



# Art, Emotion and Ethics

*Berys Gaut*

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## **Art, Emotion and Ethics** Berys Gaut

*Art, Emotion, and Ethics* is a systematic investigation of the relation of art to morality, a topic that has been of central and recurring interest to the philosophy of art since Plato. Berys Gaut explores the various positions that have been taken in this debate, and argues that an artwork is always aesthetically flawed insofar as it possesses a moral defect that is aesthetically relevant. Three main arguments are developed for this view; these involve showing how moral goodness is itself a kind of beauty, that artworks can teach us about morality and that this is often an aesthetic merit in them, and that our emotional responses to works of art are properly guided in part by moral considerations.

*Art, Emotion, and Ethics* also contains detailed interpretations of a wide range of artworks, including Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* and Nabokov's *Lolita*, which show that ethical criticism can yield rich and plausible accounts of individual works. Gaut develops a new theory of the nature of aesthetic value, explores how art can teach us about the world and what we morally ought to do by guiding our imaginings, and argues that we can have genuine emotions towards people and events that we know are merely fictional.

Characterised by its clarity and sustained argument, this book will be of interest to anyone who wants to understand the relation of art to morality.

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