



Reclaiming Art in the Age of Artifice: A Treatise, Critique, and Call to Action (Manifesto)

J.F. Martel

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Part treatise, part critique, part call to action, *Reclaiming Art in the Age of Artifice* is a journey into the uncanny realities revealed to us in the great works of art of the past and present.

Received opinion holds that art is culturally-determined and relative. We are told that whether a picture, a movement, a text, or sound qualifies as a "work of art" largely depends on social attitudes and convention. Drawing on examples ranging from Paleolithic cave paintings to modern pop music and building on the ideas of James Joyce, Oscar Wilde, Gilles Deleuze, Carl Jung, and others, J.F. Martel argues that art is an inborn human phenomenon that precedes the formation of culture and even society. Art is free of politics and ideology. Paradoxically, that is what makes it a force of liberation wherever it breaks through the trance of humdrum existence. Like the act of dreaming, artistic creation is fundamentally mysterious. It is a gift from beyond the field of the human, and it connects us with realities that, though normally unseen, are crucial components of a living world.

While holding this to be true of authentic art, the author acknowledges the presence—overwhelming in our media-saturated age—of a false art that seeks not to liberate but to manipulate and control. Against this anti-artistic aesthetic force, which finds some of its most virulent manifestations in modern advertising, propaganda, and pornography, true art represents an effective line of defense. Martel argues that preserving artistic expression in the face of our contemporary hyper-aestheticism is essential to our own survival.

Art is more than mere ornament or entertainment; it is a way, one leading to what is most profound in us. *Reclaiming Art in the Age of Artifice* places art alongside languages and the biosphere as a thing endangered by the onslaught of predatory capitalism, spectacle culture, and myopic technological progress. The book is essential reading for visual artists, musicians, writers, actors, dancers, filmmakers, and poets. It will also interest anyone who has ever been deeply moved by a work of art, and for all who seek a way out of the web of deception and vampiric diversion that the current world order has woven around us.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

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