

Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism

Raoul Eshelman



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There is a widespread feeling that postmodernism is on its way out. However, up to now there has been no attempt to define what the epoch after it would look like. Performatism, or the End of Postmodernism is the first book to offer a systematic theory of culture after postmodernism. The book maintains that we have entered a new, monist epoch in which aesthetically imposed belief replaces endless irony as the dominant force in culture. This new cultural dominant, which I call performatism, works by artificially "framing" readers or viewers in such a way that they have no choice but to accept the external givens of a work and identify with the characters within it. In short, they are forcibly made to believe-if only within an particular aesthetic context. This basic procedure can be shown to operate not only in narrative genres like film and literature, but also in visual ones like art and architecture. This new aesthetic is documented in well-known films and novels such as American Beauty, The Celebration, Life of Pi, Middlesex, and The God of Small Things as well as in the work of major architects and artists such as Sir Norman Foster, Renzo Piano, Andreas Gursky, Neo Rauch, and Vanessa Beecroft.

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