



Modernism at the Barricades: aesthetics, Politics, Utopia

By Stephen Eric Bronner



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Stephen Eric Bronner revisits the modernist project's groundbreaking innovations, its experimental imagination, and its utopian politics. Reading the artistic and intellectual achievements of the movement's leading figures against larger social, political, and cultural trends, he follows the rise of a flawed yet salient effort at liberation and its confrontation with modernity. *Modernism at the Barricades* features chapters on expressionism, futurism, surrealism, and revolutionary art and includes fresh perspectives on the work of Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky, and Emil Nolde, among others. The volume illuminates an international avant garde intent on resisting bureaucracy, standardization, scientific rationality, and the increasing commodification of mass culture. Modernists sought new ways of feeling, new forms of expression, and new possibilities of experience while seeking to refashion society. Liberation was their aim, along with the invigoration of daily life—yet their process entangled political resistance with the cultural. Exploring both the political responsibility of the artist and the manipulation of authorial intention, Bronner reconfigures the modernist movement for contemporary progressive purposes and offers insight into the problems still complicating cultural politics. He ultimately reasserts the political dimension of developments often understood in purely aesthetic terms and confronts the self-indulgence and political irresponsibility of certain so-called modernists today. The result is a long overdue reinterpretation and rehabilitation of the modernist legacy for a new age.

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Editorial Review

Review

Modernism at the Barricades is an erudite, wide-ranging, and provocative exploration of the twentieth-century avant-garde in all of its rich and multifaceted guises and incarnations. As Bronner shows, modernism sought to dash the beautiful illusions of art for art's sake to produce a resurrection of lived experience amid the ruins of a declining bourgeois civilization. If this ambitious aesthetic program 'failed,' it was, as Bronner demonstrates, a magnificent failure from which we stand to learn much today.

(Richard Wolin, Graduate Center, City University of New York, and author of *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of the 1960s*)

A champion of clarity with a style to match, Stephen Eric Bronner has produced a capacious and fascinating survey of some of modernism's greatest achievements. It is also, miraculously, a genealogy and an inspiration for cultural politics today. Bronner's book goes back to basics, enabling us to feel what it felt like when 'make it new' was new. With his trademark verve, ambition, and deep erudition, he not only covers the whole of modernism but also stands up for a beleaguered modernity.

(Bruce Robbins, Columbia University, author of *Upward Mobility and the Common Good: Toward a Literary History of the Welfare State*)

A work of scope and substance that merits serious attention from modernist scholars everywhere.

(David Weir *Modernism/Modernity*)

An unusually compelling and provocative, book that draws on [Bronner's] extensive knowledge of the artistic and political movements of the twentieth century.... A smart, engaging, and compelling book.... wonderful.

(Simon Stow *New Political Science*)

[A] thought-provoking book.

(Sean Sayers *H-Socialisms*)

Review

Stephen Eric Bronner has spent decades studying modernism and politics, and *Modernism at the Barricades* pulls together his work in a highly original and impressive philosophical, political, and historical synthesis, providing rich insight into the history of modernism, key movements and artists and their milieu, and its politics. Bronner is one of the best writers on art and politics, and each of his chapters is an engaging and insightful essay that illuminates modernism's aesthetics, politics, and historical moment.

(Douglas Kellner, University of California, Los Angeles, and author of *Media Spectacle*)

About the Author

Stephen Eric Bronner is Distinguished Professor (PII) of Political Science at Rutgers University. His books include *Socialism Unbound: Principles, Practices, and Prospects*; *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*; *Camus: Portrait of a Moralist*; and *Reclaiming the Enlightenment: Toward a Politics of Radical Engagement*.

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Evelyn Nielson:

The experience that you get from Modernism at the Barricades: aesthetics, Politics, Utopia could be the more deep you looking the information that hide inside the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Modernism at the Barricades: aesthetics, Politics, Utopia giving you excitement feeling of reading. The article author conveys their point in particular way that can be understood by anyone who read the idea because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. That book also makes your own vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having that Modernism at the Barricades: aesthetics, Politics, Utopia instantly.

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