Reviews Editor’s Note
The September 2005 issue of The Art Bulletin introduced a new series called “Interventions”: commissioned essays on wide-ranging methodological and historical concerns, with responses from several readers and counter-responses from the author published in the same issue. During the initial development of the series, the editor-in-chief and reviews editor agreed that certain books might be reviewed most productively in a similar format. Rather than having a single author review a book, The Art Bulletin could publish several shorter responses to a single text of high disciplinary and intellectual significance. As The Art Bulletin’s book review space is quite limited relative to the number of books published, “Interventions Reviews” will be reserved for books that can be expected to advance vigorous discussion of purpose, method, and historiography across the discipline. In keeping with The Art Bulletin review practice, there will be no commissioned responses to “Interventions Reviews.”

The first installment of “Interventions Reviews” is a cluster of eight responses to Art since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism. A textbook as well as a major statement and summa by four leading scholars of modern and contemporary art, the book invites such extended and multiple consideration and reflection.

Interventions Reviews
HAL FOSTER, ROSALIND KRAUSS, YVE-ALAIN BOIS, AND BENJAMIN H. D. BUCHLOH
Art since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism
London: Thames and Hudson, 2005. 2 vols.: vol. 1, 1900–1944, 352 pp., 210 color ill., 106 b/w. $46.88; vol. 2, 1945–2003, 424 pp., 236 color ill., 128 b/w. $46.88; both vols. $84.38. Also available in one vol.: 704 pp.; 413 color ill., 224 b/w. $95.00

Review by Nancy J. Troy
Who among those of us assigned to teach the survey of art history has not struggled with the very concept of the comprehensive overview? In many colleges and universities, a foundational survey nevertheless remains the bread and butter of the art history program, the centerpiece of a disciplinary practice that Henri Zerner described two dozen years ago as “an uninspired professional routine feeding a busy academic machine.” The survey text has been the indispensable corollary to this deeply entrenched yet problematic curricular offering. According to Mitchell Schwarz in 1995, “The survey text is art history at its most grandiose, promising to reveal the complex truths of humanity through art. It is also,” he continued, “art history at its most political, reducing cultural and individual differences to questionable hierarchies and generalities.”

When, five years earlier, Bradford Collins had addressed the challenge posed by the survey text, he, like Schwarz, was writing about books that seek to present works of art in relation to the vast sweep of world history, and he noted, “The writing of a completely acceptable overview of art’s history, impossible under any circumstance, has been rendered even more absurd by the growing pluralism within our field, which is why I think it may be time to rethink the entire introductory enterprise.” The solution that Collins proposed, “a collection of separate, lengthy and in-depth analyses of major monuments, a book that would leave the issues of continuity to the individual instructor,” introduces the possibility of an intellectually rigorous alternative to the dominant evolutionary paradigm, one that could be adapted to the most general of surveys or to a particular field within the history of art. “I can imagine, too,” Collins wrote, “that such a book might include essays that offer competing points of view on a given work or monument. . . . Perhaps what we need in this area, given the methodological diversity within our field, is a range of quite different options.” Some years later, Mark Miller Graham argued for a radical deconstruction of the traditional survey, which he condemned for its ties to the “authority of the panoptic gaze and the privileged perspective.” First on his list of remedies is this advice: “Stop using the present generation of survey textbooks. . . . Those who teach the course must get hold of its agenda.” Graham’s list continues with calls to “stop fetishizing completeness”; “eject the canon and thematicize the content”; “embody and engender the discipline of art history”; and, finally, “teach the conflicts . . . the actual debate and disagreement that constitute the scholarly process.”

The authors of Art since 1900: Modernism, Anti-modernism, Postmodernism have produced a survey text that responds surprisingly closely to many (but not all) of these prescriptions, establishing an ambitious new paradigm that solves some of the most egregious problems of the survey genre by challenging the reader to become actively engaged with the critical debates that are highlighted in the book. (Although the publication is available in a single volume, it can also be purchased as two separate volumes, the first of which deals with the period to 1944, while the second begins with 1945. My remarks here are prompted by volume 1, though many would be applicable to volume 2 as well.) That an actively engaged reader is being called forth becomes immediately apparent in the instructions—“How to use this book”—with which the book opens (pp. 10–11). Here, two text pages are reproduced with additional graphic signs pointing out features of the layout and organization that are intended to help the reader “follow the development of art through the twentieth century and up to the present day.” As this wording would suggest, the presentation appears rigorously chronological, insofar as the material is organized into individual entries, each approximately five pages in length and keyed to a given year. The chronological organization is further articulated by the grouping of entries into decades, although a countermanding arbitrary quality emerges from the fact that some years have multiple entries while others are omitted altogether. In fact, as the “Preface: A Reader’s Guide” (pp. 12–13) makes clear, chronology is just one of the book’s organizing principles; its numerous cross-references encourage the reader to construct alternative paths to destabilize the sense of an unfolding narrative, establishing links across time to reveal the histories of, for example, national schools, particular media, stylistic developments, or thematic concerns. Many cross-references call attention to the authors’ introductory discussions of the theoretical methods that inform the entries, and these too, like the entries, are stand-alone essays by individual authors (pp. 14–48): “Psychoanalysis in Modernism and as Method,” by Hal Foster; “The Social History of Art: Models and Concepts,” by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh; “Formalism and Structuralism,” by Yve-Alain Bois; and “Poststructuralism and Deconstruction,” by Rosalind Krauss. Not only does this framework encourage the reader to focus on conceptual issues raised by, or in relation to, salient objects and events in the history of art, it also allows the authors