



Pretentiousness: Why It Matters

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Dan Fox

Photo Credit: Tom Gidley

Pretentiousness: Why It Matters

What is pretentiousness? Why do we despise it? And more controversially: why is it vital to a thriving culture? In this brilliant, passionate essay, Dan Fox argues that it has always been an essential mechanism of the arts, from the most wildly successful pop music and fashion through to the most recondite avenues of literature and the visual arts. *Pretentiousness: Why it Matters* unpacks the uses and abuses of the term, tracing its connections to theatre, politics and class. From method acting to voguing balls in Harlem, from Brian Eno to normcore, Fox draws on a wide range of references in advocating critical imagination and open-mindedness over knee-jerk accusations of elitism or simple fear of the new and the different. Drawing on his own experiences growing up and working at the more radical edges of the arts, this book is a timely defence of pretentiousness as a necessity for innovation and diversity in our culture.

'Dan Fox makes a very good case for a re-evaluation of the word "pretentious". The desire to be more than we are shouldn't be belittled. Meticulously researched, persuasively argued – where would we be as a culture if no-one was prepared to risk coming across as pretentious? Absolutement nowhere, darling – that's where.'

Jarvis Cocker

'It would be too much to say that Fox has ended the reckless use of "pretentious" as a bludgeon against the unfamiliar, but whoever reads Pretentiousness will come away with a greater appreciation for art, ambition, exploration, and failure.'

Josh Cook, Los Angeles Review of Books

Dan Fox

Dan Fox is a writer, musician, and co-editor of *Frieze* magazine, Europe's foremost magazine of art and culture. He is based in New York. His first book, *Pretentiousness: Why it Matters*, received worldwide acclaim upon its publication.