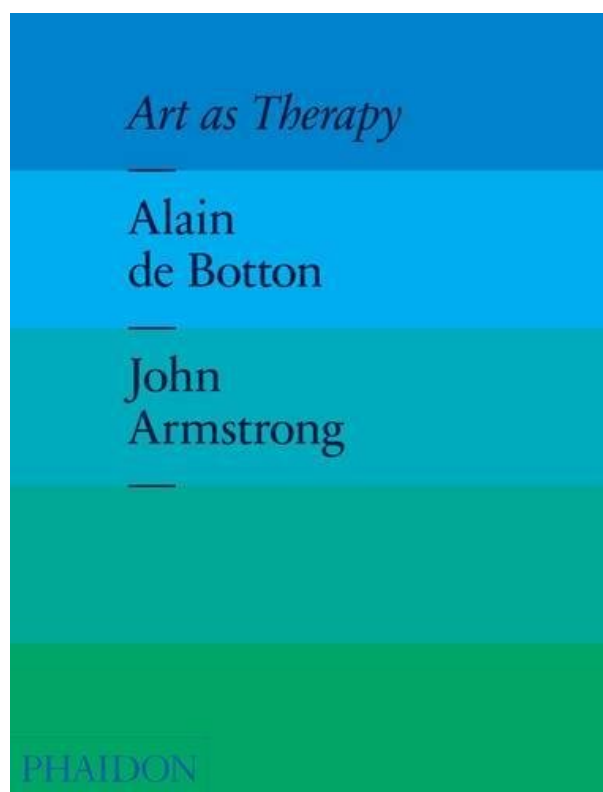


ART AS THERAPY BY ALAIN DE BOTTON, JOHN ARMSTRONG



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Art as Therapy

Alain
de Botton

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Review

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What is art's purpose? In this engaging, lively, and controversial new book, bestselling philosopher Alain de Botton and art historian John Armstrong propose a new way of looking at familiar masterpieces, suggesting that they can be useful, relevant, and – above all else – therapeutic for their viewers. De Botton argues that certain great works offer clues on managing the tensions and confusions of everyday life. Chapters on Love, Nature, Money, and Politics outline how art can help with these common difficulties – for example, Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter* helps us focus on what we want to be loved for; Serra's *Fernando Pessoa* reminds us of the importance of dignity in suffering; and Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* teaches us how to preserve and value our long-term partners. *Art as Therapy* offers an unconventional perspective, demonstrating how art can guide us, console us, and help us better understand ourselves.

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Most helpful customer reviews

23 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

If you enjoy art or want to enjoy art, this is a must read. Excellent!

By Carolina Katharine

Doesn't get better than this. Most books about art are flat, condescending, basically showing off the author's smarts. This book is very accessible to anyone who loves art and for anyone who has an interest ranging from professional to collector to novice. An intriguing take on humanity in art and how we communicate with art and how modern life dictates our understanding. Thoughtful, enlightening, refreshing, beautiful! Well edited, beautiful lay out, keenly developed and a book that is enjoyable to read over and over again. Brings a sense of discovery to the art viewer. Makes me want to head the nearest museum! Would make an excellent gift for anyone, whether for the holidays or as a thank you.

14 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Fresh, but perhaps not fully baked?

By C. Tucker

I very much enjoyed the first part of de Botton's new book, which he calls "methodology". In this section, he elucidates 7 areas of the human condition commonly addressed in art (suffering, love, etc.). This section reads as a very moving meditation on old ideas brought into very thoughtful new focus.

After this section ends, though, I felt de Botton lost his way a bit. The remainder of the book feels less deeply thought-out, as if maybe he was writing for a looming deadline (which is rather doubtful, given his excellent track record of publishing successful books, and his personal fortune). The book disappointingly veers off into a persuasive essay on how public art should be displayed and considered, and stops being fresh

and original.

I was left wanting to re-read the first chapter, and wishing de Botton and his co-author would re-write the remainder. The book is beautifully constructed, and the illustrations are worth the price of the whole thing. It's certainly worth reading, even if it does leave the reader wishing for less political opinion, and more thoughtful discourse on the nature of art and healing.

22 of 24 people found the following review helpful.

Ahhh.....

By Kathleen

This book is so different from others I have read. Here, art is not about history, not about technique. It is about the relationship between the viewer and the work. Art - either viewed or practiced - has depths of wisdom and perspective to impart. This is so delicious a book, that I limit my time with it, to make it last. Very interesting. Beautiful artwork.

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