

Mark Tansey: Visions and Revisions

By Arthur C. Danto

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In a monochromatic style, American painter Mark Tansey teases the viewer with images that explode into paradoxes. In *The Innocent Eye Test*, one of his most famous works, a cow led into a picture gallery by academic savants inspects a painting of a bull. In other paintings, Eskimos on dogsleds almost converge with Bedouins on camels in visual planes that never meet, and Jackson Pollock walks on water. Spiked with allusions ranging from John Ruskin to Albert Einstein, Tansey's wryly subversive pictures mock the avant-garde, parody Jacques Derrida's theme of the world as text and reiterate the inexhaustible possibilities of pictorial space. In this dazzlingly illustrated monograph, Danto, art critic of the *Nation* and professor of philosophy at Columbia University, places Tansey within a tradition, extending from Velazquez to Magritte, of artists who probe the philosophy of picture-making. Danto's sensitive readings are open to the multiple meanings of Tansey's provocations.

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From Library Journal

Tansey (b. 1949) is an American artist whose paintings are at once realistic, densely textured, perplexing, and filled with allusions to art and literature (e.g., *Triumph Over Mastery II* depicts a man with a paint roller obliterating the Sistine Chapel). Danto (art critic at the *Nation* and professor of philosophy at Columbia Univ.) introduces the paintings and attempts to present a skeleton key to their meaning. Most of the book consists of 119 high-quality illustrations of the paintings, preparatory studies, and the classic art that inspired Tansey. Tansey's own statements on his working methods are, like Danto's essay, surprisingly humorless considering the enigmatic, teasing quality of the art. Still, this first major study of an important artist should be considered for large art collections.

- *Stephen Rees, Bucks Cty. Free Lib., Levittown, Pa.*

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