The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course In Art History From Prehistoric To Post-Modern (Annotated Series)

Synopsis

Carol Strickland's The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from Prehistoric to Post-Modern offers an illustrated tutorial of prehistoric to post-modern art, from cave paintings to video art installations to digital and Internet media."Like music, art is a universal language. Although looking at works of art is a pleasurable enough experience, to appreciate them fully requires certain skills and knowledge."--Carol Strickland, from the introduction to The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from Prehistoric to Post-ModernThis heavily illustrated crash course in art history is revised and updated. Featuring succinct page-length essays, instructive sidebars, and more than 300 photographs, The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from Prehistoric to Post-Modern takes art education out of the realm of dreary textbooks, demystifies jargon and theory, and makes the history of art movements accessible to beginning art museum-goers â " even at a cursory reading. From Stonehenge to the Guggenheim and from African art to Warhol, more than 25,000 years of art is distilled into five sections (prehistoric and medieval, renaissance and baroque, the nineteenth century, modern art, and contemporary art) covering a little more than 200 pages.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Annotated Mona Lisa: A Crash Course in Art History from Prehistoric to Post-Modern" is more than a crash course, a term used for its catchiness. Actually, the book is a synopsis of art history and provides the lay person concise and brief explanations of history, movements, schools, and

individual artists and artwork. I taught art history for several years at the high school level and relied on Janson's History of Art 7th Ed. and Wood's Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post-Modernism as my personal instructors. Every night I had to slog through pages of information when all I wanted was something concise and to the point. "The Annotated Mona Lisa" would have served me well. I found this the other day and popped my forehead (as in V-8 commercials) and asked aloud: Why didn't I use this book for my background? Apparently, I bought it then promptly forgot/misplaced/had little time to use it. Here's why this book will be a companion for anyone interested in teaching him/herself about art history:1. Five time categories (ex. Prehistoric through Medieval) with very clear subtitles (ex. Mesopotamia: the Architects)2. Short explanations per topic.

It does indeed require a crash course to recount 25,000 years of art history in just under 200 pages. The Annotated Mona Lisa does it well with a few exceptions. Beginning with the title itself, it should be noted that this book details the history of "Western" art only, a distinction that is vital for a holistic understanding of art. Another exception is an occasional departure in chronological order. For example, the inclusion of Art Nouveau architecture in the section on Rococo Art (which is twenty-five pages before Art Nouveau is discussed) disrupts the chronological flow. There are also occasional poor choices of representative artwork. For example, I would not consider City Night to be representative of Georgia O'Keeffe's work. I noticed as well that certain well-known terms that describe art styles or techniques are omitted; an example is "Frontalism" in Egyptian art. Some art movements that I would consider to be significant are also omitted, such as the Pre-Raphaelites. And I must admit I was disheartened to see an outright inaccuracy when the book stated that artist Artemisia Gentileschi accused a fellow pupil of raping her when it is known to have been her teacher she accused. What the The Annotated Mona Lisa excels at is providing the reader with numerous charts that compare styles that are often confused such as Gothic and Romanesque architecture or Italian Renaissance and Northern Renaissance art. There are also charts that distinguish between artists such as the one that differentiates the style characteristics of several Post-Impressionist artists. The upbeat writing and interesting facts about artists and their work really help to keep the reader engaged as do interesting page designs and more than 300 illustrations, many of them in color.

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