

Pre-Raphaelite Painting Techniques by Joyce H. Townsend, Jacqueline Ridge, and Stephen Hackney. London: Tate Publishing, 2004. 208 pp. + 139 colour plates, 31 b/w illus. ISBN 1-85437-498-2. \$37.50; £19.99.

This volume is not intended as a comprehensive survey of the entire output of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Instead, by presenting information derived from the close examination of a small group of early paintings, it sets out to show the reader why Pre-Raphaelite paintings look the way they do, and in the process, dispels some of the myths surrounding their production. The first half

of the volume contains a series of five essays covering various aspects of the artists' lives and times. Together these provide an excellent lead into the second half of the book, a detailed exploration of individual paintings.

The first essay, "Revival and Reformation: The Aims and Ideals of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," by Alison Smith, skillfully describes the historic context of the PRB movement. Although the movement arose during a period of great political upheaval in Europe, it had no political motive, but was first and foremost an aesthetic code based on a desire to produce durable, well-crafted paintings that were true to nature. Smith maintains that the bright jewel-like colours found in their paintings were actually due more to the revolutionary emphasis they placed on working outdoors in bright sunshine than to their obvious admiration for pre-Renaissance sacred painting, and that in spite of the artists' curiosity about the techniques of early Flemish and Italian painters, the PRB were more interested in adopting their stylistic mannerisms than in reviving earlier painting methods.

The second essay, "Background, Training and Influences," by the main authors of the volume, Stephen Hackney, Jacqueline Ridge, and Joyce Townsend, outlines each artist's early training. It describes their relationships with one another and explains how the artists reacted against the academic ideals of the day by abandoning dead colouring and rejecting the conventional academic rules of composition which governed the distribution and lighting of objects. Helen Glanville's essay, "Contemporary Colour Theory," goes on to explore how the young PRB artists put Chevreul's colour theory of simultaneous contrast and complementary colours into practice. With detailed reference to individual paintings, Glanville demonstrates how the PRB painters were automatically drawn to the use of strong colour contrasts and coloured shadows as a direct result of their decision to paint in bright sunlight. Through the subtle use of glazing and scumbling, they were able to produce very realistic colour effects, derived from careful observation of the way light from different sources affects the colour of the objects upon which it falls.

"Contemporary Painting Materials," by Leslie Carlyle, examines the