



Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting

Barry Schwabsky

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This highly illustrated overview of the state of painting documents concerns and ideas among contemporary painters. Often moving beyond the traditional image associated with this medium, this survey illustrates the richness, eclecticism, dynamism and contemporaneity of painting.

Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting Details

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From Reader Review Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting for online ebook

Anish says

this book is super fantastic

Kim says

Definitely one of my favorite reference books. This book is indispensable and time and time again I thumb through it for inspiration when I come up to that road block of creativity. A must have! Well done, Phaidon, well done.

Michael Endo says

This book is a "must have" for anyone interested in painting. My only hope is that they release new editions as the landscape of contemporary painting changes.

Matt says

This may be an odd book about which to write a review, since 90% of its page space goes to pictures. But I take my art books as seriously as the rest of my collection, and took the time to go through this one cover-to-cover, so I figured I might as well write down my thoughts. As a collection of contemporary painters, this book is fantastic – the breadth of forms and techniques present is truly astounding, and even the most up-to-date art lover is bound to encounter the work of a painter they'd never heard of before (in my case, the disturbingly empty suburban landscapes of British painter George Shaw). Of course, any survey of art, especially contemporary art, is bound to be uneven – there's plenty of awful art flooding the market right now. The overall high quality and diversity of works on display, however, make this a minor shortcoming.

What is harder to forgive, however, is the defensiveness of the accompanying text. Each artist's work is shown with a two-three paragraph explication of their work, and more than 50% of these feel the need to assert, either subtly or overtly, that this particular artist is an example that "painting isn't dead." Besides being repetitive, this insistence on the resurrection of painting is unnecessary – no one, at least no one of any consequence, has claimed that painting was dead since the late 1970s. The very existence of this book should support that fact – the need for these curators to pound the table and scream about the importance of painting ends up weakening their case, not strengthening it.

Alex Einz says

its a reference book really , good variable collection of modern artists

Brian says

More of a reference than a sit-down-and-read, Phaidon has created yet another incredible art book, that should be considered indispensable for the contemporary painter, and invaluable for an enthusiast of contemporary painting.

THAT SAID--

There's a lot of work in here that's not going to knock your socks off. The collection of artists assembled here are somewhat inconsistent in quality--but from an editor's point of view, an incredibly large range of work is represented--you might be surprised at what strikes a chord with you. Particular faves of mine in Vitamin P--Peter Doig, Jane Callister, Karen Kilimnick, Laylah Ali, Fred Tomaselli, Elizabeth Peyton, Matthew Ritchie.... and a bunch of other good ones I can't recall right now. Really informative, and far-reaching. A great book.

I found Vitamin D was a lot more consistent in quality, but maybe that's just me.

Mike says

As others have noted, this isn't a "sit down and read" type of book but rather a coffee-table art book full of some of the best contemporary painting from the late 1990s to the early 2000s (it was published in 2004). So reviewing it is different from reviewing a novel or biography, yet it has Phaidon Press' award-winning, jaw-dropping, amazing graphic design and is of the highest of quality all the way around. A stellar selection of artists, true diversity and quality, and the best design and printing standards you could ask for, too. Phaidon could print a napkin and it would look amazing, you have to understand, these people know printing and graphic design like no one else! I would highly highly recommend this book to art students, artists, and anyone who loves contemporary art.

miguel says

Though I haven't explored their photography volume yet, Phaidon's Vitamin series are excellent primers to contemporary art, narrowed down to a specific medium (thank god). The general scene being as diverse and everywhere as it is, this kind of loose focus (operative term being loose) is amazing to experience, leafing through artist after artist. The critical blurbs can be frustratingly brief and at worst too vague, but for the most part they give a reasonable introduction in thinking of an artist's work on his/her terms. Plus, it's Phaidon, so it's going to look sexy and feel supercool. Very recommended.

Chris says

Schwabsky, Barry, ed. Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting. London: Phaidon, 2002. 352ps. ISBN: 0714844462. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Chris Pusateri

Among the most venerated of visual media, painting occupies a position that is both enviable and dubious. The same ubiquity that makes it identifiable to any schoolchild also makes it an easy target for detractors. But one thing is certain: not since Marcel Duchamp famously abandoned painting has there been any question of its use as a proving ground—as the genre against which all other forms, old and new, are judged.

In this hybrid age, when the very utility of genres is frequently questioned, we might ask, as editor Barry Schwabsky does, if such designations have lost their descriptive capacity. What is a painting? And if we can't answer that question, then why have genres at all? In my experience, labels are about judgment, and judgment in art is about the formation of taste. When we look at a painting, we can see certain formal elements at work—color, brushstroke, gesture, and so forth—and we use those things to judge the quality of a piece. The reason that formally innovative work is so often dismissed absent any real critical scrutiny is because the old rules of judgment do not apply. That is, the typical museumgoer looks at the conceptual work of Robert Smithson, let's say, and does not know by what characteristics he should judge it. His inability to fashion any evaluative criteria lead to a glib dismissal. He says that's not art because he can't explain what makes it good or bad.

But maybe the true measure of a genre's durability depends on its ability to encourage innovation and still remain discrete as an area of practice. In this book, Schwabsky convenes 114 painters, ranging in age from early twenties to early fifties, whose styles constitute an astonishingly broad survey of current techniques and procedures. From the shivering water pointillism of Johannes Kahrs to the architectural sparseness of Toba Khedoori, the artists of this book demand room and board within the genre of painting.

By casting his net so broadly, Schwabsky argues for the elasticity of painting. Vitamin P places Fabian Marcaccio's fabric-infused abstraction alongside Michael Lin's floral interiors and argues for the work of both with equal vigor. This book serves as proof that the continued health of painting depends on its willingness to acknowledge those artists who inhabit its margins, and whose work makes us question where the boundaries of painting reside.

-Originally published in the October 2008 issue of Chicago Artists' News.

Lucie says

I own this great and pretty heavy book that's ideal for artists or just people who want to know the current 'trends' in art. Definately good to find out some new and unkown names in the area! :)

Sarah says

would like to own all the vitamin books

Chris Lockhart says

some nice artwork, difficult typography. I did not read this book, because it was unpleasant to look at. I feel

the graphic designer made stylistic choices that gave importance to design and used the text and images to that end, rather than the other way around. Therefore, the book was nice to look at on the shelf, on the coffee table, and flipping through the pages. Too bad I was actually interested in the artwork and text.

June says

start to read it.

Annelise DeVore says

Another excellent art survey from Phaidon, Vitamin P includes a surprisingly broad assortment of contemporary artists working in paint. It's a useful reference for the artist, and an accessible introduction for anyone new to the world of late 20th - current painting. Also check out Vitamin D, their book of drawing.

Bridget says

This is a must have for all currently working artists. Great selection of contemporaries.
