

PROSCENIUM

ART

By Yasmina Reza

Translated by Christopher Hampton

ART

Wednesday 31 May to Saturday 3 June 2023
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

ART

Cast

MarcAnton Jungreuthmayer
SergeDuncan Sykes
Yvan.....Mark Sutherland

Creative Team

Directed byRichard Kessel
Stage ManagerKeith Cochrane
Assistant Stage ManagerCrystal Anthony
LightingHelene Smith
ProgrammeMark Sutherland
MarketingLynette Alston
Poster and Graphic DesignCharles Anthony

Paris

Serge's flat
Yvan's Flat
Marc's Flat

This play runs straight through, with no interval

With thanks to Jean Kessel, Sammi and Dave Kessel,
and Christine Williams

Yasmina Reza

Yasmina Reza was born in Paris in 1959. After studying at Paris University, and training at the Jacques Lecoq Drama School, she acted in several new plays as well as in plays by Molière and Marivaux.

In 1987, she wrote *Conversations after a Burial*, which won the Molière Award for Best Author. The North American production premiered in February 2013 in Jacksonville Beach Florida. Reza translated Roman Polanski's stage version of Kafka's *Metamorphosis* in the late 1980s. Her second play, *Winter Crossing*, won the 1990 Molière Award for Best Fringe Production, and her next play, *The Unexpected Man*, enjoyed successful productions in England, France, Scandinavia, Germany, and New York.

In 1994, *Art* premiered in Paris and went on to win the Molière Award for Best Author. Since then it has been produced internationally and translated and performed in over 30 languages. The London production received the 1996–97 Laurence Olivier Award and Evening Standard Award. It also won the Tony Award for Best Play. *Life X 3* has also been produced in Europe, North America and Australia. Screenwriting credits include *See You Tomorrow*, starring Jeanne Moreau and directed by Reza's then-partner Didier Martiny.

In 1997, her first novel, *Hammerklavier*, was published and another work of fiction, *Une Désolation*, was published in 2001. Her 2007 work *L'Aube le Soir ou la Nuit (Dawn Evening or Night)*, written after a year of following the campaign of Nicolas Sarkozy, caused a sensation in France.

In 2007, her play *Le Dieu du Carnage (God of Carnage)* (performed by Proscenium in 2018), received the Viennese Nestroy Theatre Prize for the best German-language performance of the season. It opened in London in 2008, in a translation by Christopher Hampton. The London production won the Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Comedy. The play premiered on Broadway and won Best Play at the 2009 Tony Awards. In collaboration with Polanski, Reza wrote the screenplay

adaptation of *God of Carnage* for the 2011 film *Carnage*. She was nominated at the European Film Awards and won a César Award for her screenwriting and the film won a Little Gold Lion at the 68th Venice International Film Festival.

Christopher Hampton

Christopher Hampton was born in 1946. His theatre credits include *When Did You Last See Your Mother* (Royal Court, Comedy Theatre), *Total Eclipse* (Royal Court, Lyric Hammersmith, BBC TV), *Uncle Vanya* (Royal Court), *The Philanthropist* (Royal Court, Mayfair and Wyndham's Theatre), *Hedda Gabler* (Stratford Ontario Festival, revived at the National Theatre), *Savages* (Royal Court, performed by Proscenium in 1977), *A Doll's House* (Lincoln Center and West End), *Treats* (Royal Court and West End), *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *Tales from Hollywood* (performed by Proscenium in 1989), *White Chameleon*, *Alice's Adventures Underground*, *An Enemy of the People* (all National Theatre), *Tartuffe* (RSC), *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (RSC, Broadway), *Faith Hope and Charity* (Lyric Theatre Hammersmith), *Sunset Boulevard* (West End and Broadway), Yasmina Reza's *The Unexpected Man* (RSC and Duchess Theatre), and *The Third Man* (Menier Chocolate Factory).

Television credits include *Able's Will*, *The History Man*, *The Ginger Tree*, and *Tales from Hollywood* (all BBC).

Film credits include *A Doll's House*, *Tales from the Vienna Woods*, *The Honorary Consul*, *The Good Father*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, *Mary Reilly*, *Total Eclipse*, *Carrington*, and *The Secret Agent* (both of which he directed), *The Quiet American*, *Atonement*, *A Dangerous Method*, *The Father*, and *The Son*.

Hampton was knighted in the 2020 New Year Honours for services to drama.

20th Century Art

The fictional painting in *Art* was inspired by the 20th century's parade of scandal-provoking real-life artworks. Modern art generally eschews artistic tradition in favor of innovation and novelty with an inclination toward abstraction. Its history is rife with controversial “masterpieces,” discarded works of genius, sensational incidents of artistic vandalism, and (of course) troublesome all-white pieces. This history tells us a lot about the way modern culture tries to determine the value of a piece of art. All of the following stories, like *Art*, share the themes of wildly fluctuating standards of judgment: a work will be in the trash one day and in the Guggenheim Museum the next.

The fictional painting by Antrios at the heart of *Art* is modeled on actual (and highly controversial) pieces of modern art. Early in the century, Ukrainian painter Kasimir Malevich began experimenting with black and white paint in abstractions such as *White on White* (1917), an off-white square on a white background, intended to express distilled feelings so intense that pictorial painting could not achieve them. A few years later, his fellow countryman, Aleksandr Rodchenko, exhibited a series of three monochromatic (though not white) paintings, *Red Yellow Blue* (1921) as representative of the “death of painting.” In the 50s and 60s, two American painters continued Malevich's experiments with white. Robert Ryman, often considered to be the inspiration for *Art*'s Antrios, painted white/off-white expressionistically brushed surfaces for his entire career. The ever-irreverent Robert Rauschenberg created a series, *White Paintings*, with housepaint and rollers—they had completely flat surfaces devoid of any human touch—as a joke about the artistic merits of Ryman and his ilk. Rauschenberg also attracted a flurry of attention with another off-white response to an older artist with his *Erased de Kooning Drawing* (1953). He spent a month erasing an ink-and-crayon drawing by Willem de Kooning, a much-revered artist of the day, and displayed the empty sheet as a work of his own. Interestingly, controversy arose not from this act of “vandalism” to de Kooning's work,

but from a surprised de Kooning's hurt feelings that the final piece was publicly exhibited rather than kept as a personal keepsake...

... A controversial piece from *Art's* own era is Tom Friedman's *1,000 Hours of Staring* (1992-1997). Friedman was known for his obsessive transformations of mundane materials. He claims to have stared at a mass-produced, regular piece of 8.5"x11" white paper for one thousand hours over a five-year period, investing it—without even touching it, let alone handcrafting anything—with what he terms a “stare on paper.” *Art* reviewers were initially convinced the piece was a lie, since Friedman provided no proof that he had actually done what he said. In 2008, it was acquired by the drawings department at the Museum of Modern Art in New York...

...A couple of other famous pieces have endured the trashy treatment: French painter Henri Rousseau's *Portrait of a Woman*, now in the Musée D'Orsay in Paris, was held in such low regard that it was languishing in a junk shop that sold canvases to be painted over, with a five-franc price tag on it—and it was lucky enough to be rescued by a young Pablo Picasso. Much later in the century, British sculptor Damien Hirst's piece *Untitled* (2001), an installation recreating a stereotypical artist's studio, complete with trash from the previous night's gallery opening, was mistakenly tidied up and thrown away by a gallery janitor. While the janitor was quoted in *The New York Times* as saying, “It didn't look like art to me,” the components were retrieved by a team of dumpster-diving curators, who meticulously recreated the piece. Hirst was reported to have been tickled by the mishap, as his work strives to inhabit a sort of grey area between art and the everyday. He felt that the work had been improved and made richer by this additional chapter in its history. It went on to become the first runner-up for Britain's prestigious Turner Prize later that year, losing narrowly to Martin Creed's piece *The Lights Going On and Off*. Throughout the 20th century, the abstract nature of modern art has created many controversies. Just as in *Art*, one man's trash is truly another man's treasure.

Hannah Kushnick, Steppenwolf, 2009

<https://www.steppenwolf.org/tickets--events/seasons-/2008-09/art>



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Directed by Anton Jungreuthmayer

Wednesday 8 to Saturday 11 November 2023, 7:45pm

Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, and up to four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund-raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Marion Chamberlain

Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk