

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays is a pivotal collection that has significantly influenced modern literary and aesthetic theory. Edited by Susan Sontag herself, this anthology compiles her most influential essays, many of which challenge conventional approaches to art, literature, and culture. Published in 1966, the collection reflects Sontag's critical stance against the dominant interpretive practices of her time, advocating instead for a more direct, sensory engagement with artistic works. Her essays have sparked debates on the purpose of art, the role of the critic, and the nature of interpretation, making this collection a cornerstone in 20th-century cultural criticism.

Understanding Susan Sontag's Critique of Interpretation

The Core Argument in "Against Interpretation"

At the heart of Sontag's essay "Against Interpretation" lies a rejection of the tendency to reduce art to mere symbols or ideological messages. She criticizes the prevailing tendency among critics to dissect works of art analytically, stripping them of their immediate sensuous pleasures and emotional impact. According to Sontag, this approach diminishes art's power by turning it into a code to be decoded rather than an experience to be felt.

Key points include:

- Interpretation as a form of intellectual reductionism

- The importance of aesthetic experience over intellectual analysis
- The danger of turning art into a political or moral lesson

Sontag advocates for an appreciation rooted in the sensory and emotional aspects of art, emphasizing that art should be enjoyed on a visceral level rather than solely analyzed for hidden meanings.

The Impact of Sontag's Critique on Literary and Artistic Theory

Her critique was revolutionary because it challenged the dominant hermeneutic traditions, especially those influenced by psychoanalysis and Marxism, which sought to uncover underlying meanings in texts and artworks. Sontag's stance encouraged critics and audiences alike to focus on the immediate aesthetic experience, fostering a more open and personal engagement with art.

This shift had several implications:

- Encouraged a focus on form, style, and sensory qualities
- Reduced the tendency to interpret art solely through ideological lenses
- Opened space for appreciating art in its own right, free from over-interpretation

Her ideas also influenced subsequent movements in art criticism, including New Criticism and phenomenological approaches, which prioritize the viewer's or reader's direct experience.

Other Notable Essays in the Collection

Apart from "Against Interpretation," the collection includes essays that explore various facets of culture, art, and politics, reflecting Sontag's multifaceted intellectual engagement.

"On Style"

In this essay, Sontag emphasizes the importance of style in art and literature as an autonomous element. She argues that style is not merely superficial but essential to the meaning and impact of a work. Her discussion highlights how stylistic choices can evoke emotion and shape perception, advocating for recognition of style as a vital component of artistic expression.

"Notes on 'Camp'"

This essay explores the aesthetic sensibility known as "camp," characterized by irony, exaggeration, and a love of the unnatural or theatrical. Sontag examines how camp challenges traditional notions of taste and beauty, celebrating artifice and exaggeration as expressions of authenticity and cultural critique. It remains a foundational text in understanding queer aesthetics and popular culture.

"Fascinating Fascism"

Here, Sontag investigates the seductive appeal of fascist aesthetics and rhetoric, analyzing how totalitarian regimes use visual and verbal language to manipulate mass audiences. The essay warns of the dangers of aestheticization of politics and emphasizes the importance of critical awareness in the face of propaganda.

"On Photography"

Although originally a separate work, this essay is included in the broader collection and discusses

photography's role in shaping perception and memory. Sontag considers how photographs influence our understanding of reality and the implications of viewing images as forms of cultural and political expression.

The Influence of Sontag's Essays on Contemporary Culture

Revolutionizing Art Criticism

Sontag's emphasis on sensory experience over interpretive analysis has inspired critics to re-evaluate their approaches. Contemporary critics often prioritize the visceral and emotional aspects of art, fostering a more democratized engagement that values personal response alongside scholarly interpretation.

Impact on Literary Theory

Her ideas have contributed to debates about reader-response theory and the role of the critic. Sontag's advocacy for experiencing art directly has encouraged a more participatory approach to reading and viewing, emphasizing that interpretation should complement, not overshadow, immediate experience.

Broader Cultural Implications

Sontag's essays also influence cultural critique beyond the arts, informing discussions about media, politics, and societal values. Her warnings about aestheticizing politics and the power of images remain relevant in an age dominated by visual culture and social media.

Criticisms and Debates Surrounding Sontag's Views

While widely celebrated, Sontag's stance has faced criticism from various quarters.

Critiques from Post-Structuralists and Deconstructionists

Some argue that her rejection of interpretation risks superficial engagement, neglecting the complex layers of meaning that can enrich understanding of art and culture. They contend that interpretation can deepen insight rather than diminish it.

Concerns about Artistic Autonomy

Others worry that emphasizing sensory experience might diminish the importance of intellectual or political engagement with art, potentially sidelining critical analysis in favor of aesthetic pleasure.

Balancing Sensory and Intellectual Engagement

The ongoing debate centers on finding a balance between appreciating art for its immediate impact and engaging in thoughtful interpretation. Many modern critics advocate for an integrated approach that respects both perspectives.

Legacy of Susan Sontag's "Against Interpretation and Other Essays"

Sontag's collection remains a vital text for students, critics, and creators. Her call to prioritize direct

aesthetic experience over over-interpretation continues to resonate in an era overloaded with information and analysis. Her essays serve as a reminder to approach art with openness, curiosity, and sensuous engagement, fostering a richer cultural appreciation.

Her influence extends beyond academia into popular culture, inspiring artists, writers, and thinkers to reconsider the ways they engage with and interpret art. The collection's enduring relevance underscores its importance as a landmark in critical thought, challenging us to experience art fully and authentically.

In conclusion, "Against Interpretation and Other Essays" by Susan Sontag remains a powerful manifesto for appreciating art beyond mere analysis. It advocates for a more immediate, sensory, and personal engagement with creative works, urging critics and audiences alike to experience art in its raw, visceral form. As debates about interpretation and aesthetic value continue to evolve, Sontag's insights provide a timeless framework for understanding and valuing the multifaceted nature of human creativity.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central argument of Susan Sontag in 'Against Interpretation and Other Essays'?

Susan Sontag argues that overemphasizing interpretation diminishes the immediate experience and aesthetic value of art, advocating for appreciating art through direct perception rather than analytical decoding.

How does Sontag critique traditional approaches to art interpretation

in her essays?

Sontag criticizes traditional interpretation for reducing art to a set of symbols or meanings, which she believes can strip away the sensory and emotional richness of the artwork, urging a more perceptual approach.

In what ways does Sontag's stance in 'Against Interpretation' influence contemporary art criticism?

Her stance encourages critics and audiences to focus on the sensory and experiential aspects of art, promoting a more immediate and visceral engagement rather than solely analytical or theoretical analysis.

What are some examples of 'direct perception' of art that Sontag advocates for?

Sontag promotes experiencing art through visceral reactions, appreciating form, color, texture, and emotional impact without immediately seeking to decode or interpret symbolic meanings.

How does Sontag address the role of interpretation in literature and visual arts?

She suggests that interpretation can sometimes hinder genuine appreciation, arguing that art should first be experienced on a sensory level before engaging in interpretive analysis.

What impact did 'Against Interpretation and Other Essays' have on the philosophy of aesthetics?

The collection challenged prevailing aesthetic theories by emphasizing the importance of sensory experience, influencing later debates about the purpose of art and the role of interpretation.

How does Susan Sontag connect the idea of interpretation to cultural and societal issues in her essays?

Sontag critiques how interpretation can serve ideological purposes, sometimes obscuring discomfiting truths, and advocates for a more honest, perceptual engagement with art and culture.

What is Sontag's view on the relationship between art and morality in her essays?

She contends that art should be appreciated for its aesthetic qualities first, rather than judged primarily by moral or political considerations, promoting a focus on sensory and emotional experience.

Why is 'Against Interpretation and Other Essays' considered a seminal work in modern aesthetic thought?

Because it challenged conventional notions of interpretation, emphasizing direct experience and sensory perception, it remains influential in shaping contemporary attitudes toward art appreciation and criticism.

Additional Resources

Susan Sontag *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*: A Deep Dive into Art, Interpretation, and the Human Condition

In the landscape of 20th-century critical thought, Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* stands as a seminal collection that challenges conventional approaches to understanding art and culture. Known for her incisive wit, philosophical rigor, and poetic prose, Sontag's essays question the very act of interpretation—arguing that overanalyzing art can strip it of its visceral power and emotional immediacy. This collection is not merely a critique but an invitation to reconsider how we engage with aesthetic and cultural phenomena, emphasizing sensory experience, authenticity, and the

importance of resisting reductive readings.

Understanding the Context of Susan Sontag's Work

Before delving into the core ideas of *Against Interpretation*, it's essential to appreciate the intellectual climate of the 1960s and early 1970s, during which Sontag was writing. The period was marked by a burgeoning interest in semiotics, psychoanalysis, and structuralism—all of which fostered a tendency to decode and interpret art as a form of symbolic language. Critics and theorists were increasingly concerned with uncovering hidden meanings, often at the expense of immediate aesthetic experience.

Sontag's essays emerged as a response to this trend, advocating instead for a more direct, sensuous engagement with art. Her perspective is rooted in the belief that art should evoke visceral responses rather than be dissected into abstract symbols. This stance aligns with her broader philosophical commitment to authenticity, immediacy, and the power of the sensory.

Key Themes in *Against Interpretation* and Other Essays

1. The Critique of Interpretation

At the heart of Sontag's critique is her famous assertion that "In place of a hermeneutics of suspicion, we need a sensuousness." She argues that interpretation often diminishes art to a set of meanings, stripping it of its emotional and aesthetic impact.

Main points include:

- Overinterpretation reduces art to a puzzle, losing its capacity to evoke genuine feeling.
- The act of interpretation can be a form of intellectual vanity, where understanding replaces

experiencing.

- Art should be appreciated for its form and sensory qualities rather than for what it "means."

2. The Emphasis on Sensory Experience

Sontag champions a direct, immediate engagement with art and culture. She advocates for experiencing works of art through the senses, emphasizing the importance of aesthetic pleasure and emotional resonance over intellectual analysis.

Key ideas include:

- Cultivating a "sensuousness" that allows art to speak to our primal instincts.
- Appreciating the beauty, form, and materiality of art instead of dissecting its symbolism.
- Recognizing that sensory engagement fosters a deeper, more authentic connection with art.

3. The Role of Art in Society

Sontag explores how art functions within societal and political contexts. She suggests that art should serve as a form of personal and collective awakening rather than a tool for ideological interpretation.

Discussion points:

- The potential of art to challenge societal norms when appreciated aesthetically.
- The danger of politicizing art to the point where its aesthetic qualities are sacrificed.
- The importance of maintaining the integrity of artistic expression amid cultural revolutions.

Major Essays in the Collection

Against Interpretation (1964)

This essay is the collection's centerpiece and encapsulates Sontag's critique of the interpretive tradition. She criticizes critics and theorists who reduce art to a set of symbols, arguing that this approach can diminish the emotional power of artworks.

Highlights include:

- The distinction between "resisting interpretation" and "appreciating form."
- The idea that art's primary function is to evoke feelings, not to be decoded.
- The call for a more "aesthetic" approach—what she later terms "the aesthetic as a moral stance."

Notes on "Camp" (1964)

Though not directly about interpretation, this essay reveals Sontag's broader interest in aesthetic sensibility. She describes "camp" as an appreciation of artifice, stylization, and irony—values that challenge traditional notions of seriousness and authenticity.

Key insights:

- Camp as an attitude that celebrates artifice and exaggeration.
- Its role in fostering a playful, subversive appreciation of culture.
- The importance of embracing aesthetic pleasures that defy conventional standards.

On Style (1962)

In this essay, Sontag emphasizes the importance of style as a form of individual expression. She argues that style is an authentic reflection of personal identity and should be appreciated for its aesthetic qualities.

Main ideas:

- Style as a mode of resisting conformity.

- The significance of authentic self-expression.
- The difference between superficial style and genuine artistic voice.

Sontag's Legacy and Influence

Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* has profoundly influenced contemporary arts criticism, cultural theory, and philosophical discourse. Her emphasis on sensory experience and her skepticism of interpretation have inspired movements like experiential art, new aestheticism, and anti-psychoanalytic approaches.

Notable impacts include:

- Challenging critics and theorists to reconsider the role of interpretation.
- Encouraging audiences to re-engage with art on a visceral level.
- Influencing artists who prioritize sensory and material qualities in their work.

Practical Implications for Art Appreciation Today

In the digital age, where images and information are abundant and instantaneous, Sontag's call for sensuous engagement is more relevant than ever. Her ideas suggest that:

- Instead of rushing to analyze or interpret, audiences should spend time simply experiencing art.
- Appreciating art's form and materiality can lead to richer, more authentic engagement.
- Critical thinking should complement, not replace, sensory experience.

Tips for applying Sontag's principles:

- Spend time with artworks without preconceived notions or analytical frameworks.
- Focus on the sensory aspects—the textures, colors, sounds, and physical presence.
- Reflect on how the art makes you feel, rather than what it "means."
- Engage with art in communal settings to share visceral reactions.

Conclusion: Embracing Sensory Engagement over Interpretation

Susan Sontag *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* invites us to reconsider our relationship with art and culture. Her critique of interpretive excess underscores the importance of experiencing art as an immediate, visceral phenomenon—an encounter that awakens our senses and emotions. While interpretation has its place, Sontag reminds us that the power of art lies ultimately in its ability to move us directly, beyond the confines of intellectual analysis.

By embracing her ideas, critics, artists, and audiences can foster a richer, more authentic engagement with cultural works—one rooted in sensory immediacy, aesthetic appreciation, and a deep respect for the human capacity to feel and experience. In a world increasingly dominated by analysis and information, Sontag's call to prioritize sensuousness remains a vital and inspiring perspective for understanding art and ourselves.

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susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: [Against Interpretation](#) Susan Sontag, 2013-10-01 Includes the essay Notes on Camp, the inspiration for the 2019 exhibition Notes on Fashion: Camp at the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Against Interpretation was Susan Sontag's first collection of essays and is a modern classic. Originally published in 1966, it has never gone out of print and has influenced generations of readers all over the world. It includes the groundbreaking essays Notes on Camp and Against Interpretation, as well as her impassioned discussions of Sartre, Camus, Simone Weil, Godard, Beckett, Levi-Strauss, science-fiction movies, psychoanalysis, and contemporary religious thought. This edition has a new afterword, Thirty Years Later, in which Sontag restates the terms of her battle against philistinism and against ethical shallowness and indifference.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* Susan Sontag, 1966 First published in 1966, this celebrated book--Sontag's first collection of

essays--quickly became a modern classic, and has had an enormous influence in America and abroad on thinking about the arts and contemporary culture. As well as the title essay and the famous Notes on Camp, *Against Interpretation* includes original and provocative discussions of Sartre, Simone Weil, Godard, Beckett, science-fiction movies, psychoanalysis, and contemporary religious thinking. This edition features a new afterword by Sontag.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Against Interpretation* Susan Sontag, 1996

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susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Cultural Conservatism, Political Liberalism* James Seaton, 1996 Examines whether cultural studies has been too dismissive of the tradition of literary-cultural criticism that preceded it

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Fatefully, Faithfully Feminist* Carlos Monsiváis, 2024-02-25 This critical anthology of writings by Carlos Monsiváis represents a foundational set of texts by an exceptional (yet under-translated) Mexican cultural critic. *Fatefully, Faithfully Feminist* situates the urgencies of social movements as they developed in real time. Spanning from 1973 to 2008, Monsiváis's essays, which were originally compiled by scholar Marta Lamas, analyze the role of women in a patriarchal culture from pre-Columbian times to the present. This critical edition offers extensive annotation and cultural background to understand the cogent, but particularly Mexican arguments that Monsiváis makes, many of which are extremely relevant in today's political economy in the US and the world. Norma Klahn and Ilana Luna's translation, critical introduction, and commentary consider issues of context, history, and conventions, framing Monsiváis's debates in relation to global feminist history and human rights struggles.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *The Cambridge Introduction to Satire* Jonathan Greenberg, 2019 Provides a comprehensive overview for both beginning and advanced students of satiric forms from ancient poetry to contemporary digital media.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Art Rebels* Paul Lopes, 2019-06-11 How creative freedom, race, class, and gender shaped the rebellion of two visionary artists Postwar America experienced an unprecedented flourishing of avant-garde and independent art. Across the arts, artists rebelled against traditional conventions, embracing a commitment to creative autonomy and personal vision never before witnessed in the United States. Paul Lopes calls this the Heroic Age of American Art, and identifies two artists—Miles Davis and Martin Scorsese—as two of its leading icons. In this compelling book, Lopes tells the story of how a pair of talented and outspoken art rebels defied prevailing conventions to elevate American jazz and film to unimagined critical heights. During the Heroic Age of American Art—where creative independence and the unrelenting pressures of success were constantly at odds—Davis and Scorsese became influential figures with such modern classics as *Kind of Blue* and *Raging Bull*. Their careers also reflected the conflicting ideals of, and contentious debates concerning, avant-garde and independent art during this period. In examining their art and public stories, Lopes also shows how their rebellions as artists were intimately linked to their racial and ethnic identities and how both artists adopted hypermasculine ideologies that exposed the problematic intersection of gender with their racial and ethnic identities as iconic art rebels. *Art Rebels* is the essential account of a new breed of artists who left an indelible mark on American culture in the second half of the twentieth century. It is an unforgettable portrait of two iconic artists who exemplified the complex interplay of the quest for artistic autonomy and the expression of social identity during the Heroic Age of American Art.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: Othello Peter Davison, 1988-09-02

Even productions of Othello based on very different conceptions of the play can prove successful and deeply moving. Among critics, however, Othello has roused furious critical disagreement, remarkable for the degree of animosity exposed. After an Introduction in which the problems of analysing this play are outlined, Peter Davison considers six critical approaches to Othello: Genre, Historical and Social, Dramatic Convention and Decorum, Character and Psychological, the Play as Dramatic Poem, and Archetypal Criticism. In the second part of this study, Professor Davison offers his own, contextual approach. He takes into account the historical and social context in which the play was written, the context of the play in performance, and the context in which contemporary audiences see and read Othello. He also provides a guide for further reading.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: The Crane's Walk Jeremy Barris,

2009-08-25 In *The Crane's Walk*, Jeremy Barris seeks to show that we can conceive and live with a pluralism of standpoints with conflicting standards for truth--with the truth of each being entirely unaffected by the truth of the others. He argues that Plato's work expresses this kind of pluralism, and that this pluralism is important in its own right, whether or not we agree about what Plato's standpoint is. The longest tradition of Plato scholarship identifies crucial faults in Plato's theory of Ideas. Barris argues that Plato deliberately displayed those faults, because he wanted to demonstrate that basic kinds of error or illogic have dimensions that are crucial to the establishing of truth. These dimensions legitimate a paradoxical coordination of logically incompatible conceptions of truth. Connecting this idea with emerging currents of Plato scholarship, he emphasizes, in addition to the dialogues' arguments, the importance of their nonargumentative features, including drama, myths, fictions, anecdotes, and humor. These unanalyzed nonargumentative features function rigorously, as a lever with which to examine the enterprise of rational argument itself, without presupposing its standards or illegitimately assimilating any position to the standards of another. Today, communities are torn apart by conflicts within and between a host of different pluralist and absolutist commitments. The possibility developed in this book--a coordination of absolute and relative truth that allows an understanding of some relativist and some absolutist positions as being fully legitimate and as capable of existing in a relation to their opposites--may contribute to perspectives for resolving these conflicts.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: Cult Film as a Guide to Life I.Q.

Hunter, 2016-09-08 *Cult Film as a Guide to Life* investigates the world and experience of cult films, from well-loved classics to the worst movies ever made. Including comprehensive studies of cult phenomena such as trash films, exploitation versions, cult adaptations, and case studies of movies as different as *Showgirls*, *Room 237* and *The Lord of the G-Strings*, this lively, provocative and original book shows why cult films may just be the perfect guide to making sense of the contemporary world. Using his expertise in two fields, I.Q. Hunter also explores the important overlap between cult film and adaptation studies. He argues that adaptation studies could learn a great deal from cult and fan studies about the importance of audiences' emotional investment not only in texts but also in the relationships between them, and how such bonds of caring are structured over time. The book's emergent theme is cult film as lived experience. With reference mostly to American cinema, Hunter explores how cultists, with their powerful emotional investment in films, care for them over time and across numerous intertexts in relationships of memory, nostalgia and anticipation.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: Art after the Hipster Wes Hill,

2017-10-20 This book examines the complexities of the hipster through the lens of art history and cultural theory, from Charles Baudelaire's flâneur to the contemporary "creative" borne from creative industries policies. It claims that the recent ubiquity of hipster culture has led many artists to confront their own significance, responding to the mass artification of contemporary life by de-emphasising the formal and textual deconstructions so central to the legacies of modern and postmodern art. In the era of creative digital technologies, long held characteristics of art such as individual expression, innovation, and alternative lifestyle are now features of a flooded and fast-paced global marketplace. Against the idea that artists, like hipsters, are the "foot soldiers of

capitalism”, the institutionalized networks that make up the contemporary art world are working to portray a view of art that is less a discerning exercise in innovative form-making than a social platform—a forum for populist aesthetic pleasures or socio-political causes. It is in this sense that the concept of the hipster is caught up in age-old debates about the relation between ethics and aesthetics, examined here in terms of the dynamics of global contemporary art.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: Engaging Smithsonian Objects through Science, History, and the Arts Mary Jo Arnoldi, 2016-01-05 How do we come to know the world around us? What about worlds apart from our own—outer space, distant cultures, or even long-past eras of history? *Engaging Smithsonian Objects through Science, History, and the Arts* explores these questions and suggests an answer: we come to know our world and worlds apart through the objects that represent them. Objects are a window, and by looking through them we can learn and understand more about the people who made them and the time and place they came from. In the pursuit of this understanding museums are invaluable; they are repositories not just of things but also of past, present, and future knowledge. *Engaging Smithsonian Objects* puts these ideas into practice, using objects to bring us to new knowledge and showing how museums support us in the endeavor. The book is organized around ten objects from the Smithsonian’s vast collections. Some of the objects are iconic—the Ruby Slippers from *The Wizard of Oz* or three Stradivarius string instruments—while others are more ordinary, though no less interesting—an Iron Lung or a Hawaiian gourd drum. Two different authors with expertise in different academic disciplines write about each object from their unique professional and personal perspective. Both the authors and the ten featured objects represent a range of academic disciplines, from art to anthropology to geology. Taken together, the twenty essays in the book demonstrate just how much we can learn from objects by considering their kaleidoscopic meaning and significance from a variety of viewpoints. The book’s interdisciplinary engagement with objects was inspired by the Smithsonian Material Culture Forum, now in its twenty-sixth year. For students of material culture and museum studies, this book illustrates the vitality and value of exploring material culture through the lens of intersecting disciplinary perspectives. For students of curiosity and lifelong learning, this book offers a lively and thoughtful look into the Smithsonian’s collection and the many vibrant worlds it represents. Richly illustrated with color plates and photographs throughout, *Engaging Smithsonian Objects through Science, History, and the Arts* is a beautiful and stimulating answer to the question, “How do we know our world, and how can we know more?”

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Cosmopolitan Style* Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 2006 This is a groundbreaking work which links the novels of modernist, contemporary, and postcolonial authors to rethink the political nature of cosmopolitanism.

susan sontag against interpretation and other essays: *Claes Oldenburg* Nadja Rottner, 2012-02-03 Contemporary criticism, interviews, scholarly reassessments, and texts by the artist focusing on Claes Oldenburg’s sculptures, installations, and multimedia performances between 1960 and 1965. Claes Oldenburg (born in 1929) is largely known today as a pop art sculptor. Oldenburg himself described his formless canvas and vinyl soft sculptures—gigantic hamburgers and ice cream cones, cushiony toilets and typewriters—as “objects that elude definition.” This collection of writings revisits not only Oldenburg’s soft objects from the early to mid 1960s but also his pioneering installations *The Street* (1960) and *The Store* (1961–1962) and his often overlooked multimedia performances. As the artist translated his ideas and beliefs into various media and formats, his work drew on a range of styles and schools, including abstract expressionism, Happenings, pop art, minimalism, and postminimalism. Perhaps because of their refusal to be classified, these artworks are as contemporary today as they were when they were created between 1960 and 1965. This collection serves both as a summation of early critical thinking on Oldenburg’s art and a starting point for consideration of the artist as a forerunner of current art trends of stylelessness and intermediality. It includes both contemporary criticism and more recent scholarly reassessments, interviews with the artist, and Oldenburg’s own unpublished manifesto on the Ray Gun Theater (the artist’s name for his performance series in the back of *The Store*).

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