

*The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848-1914* by David Peters Corbett. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2004 (co-published with the Manchester UP). xviii, 318 pp. + 22 colour plates, 70 b/w illus. ISBN: 0-271-02360-0. \$75 (cloth). 0-271-02361-9. \$35 (paper).

David Peters Corbett's *The World in Paint* promises to synthesize notions of "modern" and "Victorian," a dichotomy rooted in early modernists' hostility toward narrative painting and a definition of modernism tied to the art of nineteenth-century and twentieth-century France and America. Victorian and modern are often treated as mutually exclusive terms. Art historians of British art have suggested paradigm shifts, beginning with Dianne Sachko Macleod who recommended multiple modernisms in her groundbreaking 1995 essay "The Dialectics of Modernism and English Art" (*British Journal of Aesthetics*). Lisa Tickner's study of British moderns (*Modern Life and Modern Subjects*, 2000) and Elizabeth Prettejohn's argument for Pre-Raphaelites as pioneering modernists (*The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, 2000), along with her edited volume on Aestheticism (*After the Pre-Raphaelites*, 1999), also offer revisions that unite "British" and "modernism" from c.1870 on. Other recent books on Frederic Leighton, Lawrence Alma-Tadema, and Victorian sculpture further redefine Victorian visual culture in light of modernisms.

Corbett interprets the period 1848 to 1914 as a coherent, essentially modern British cultural trajectory from the Pre-Raphaelites to Aestheticism to moderns like Sickert, the Camden Town Group, Bloomsbury, and Vorticism. He argues that the "economic modernization of artistic practice" placed Victorian artists into new social and economic positions and gave painting a new role as an alternative to industrial materialism. Corbett promises to discern "traditions" (which he puts in quote marks, though it seems an unfortunate word choice) of the visual from 1848 to World War I. But finding a tradition means leaving out what seems messy, inconsistent, and incoherent, which may threaten the ultimate claims for that tradition. Choosing 1848 as the onset of change also ignores remarkable interrogations of visual and modern experiences by J.M.W. Turner, William Blake, and John Constable.

Corbett's somewhat jumbled introduction begins with Thomas Sturges Moore's poem on Titian's *Bacchanal*, an example of a conflicted ekphrasis of competition between language and the visual, one theme of this book. Victorian artists from the 1860s sought to replace blatant realism with an aesthetic resistance to the modern, which they defined as crass and commercial. But artists also hoped to correct art's perceived marginalization from lived experience under industrial capitalism. Elsewhere (in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Bruce Allen, 1995), I have discussed the language of the "fleeting" in art writings from 1880 to World War I, a language both within commercial venues and defying the commercial. This contradiction – artists denigrating