

Art in the Age of Queen Victoria: A Wealth of Depictions edited by Mark Bills. Bournemouth: Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum/Lund Humphries, 2001. 136 pp. + 69 colour plates, 38 b/w illus. ISBN 0-85331-829-8. \$60.00.

The centenary of Victoria's death in 2001 occasioned numerous publications celebrating the artistic legacy of her reign. The title, *Art in the Age of Queen Victoria*, has been used three times: for this catalogue of works in the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum in Bournemouth; for a survey of pictures from the Royal Academy of Arts, London; and for an Australian travelling show of pictures in Antipodean galleries. This title replaces the previously preferred moniker "Victorian Art," which appropriately paid less tribute to the most powerful figure in the nineteenth century. For Victoria herself had little interest in contemporary art in Britain, preferring to spend her guineas on continental productions. However, many of her subjects took up the patronage slack. And the fruits of one canny connoisseur-couple's purchasing power are visible permanently at Bournemouth, in the house that they built for themselves and their art, on a bluff overlooking the English Channel. This volume, edited by Mark Bills, the former curator of the collection and now Curator of Paintings, Prints, and Drawings at the Museum of London, aims to provide a colour catalogue of hoteliers Merton and Annie Russell-Cotes's collection, and to introduce the breadth of the works through thematic essays by a range of historians of Victorian art. The collection was recently featured in abbreviated form in a United States tour titled *A Victorian Salon* which I reviewed in this journal (Fall 1999). The highlight of that show, and the gallery's greatest work, is Albert Moore's *Midsummer* (1887), a picture not illustrated in the present volume. The more scholarly catalogue to that show must be combined with this book to get a full sense of the institution's holdings, because only twelve works overlap between the two, the best of which, and only true Pre-Raphaelite work, being Dante Rossetti's *Venus Verticordia* (1864-68).

The reason why *Midsummer* is excluded is that the essays deal with "some themes most pertinent in Victorian art," and while purporting to be a basic introduction to the period, this book cannot really be counted as such, since it purposefully avoids many important strands, including artistic movements. Hence, Aestheticism and Moore lose out. Brill contributes 84 catalogue entries and two essays that provide basic introductions to the subjects of display and exhibition of art in the period, and the proliferation of prints in Victorian visual culture. Mary Cowling gives an overview of thematic strands in history and contemporary life subjects using works from the collection by artists such as Edwin Long, Solomon Alexander Hart, and the Frenchman Charles Landelle, whose penetratingly psychological *Judith* (1895) represents the heights of