



# Pop Modernism: Noise and the Reinvention of the Everyday

*Juan A. Suarez*

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Drawing on a wide range of materials, including experimental movies, pop songs, photographs, and well-known poems and paintings, Pop Modernism shows that experimental art in the early twentieth century was centrally concerned with the reinvention of everyday life. In a series of clearly written, provocative, and groundbreaking essays, Juan A. Suárez demonstrates how modernist writers and artists reworked pop images and sounds, old-fashioned and factory-made objects, city spaces, and the languages and styles of queers and ethnic “others.”

Pop Modernism examines the popular roots of modernism in the United States. Along the way, Suárez reinterprets many of modernism’s major figures and argues for the centrality of relatively marginal ones, such as Vachel Lindsay, Charles Henri Ford, Helen Levitt, and James Agee. Chapter discussions include Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler’s film Manhatta (1921), exploring its debt to modernist film criticism and discourses on the popular; the work of surrealist Joseph Cornell as an exploration of “object automatism” (the latencies and histories buried in objects and mass cultural artifacts); and how the interest in the culture industry was gradually replaced, from the late 1930s onward, with a fascination with folk and amateur art.

Pop Modernism reconnects the modernist reinvention of everyday life and contemporary artistic practice. What is at stake is not just an antiquarian impulse to rescue forgotten past moments and works, but a desire to establish an archeology of our present art, culture, and activism.

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