



Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us from Seeing

Darian Leader

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When the Mona Lisa was stolen from the Louvre in 1911, it was twenty-four hours before anyone noticed it was missing. Afterward, countless people flocked to see the empty space where it had once been on display. What could have drawn these crowds to stare at a blank wall? Many of them had never seen the painting in the first place. Can this tell us something about why we look at art, why artists create it, and why it has to be so expensive? Taking this story as his starting point, Darian Leader explores the psychology of looking at paintings and sculpture. He combines anecdote, observation, and analysis with examples taken from classical and contemporary art. This is a book about why we look at art, and what, indeed, we might be hoping to find.

Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us from Seeing Details

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Author : Darian Leader

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From Reader Review Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us from Seeing for online ebook

Pam says

So far I really like it, it's different from pretty much everything I've read before, and readable, which are both plusses :)

John Kemp says

An absorbing and non-threatening point of entry to the Lacanian universe, its brilliance and manifold perversities, using the theft of the Mona Lisa and Freud's reading of Leonardo as the point of departure for a wider reflection on modernist aesthetics.

Lisa says

I don't know if I agree with all of Mr. Leader's conclusions, but I loved this book. He includes so many huge ideas in such a short book, and his examples run the gamut from art to movies to everyday life. Mr. Leader is a Freudian scholar and his point of view is illuminating and challenging. A fast, worthwhile read.

Karin Gottshall says

Is it because of Leader's psychoanalytic lens, which seems so out of vogue in the age of the Brain, that he's not better-known? Or maybe he's just too difficult to really fit into the popular nonfiction category, but too readable to be pigeonholed as academic. He's brilliant, and I've been reading everything I can find by him. Like his other work, Stealing the Mona Lisa is dense and beautifully written. Some of Leader's ideas seem far-fetched, but I love that he's continually casting out beyond the familiar, into the strangeness of our desires. For every theory that leaves me unconvinced, he posits ten more that allow me to see myself and the world differently, in ways that feel profound and true.

?oincidental Dandy says

As steep as the proposed theories & concepts put forward by the author may be, they still make for an enlightening & interesting read.

Amy says

While the title suggests that this book is about the Mona Lisa and its 1911 theft from the Louvre, that event

is merely the starting point for a much broader discussion of art. Author Darian Leader is a psychoanalyst who explores the reasons why we look at art and why artists create; what are we trying to see and what do we fail to see?

Readers should be prepared for dense discussion of drives and sublimation (key elements of the psychoanalyst's craft). At times, Leader also assumes that the reader has at least a passing knowledge of mythology and specific works of art.

Exploring the human motivation for creating and viewing art is an interesting topic, but this title will not appeal to most readers.

Ángel says

Un libro recomendable para los amantes del arte y para los que buscan comprenderlo. Aquí se aborda desde la perspectiva del psicoanálisis. Luego, hallarán buenos planteamientos sobre el arte y nuestra forma de acercarnos a él; es accesible a cualquier lector por su lenguaje, la simplicidad de sus planteamientos y el humor e ingenio con el que se intercalan anécdotas que lo aleja de otros libros de arte más densos. Sin embargo, el texto de Leader, en mi opinión, tiene varias lagunas de monotonía.

Bert says

Fascinating and dense, and most importantly made me think about art in a way i hadn't for many years. So it uses the premise of the theft of the Mona Lisa in 1911, and the subsequent phenomena of people flocking to view the empty space, as a gateway into concepts like the gaze, authenticity, absence, and signifiers in art. Leader is a considerate and convincing writer, though his viewpoint is heavily Lacanian, and really this is a book strictly about western art (mostly male) and its specific position in our culture. Which is fine, except he never states that distinction. I found the concept of the artists' unique or privileged role in our culture, as a kind of state sanctioned criminal, especially lovely, and like most of Leader's observations it doesn't matter if it's conceptual jerking off or not, it's still interesting, actually there was loads here that i wish i could hang on to and remember.

Earthwatchaddict says

This book was a bit too technical for me but I think it would be fascinating for someone with a more artistic background. Still, very interesting.
