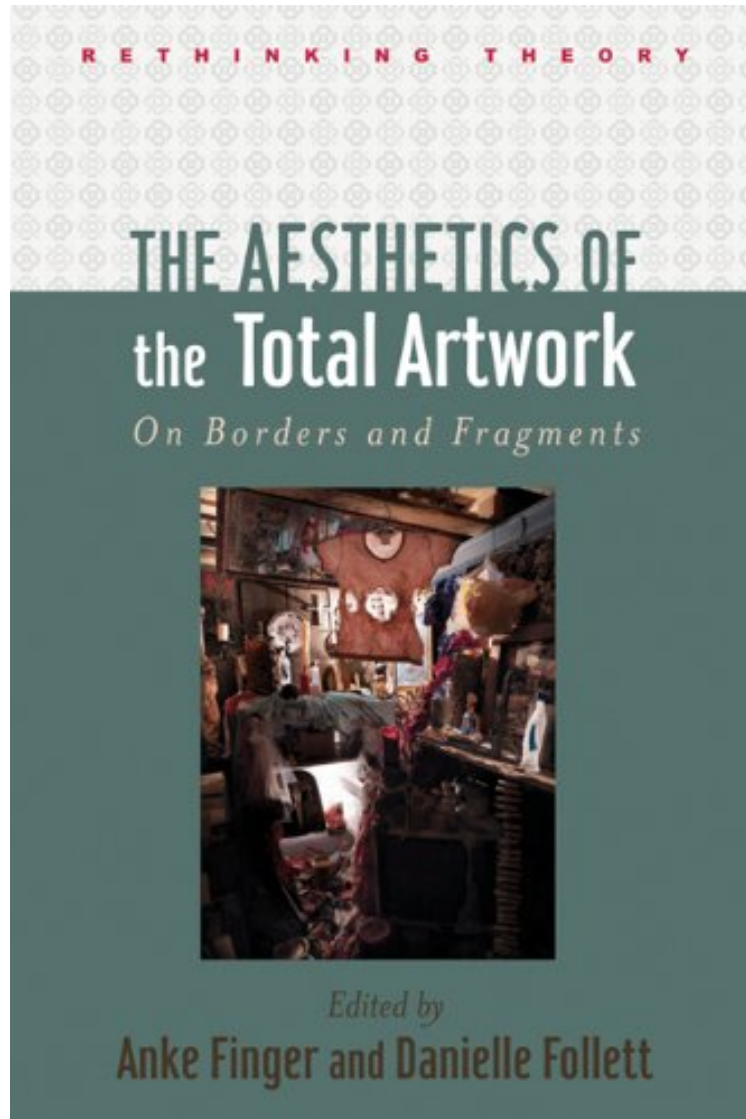


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The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork: On Borders and Fragments (Rethinking Theory)

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In *The Aesthetics of the Total Artwork*, artists, curators, and scholars from many countries and fields offer new ways of understanding the history and contemporary importance of the idea of the total artwork, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The term "*Gesamtkunstwerk*" was introduced in the romantic period. It describes the desire for and practice of combining various art forms into a whole, such as performances that combine text, visual arts, music, dance, and architecture. Richard Wagner was one of the early theorists of the concept, inspiring many modernist artists; yet, due to his ideological significance for the Third Reich, the concept has frequently been associated with totalitarianism since the Second World War. Nonetheless, artistic practice has continued to incorporate all-inclusive tendencies, even while avoiding the term "total artwork." The contributors to this volume challenge us to think again about the total artwork, daring to suggest that it is alive and well, that it informs current art in ways that are deep, meaningful, contentious, and provocative. The essays come from authors steeped in literary culture, the world of art, philosophy, and music theory. Such diverse perspectives can only stimulate debate in the academy and beyond about the history of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and open up paths that may be followed in its future.

About the Author Anke Finger is an associate professor of German and comparative literature at the University of Connecticut. Danielle Follett is at the Universit ParisVIII (Saint Denis).