



The Book on the Floor: André Malraux and the Imaginary Museum

By Walter Grasskamp

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In 1954, the French writer, politician, and publisher André Malraux (1901–1976) posed at home for a photographer from the magazine *Paris Match*, surrounded by pages from his forthcoming book *Le musée imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale*. The enchanting metaphor of the *musée imaginaire* (imaginary museum) was built upon that illustrated art book, and Malraux was one of its greatest champions. Drawing on a range of contemporary publications, he adopted images and responded to ideas. Indeed, Malraux's book on the floor is a variation of photographer André Vigneau's spectacular *Encyclopédie photographique de l'art*, published in five volumes from 1935 on—years before Malraux would enter this field. Both authors were engaged in juxtaposing artworks via photographs and publishing these photographs by the hundreds, but Malraux was the better sloganeer.

Starting from a close examination of the photograph of Malraux in his salon, art historian Walter Grasskamp takes the reader back to the dawn of this genre of illustrated art book. He shows how it catalyzed the practice of comparing works of art on a global scale. He retraces the metaphor to earlier reproduction practices and highlights its ubiquity in contemporary art, ending with an homage to the other pioneer of the “museum without walls,” the unjustly forgotten Vigneau.

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Editorial Review

Review

“German art critic Walter Grasskamp (formerly, Academy of Fine Arts, Munich) presents a careful reconstruction of Malraux's project, pointing out its indebtedness to André Vigneau's *Encyclopédie photographique de l'art* (first published in 1935) and a possible connection to the ideas expounded by “Walter Benjamin in his influential *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility* (1936).”—*Choice*

About the Author

Walter Grasskamp is an art critic and held the chair in art history at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich from 1995 to 2016.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Thomas Garcia:

A lot of people always spent their free time to vacation or go to the outside with them family members or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent they free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you need to try to find a new activity that's look different you can read the book. It is really fun for you personally. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent 24 hours a day to reading a reserve. The book The Book on the Floor: André Malraux and the Imaginary Museum it is very good to read. There are a lot of people that recommended this book. We were holding enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy the actual e-book. You can more quickly to read this book from your smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book possesses high quality.

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