



The Destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution (Picturing History)

Dario Gamboni

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In January 2006, a man tried to break Marcel Duchamp's Fountain sculpture with a small hammer. The sculpted foot of Michelangelo's David was damaged in 1991 by a purportedly mentally-ill artist. With each incident, artists and intellectuals must confront the unsettling dynamic between destruction and art.

Renowned art historian Dario Gamboni is the first to tackle this weighty issue in depth, exploring spectres of censorship, iconoclasm and vandalism that surround such acts.

Initially galvanized by the sweeping obliteration of architecture and art under the Communist regimes of the Soviet Union and eastern bloc countries, Gamboni investigated other instances of destroyed art and architecture around the globe, uncovering a disquieting and surprisingly widespread phenomenon that still thrives today. As he demonstrates through analyses of incidents occurring in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in both the United States and Europe, a complex relationship exists among the evolution of modern art, contemporary destruction of art, and the long history of iconoclasm. Gamboni probes the concept of artists' rights, the power of political protest and the ways in which iconoclasm offers a unique interpretation of society's relationship to art and material culture.

A compelling and thought-provoking study, *The Destruction of Art* forces us to rethink the ways that we interact with art and react to its power to shock or subdue.

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