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Pissing Figures 1280â€™2014 (Ekphrasis)



Synopsis

"Not just anyone makes a good pisser."--Jean-Claude LebenszteinJean-Claude Lebensztein's history of the urinating figure in art, *Pissing Figures* (2014), is at once a scholarly inquiry into an important visual motif, and a ribald statement on transgression and limits in works of art in general. Lebensztein is one of France's best-kept secrets. A world-class art historian who has lectured and taught at major universities in the United States, his work has remained almost entirely in French, his American audience limited to a small but dedicated group of cognoscenti. First introducing the Manneken Pis "the iconic little boy whose stream of urine supplies water to this famous fountain and is also the logo for a Belgian beer company" the author takes the reader through a semi-scatological maze of cultural history. The earliest example is a fresco scene located directly above Cimabue's "Crucifixion" from around 1280 at the Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi, in which Lebensztein's careful eye locates an angel behind a pillar urinating through a hole in his garment. He continues to navigate expertly through cultural twists and turns, stopping to discuss Pier Paolo Pasolini's 1968 film *Teorema*, for example, and Marlene Dumas's 1996 "97 homage to Rembrandt's pissing woman. At every moment, Lebensztein's prose is lively, his thinking dynamic, and his subject matter entertaining.

Book Information

Series: Ekphrasis

Paperback: 168 pages

Publisher: David Zwirner Books (August 22, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 194170154X

ISBN-13: 978-1941701546

Product Dimensions: 4.2 x 0.6 x 6.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Best Sellers Rank: #492,697 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #69 in Books > Arts &

Photography > Individual Artists > Essays

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...[Lebensztein] elegantly reveals how artists have repeatedly used our queasiness in the face of bodily functions to transgress narrow-minded cultural norms. (Alexxa Gotthardt Artsy). . . amusing, memorable books. . . (Jonathon Sturgeon Artnet)The books in the series seem designed to slip into

your back pocket • slim, spartan, and compact, sporting uniform covers consisting solely of typeface in black or white, with a matching horizontal bar across the top, against a solid color.
(Thomas Micchelli Hyperallergic)

Jean-Claude Lebensztejn is a French art historian, critic, and honorary professor of the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His interests range from the art of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, to film, music, human animality, and more generally, the question of frontiers and boundaries. In addition to his *Œtudes cœzanniennes* (2006) and a scholarly edition of fifty of Cœzanne’s letters (2011), Lebensztejn has recently published a collection of essays on nomads, a translation of Lao-tseu, a study of Pygmalion, a conversation with Malcolm Morley, and numerous texts concerned with questioning norms of taste and aesthetic values in general. He is preparing a book on transgression in the works of Franz Kafka, Marquis de Sade, and Comte de Lautrœmont. Jeff Nagy is a translator, critic, and historian of technology based in Palo Alto, California. His research focuses on networks pre- and post-Internet and the development of digital labor.

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