

# Art and the Human Adventure

André Malraux's Theory of Art

Derek Allan

Amsterdam/New York, NY 2009. 340 pp. (Faux Titre 341)

ISBN: 978-90-420-2749-7

Paper €68,-/US\$99,-

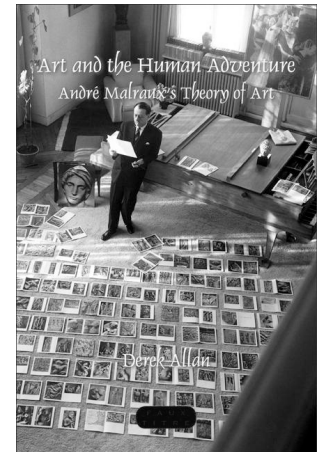
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André Malraux was a major figure in French intellectual life in the twentieth century. A key component of his thought is his theory of art which presents a series of fundamental challenges to traditional explanations of the nature and purpose of art developed by post-Enlightenment aesthetics. For Malraux, art – whether visual art, literature or music – is much more than a locus of beauty or a source of “aesthetic pleasure”; it is one of the ways humanity defends itself against its fundamental sense of meaninglessness – one of the ways the “human adventure” is affirmed.

Here for the first time is a comprehensive, step by step exposition, supported by illustrations, of Malraux's theory of art as presented in major works such as *The Voices of Silence* and *The Metamorphosis of the Gods*. Suitable for both newcomers to Malraux and more advanced students, the study also examines critical responses to these works by figures such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Maurice Blanchot, Pierre Bourdieu, and E. H. Gombrich, and compares Malraux's thinking with aspects of contemporary Anglo-American aesthetics. The study reveals that an account of art which Gombrich once dismissed as “sophisticated double-talk” is in reality a thoroughly coherent and highly enlightening system of thought, with revolutionary implications for the way we think about art.



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