

*Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*. Manchester City Art Galleries, 22 November 1997--22 February 1998; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 7 March--25 May 1998; Southampton City Art Gallery, 6 June--2 August, 1998.

*The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones and Watts: Symbolism in Britain, 1860-1910*. Tate Gallery, London, 16 October 1997--4 January 1998; Haus der Kunst, Munich, 30 January--26 April 1998; Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, 15 May--30 August 1998.

The exhibition *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists* was selected and the catalogue jointly written by Jan Marsh and Pamela Gerrish Nunn. The gathering together of this group of paintings is a landmark in Pre-Raphaelite studies and both Marsh and Nunn are to be applauded for their scholarly efforts. Despite their involvement in what was a comparatively welcoming artistic movement for women, the passage of time has left the artists presented here in relative obscurity. Even the Tate Gallery exhibition of 1984 included only a few works by Elizabeth Siddal as representative of the women involved in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Given the large number of artists represented in this exhibition, it constitutes quite a substantial omission. As explained in the catalogue's introductory essay: "Our contention is that their [women artists] re-inclusion in Pre-Raphaelite history will re-define its scope, concerns and achievements, as well as restore a wealth of forgotten and neglected works to public attention. Half the picture does not give the whole view"(9).

It is not always the case that the singling out of a previously marginalized group really serves a useful purpose. However, in this case, the sheer number of artists and the quality of many of the works included adds a new and fascinating dimension to the ways in which we perceive the Pre-Raphaelite movement. In her catalogue essay, Nunn points out the irony of the exclusion of this group from the history of Pre-Raphaelitism: Woman--the object, icon, motif, and motive of whom and from whom Pre-Raphaelitism is said to have been made--has, perversely, masked the presence within the movement of women" (54).

The exhibition and accompanying catalogue serve as a kind of retrograde manifesto for the position of PRB women. Simultaneously, however, it is precisely this single gender commonality which leaves the exhibition occasionally lacking in stylistic coherence. Not all females associated with the PRB who painted were necessarily highly skilled artists. The result is a substantial range in the style and technical abilities represented. In the effort to bring to light all the information that has been discovered on the subject, Marsh and Nunn have perhaps included, along with exceptional works, those of some whose skills are less immediately apparent.

As viewed at the Manchester City Art Galleries, the exhibition was both a joy and a frustration to behold. The opportunity to view so many rarely exhibited works was a valuable experience. However, the hang at Manchester was distracting perhaps due to a shortage of space which led to the crowding of paintings and the