

(Mobile book) A Short History of the Shadow (Essays in Art and Culture)

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Victor I. Stoichita
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Victor I. Stoichita : A Short History of the Shadow (Essays in Art and Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Short History of the Shadow (Essays in Art and Culture):

11 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Author has good intentions but wants too much to be an art critic
By Jason Gray
The idea of a book that discusses the shadow in art and philosophy is a great foundation for a book, but the author fails to straddle that line well. If you are researching shadows in art, this book does cover many great examples and would be a nice starting point. However, the author only expresses his ideas through his critique of the art, making it difficult to grasp a clear thought. On the philosophy side, the author mentions Freud and Nietzsche,

among others, but expects the reader to be fully versed in this topic and explains nothing. A glaring omission is Carl Jung and his "shadow" archetype. Not sure how one can write a book on shadows and philosophy and ignore Jung.

In this investigative tour de force, Victor I. Stoichita untangles the history of one of the most enduring technical and symbolic challenges to beset Western artists — the depiction and meanings of shadows. The representation of shadow, and especially of cast shadow, is as old as art itself, for according to classical writers art was born when the outline of a human shadow thrown onto a wall was first traced out in order to capture it in the form of a silhouette. But the history of the shadow is properly the history of light versus dark, for in addition to indicating relief and volume or the times of day, shadows can intimate subtler interior realities — from states of mind to the state of the soul.

According to J. C. Lavater in the 18th century, for example, it was the shadow of the face, not the face itself, that was the soul's reflection. More recently Andy Warhol, in his *Shadows* canvases, and Joseph Beuys have in turn explored the idea of the shadow as the hyper-realized revelation of utter human emptiness and as the self's awesomely powerful *Doppelgänger*. Stoichita's compelling account of the shadow and Western art, which draws on texts by Renaissance artist-authors like Vasari and Cennini, folk tales, fairy tales and classical myths, works by van Eyck, Poussin, Malevich, De Chirico, Picasso and other masters, German Expressionist cinema, photography and child psychology, is a wholly original incursion into a subject that for centuries has challenged the very meaning of art as representation.

From Library Journal In what could be called a meticulous dissection of Robert Louis Stevenson's "I Have a Little Shadow," Stoichita (history of art, Univ. of Fribourg, Switzerland) examines the artistic and intellectual concepts of the "dark spot" and of their effects upon our view of reality. In exhaustive if not exhausting detail, he ranges from Pliny to Plato, from Piaget to photography, from wall painting to Warhol. Black is both the absence of light and all the colors of the rainbow; in comparison, the shadow contains both the reflection of the image and its essential nature. Apart from its philosophical terminology, this is a difficult book; few sentences escape from parenthetical insertion, and one wonders whether this is a reflection of the original or the imposition of the stylistic shadow of the translator. Also, it is surprising that such a scholarly book should lack an index. Still, it seems that what the shadow knows, Stoichita knows as well, and his work will be useful in academic and art libraries collecting for a graduate level. —Paula Frosch, Metropolitan Museum of Art Lib., New York Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. "Stoichita surpasses his predecessors with his discriminating, inspired interrogation ... dazzling analysis" -- Marina Warner, *Tate Magazine* About the Author Victor I. Stoichita is Professor of the History of Modern and Contemporary Art at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland.