



Odd Nerdrum: Kitsch, More than Art

By Jan-Ove Tuv, Bjørn Li, Dag Solhjell, Tommy Sørbø

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Kitsch is Odd Nerdrum's luxuriously produced *apologia* for the enduring relevance of the old master style. Containing writings and interviews by and with Nerdrum alongside hefty plate sections of both Nerdrum's own paintings and those by painters he sees as exemplars of a certain kind of figurative art, it is a bold attack on the foundations of modernism. In Nerdrum's view, what we call "kitsch" art is a consequence of modernism's "make it new" ethic. For Nerdrum, this insistence on novelty has permeated the thinking of institutions, critics, artists and the public, and has effectively suppressed what Nerdrum most values in a work of art: sentimentality, passion, pathos and the self-evident skill and emotion of sheer craft. By this latter value in particular, the kitsch painter is able to work according to knowable standards that painting prior to modernism has established--standards that are "more than art," for, as Nerdrum puts it, "the kitsch painter commits himself to the eternal: love, death and the sunrise." *Kitsch* is a manifesto that recruits figurative painters both old and new, such as William Dyce, Paul Fenniak, Sampo Kaikkonen, Isaac Levitan, Osiris Rain, Ilya Repin, Giovanni Segantini, Valentin Serov, George Tooker, George Frederick Watts and Anders Zorn, and situates their work alongside more than 70 of Nerdrum's recent paintings. Alongside essays, poems and plays by the artist, *Kitsch* contains an extended dialogue on the topic between Nerdrum and Maria Kreyn.

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