



The Innocent Eye

Jonathan Fineberg

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"When I was the age of these children I could draw like Raphael. It took me many years to learn how to draw like these children."--Pablo Picasso, upon viewing an exhibition of children's drawings, as quoted by Sir Herbert Read in 1945

The idea that modern art looks like something a child can do is a long-standing cliché. For some modernists, however, the connection between their work and children's art was direct and explicit. This groundbreaking and heretical book, centered on such modern masters as Klee, Kandinsky, Picasso, and Miró, presents for the first time material from the collections of child art that these artists actually possessed as they undertook some of the greatest masterworks of their careers. As the first art historian to pursue this connection in detail, Jonathan Fineberg here explores the importance of children's art to the work of key modernists from Matisse to Jackson Pollock. Fineberg's inquiry unfolds in this handsome book, which juxtaposes modern masterpieces with the drawings by children that directly influenced them. Fineberg discusses the effect of primitivism and Freudian thought on some of these artists, and demonstrates how they valued children's art for many reasons, including its naive spontaneity and celebration of the moment, imaginative use of visual language, and its universality and candor. For each of the masters who collected child art, the reasons for doing so are as varied as his or her unique style.

Fineberg has uncovered most of these major collections of child art assembled by celebrated modernists. Many examples from these collections are reproduced in this book for the first time, together with explanations as to why expressionists, cubists, futurists, and others displayed the art of children alongside their own work in exhibitions of the early twentieth century. In chapters devoted to Larionov, Kandinsky and Münter, Klee, Picasso, Miró, Dubuffet, the Cobra artists, and artists after World War II, Fineberg examines how each artist exploited aspects of child art to formulate his or her own artistic breakthroughs.

With over 170 color plates and 140 black and white illustrations, this visually compelling book will stimulate new research among art historians and will inspire museum visitors to see some of their favorite modern masterpieces in a new way.

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