

The Enlightenment: The Pursuit of Happiness, 1680-1790

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Why the Museum Matters. A powerful reflection on the universal art museum, considering the values critical to its history and anticipating its evolving place in our cultural future Art museums have played a vital role in our culture, drawing on Enlightenment ideals in shaping ideas, advancing learning, fostering community, and providing spaces of beauty and permanence. In this thoughtful and often personal volume, Daniel H. Weiss contemplates the idea of the universal art museum alongside broad considerations about the role of art in society and what defines a cultural experience. The future of art museums is far from secure, and Weiss reflects on many of the difficulties these institutions face, from their financial health to their collecting practices to the audiences they engage to ensuring freedom of expression on the part of artists and curators. In grappling with these challenges, Weiss sees a solution in shared governance. His tone is one of optimism as he looks to a future where the museum will serve a greater public while continuing to be a steward of culture and a place of discovery, discourse, inspiration, and pleasure. This poignant questioning and affirmation of the museum explores our enduring values while embracing the need for change in a rapidly evolving world.

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