

Lee Johnson, *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue, 1816-1831*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981. Vol. I, Text; Vol. II, Plates, 299,95 \$

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LEE JOHNSON *The Paintings of Eugène Delacroix: A Critical Catalogue, 1816-1831*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981. Vol. I, Text; Vol. II, Plates, 299.95 \$.

The eighty years of French painting from David to Delacroix are hardly neglected. They constitute a well defined, important period which continues to be studied. Yet our knowledge of what was painted during these years remains surprisingly incomplete. Twenty-eight years ago Georges Wildenstein published the paintings of Ingres with adequate photographs. As yet we have nothing comparable for Gros, Girodet, Géricault or Prud'hon. More remarkable still is the fact that we have no critical catalogue for David. The first two volumes of Lee Johnson's study of the paintings of Delacroix are therefore to be welcomed warmly. A critical catalogue for an artist of this period is rare in itself, and this catalogue promises to be among the most ambitious of its kind.

Delacroix studies have a distinguished tradition that begins with Tourneux's bibliographical study and the catalogues of Moreau and Robaut. In the twentieth century Joubin edited the journals and the correspondence; Escholier and Huyghe wrote comprehensive monographs; to commemorate the centenary of the artist's death the Louvre mounted an imposing exhibition and published a fully documented catalogue of the 532 entries. But since Delacroix's production was large, it has proved enormously difficult to free the historiography of his *œuvre* of accumulated errors and confusions. We have long needed another catalogue as scrupulous and comprehensive as Robaut's, as committed to independent verification, but fully photographed and founded upon modern scholarship, with its concern for dating, its attention to provenance, lists of exhibitions and bibliography.

The present catalogue is all that one could ask in this respect. Volume I gives a full documentary history for the first fifteen years of Delacroix's production and provides extensive commentary on the

major paintings. Volume II contains good, large plates reproducing the known works. In both volumes the paintings are arranged by subject, chronologically within each category, so that they give the most complete account of Delacroix's evolution that we have. And how complex that evolution is! One is struck by his enormous versatility, powers of observation and willingness to take chances. In almost every category of subject that he tried, and he tried many, he was capable of producing a masterpiece. The result is that even his small paintings resist the easy generality. Who would think that the solidly realistic *Female Academy* (pl. 7), the mannered *Lady and her Valet* (pl. 6) and the free, powerful *Odalisque on a Divan* (pl. 7) were the creations of the same artist, and painted within a few years of each other? This purposeful experimentation is writ large in the famous Salon paintings. The *Barque of Dante*, the *Massacre of Chios*, the *Death of Sardanapalus* and *Liberty Leading the People* are so linked by a single name that we forget what distinctly different kinds of achievement they are. Though loosely connected by their preoccupation with struggle and suffering, they do not resemble each other in subject, composition or mood.

In addition Volume II contains photographs of a considerable number of lost works and doubtful attributions. These draw our attention to the problems that remain. An unexpected finding is that for the early years more paintings are lost than known. Many are undoubtedly minor; their number is a tribute to the thoroughness of Robaut's original catalogue and to the care with which the author has unravelled the contents of Robaut's partly defined lots. Given the fame of many of Delacroix's Salon paintings for this period, the reader may also be surprised to discover that more paintings are in private hands than in public collections. One of the challenges, successfully met in so many cases, has been to track down and secure photographs of little known works.

Of the doubtful attributions some are relative newcomers to the literature on Delacroix, for instance most of the rejected copies after

Rubens. Others have a longer, more respectable history, the portraits of Barroilhet and Palatiano and the Louvre *Seated Female Academy* and *Interior with Stove* being cases in point. The most perplexing questions are those posed by the studies of the horse, for to problems of misattribution there is the added one of overpainting. Furthermore, since about half the studies listed by Robaut are missing, it is difficult to establish a clear conception of Delacroix's style. It is to the author's credit that he has succeeded in giving us the first thorough account of the problems of attribution in Delacroix's *œuvre*. The artist's nineteenth-century scholars were concerned with the issue it is true, but the information they compiled is scattered among their unpublished papers. One of the strengths of this catalogue is the way in which these sources have been put to use. Indeed the whole section on doubtful works demonstrates the immense value to be derived from a thorough knowledge of provenance, exhibitions and bibliography. Though these foundations of the Catalogue raisonné are tedious to research, nothing can take their place. When combined, as they are here, with the judgments of a trained eye, they allow for the making of fine distinctions in the kind and degree of doubt that attaches to each work.

In the years before 1831 Delacroix painted many of the works that establish him as a major artist. For these we are given information relating to preparatory studies and drawings, a guide to previous research and concise accounts of the author's own findings. The result is a text that goes far beyond the documentary. We learn much that is new about literary, historical and visual sources, about the identity of sitters and the consistently mixed critical reactions of Delacroix's contemporaries. References to Salon reviews alone will provide many a clue to those seeking similar material for other artists. The same broad interest attaches to the accounts of Delacroix's technical and aesthetic concerns: his analyses of colour, his sense of the relationship between modelling and contour, of the problem of working from nature and of maintaining a sketch-like spontaneity. All this is fruitful

reading for the student of nineteenth-century art as a whole, as well as for the specialist on Delacroix.

This is a handsome, physically durable book. Paper, typography, and plates, both in colour and black

and white, are worthy of the author's treatment of the subject. The publishers have recognized that this will be a standard work of reference for generations. Less commendable though is their punitive mark-up for North American buyers (the two

volume set sells for only £80 in the United Kingdom). One might think that an attempt was underway to limit the circulation of a work of fundamental importance.

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LIVRES COMMUNIQUÉS / BOOKS RECEIVED

Ces ouvrages sont susceptibles d'une recension critique.

Books listed below are in no way precluded from consideration for future review.

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BAKER, SUZANNE DEVONSHIRE *Artists of Alberta*. Edmonton, The University of Alberta Press, 1982. 97 pp., 97 illus. col., 13.50\$ (paper).

BAUDELAIRE, CHARLES and JONATHAN MAYNE (trans., ed.) *Art in Paris 1845-1862; Salons and other Exhibitions*. Ithaca (N.Y.), Cornell University Press, 1981 (Landmarks in Art History). 241 + xiv pp., 72 illus., 9.95\$ (paper).

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LAPOINTE, CAMILLE *Les collections archéologiques de la Place Royale: le verre des latrines de la maison Perthuis*. Québec, Ministère des Affaires culturelles, Direction générale du Patrimoine, 1981 (Dossier 52). 206 p., 172 pl.

LEMIRE, ROBERT et MONIQUE TRÉPANIÉ *Inventaire des bâtiments construits entre 1919 et 1959 dans le vieux Montréal et les quartiers Saint-Georges et Saint-André / Inventory of Buildings Constructed Between 1919 and 1959 in Old Montreal and Saint-Georges and Saint-André Wards*. Québec, Direction des lieux et des parcs historiques nationaux, Parcs Canada, Environnement Canada, 1980 (Histoire et archéologie, n^{os} 51a, 51b). 330 p. en deux tomes, illus., 21.75\$ (broché).

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WAGG, SUSAN *Percy Erskine Nobbs; Architecte, Artiste, Artisan / Architect, Artist, Craftsman*. Kingston and Montreal, McGill / Queen's University Press, 1982. 99 + xiii pp., 29 illus., 12.95\$ (paper).