



Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature (October Books)

By Devin Fore

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The human figure made a spectacular return in visual art and literature in the 1920s. Following modernism's withdrawal, nonobjective painting gave way to realistic depictions of the body and experimental literary techniques were abandoned for novels with powerfully individuated characters. But the celebrated return of the human in the interwar years was not as straightforward as it may seem. In *Realism after Modernism*, Devin Fore challenges the widely accepted view that this period represented a return to traditional realist representation and its humanist postulates. Interwar realism, he argues, did not reinstate its nineteenth-century predecessor but invoked realism as a strategy of mimicry that anticipates postmodernist pastiche. Through close readings of a series of works by German artists and writers of the period, Fore investigates five artistic devices that were central to interwar realism. He analyzes Bauhaus polymath László Moholy-Nagy's use of linear perspective; three industrial novels riven by the conflict between the temporality of capital and that of labor; Brecht's socialist realist plays, which explore new dramaturgical principles for depicting a collective subject; a memoir by Carl Einstein that oscillates between recollection and self-erasure; and the idiom of physiognomy in the photomontages of John Heartfield. Fore's readings reveal that each of these "rehumanized" works in fact calls into question the very categories of the human upon which realist figuration is based. Paradoxically, even as the human seemed to make a triumphal return in the culture of the interwar period, the definition of the human and the integrity of the body were becoming more tenuous than ever before. Interwar realism did not hearken back to earlier artistic modes but posited new and unfamiliar syntaxes of aesthetic encounter, revealing the emergence of a human subject quite unlike anything that had come before.



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Editorial Review

Review

Few books can confidently lay claim to having unearthed an entirely new cultural constellation. The achievement of *Realism after Modernism* is to call into question the very premises of the hackneyed distinction between avant-garde and realism. It compels us to conceptualize anew the ways in which notions of the human, temporality, and spatial perspective were reconfigured and recontextualized by artists and writers between the wars. Creatively juxtaposing photography, literature, theater, and photomontage, Devin Fore demonstrates that the art of the 1930s did not signal a regression to outmoded forms but heralded a distinctive aesthetic practice.

(**Anson Rabinbach**, Princeton University; author of *The Human Motor*)

With magisterial scholarship and profoundly original critical insights into the literature, the visual arts, and the philosophical anthropology of the interwar period, Devin Fore demonstrates that the rehumanizing of art (at once welcomed and lamented) was in fact a reinvention of the human, one in which human bodies are often shown as indistinguishable from the technical artifacts that surround them. Fore's brilliant work is an important event not only in cultural history, but also in the still urgent project of redefining, and expanding, our views of what constitutes the human.

(**Leo Bersani**, co-author of *Intimacies*; author of *Is the Rectum a Grave? and Other Essays*)

A sensational, refreshing view on the comeback of interwar realism, and an example of cultural studies at its best. Devin Fore dives into archival depths and brilliantly deciphers photography and literature with emphasis on their formal dimensions. The exciting discovery: realism after modernism depicts human beings as 'vacuum chambers' absorbing all functional media surrounding them.

(**Helmut Lethen**, Director, IFK International Research Center for Cultural Studies at the University of Art and Design, Linz, Vienna; author of *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar German*)

Fore shows that if the 'new man' envisioned in the figurative practices of Weimar Germany might seem at the center of the universe, he is in fact a prosthetic man: He has become a mere organ of that universe, which is now fully one of techniques and media. Fore's conclusion resonates powerfully with our own historical status in the Internet age and indeed the interwar discourses he engages are finding surprising echoes in current anthropology and media studies.

(Yve-Alain Bois *Artforum*, "The Best Books of 2012")

About the Author

Devin Fore is Associate Professor in the Department of German at Princeton University.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Brian Andres:

Information is provisions for folks to get better life, information nowadays can get by anyone on everywhere. The information can be a knowledge or any news even an issue. What people must be consider when those information which is from the former life are hard to be find than now could be taking seriously which one would work to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you obtain the unstable resource then you get it as your main information there will be huge disadvantage for you. All of those possibilities will not happen inside you if you take Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature (October Books) as the daily resource information.

Ellen Omalley:

Reading a publication tends to be new life style within this era globalization. With reading you can get a lot of information which will give you benefit in your life. Together with book everyone in this world may share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. A lot of author can inspire their particular reader with their story or their experience. Not only the story that share in the ebooks. But also they write about the ability about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach your young ones, there are many kinds of book which exist now. The authors these days always try to improve their expertise in writing, they also doing some investigation before they write to their book. One of them is this Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature (October Books).

Maurice Neely:

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Carolyn Charles:

That guide can make you to feel relax. This specific book Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature (October Books) was colourful and of course has pictures around. As we know that book Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature (October Books) has many kinds or style. Start from kids until adolescents. For example Naruto or Private investigator Conan you can read and believe that you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book usually are make you bored, any it makes you feel happy, fun and rest. Try to choose the best book to suit your needs and try to like reading

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