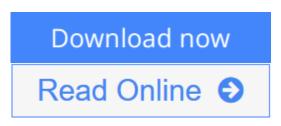# Textual Vision: Augustan Design and the Invention of Eighteenth-Century British Culture (Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650–1850)

*By Timothy Erwin*



**Textual Vision: Augustan Design and the Invention of Eighteenth-Century British Culture (Transits: Literature, Thought & Culture, 1650–1850)** By Timothy Erwin

A stylish critique of literary attitudes towards painting, *TextualVision* explores the simultaneous rhetorical formation and empirical fragmentation of visual reading in enlightenment Britain. Beginning with an engaging treatment of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, Timothy Erwin takes the reader on a guided tour of the pointed allusion, apt illustration, or the subtle appeal to the mind's eye within a wide array of genres and texts, before bringing his linked case studies to a surprising close with the fiction of Jane Austen.

At once carefully researched, theoretically informed and highly imaginative, *Textual Vision* situates textual vision at the cultural crossroads of ancient *pictura-poesis* doctrine and modernist aesthetics. It provides reliable interpretive poles for reading enlightenment imagery, offers vivid new readings of familiar works, and promises to invigorate the study of Restoration and eighteenth-century visual culture.

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## Editorial Review

Review
Throughout this book, Erwin's expertise in different aspects of eighteenth-century visual and literary culture is impressive, and he should be commended for so deftly tying together the rise of professional writing with academic debates in the fine arts and the emergence of a popular British culture. *Textual Vision* will be of particular interest to those investigating the relationship between word and image or the paragone of painting and poetry, and it stands as a testament to how the scholarship of art history and literature can inform one another. (*Eighteenth-Century Fiction*)

'Stylish' and 'theoretically informed' declares this book's flyleaf. These descriptors are true. . . .Erwin means to trace the tension between *disegno* and *colore* (i.e., drawing and color, a binary devised in art theory) in literature from Dryden and Pope through Addison, Johnson, Burke, and the birth of the novel (a final chapter treats Jane Austen). In classic-to-romantic fashion, color wins. . . .Summing Up: . . . Graduate students and researchers. (*CHOICE*)

In a series of readings focused on the image text relation from Pope to Austen, *Textual Vision* provides the best account we have of the aesthetics of design during a period we had been given to believe was in the process of repudiating it as an anachronism…. In providing us with a subtle account of the persistence of design through the eighteenth century (and beyond), Erwin makes an important corrective to the familiar narrative about the rise of the new aesthetics, which takes us with ease from Addison to Kant, concerning how it related to the tradition preceding it. *Textual Vision* could also be productively read within the resurgence of interest in the beautiful, a category it refreshingly approaches as a textured historical discourse rather than an avenue for repoliticizing aesthetics…. [T]he rediscovery of design in *Textual Vision* will remain indispensable. (*Modern Philology*)

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About the Author
**Timothy Erwin** is professor of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

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