

Lord Leighton. By Leonée and Richard Ormond. 200 pp. 10 color plates, 194 black-and-white. Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1975. \$45.00.

Frederick Leighton (1830-1896) was set apart from his English contemporaries by his upbringing in Frankfurt and on the Continent. He was a child prodigy, consecrated to art from an early age, a spoiled child, if you like, of affluent and well-connected parents who saw to it that his gifts were given every opportunity to develop. Thus at the age of nine he was "introduced" to the still-life painter George Lance who had a studio in Paris. At eleven he had lessons from a Florentine painter. At twelve he entered the Berlin Academy and at fifteen he entered the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence. Shortly thereafter the family settled in Frankfurt where Leighton entered the Städelches Kunstinstitut, to begin formal, serious art education. He quickly won acceptance as one of the most gifted young painters around, and he moved thenceforth pretty much at will within the international society of artists. It was not until his 29th year (1859) that he went to London to stay and set up a studio there. His prolonged expatriate existence was a handicap at first, despite the fact that his first important painting, Cimabue's Madonna is Carried in Procession through the Streets of Florence, had been purchased four years earlier by Queen Victoria for the Royal Collection.

More patriotic, stay-at-home painters resented this young outsider making such a coup right off the bat. Critics were harsher on him than he thought he deserved, and his election to the Royal Academy was delayed. In due time, however, he was elected to the Academy, and for the last twenty years of his life he served, with the utmost dedication, as its President. His selfless, innovative, dedicated service to the cause of art and to the Academy in the end won him respect and love. He was a shy, somewhat withdrawn man in his personal relationships (he never married)--not easy in the intimacy of friendship, though cordial, easy and generous as a host and companion, and a man of unexceptionable loyalty over a lifetime filled with many personal associations. The Ormonds handle this complex, rather delicate personality with insight. The reader comes away with a vivid picture of a man larger than life who yet lacked some essential inner identity. The comparison with Henry James, whose genius was greater, but whose personality presents a similar enigma, comes about naturally. The two men knew but did not like