

52. *Portrait of Rita Angus*, by Leo Bensemann. 1937–38. Canvas, 43.7 by 35.5 cm. (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington).



latter's marriage, while the recently divorced Angus possibly enjoyed sexual relations with Bensemann. Later Angus was briefly a lover of Bloomsbury South's sole composer of note, Douglas Lilburn. Brasch (himself a sublimated homosexual) in turn wrote an eloquent 'Paen for Douglas Lilburn', published for the first time as an appendix to Simpson's volume, almost seventy years after it was received by its fiercely private dedicatee.

The most enduring testimony of the Bloomsbury South 'triangle' is Angus's and Bensemann's portraits of each other, and the portraits by them both of Baigent. Angus's wit and sharply graphic Art Deco style are evident in the echoing forms of Bensemann's famous eyebrows and hairline, and the silhouetted Southern Alps peaks in the background. In turn, Bensemann's fantastic imagination casts Angus as a proto-Addams Family character set against an eerie desert landscape with rocky pyramidal outcrops (Fig.52).<sup>3</sup> Little wonder that these portraits enjoy iconic status at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington.

While the visual arts share the stage with poetry, publishing, music, drama and criticism, the art historian never feels short-changed. An ambitious chapter links the second-generation Bloomsbury South figures

of poet James K. Baxter (1925–72) and New Zealand's most prominent twentieth-century artist, Colin McCahon (1919–87). Although they knew each other well and admired each other's work, there are sharp contrasts between Baxter, who fits seamlessly into the modern literary tradition, and the more acquired taste of the more ugly, difficult and original McCahon. The criticism of the historian and poet J.C. Beaglehole still holds true for the latter: 'McCahon is not a brilliant technician, in the academic sense; there are men in New Zealand who can run rings around him in ease [ . . . ] He is deliberately all too primitive all too often, he is gauche, self-willed, violent. Yet for us he is one of the important people. He is a serious artist' (p.237). Here, both in its demotic clarity and its implicit elitism (consider the artists who might, however unfairly, be cast as 'unimportant'), one is reminded of the critical language of Clive Bell. Not for the first time, the two Bloomsburys meet.

<sup>1</sup> H. Orsman and J. Moore, eds.: *Heinemann Dictionary of New Zealand Quotations*, Auckland 1988, p.339.

<sup>2</sup> The population of Christchurch in 1932 was 128,900.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Addams's first Addams Family cartoons in the *New Yorker* (1938) are closely contemporaneous with this portrait.

## Publications Received

*Romanesque and the Past*. Edited by John McNeill and Richard Plant. 295 pp. incl. 20 col. + 277 b. & w. ills. (Maney Publishing, Leeds, 2013), £60. ISBN 978-1-909662-10-0.

This book is the first of what promises to be a long-running series. It is based on the inaugural biennial Romanesque conference of the British Archaeological Association held at the Courtauld Institute in London in 2010. Since then, conferences have taken place in Palermo, Barcelona and Oxford, with Poitiers to come in 2018, each focusing on an intrinsic question on the understanding of Romanesque. The theme of the first volume was wisely chosen to situate the style chronologically. Lacking a defining genesis monument, as St Denis in Paris is for Gothic architecture, the origins of Romanesque are often clouded in uncertainty, and it can be marginalised as a mere precursor, a 'style of becoming'. However, this volume looks to strengthen the identity of Romanesque by reversing the usual perspective and considering its connections to Antiquity.

The collection has no introduction, but instead a wide-ranging opening chapter by John McNeill. He shows how earlier uses of classical *spolia* may not have been as ideologically engaged as the practice was in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which gained a new obsession with *Romanitas*. The last word goes to the short chapter by Eric Fernie on the temporal and political range of the Romanesque, much of which reflects his thinking for his comprehensive Pelican History of Art book, *Romanesque Architecture* (2011). Fernie, keen to keep the diagnostic and methodological tool of style central to art history, deliberates over the labelling of the art of the ninth and tenth centuries. He concludes, like McNeill, that the presence of the past is key to defining the Romanesque: the first style of a new European age following the close of a long antiquity.

Presence of the past can mean, essentially, two things: continuity or revivalist historicism. The situation that arises in this volume is, appropriately in the dualisms of Romance language grammar, the sense of a conscious looking back to a remote past, rather than a direct line. Architecture is predominant, but Romanesque here embraces a whole visual culture. Powerful centres of thought, such as Cluny Abbey, still feature, reassessed by Neil Stratford, and Conrad Rudolph discusses Hugh of St Victor's the *Mystic Ark*. However, many of the topics are regionally based and full of novel material, for instance Claude Andraut-Schmitt on clerestories in the south of France. Distance is particularly important to Roger Stalley's essay on Ireland, a country never conquered by the Romans but one that still developed its own Romanesque.

The succinctness of each of the chapters means that nearly all of them would be useful for pedagogical purposes: all have nuanced points to make about the transmission of ideas from one age to another, and the diverse subject-matter will engage a new generation of Romanesque scholars. Indeed, the way this volume discusses the concept of revival is important. Historicism was often seen as the antithesis of cultural progress (for instance Kenneth Clark on the Gothic Revival), but these studies show increasingly how important it is in the methodology of style, and therefore of interest to all art historians.

JAMES ALEXANDER CAMERON

*A Revolution in Color: The World of John Singleton Copley*. By Jane Kamensky. 526 pp. incl. numerous col. + b. & w. ills. (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 2016), \$35. ISBN 978-0-393-24001-6.

It is a useful commonplace to describe John Singleton Copley's career as lived in two acts. Indeed the series of Copley exhibitions staged in the United States in 1995 and 1996 produced two excellent catalogues, *John Singleton Copley in America*

and *John Singleton Copley in England*. Rather like his erstwhile friend, mentor and rival Benjamin West, Copley's reputation has been bedevilled by art-historical confusion over which national school he should be placed in. In truth it is pointless to try to disentangle the English or British Copley from the American Copley, especially within the context of the fluid national identities that prevailed in the eighteenth century transatlantic world. One of the great contributions of Jane Kamensky's lively and insightful book is her observation that 'the revolutionary world was awash in an almost infinite spectrum of color. Allegiance came in many shades'. The fact that Copley 'had been born in the provincial city of Boston mattered no more than that Gavin Hamilton came from Edinburgh, or Joseph Wright from Derby'. Unlike West, who produced little in his American years, Copley painted works of genius on both sides of the Atlantic: his *Portrait of Paul Revere* (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) presented a genuinely penetrating icon of emerging American nationality and ideology while *Watson and the shark* (1778; National Gallery of Art, Washington) moved history painting even further along the road to modernity than West's *Death of General Wolfe* (1771; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa). Even after half a century, Jules Prown's catalogue raisonné remains the foundation of Copley scholarship, upon which much art history has been built, most recently with the exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, *American Adversaries: West and Copley in a Transatlantic World* (2013).

Kamensky has given us the first proper biography of the artist. She is especially well equipped for the task, and approaches it with a novelist's verve and imagination, a necessary skill set for dealing with someone of Copley's artistic genius and complex, often downright unpleasant personality. Copley's bitter feud with West was as inevitable as it was regrettable. West had given Copley a great deal of encouragement, assisted him on his arrival in London, and along with his wife displayed genuine care and affection for the artist and his family only to discover he had nursed a viper. Even though eighteenth-century London was the biggest and richest city in Europe, two ambitious, American-born history painters in the city was one too many, and friendship segued into hatred. Kamensky has produced an exemplary historical biography, not a work of art history, but *A Revolution in Color* is a thumping good read and makes a significant contribution to our appreciation of the often misunderstood and underappreciated Copley.

LOYD GROSSMAN

*Studio of the South: Van Gogh in Provence*. By Martin Bailey. 224 pp. incl. 122 col. + b. & w. ills. (Frances Lincoln, London, 2016), £25. ISBN 978-0-7112-3667-71.

The subject of this book is extremely well known and has been investigated by numerous writers, most recently Martin Gayford in *The Yellow House* (2006) and Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith in their biography of Van Gogh (2011). But Martin Bailey's long engagement with Van Gogh's life and work bears full fruit in this monograph. It concerns the fifteen months that Van Gogh spent in Arles (1888–89), ending with his hospitalisation and removal to the asylum at St Rémy. It saw the creation of some of the most famous paintings in Western art (by Van Gogh and by Gauguin), about which no new detail is too small. Bailey places Van Gogh's modest rented house in place Lamartine in its geographical and social context, a somewhat insalubrious quarter of Arles with its cheap cafés, railway lines and brothels. He explores the lives of some of the people Van Gogh came to know and who posed for him, particularly the philosophic postman Joseph Roulin and his family and a randy Zouave, Paul-Eugène Milliet. There are

new facts about the painter's daily domestic life, a good chapter on the productive week he spent by the Mediterranean at Les Saintes-Maries and, of course, Gauguin's tumultuous visit in late 1888 (with new evidence here on Van Gogh's self-mutilation). Finally Bailey sketches the fate of the Yellow House (having been bombed, it was demolished in 1944). This fact-anchored narrative, even if a little pedestrian and journalistic in the writing (there are many more precise synonyms for the overused 'iconic', for example), is worth much more than the familiar overheated and often speculative accounts. There are reproductions of several relatively unfamiliar works, as well as valuable documentary photographs.

RICHARD SHONE

*Salvador Dalí and Andy Warhol: Encounters in New York and Beyond*. By Torsten Otte. 416 pp. incl. 40 col. + 20 b. & w. ills. (Scheidegger & Spies, Zürich, 2016), £35. ISBN 978-3-85881-774-7.

The differences between Andy Warhol and Salvador Dalí are as telling as the ground they share. Dalí's emphatically European demeanour, with his brocade suits, golden sceptre and old-school Surrealism, contrasts with Warhol's giddy embrace of America: its packaged foods, movie stars, dollar signs and more.

Otte's pairing of Warhol and Dalí gets off to a slow start, covering well-trod commonalities: both coveted money; both craved fame. The ping-pong structure of the book, alternating between the two artists, makes a disjointed read. All is forgiven however in light of Otte's abundant research gleaned from over one hundred interviews, uncovering myriad overlooked connections that, taken together, prove startling. They shared muses, from Ultra Violet to Benedetta Barzinni and Ivy Nicholson; subject-matter, from *The Last Supper* to isolated ruby-red lips (*Mae West Lips Sofa*; *Marilyn Monroe's Lips*); and ambiguous sexual proclivities, allegedly tending towards voyeurism. Both were predominantly painters who made important contributions to film history. Both experimented with helium-filled aluminium balloons; photographic evidence suggests Dalí's attempts may have predated Warhol's *Silver Clouds* (1964).

The pairing of the two becomes, finally, a serviceable device to organise Otte's copious research and biographical detail: Walt Disney's desire to collaborate with the famous surrealist; Gala Dalí's \$10,000 gigolos; the many glamorous women who proposed to Warhol. Warhol died exactly thirty years ago; the eye-witness accounts gathered here constitute a timely resource for future historians, keen to reposition these two beyond a Pop label that inadequately describes either.

GILDA WILLIAMS

*Entangled: Threads & Making*. Edited by Karen Wright. 151 pp. incl. 62 col. + 6 b. & w. ills. (Turner Contemporary, Margate, 2017), £24.95. ISBN 978-0-9552363-9-6.

The all-female exhibition *Entangled: Threads and Making* held at Turner Contemporary, Margate (closed 7th May) put centre-stage the axis between art and craft. Over forty female artists were featured, with work dating from the early twentieth century to the present day. The exhibition was well grounded in the art of the pioneers in textiles and hand-crafted practice, Sonia Delaunay, Louise Bourgeois and Anni Albers, all of whom helped elevate weaving, knitting, embroidery and sewing to a high art form. Also included were younger generations of artists, both established and emerging, who continue to break down the demarcations between art and craft. Paola Anziché's work, for example, takes the form of suspended tubes in raffia, wool and other natural fibres, which invite the spectator to walk through them and get inside her chosen materials and explore their tactility. While all

the artists have 'making' in common, it is their experimentation, innovation and creativity with such a diverse range of materials and techniques that is so enthralling.

To accompany the exhibition, an exemplary book containing a collection of critical essays and interviews provides much fascinating insight. Particularly enlightening is the dialogue between Karen Wright and Frances Morris on Louise Bourgeois. The book examines a wide range of issues, such as gender assumptions and questions of the aesthetics of gender in art. Turner Contemporary is to be congratulated for producing such a thought-provoking and reflective exhibition and publication.

ALICE MACKRELL

*The Visitor's Book*. In *Francis Bacon's Shadow: The Lives of Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth-Miller*. By Jon Lys-Turner. 392 pp. incl. 54 col. + b. & w. ills. (Constable, London, 2016), £20. ISBN 978-1-47212-166-0.

Jon Lys-Turner's marvellous book was obliged to carry its explanatory subtitle, and the couple mentioned are relegated to Bacon's background in the cover photograph, but this is to diminish its scope and achievement. Lys-Turner, who met Chopping, Wirth-Miller and Bacon in 1981, inherited a wealth of new material on Bacon among the voluminous correspondence, sketchbooks, journals and photography that 'Dickie and Denis' left behind in the storm-wracked Essex party cabin they shared for over sixty decadent and tumultuous years. There are astounding vignettes of Bacon attending the wrap party for the James Bond film *From Russia With Love* and hurling a champagne bottle through the front window of the home of the Bee Gees pop group as well as revealing accounts of European holidays enjoyed and endured by the three artists and intimate unpublished letters written by Bacon. Wirth-Miller was Bacon's closest friend, and theirs was an epistolary relationship as well as a bibulous and combative one. Bacon could be despicably cruel to Wirth-Miller, who was never allowed to forget that he was the lesser talent, despite making crucial contributions to the landscape elements and animal studies in Bacon's work. Lys-Turner also makes a strong case for the quality of Chopping's work, delicate and macabre *trompe l'œil* compositions that found great success as the dust jackets of James Bond novels.

The author tells his outrageous tales in a deadpan manner and has a knack for the concise character sketch, both narrative gifts admirably suited to the lurid drama and desperate comedy that here needs no further lubrication. In addition to containing the soap opera of its leading trio, the book is populated by a cavalcade of great and neglected British eccentrics, such as the modernist poet Anna Wickham, who, when provoked, 'would bite people on the head', and the naturalist W.S. Bristowe, who 'enjoyed cooking and eating large spiders'. It is in fact an alternative cultural history of the British scene from the febrile and dangerous years before and during the Second World War to the last gasp of bohemian Soho and beyond – a passing from fashion into squalid old age that is unsparingly rendered with great feeling. With the tribute paid to the many visitors that crowd its pages the book restores to us a highly influential community of artists that corrects the fiction of isolated genius. With such a large cast and mass of detail and anecdote perhaps one error can be forgiven, but it ought to be recorded that the 'art historian and collector of cubist works' Douglas Cooper is here misnamed Donald.

JAMES NORTON