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Uncreative Writing: Managing Language In The Digital Age



Synopsis

Can techniques traditionally thought to be outside the scope of literature, including word processing, databasing, identity ciphering, and intensive programming, inspire the reinvention of writing? The Internet and the digital environment present writers with new challenges and opportunities to reconceive creativity, authorship, and their relationship to language. Confronted with an unprecedented amount of texts and language, writers have the opportunity to move beyond the creation of new texts and manage, parse, appropriate, and reconstruct those that already exist. In addition to explaining his concept of uncreative writing, which is also the name of his popular course at the University of Pennsylvania, Goldsmith reads the work of writers who have taken up this challenge. Examining a wide range of texts and techniques, including the use of Google searches to create poetry, the appropriation of courtroom testimony, and the possibility of robo-poetics, Goldsmith joins this recent work to practices that date back to the early twentieth century. Writers and artists such as Walter Benjamin, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, and Andy Warhol embodied an ethos in which the construction or conception of a text was just as important as the resultant text itself. By extending this tradition into the digital realm, uncreative writing offers new ways of thinking about identity and the making of meaning.

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Customer Reviews

Declaring something uncreative writing and rehashing post-structuralist critiques of authorship does little to obscure his belated, retro perspective. The problems he sees as relevant to writing are the

same problems Duchamp worked through nearly a century ago. The author's implicit claims deserve the same respect one might give to someone suddenly discovering surrealism for the first time in the twenty-first century, except surrealism is actually a more recent phenomenon than conceptualism.

One of the most important books written on the future (and perhaps recent past) of contemporary writing -- prophetic look on how technology is shaping writing and consciousness. Far reaching -- with tie ins to contemporary art. A must read for the new Post-Moderns;

Exciting book, fun read, but not very persuasive. Makes you realize in a backwards way that art isn't just for the mind, but also the soul (that magical concept). A short poem like "Of Mere Being" is far more satisfying in every way than Warhol's whole oeuvre (much as I admire it) and most every work cited in this book. Nevertheless, UNCREATIVE WRITING is definitely worth reading

The book describes current cultural trends that are not reflected too often. Thinking about writing in the age of electronic communication and internet is frequent today but insight into how writing really changes is rather new. The changes are considered not only from such kinds of points of view as you have access to information, you can manipulate texts, but the author offers insight into rather deep changes in writing. Sometimes, I did not agree with the author's view that originality is out of date. Still he offers serious arguments for necessity to reconsider Kant's romantic notion of genius. Sometimes, the author uses journalistic jargon remaining on the rather superficial description of current cultural trends. Nevertheless, his ideas are challenging and he provokes new ways of thinking about reality that is all around us.

Kenneth Goldsmith's Uncreative Writing is a new/another way to think about digital writing, issues of plagiarism, and what he refers to as something comparable in writing (the pc and the internet) to what painting had to face to redefine itself in the wake of photography. One of the things that makes this book so pleasurable to read is the joy with which Goldsmith lays out the climate in writing today, the possibilities inherent in this kind of "uncreative writing," and the various ways that others, including artists, writers, and even his own students, have taken up this style of writing in their own ways. This book makes me happy, too, in the same way that look at a painting by Yves Tanguy or a sculpture by Max Ernst makes me happy. And I have to admit that even though I don't always think of such things on my own, I really admire the kinds of transgressive writing acts

described in the book, as well as his very good defense of such mundane activities as retyping the NYT every day for a year. Then again, since it is called uncreative writing, maybe I shouldn't beat myself up for not being able to come up with the kind of "uncreative" genres and assignments the he speaks of. Still, I am obviously not an "uncreative genius." But I can still admire this book and borrow/steal ideas which he has crystallized, if not created himself. There are also some really great pedagogical ideas in there that will make students rethink the physical act of writing, acts of transcribing, the nature of research and of documenting sources, alongside questions of appropriation, pastiche, sampling, etc. that we are still dealing with, 100 years after the Urinal. I think this is a good book for any writing instructor, not just for creative/uncreative writing.

Kenneth Goldsmith is one of the most thought provoking poets and word artists out there. A brilliant thinker and trouble maker. He is exactly what a good artist should be doing: mess with your status quo. A great read for any creative person, regardless of your field. Inspiring, smart and witty.

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