

Dialectical Passions: Negation in Postwar Art Theory (Columbia Themes in Philosophy, Social Criticism, and the Arts)



Representing a new generation of theorists who reaffirm the radical dimensions of art, Gail Day launches a bold critique of late-twentieth-century art theory and its often reductive analysis of cultural objects. Exploring core debates in discourses on art, from the New Left to theories of critical postmodernism and beyond, Day counters the belief that recent tendencies in art fail to be adequately critical and challenges the political inertia that results from these conclusions. Day organizes her defense around critics who have engaged substantively with emancipatory thought and social process: T. J. Clark, Manfredo Tafuri, Fredric Jameson, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, and Hal Foster, among others. She maps the tension between radical dialectics and left nihilism and assesses the interpretation and internalization of negation in art theory. Chapters confront the claim that exchange and equivalence have subsumed the use value of cultural objects—and with it critical distance; the meaning of symbol and allegory in 1980s art and its limited reading of the writings of Walter Benjamin and Paul de Man; and common conceptions of mediation, totality, and the politics of anticipation. A necessary unsettling of received wisdoms, *Dialectical Passions* sets a new course for emancipatory reflection in aesthetics, art, and architecture.

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