

*The Forbes Collection of Victorian Pictures and Works of Art*. 3 vols., boxed. London: Christie's International, 2003. 288 pp. + 121 colour plates, 73 b/w illus.; 338 pp. + 217 colour plates, 36 b/w illus.; 338 pp. + 210 colour plates, 22 b/w illus. £90.00 (paper).

In February 2003, one of the most extensive private collections of Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian art was auctioned to the public at Christie's in London. The collection, begun by media magnate Malcolm S. Forbes over thirty years ago and assembled largely by his son Christopher, included works by leading Pre-Raphaelite and Pre-Raphaelite circle artists such as John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Woolner, James Collinson, Ford Madox Brown, Walter Deverell, Edward Burne-Jones, Arthur Hughes, Frank Dicksee, Frederick Leighton, George Frederick Watts, and John William Waterhouse. The sale, which included over 350 paintings, drawings, and sculptures over a two-day period, netted almost £17 million.

For those of us not fortunate enough to attend the auctions in person, a splendid three-volume catalogue has been produced. This massive work, comprising almost 1,000 pages of high-quality colour reproductions and scholarly essays, is sure to be a valuable reference for any student of Pre-Raphaelite or Victorian art. While the Forbes Collection has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and catalogues over the years (for example, in 1974 the University of Minnesota's *Art and Mind of Victorian England: Paintings from the Forbes Magazine Collection*), no previous treatment has been as comprehensive or detailed as the Christie's catalogue.

As would be expected from any catalogue for a prominent sale, the *Forbes* volumes provide a high-quality colour reproduction, a detailed provenance, and an exhibition history for each lot. This catalogue, however, is distinguished from most others by the extensive and scholarly articles describing the works, their histories, and their historical/literary contexts. In many cases, images of associated works, such as studies and sketches, as well as contemporary works by related artists, are included to illustrate the discussion.

For example, the entry for Hunt's *Il Dolce far Niente* (1866), which sold for £666,650, is six pages long and includes full-page colour reproductions of both the painting and a detail of the principal figure's hands, together with three black-and-white plates showing associated works by Rossetti and Burne-Jones and a chair designed by Hunt himself. That for Walter Deverell's magnificent *Twelfth Night* (1850) – which sold for £600,650, a record for a Deverell work – is ten pages in length, and includes a fold-out colour plate illustrating both the work and a detail, as well as eight supporting black-and-white plates. The historical and literary detail of the entries is exceptional and often reflects the input of leading scholars in the field, such as Dr. Judith Brockhurst, whose forthcoming *catalogue raisonné* of Hunt will include several of the works featured in the *Forbes* catalogue.