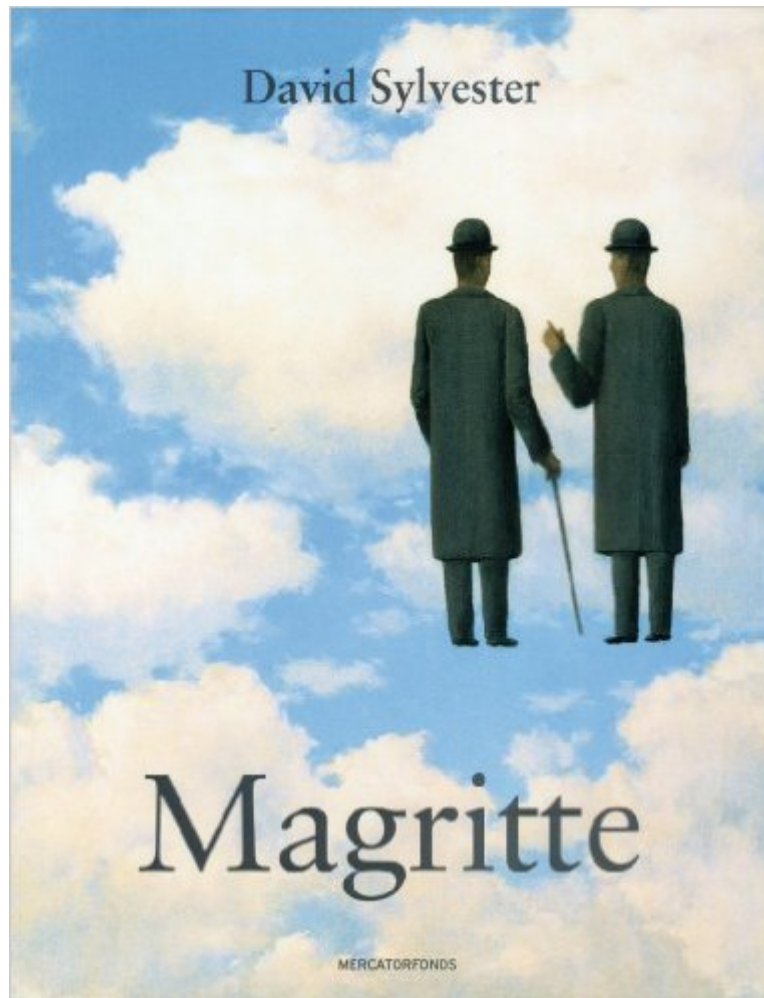


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Magritte



Synopsis

The Belgian painter René Magritte (1898-1967) was one of the outstanding--and most enigmatic--figures of the Surrealist movement. Since the 1960s, his work has had an enormous and continuing influence, not only on art, but on culture at large. His unforgettable paintings;poetic and often puzzling;have become part of our popular imagery. This magisterial volume by David Sylvester, the foremost expert on Magritte's work--out of print for more than a decade--is available again to celebrate the opening of the new Magritte Museum in Brussels. Brought up to date by the museum's director, Michel Draguet, the book offers 40 chapters of critical insights and clues to Magritte's puzzles, and over 500 lush full-color illustrations, making it an unparalleled source for understanding and appreciating an enormously popular and remarkably creative artist.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Originally published in 1992, this is an updated version of the monumental monograph written by one of the best art critics of the XXth century, the late David Sylvester. Sylvester was the author of the Magritte catalogue raisonné and this book complements it with an encyclopedic text that is nevertheless easy to read and devoid of any pretentious cant. The author's style is concise, precise and elegant and I can't think of any better way to write about art: Sylvester describes without discoursing, explains without judging and always leaves it to the reader to make his or her own opinion about the work, based on the best possible knowledge of the artist. The book is replete with

hundreds of illustrations, many full-page (and full color), some thumbnails (a few of these in black and white) and some half-page. The only slight criticism I would dare to make is that there are no magnified details, but again, this should not keep this book from deserving 5 stars.

This is close to being a great book on Magritte. Buy it for the impressive reproductions, but if you read, be prepared for frustration. It's a shame Sylvester's organization and essays are so haphazard. His biographical focus on the artist's life events and circumstances can be tedious, obscuring more than enlightening, and his critical comments on the works themselves lack insight. The book's strength is its comprehensive biography, starting with Magritte's mother's early suicide by drowning, and moving to Magritte's learning to paint at 12, his father's affluence, Magritte's marriage to Georgette, painting studies in Brussels during the war, and then on to designing wallpaper, doing commercial art, discovering Surrealism, and trying for years to insert himself into the Surrealist scene in Paris only to give up and return to Brussels at last. Yet when Sylvester breezily skips Magritte's death, leaving it as an unexplained ellipsis between two paragraphs, it makes me wonder what other major omissions I didn't notice. An enormous number of paintings are here, beautifully reproduced. However, the discussion is mostly thematic, going back and forth so much in time that it can be difficult to gain a sense of Magritte's achievement in any direction. I also thought it questionable whether a man who thinks "Le viol" is simply a hilarious joke is qualified to be an art critic. He spends pages talking about "The annunciation" but only discusses "L'empire des lumières (The dominion of light)" for a couple paragraphs in which he mentions Magritte's habit of doing several versions. Beautifully produced book, in short, informative, but not quite brilliant. I would rate the images five stars and the text only three if I could.

This beautiful book is full of color pictures, lots of this great painter, quality images are often occupying the whole page, I am in full agreement with the previous review, is a great book for those interested in the Surrealism and the genius painter

It is a really important book for those who admire Magritte. The text is very clarifying about his picture. Besides it is a beautiful book with pictures I had never seen before.

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