

## REVIEWS

### LIVES OF THE ARTISTS: HERKOMER AND LEIGHTON A REVIEW ARTICLE

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*Herkomer: A Victorian Artist* by Lee MacCormick Edwards. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999. 159 pp. 24 colour, 144 black-and-white illus. ISBN 184014 686 9. \$61.95.

*Frederic Leighton: Antiquity, Renaissance, Modernity* edited by Tim Barringer and Elizabeth Prettejohn. New Haven: Yale UP, 1999. 332 pp. 17 colour, 100 black-and-white illus. ISBN 0-300-07937-0. \$60.00.

It would be hard to find two studies of Victorian artists more different in their methodologies at least on the surface than these two books. Some of the differences are due to the reality that, for most scholars and the public, Hubert von Herkomer is not well-known, while Frederic Leighton is much better known and is currently enjoying a revival of his art and reputation.

Lee Edwards's long-awaited study of Herkomer has been preceded by a study of Victorian realism in art--*Hard Times: Social Realism in Victorian Art* (1988), by Julian Treuherz et al.--in which connections between the "high" art of Herkomer and other realists was placed in the contexts of public visual culture of the press and printmaking. Recent studies of Van Gogh's work also acknowledge the influence of Victorian social realists, whom Van Gogh adored, on his work. Herkomer's talents were wide-ranging in several media (painting, printmaking, theatre, writing, composing, and even early film-making, head of an art school) and his reputation international (he had dual citizenship in England and Germany). He is a good example of a Victorian artist well-known in his day and almost erased in ours. His career touched Pre-Raphaelitism at several points: illustrations to texts (which the Pre-Raphaelites initiated under Edward Moxon in the 1857 edition of Tennyson's *Poems*) and their interest in the dark side of contemporary life.

Edwards's biography is chronological and *oeuvre*-driven: topics include his early life, his subsequent activities as an illustrator for the *Graphic*, his rustic and Welsh landscape which she calls "pastoral idylls," his studies of Bavarian peasants that tended to idealize them and to which Herkomer introduced topics of old age and death, his triumphant painting, *The Last Muster* (1875; an early version of which was an illustration for the *Graphic*), his more overt social realism in subsequent paintings, his lucrative portraits, his trip to America, his life and school in the then-quiet and sparsely populated London suburb of Bushey (which by the 1890s was a commuter suburb), his printmaking, his theatre and film ventures, his