



# Conceptual Revolutions in Twentieth-Century Art

*By David W. Galenson*

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From Picasso's Cubism and Duchamp's readymades to Warhol's silkscreens and Smithson's earthworks, the art of the twentieth century broke completely with earlier artistic traditions. A basic change in the market for advanced art produced a heightened demand for innovation, and young conceptual innovators - from Picasso and Duchamp to Rauschenberg and Warhol to Cindy Sherman and Damien Hirst - responded not only by creating dozens of new forms of art, but also by behaving in ways that would have been incomprehensible to their predecessors. *Conceptual Revolutions in Twentieth-Century Art* presents the first systematic analysis of the reasons for this discontinuity. David W. Galenson, whose earlier research has changed our understanding of creativity, combines social scientific methods with qualitative analysis to produce a fundamentally new interpretation of modern art that will give readers a far deeper appreciation of the art of the past century, and of today, than is available elsewhere.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"To Mr. Galenson markets are what make the 20th century completely different from other eras for art. . . . [B]reaking the rules became the most valued attribute. The greatest rewards went to conceptual innovators who frequently changed styles and invented genres." - Patricia Cohen, *The New York Times*

"David Galenson brings the insights of an economic historian to this fascinating study of innovation in modern art. He shows how changes in the structure of the market for new art altered the innovation process itself and how the nature of innovation developed in the lives of many 20th century artists. Anyone interested in the development of 20th century art and any economist interested in the general process of innovation will want to read this book." - Martin Feldstein, Department of Economics, Harvard University

"With this book, David Galenson burnishes his reputation as one of the most interesting economists at work today. Once you've read *Conceptual Revolutions in Twentieth-Century Art*, you'll never look at modern art - or the creative process - quite the same way." - Daniel H. Pink, author of *A Whole New Mind*

"David Galenson has written the most inventive, surprising, and illuminating book on modern art to appear in my lifetime. I can think of no other book on modern art that remotely resembles *Conceptual Revolutions in Twentieth-Century Art*. Yet it is a surprising book because Galenson draws much of his evidence from what artists and art historians have been saying about modern art for more than a century. What Galenson has done is to take often over-familiar material and to reshape it by asking simple questions about artists' behavior and then systematically setting out to explain them. Most importantly, I know of no artist, and certainly no art historian, who has seen so clearly the connection between the variety and pace of 20th-century artistic innovations and the increasing autonomy granted to artists by a richly competitive market. After introductory chapters on innovation and artistic importance, *Conceptual Revolutions* describes with unsurpassed clarity artistic behaviors new to recent art. Each chapter can be read independently of the others, but taken together readers will find clearly explained much of what often seems mysterious not only to the layperson but even to the art professional. *Conceptual Revolutions* offers new explanations for many familiar phenomena in modern art and challenges many received ideas held by scholars of 20th-century art, all presented in a prose style that is accessible to any intelligent reader. *Conceptual Revolutions* should change any open-minded reader's basic perceptions about art today." - Robert Jensen, Department of Art, University of Kentucky

"A fascinating and highly readable explanation of why the art of the 20th century changed so dramatically from that which came earlier. David Galenson goes further in using innovative methods of analysis to change our concept of modern art than anyone I know. Entertaining and informative." - Don Thompson, author of *The \$12 Million Stuffed Shark: The Curious Economics of Contemporary Art*

#### About the Author

David W. Galenson is Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago and Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research. His other published works include *Painting Outside the Lines* (2001) and *Old Masters and Young Geniuses* (2006).

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#### **Kim Nielsen:**

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