



Art Without Borders: A Philosophical Exploration of Art and Humanity

Ben-Ami Scharfstein

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People all over the world make art and take pleasure in it, and they have done so for millennia. But acknowledging that art is a universal part of human experience leads us to some big questions: Why does it exist? Why do we enjoy it? And how do the world's different art traditions relate to art and to each other?

Art Without Borders is an extraordinary exploration of those questions, a profound and personal meditation on the human hunger for art and a dazzling synthesis of the whole range of inquiry into its significance. Esteemed thinker Ben-Ami Scharfstein's encyclopedic erudition is here brought to bear on the full breadth of the world of art. He draws on neuroscience and psychology to understand the way we both perceive and conceive of art, including its resistance to verbal exposition. Through examples of work by Indian, Chinese, European, African, and Australian artists, *Art Without Borders* probes the distinction between accepting a tradition and defying it through innovation, which leads to a consideration of the notion of artistic genius. Continuing in this comparative vein, Scharfstein examines the mutual influence of European and non-European artists. Then, through a comprehensive evaluation of the world's major art cultures, he shows how all of these individual traditions are gradually, but haltingly, conjoining into a single current of universal art. Finally, he concludes by looking at the ways empathy and intuition can allow members of one culture to appreciate the art of another.

Lucid, learned, and incomparably rich in thought and detail, *Art Without Borders* is a monumental accomplishment, on par with the artistic achievements Scharfstein writes about so lovingly in its pages.

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