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The New Philistines: (Provocations)

Sohrab Ahmari

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Sohrab Ahmari : The New Philistines: (Provocations) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The New Philistines: (Provocations):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The artsy-fartsy emperor has no clothes!By Book WormGreat language, especially in comparison to the gibberish of the artsy folks' talk the author is quoting to make his point. Modern art has lost meaning for him, he sees no beauty. Art, and the ex-bourgeois artists and their sycophants have

become messengers or even missionaries for the improvement of the marginalized (real or imagined). The art objects, so the author, are full of message, and bare of beauty, worse than under the socialistic governments art industry. Some 20 years ago I overheard a museum tour guide pointing at a completely white, about two by three meter size painting by Cy Twombly to alert the spectators to the "Potentialis" in this image. I thought this was about the widest stretch for your imagination possible. After reading Ahmari I have to rethink that. In comparison to the observations the author describes, Twombly's picture feels more like a painter's reflection on Michelangelo. The essay is entertaining to read, even if you do not agree with the author's strong views. (I tend to agree with his view that Shakespeare does not really need to be ultra-modernized, but I would be more tolerant with modern visual arts, after all they are modern and generic, even if they lack ingenuity or talent). There is a potential for a major trans-Atlantic misunderstanding though. The author calls the artists (and their fans) he criticises "identitarians". In Europe Identitarians represent an (ultra-)right wing political movement, I am sure the author would not wish them confused with those rather left leaning artists. I believe, the term has a somewhat different use in the US. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A peak behind the curtains of politics By David Morgan I appreciate the conviction in Ahmari's writing. This book exposes the politics of identity for what it is: a dead end. He helps those of us who aren't experts in art to understand the broader impact the art world has on everyday life. (Perhaps not as well as Francis Schaeffer, but this book has a narrower scope, it seems.) He shows how "identitarian politics" has engulfed the art world to its hurt, and led to the rising of nationalist reactions like Trump, Le Pen, and others. Thoroughly enjoyable and well paced, I heartily recommend "The New Philistines." 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Important read By S L H Wonderful writing on an important subject. Wish it had been longer. I hope to share and discuss with artist friends.

Contemporary art is obsessed with the politics of identity. Visit any contemporary gallery, museum or theatre, and chances are the art on offer will be principally concerned with race, gender, sexuality, power and privilege. The quest for truth, freedom and the sacred has been thrust aside to make room for identity politics. Mystery, individuality and beauty are out; radical feminism, racial grievance and queer theory are in. The result is a drearily predictable culture and the narrowing of the space for creative self-expression and honest criticism. Sohrab Ahmari's book is a passionate *cri de coeur* against this state of affairs. *The New Philistines* takes readers deep inside a cultural scene where all manner of ugly, inept art is celebrated so long as it toes the ideological line, and where the artistic glories of the Western world are revised and disfigured to fit the rigid doctrines of identity politics. The degree of politicisation means that art no longer performs its historical function, as a mirror and repository of the human spirit - something that should alarm not just art lovers but anyone who cares about the future of liberal civilisation.

"Sohrab Ahmari's polemic against the contemporary art world is angry, witty, uncompromising, and utterly unanswerable... Tremendously entertaining and thought-provoking." - Andrew Roberts, *Commentary*; "An elegant and necessary salvo in a new culture war." - Quillette; "An ambitious new series that tackles the controversy of the topics explored with a mixture of intelligence and forthright argument from some excellent writers." *The Observer*; "This short book is reminiscent of pre-novelist Tom Wolfe books like *The Painted Word* and *From Bauhaus to Our House*, which told amusing but depressing tales about lefty politics making their way into the art world, making both art and politics worse in the process." - *National* About the Author Sohrab Ahmari is an editorial writer for the *Wall Street Journal*, based in London. He joined the *Journal* in New York as an assistant books editor in 2012. Prior to that, he earned a law degree at Northeastern University in Boston, served as a non-resident fellow at the Henry Jackson Society and completed a two-year commitment to Teach for America. In addition to the *Journal*, Sohrab's writing has appeared in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Weekly Standard*, *Commentary* and *Dissent*, among many other publications. He has testified before the British Parliament and appears regularly on broadcast media on both sides of the Atlantic, including the BBC, Sky News, France 24, Deutsche Welle and the Fox News Channel.