

Sociology of Culture • Critical Theory

New Directions in Culture and Governance

Series Editor: Terry Nichols Clark

"Not only is this an intellectually lively and thought-provoking book, it is refreshingly optimistic in its insights and theories about how cultural institutions inform and transform cultural practices. Drawing upon both European and American histories and traditions of sociological thought, Laurent Fleury convincingly overturns deterministic notions of habitus and argues against the idea that the project of the democratization of culture has failed. Fleury returns political and social agency to cultural institutions as actors in public policy and as places where people can experience and express new attitudes, pleasures, and values. This is a book that should be read by the cultural managers of museums, art galleries, theatres, and libraries, as well as by scholars of cultural sociology, cultural studies, and leisure studies—indeed, it is a book to inspire anyone who is concerned about democratic access to the arts."

—**Danielle Fuller**, University of Birmingham

Sociology of Culture and of Cultural Practices traces the development of the sociology of culture from its origins (Weber and Simmel) and examines the major trends that have emerged in this branch of sociology. It raises issues of cultural hierarchy, distinction, and legitimate culture, and mass culture, and focuses on new areas of research, including the role of institutions, the reception of works of art, the aesthetic experience, and emancipation through art and presents a synthesis of research and debate from France and the United States.

Examining the work carried out by cultural institutions, Laurent Fleury highlights the power they are capable of exercising: cultural institutions define the spaces in which collective identities, cultural experiences, social practices, and ways of relating to art are expressed and crystallized. The power of cultural institutions is often ignored, and the fact that they inform activities, govern practices, and encourage individuals to develop a degree of familiarity with culture is unfamiliar to many. Highlighting this *instituting* process helps to counteract the determinism of certain ideas based on a rigid conception of the *habitus* and underlines the transformative power of cultural institutions.

This book introduces the political variable into the sociology of culture. In examining the ideal of the democratization of culture, and, especially, the possibility of realizing such an ideal, Fleury describes how cultural inequalities can be overcome and shows how culture can fulfill an emancipatory function.

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FLEURY
Sociology of Culture and Cultural Practices



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The Transformative Power of Institutions



LAURENT FLEURY

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