

REVIEWS

John Everett Millais by Jason Rosenfeld. London: Phaidon Press, 2012. 256 pp. + 163 colour plates. ISBN 978 0 7148 3977 6. \$59.95.

A sticky label on the front of Jason Rosenfeld's weighty new work, *John Everett Millais*, claims that it is "The first monograph to appraise the artist's complete career, celebrating his portrait and landscape masterpieces as well as popular Pre-Raphaelite paintings." This is something of a publisher's exaggeration: Paul Barlow's 2005 study of Millais, *Time Present and Time Past*, has already offered the Pre-Raphaelite scholar a recent, comprehensive coverage of the artist's life works, arguing (like Rosenfeld) for the continuing originality and modernity of Millais's later and lesser-known paintings. In fact, Rosenfeld's sumptuously illustrated monograph can be seen as the culmination of some thirty years of scholarship on this most versatile and talented of Pre-Raphaelite artists. Under the impetus of Malcolm Warner's work, art historians have turned their attention to Millais's marginalized later works, or explored themes across the entire span of his career: Peter Funnell's 1999 catalogue of his portraits, and Debra N. Mancoff's collection of essays, *John Everett Millais: Beyond the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (2001), which includes pieces by Julie F. Codell, Leonée Ormond, and Anne Helmreich, among others, are particularly significant landmarks in this journey. As a curator for both the 2008 Tate exhibition on Millais and the 2012-13 "Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant Garde" one, Rosenfeld has not only contributed to the development of this scholarship, but also played a prominent role in refreshing the public perception of the artist.

The strengths of Rosenfeld's approach lie in his considerable breadth of coverage, and his ability to develop sensitive and artistically informed readings of Millais's work. His interpretation of *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru* (1846), for example – a very early academic work – ranges over the compositional sources of the painting: French masters such as David, Géricault, and Delacroix are indicated, as well as the rather less celebrated English academic artists of the eighteenth-century, J.S. Copley and Benjamin West. Moreover, Rosenfeld does not ignore the crucial influence of the contemporary theatre on the young painter. Along with contemporary literature, particularly poetry, the theatre was to remain one of Millais's most abiding influences: it is evidence that he was always a topical artist, even when painting nominally historical subjects. Similarly, Rosenfeld's reading of *Autumn Leaves* (1855-56), perhaps Millais's most mysterious work, is fresh and exciting, exploring the nostalgic and elegiac mood of the work, but also its