

The Pre-Raphaelite Lens: British Photography and Painting, 1848-1875 by Diane Waggoner; with Tim Barringer, Joanne Lukitsh, Jennifer L. Roberts, and Britt Salvesen. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2010. x, 230 pp. + 200 colour illus. ISBN 978-1-84822-067-6. \$65.00.

This is a beautiful book. Or is it a catalogue? Not exactly either, on which more below. The question has become an interesting one as both exhibition and exhibition book reinvent themselves in response to a proliferation of alternatives: the exhibition brochure, the exhibition audio, the exhibition website and blog, the exhibition app – not to mention wall texts and reproductive posters, postcards, and much more.

One response, evident here, has been to turn the exhibition catalogue into a separable book. This volume goes further than most in this direction. Originally produced for an exhibition organized by the National Gallery of Art in Washington in association with the Musée d'Orsay, Paris, *The Pre-Raphaelite Lens* has altogether omitted the usual catalogue section (with detailed entries organized by object). In its place, seven scholarly essays alternate with what we might understand as seven photo essays, each separately titled and only loosely related to the verbal essay that precedes it. These sections of photographic reproductions are visually compelling. While some images illustrate points made in the scholarly essays, the sequence also functions independently as an essay-without-words. The images are minimally identified (author, title, medium, size, collection) but beautifully reproduced, one to a page. We cannot tell whether the photo essays correspond to rooms or sections of an exhibition or represent a different organization of its objects designed specifically for the book. The images as presented bring out both comparative relationships between facing-page pictures (like the old two-projector slide-lecture), and group affinities in an unfolding sequence under the essay's running title (e.g., "Minute Details" or "Natural Effects").

Does this format reproduce a museum experience? Yes and no. As in an exhibition, separate sections with minimal text do allow us to focus on looking, to see what the images as presented can reveal. In the book, however, photographs remain photographs, but paintings become them. There are other differences as well. The size of the reproduced images has been adjusted so that the subjects on facing pages are seen in the same scale. In the exhibition it is the viewer who must adapt to shifts in representational scale (and still greater shifts in the medium and size of the artefact); in the book these differences are deliberately minimized. In the museum we are better able to appreciate the comparative ability of each medium to render microscopic fineness of detail or larger-scale effects of natural light and shadow. These features, the scholarly essays suggest, constitute part of a shared visual vo-