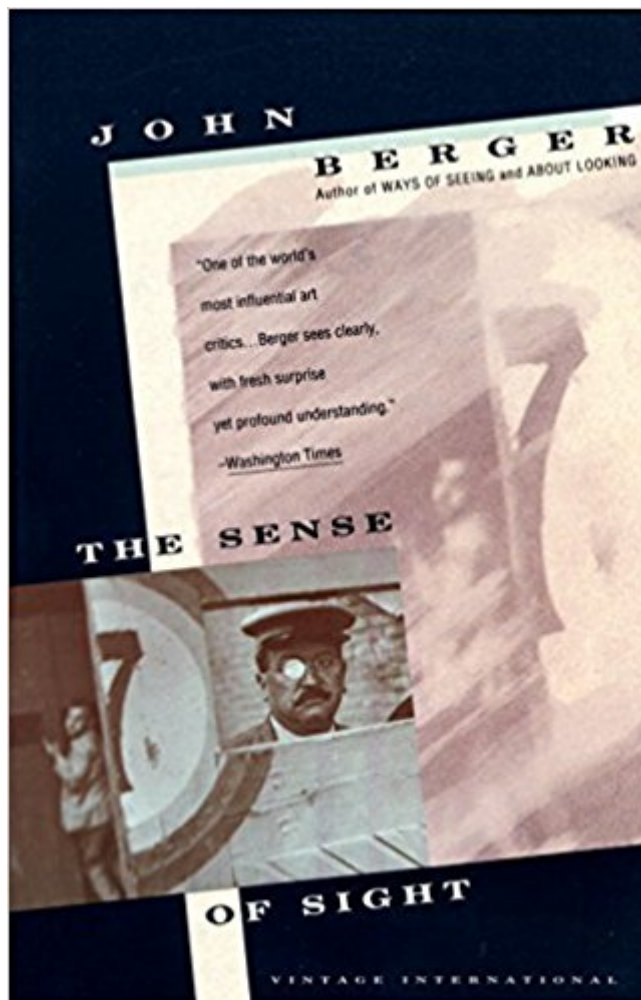


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# The Sense Of Sight



## Synopsis

With this provocative and infinitely moving collection of essays, a preeminent critic of our time responds to the profound questions posed by the visual world. For when Booker Prize-winning author John Berger writes about Cubism, he writes not only of Braque, Léger, Picasso, and Gris, but of that incredible moment early in this century when the world converged around a marvelous sense of promise. When he looks at the Modigliani, he sees a man's infinite love revealed in the elongated lines of the painted figure. Ranging from the Renaissance to the conflagration of Hiroshima; from the Bosphorus to Manhattan; from the woodcarvers of a French village to Goya, Dürer, and Van Gogh; and from private experiences of love and of loss, to the major political upheavals of our time, *The Sense of Sight* encourages us to see with the same breadth, courage, and moral engagement that its author does.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

British art critic and novelist Berger offers a sharp collection of essays on art and artists and a critical study of Picasso's career. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The fifth volume of writings by the noted British Marxist art critic. Besides being a painter, Berger is recognized for his poetry and fiction, which easily stands out in the items here. The material is quite up-to-date, and few of the essays have appeared in earlier collections; seven of the nine poems were previously unpublished. Essays are grouped thematically e.g., travel and emigration, dreaming, love and passion. Suicide and death are frequent references. "The White Bird," an unforced lyrical

essay on nature and art, is perhaps the finest of the art commentary. It avoids dogmatic and ideological generalizations on class struggle and "the rich and powerful and the poor," included in most items. Berger is without doubt a committed philosopher and critic, but perhaps best read in small doses. For large collections. Mary Hamel-Schwulst, Art Dept., Goucher Coll., Towson, Md. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Sense of Sight is possibly the best place to start with the impressive breadth and depth of Berger's essay writing. For anyone new to Berger, this is clearly the place to start. Even though "Selected Essays" features a longer time frame and over 600 pages of writing, "Sense of Sight" contains many of the works that make "Selected" such a powerful collection. Berger's subjects in "Sense", as Lloyd Spencer says in his intro, fall into a number categories: "travel and emigration, dreaming, love and passion, death, art as activity and artifact, and the relation between work in language and the physical labour which produces and reproduces the world." Berger's confidence in tackling this array of stories is buoyed by his abilities. Few writers today would even tackle such a variety of areas because few command Berger's ability to weave stories and ideas together in the same cloth with the same commitment to both threads. Highlights include:- "The Moment of Cubism": a powerful and accessible study of one of the most profound developments in painting- "Leopardi": an introduction to a man Nietzsche considered the greatest prose writer of the 19th century- "The Eaters and the Eaten": an intriguing study of food, class, and feasts- "The Production of the World": Van Gogh's compulsion to bring his canvas and reality ever closer together, "so close that the stars in the night became maelstroms of light"- "Dürer: a Portrait of the Artist": what two self-portraits of an unrivalled artist reveal about art, independence, and religion on the cusp of the modern era- "Ernst Fischer: a Philosopher and Death": a moving recollection of the writer's passions, insights, and final days

It was a delight to return to John Berger's writings through this collection of essays. A few are previously unpublished and the rest date from 1960 to 1984. Old stuff? No. Some of the essays are timeless, those on art in particular. Some offer haunting pictures of a vanished world, travel pieces in Yugoslavia for example. And some are disturbing and dismaying for their current relevance. "On the Bosphorus" was written in 1979, just after the government of Turkey had declared martial law, again. Berger sets this story of modern Turkey, its people, and its politics, on a ferry across the Bosphorus carrying Anatolian, commuting workers, truck drivers and Kurdish porters. The impact of

US intervention on Turkish politics appears in the details of lives situated in history and written on the bodies of Berger's fellow passengers and remembered friends. The essay that follows, "Manhattan," is eerie for the juxtaposition, and the two engage the reader in a post-September 11th dialogue. John Berger is an art critic who taught us another way of seeing 40 years ago, but his strength is in the relation between the visual and the verbal. He writes of the stories told by works of art and fills his essays with pictures of particular. He is the story teller.

The first essay is life-changing and worth the purchase alone.

Interesting book

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