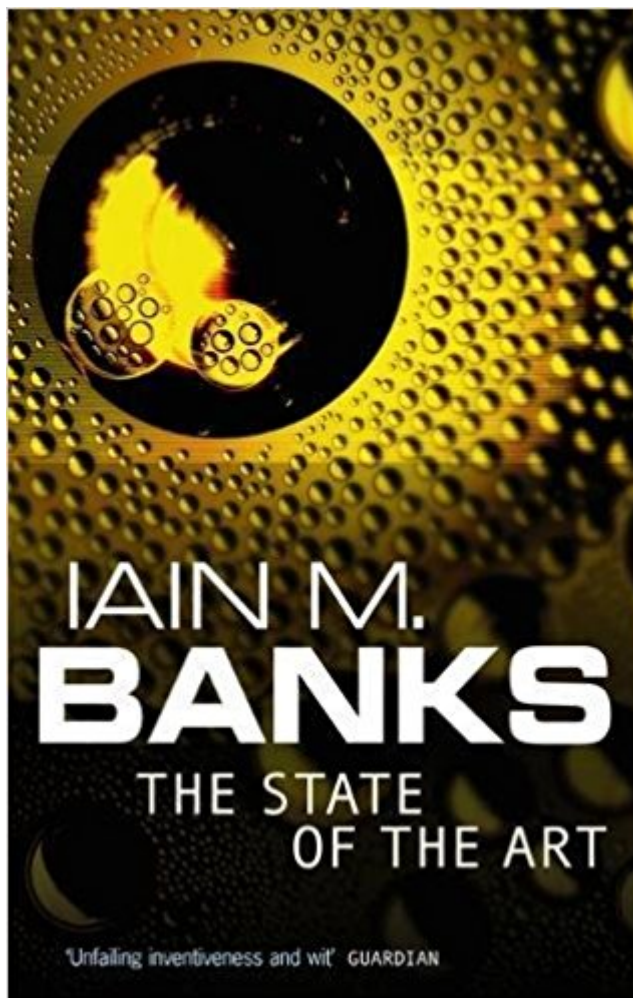


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# State Of The Art



## Synopsis

The first ever collection of Iain Banks's short fiction, this volume includes the acclaimed novella, *The State of the Art*. This is a striking addition to the growing body of Culture lore, and adds definition and scale to the previous works by using the Earth of 1977 as contrast. The other stories in the collection range from science fiction to horror, dark-coated fantasy to morality tale. All bear the indefinable stamp of Iain Banks's staggering talent.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Accompanied by a lengthy essay, "A Few Notes on the Culture" (1997), these seven arresting short stories and the disturbing novella that provides the title for Banks's latest SF collection all date from 1984-1987, the period of his bizarre mainstream novel *The Wasp Factory* and the extravagant genre novel *Consider Phlebas*, both cult-inspiring works. In short pieces like "Road of Skulls" and "Piece," Banks turns convention upside down and inside out, with shocker-endings that linger like smoke rising from a crematorium. "Odd Attachment" traces a marooned spaceman and his AI suit on a tortuous survival trek across an uninhabited planet, illustrating Banks's preoccupation with the "self-generative belief system" that applies to both humans and AIs in the Culture, the setting for the title story and some of his SF novels. Viewing Earth and *Homo sapiens* through the eyes of the Culture, a galactic group-civilization spawned by a handful of humanoid species several thousand years in the past, allows Banks to speculate on his dearest philosophical topics: the preferability of anarchy in space, denunciation of market economies as "synthetic evil," never-ending education for both humans and machines, and genetic manipulation. For all their

wrenching images and sadistic twists, Banks's unsettling tales bestow a grim gift, the ability to see ourselves as others might see us. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

'Banks is a phenomenon: the wildly successful, fearlessly creative author of brilliant and disturbing non-genre novels, he's equally at home writing pure science fiction of a peculiarly gnarly energy and elegance' William Gibson 'Few of us have been exposed to a talent so manifest and of such extraordinary breadth' The New York Review of Science Fiction 'Unfailing inventiveness and wit' Guardian

In "The State of the Art" Banks deals with the Culture (an advanced++ and peaceful galaxy wide collection of societies) and its contact with earth. It is a novella and was published with several other short stories but I think it should be pulled out of that context and published as a stand-alone novel even though short. The novel fills in the gap between the early Culture books and the continuing mystery of why there is no mention of our favorite planet--where all the foibles and horrors of other less advanced cultures exhibit the problems we have on earth. So earth is examined and the lunacy of war, environmental destruction, economic chaos and huddling masses explored along with any hopeful signs that the societies of earth may actually get it together before it is too late. The humor which one always needs when dealing with mayhem and cruelty, comes in sardonic bursts the most pleasing of which are the ship names like "You Call that Clean?" "Lightly Seared on the Reality Grill," "Experiencing a Significant Gravitational Shortfall." The hope that the Culture will intervene and save us from our path of destruction is put to rest (just in case the reader was hoping that a higher power was going to save us from our folly) and the Culture decides just to monitor earth--leave it as a control case, as it were, in its continuing problem of whether and when to intervene in a planet's destiny. I seldom read science fiction and have only recently discovered this series. I am such an avid fan that I must ration myself so as not to finish them too fast. To me the series falls into the same genre of the "Dune" series and the "Foundation" series. There is a lot of sociology nested in the corners of the excitement and there is enough excitement for an adrenaline junky along with some dreamy technology.

This is probably the most down to earth scifi work of Banks. Which is both good and not so good. Being about actual 1970s earth is relatable. But it's not a grandiose space opera, the genre where Banks shone the brightest. Definitely read this if you like Banks. His main topics are all here, so I'd

the humor. Read this if you want a gateway into the Culture series - this one is very accessible. Read this if you like liberal views taken to the space level - that's what Banks is all about.

In a pragmatic way at variance with how I kid myself I apportion value, I nearly didn't get this because it's not as big as usual and it has short bits. This would have been a mistake. I now have yet another set of filters through which to view Banks' output - a (probably) deeper insight from which to review/reread. Considering I would have done that anyway, but will now derive fresh pleasure from the time spent, I am as pleased as sunshine that I rounded off my collection with this collection.

I'm in love with the Culture series. This wonderful collection of short stories forwards that vision with a novella and a couple shorts, and a few other brilliantly imaginative pieces that leave one with images of other worlds that one recalls and ponders at off moments during the more mundane activities of this world.

Somebody needed a book to put out, so they took a few of his previously published shorts and added the one novella, which is nice, but doesn't add any new context to the universe and clearly was written before the full development of the Culture concept. However, for Banks fans still in mourning over his untimely passing, it's better than no new stuff at all. This one will be collectible sooner if you run across an early edition in a used book store, as I did. :-{}}

The book is a series of short stories on various subjects. Very compelling, imaginative writing. There is nothing like it.

I love the Culture Series novels - and this novel is no exception.

Never really connected with me. It was just okay. A relatively short work and it just left me unfulfilled. It must be a bit hard to find these days as it was sort of expensive for a mass market book.

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