

Ars Erotica

Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love

Richard Shusterman

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The term *ars erotica* refers to the styles and techniques of lovemaking with the honorific title of art. But in what sense are these practices artistic and how do they contribute to the aesthetics and ethics of self-cultivation in the art of living? In this book, Richard Shusterman offers a critical, comparative analysis of the erotic theories proposed by the most influential premodern cultural traditions that shaped our contemporary world. Beginning with ancient Greece, whose god of desiring love gave eroticism its name, Shusterman examines the Judaeo-Christian biblical tradition and the classical erotic theories of Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and Japanese cultures, before concluding with medieval and Renaissance Europe. His exploration of their errors and insights shows how we could improve the quality of life and love today. By using the engine of eros to cultivate qualities of sensitivity, grace, skill, and self-mastery, we can reimagine a richer, more positive vision of sex education.

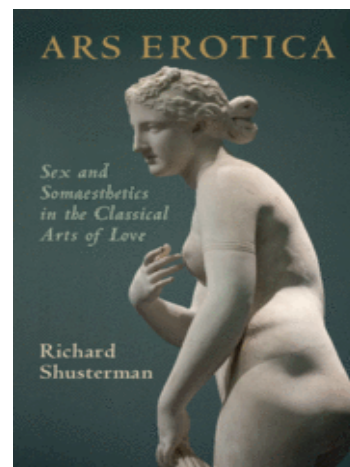
1. *Ars Erotica* and the question of aesthetics; 2. Dialectics of desire and virtue; 3. The biblical tradition; 4. Chinese *Qi* erotics; 5. Lovemaking as aesthetic education; 6. Fragrance, veils, and violence; 7. From romantic refinement to courtesan connoisseurship; 8. Commingling, complexity, and conflict

'With a panoramic horizon that draws upon the full compass of sexual culture, world philosopher Richard Shusterman in his *Ars Erotica* elevates and ennobles sexuality by finding the crucial isomorphisms between deference and a situated, contrapuntal musicality, between artistry and the intensity of pleasure, between sensual imagination and intelligent practice. Shusterman continues his somaesthetic revolution by taking the stodgy professional discipline to task with a sex education that seeks to refine rather than contain, and to elevate rather than ignore this vital aspect of the human experience.'

Roger T. Ames, *Peking University*

'The unending struggle to reconcile the 'base' demands of the desiring body with the elevating aspirations of culture defines human history. Drawing on his pioneering work in somaesthetics, Richard Shusterman displays extraordinary erudition in presenting the ways in which seven great civilizations have fashioned an *ars erotica* seeking to do justice to both.'

Martin Jay, *University of California, Berkeley*



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