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Welcome to the ninth edition of Janson’s Basic History of Western Art, a concise introduction to the Western tradition in art. Derived from the comprehensive Janson’s History of Western Art, the “Basic” has always offered readers a strong focus on Western art, an important consideration of technique and style, and a clear point of view. It concentrates the discussion on the object, its manufacture, and its visual character, and considers the contribution of the artist as an important part of the analysis. In response to reviewers’ requests, this edition expands the coverage of Islamic art into a discrete chapter. It also continues to maintain separate chapters on the Northern European Renaissance, the Italian Renaissance, and the High Renaissance, with stylistic divisions for key periods of the modern era. This edition thus creates a narrative of how art has changed over time in the cultures that Europe has claimed as its patrimony and that Americans have claimed through their connection to Europe. Janson’s Basic History of Western Art, ninth edition, is the product of careful revision by a team of scholars with different specialties, bringing great depth to the discussions of works of art.

The authors also explore how works of art have been used to shore up political or social power. They also discuss the visibility of women, whom the authors discuss as artists, as patrons, and as an audience for works of art. Inspired by contemporary approaches to art history, they also address the representation of women as expressions of specific cultural notions of femininity or as symbols.

Objects, Media, and Techniques

Many new objects have been incorporated into this edition. Throughout, pictures have been updated whenever new and improved images were available. The mediums discussed include not only modern art forms such as installations and earth art, but also the so-called minor arts of earlier periods—such as tapestries and metalwork. Discussions in the Materials and Techniques boxes illuminate this dimension of art history.

Preface

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Interpreting Cultures

Western art history encompasses a great many distinct chronological and cultural periods, which the authors wish to treat as distinct entities. So, for example, Etruscan art is presented as evidence for Etruscan culture, not as a precursor of Roman or a follower of Greek art.

Women in the History of Art

Another important feature of the Basic is the visibility of women, whom the authors discuss as artists, as patrons, and as an audience for works of art. Inspired by contemporary approaches to art history, they also address the representation of women as expressions of specific cultural notions of femininity or as symbols.

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