



# Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting (Essays in Art & Culture)

By Norman Bryson

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In this, the only up-to-date critical work on still life painting in any language, Norman Bryson analyses the origins, history and logic of 'still life', one of the most enduring forms of Western painting. The first essay is devoted to Roman wall-painting while in the second the author surveys a major segment in the history of still life, from seventeenth-century Spanish painting to Cubism. The third essay tackles the controversial field of seventeenth-century Dutch still life. Bryson concludes in the final essay that the persisting tendency to downgrade the genre of still life is profoundly rooted in the historical oppression of women. In *Looking at the Overlooked*, Norman Bryson is at his most brilliant to date. These superbly written essays will stimulate us to look at the entire tradition of still life with new and critical eyes.

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*By Norman Bryson*

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

Remarkable essays. (Lawrence Gowing *Times Literary Supplement*)

Norman Bryson's new book...elicits levels of meaning in still life painting that reveal how complex this apparently simple art form can be. He dwells on certain pictures with a fastness comparable to that found in the best still lifes; and in so doing he induces in the reader a similar attention...Few art historians can unpeel images in the way he does. (Frances Spalding *The Independent*)

In four dazzling essays, [Bryson] breaks through the profound, enigmatic silences that have made still life resistant to interpretation for centuries, coaxing the most reticent of genres into eloquent speech...By including still life in the current discourse on gender and patriarchal modes of seeing, Bryson brings it up to date, arguing convincingly for its permanent relevance. For if he is correct, then still life will always offer painters a rich seam to mine. (Nancy Grimes *ARTnews*)

There can be little doubt that Bryson has succeeded brilliantly in his aim of developing our critical discourse: novel interpretations can be found on every page of this book. Like all the best art critics, Bryson succeeds in extending the range of our response to the paintings he writes about: after reading his words on Zurbarán or Chardin their still lifes become tinged with his eloquence. (Paul Taylor *Art History*)

#### About the Author

**Norman Bryson** is professor of art history and theoretical studies at the Slade School of Art, University of London.

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