



A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History



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A landmark collection of essays on the intersections of visual art, cultural studies, and environmental history in America. Issues of ecology--both as they appear in the works of nature writers and in the works of literary writers for whom place and the land are central issues--have long been of interest to literary critics, and have given rise over the last two decades to the now firmly established field of ecocriticism. The essays in this volume, written by art historians and literary critics, seek to bring the study of American art into the expanding discourse of ecocriticism.

"A Keener Perception" offers a series of case studies on topics ranging from John White's watercolors of the Carolina landscape executed during Sir Walter Raleigh's 1585 Roanoke expedition to photographs by environmental activist Eliot Porter. Rather than merely resurrect past instances of ecologically attuned art, this volume features essays that resituate many canonical figures, such as Thomas Eakins, Aaron Douglas, and Isamu Noguchi, in an ecocritical light by which they have yet to be viewed. Studying such artists and artworks through an ecocritical lens not only provides a better understanding of these works and the American landscape, but also brings a new interpretive paradigm to the field of art history--a field that many of these critics believe would do well to embrace environmental concerns as a vital area of research.

In highlighting the work of scholars who bring ecological agendas to their study of American art, as well as providing models for literary scholars who might like to better incorporate the visual arts into their own scholarship and teaching, "A Keener Perception" is truly a landmark collection--timely, consequential, and controversial.



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