

Pre-Raphaelite Vision: Truth to Nature by Allen Staley and Christopher Newall, with contributions by Alison Smith, Ian Warrell, and Tim Batchelor. London: Tate Publishing, 2004. x, 290 pp. + 141 colour plates, 72 b/w illus. ISBN 1-85437-499-0. \$50.00, £29.99 (paper).

Pre-Raphaelite Vision, Truth to Nature, written to accompany the exhibition of the same name held at Tate Britain from 12 February through 3 May 2004, continues the exhibition program by situating the selected works of art in their historical and artistic contexts. The exhibition aimed “to place the Pre-Raphaelite vision in the context of the scientific, religious, and social culture of the age” and to explore “how far Pre-Raphaelite works can be seen as images of affirmation of religious uncertainty in an increasingly scientific age.” Contextualizing art in an exhibition is challenging, as the amplifying information may potentially distract from the works of art. The exhibition organizers rose to the occasion, however, including, for example, geological specimens as well as magnifying glasses so that visitors could carefully peruse the objects and thus invoke the careful, attentive vision characteristic of Pre-Raphaelitism.

The catalogue is introduced by an essay by exhibition manager Alison Smith, who makes clear the book's additional goal – to update Allen Staley's groundbreaking study, *The Pre-Raphaelite Landscape* (1973), issued in a new edition by Yale University Press in 2001: “It is not the purpose of this essay to demand the rehabilitation of Pre-Raphaelitism into the teleology of Modernism, but rather to explore what made their vision unique. Since the original publication of Staley's text, changes in the historiography of art and the rise of Postmodern art practices have done much to undermine the formalist aspects of the Modernist aesthetic, and so more recently the Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on nature, time, and place has given it an intellectual validity on its own terms.” The aim of her own essay, then, is not to look “backwards or forwards,” but “to place the movement in its contemporary context, and see the Pre-Raphaelites' mission as an unprecedented and open-ended investigation into the laws governing picture-making and the limitations of realism in art.” This is an exciting and ambitious project that effectively links Pre-Raphaelitism to current debates in cultural history, most notably those sparked by the publication of Jonathan Crary's 1990 book *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (surprisingly not cited in the bibliography).

All the contributors are successful in providing a new understanding of the “Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on nature, time, and place,” coupled with an appreciation of the formal innovation and complexity of the works themselves. (The former task is accomplished largely by the thematic essays; the latter by the catalogue entries.) However, readers in search of an institutional history of Pre-Raphaelitism would find more useful such sources as the catalogue to the