and museums play a role.

From Library JournalThe term "artwriting" refers to texts either by art critics or by art historians; this book is a

philosophical account of the history of (mostly) recent art criticism. Carrier emphasizes that since visually identical objects may, as interpreted, be quite different visual artifacts, we need properly to identify an art work, to recognize the possibility of conflicting interpretations, and to understand the rhetoric of interpretation. Rejecting both historical criticism and antihistorical efforts to ground art criticism in "the presentness of art works," he builds upon structuralism to offer an alternative view in which criticism can be understood only in relation to the art market system, whose elements are artists, critics, museums, dealers, collectors, etc. Interesting reading, especially for historians and critics of art and culture. Robert Hoffman, Philosophy Dept., York Coll., CUNY Copyright 1987 Reed Business Information, Inc.