

Theorizing imitation in the visual arts : global contexts

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Abstrak

From antiquity to the present, the theory and practice of imitation have been central to the construction of art. Yet despite a growing body of recent work, imitation is still commonly confused with the practice of copying. This misunderstanding is detrimental to the many kinds of replication that are negatively compared with notions of originality and authenticity, such as appropriation, quotation, reproduction, citation and reference. Nevertheless it is the act of repetition that confers the quality of originality and authenticity on the model in the first place --- a paradoxical gesture of demarcation that serves to establish a representational hierarchy between imitation and model. This reinforces the perception that all forms of imitation necessarily run counter to the idea of innovation or emulation.

This collection of essays challenges these prejudices by bringing to bear a perspective that reveals the ubiquity of the practice of imitation across cultures while underlining the homology of theories of imitation from within the various historical and geographical positions that are investigated. Leading scholars bring light to a broad range of areas, some of which have been little researched in the past, providing an invaluable text for undergraduates and scholars of art history, visual studies, and aesthetics, and museum professionals.