



A Brief History of Nakedness

Philip Carr-Gomm

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Confrontations with naked human bodies can provoke powerful, and often contradictory, impressions and feelings. Just as they might either thrill or revolt, they can signal innocence or sexiness, frankness or madness, a oneness with nature or a separation from society. Advertisers and the media are very aware of the complex and highly subjective associations that most of us have towards nakedness, and use images incessantly to compete for our attention. Yet mystics have embraced nudity to get closer to God or to some other remote power, while political activists have discovered that baring all is one of the most effective ways to gain publicity for a cause. In *A Brief History of Nakedness*, Philip Carr-Gomm traces our preoccupation with nudity in three distinct areas of human endeavour: religion, politics and popular culture. Rather than study the history of the fine-art nude, or detail the ways in which the naked body has been denigrated or imprisoned, this book explores new territory – revealing the ways in which religious teachers, politicians, protestors and cultural icons have used nudity to enlighten or empower themselves, or simply to entertain us. From the naked sages of India and St Francis of Assisi to modern-day druids and Christian nudists, from *The Full Monty* and *Calendar Girls* to Lady Godiva and Lady Gaga, *A Brief History of Nakedness* surveys the touching, sometimes tragic, and often bizarre story of our relationship with our own and with others' naked bodies.



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