

*Painted Men in Britain, 1868-1918: Royal Academicians and Masculinities* by Jongwoo Jeremy Kim. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012. 194 pp. + 4 colour, 66 b/w illus. ISBN 978-1-4094-0008-0. £63.00.

Jongwoo Jeremy Kim is one of a growing number of scholars working on the reconsideration of visual and textual representations of the gender and sexuality of male bodies in British art of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his first book, *Painted Men*, based on his dissertation, Kim looks in particular at paintings by various Royal Academicians, and offers a challenge to what he describes as conventional twentieth-century modernist readings of these artists and their works. Kim proposes that a consideration of the homoerotic or “degenerate” content of these paintings reveals that the “modern anxieties, losses and upheavals” experienced by artists of the French *avant garde* were also prevalent in the lives of Academicians. Therefore, he proposes, these Academic paintings should be seen as an important contributing factor to the history of modernism and the *avant garde*, rather than dormant and undeveloped, remote to the artistic vitality of the time. Indeed, Kim suggests that the last decade or so of Western art-history has been based on a single model of modernism; it is his intention in this book to “put an end” to “the tunnel-visioned writings” of modernist art historians who insist on basing the history of modernism on an idealized chronicle of the lives of the French masters.

Kim’s argument is presented in four chapters and concentrates on close readings of paintings by Frederic Leighton, Henry Scott Tuke, Luke Fildes, John Singer Sargent, and their contemporaries in the Royal Academy between the years 1868 and 1918. The Introduction of the book is predominantly a close analysis of Tuke’s painting *Woodland Bather* (1893), which Kim uses as an example of his thesis. He suggests that the painting contains certain attributes that could be seen as contrary to the expectations of Academic painting, and that it fails to achieve three main Academic objectives: an idealized naturalism, a pictorial standard for the heroic male figure, and a clear narrative intent. However, for the author, these are exactly the features which make the painting interesting, for they are clearly “transgressions” against the Royal Academy, in the sense that they represent the non-heteronormative male figure, and are therefore in direct conflict with Academic art at Burlington House. Nevertheless, Kim finds it “puzzling” why the *Woodland Bather* fails as an Academic painting; his response to this conundrum is that Tuke’s painting should now be seen as a “different type” of Academic art, since the painter knowingly misused academic conventions to express “ideological heresies.” While I do not disagree with Kim’s premise that Tuke’s *Woodland Bather* figure has homoerotic elements and works within the context of