



# **The New York School Poets and the Neo-Avant-Garde: Between Radical Art and Radical Chic**

*Mark Silverberg*

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New York City was the site of a remarkable cultural and artistic renaissance during the 1950s and '60s. In the first monograph to treat all five major poets of the New York School—John Ashbery, Barbara Guest, Kenneth Koch, Frank O'Hara, and James Schuyler—Mark Silverberg examines this rich period of cross-fertilization between the arts. Silverberg uses the term 'neo-avant-garde' to describe New York School Poetry, Pop Art, Conceptual Art, Happenings, and other movements intended to revive and revise the achievements of the historical avant-garde, while remaining keenly aware of the new problems facing avant-gardists in the age of late capitalism. Silverberg highlights the family resemblances among the New York School poets, identifying the aesthetic concerns and ideological assumptions they shared with one another and with artists from the visual and performing arts. A unique feature of the book is Silverberg's annotated catalogue of collaborative works by the five poets and other artists. To comprehend the coherence of the New York School, Silverberg demonstrates, one must understand their shared commitment to a reconceptualized idea of the avant-garde specific to the United States in the 1950s and '60s, when the adversary culture of the Beats was being appropriated and repackaged as popular culture. Silverberg's detailed analysis of the strategies the New York School poets used to confront the problem of appropriation tells us much about the politics of taste and gender during the period, and suggests new ways of understanding succeeding generations of artists and poets.

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