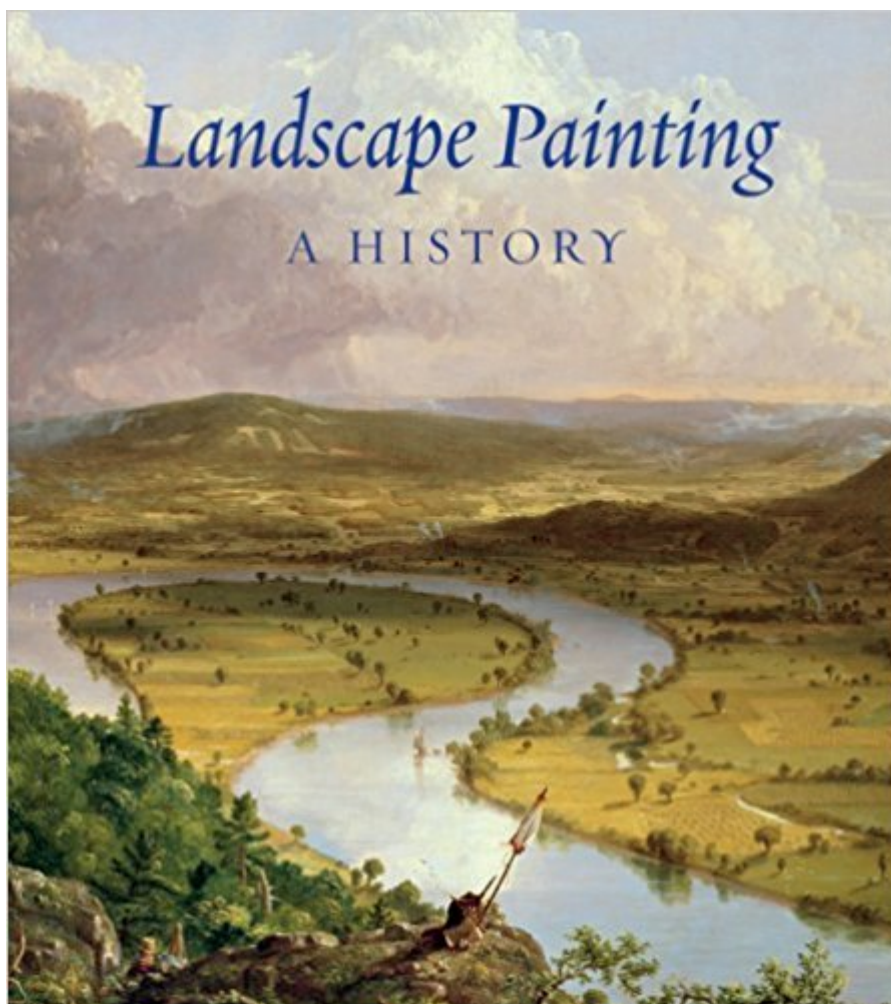


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Landscape Painting: A History



Synopsis

Since Antiquity, painters have sought to portray the glories of nature, and many of their pictures have become the best-known masterpieces in the history of art. In this sweeping treasury of Western art, distinguished art historian Nils B  ttner has chosen paintings that not only portray natural vistas but also dramatic scenes with people and architecture. His broad selection of paintings in this genre consists mainly of well-known works, but some seldom-reproduced pictures are also included. The paintings are presented chronologically, beginning with the heritage from the ancient world and the precursors of landscape artists in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Giovanni Bellini, and Raphael. The sixteenth century heralded a new perception of the world, reflected in the works of such masters as Albrecht D  rer and Bruegel, as shown. Next, artists of the flowering age of landscapes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are featured, including Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, Rubens, Rembrandt, Fragonard, David, and Gainsborough. In the early nineteenth century, which was dominated by the spirit of Romanticism, artists began to display a new manner of treating nature. These revolutionary conceptions of nature are vividly presented with examples from Constable, Turner, Whistler, Frederic Church, Bierstadt, Thomas Eakins, and Winslow Homer. These artists are followed by plein-air painters, Impressionists, and Post-Impressionists, among them Manet, Monet, Sisley, Renoir, C  zanne, Seurat, van Gogh, and Rousseau. Artists represented from the twentieth century include Matisse, Picasso, Klee, Magritte, Georgia O  Keeffe, Andrew Wyeth, and David Hockney. Many of the extraordinary works are reproduced in full along with a detail and an informative caption. In the authoritative text, the author traces the history of landscape painting up to the present day but also focuses on individual paintings and the circumstances under which they were created. Along with a description of a painting, the lucid text examines the work  s cultural, historical, and aesthetic context. The art of landscape artists, which has long been an under-published area of art history, is finally and stunningly revealed in this richly illustrated tribute to their work. This fresh vision of landscape artists is certain to be welcomed by art historians and museum-goers, as well anyone else interested in Western art.

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Customer Reviews

I ordered this book because of the scholarship, not the reproductions. Ironically, I am going to only address the color plates in this review. After its arrival, I realized it is very much about the reproductions. It is large, very heavy and is mostly pictures rather than text. That is very generous on one hand but at a price. But the cost is reason to not just buy out of impulse. It is currently new online for at little as \$65 to \$92, and is \$135 (list price) largely because of the enormous costs per unit in printing so many reproductions at such a large scale. The people who did the separations, the book design and production team as well as the level of printing are all top notch. The quality of the paper and of the printing are superb--no question. Nonetheless, none of them create the content and that is the problem. Unfortunately, in my opinion, success did NOT result in over half of this giant's reproductions so I must politely disagree with my fellow reviewers. Too many reproductions do not look remarkably like the original paintings and too many do not stand on their own as good reproductions apart from their verisimilitude. Let's say, at minimum that there is simply a difference of opinion here. It matters because, I think you should not buy the book unseen. The reason why the book does not reach its full potential is, for the most-part, caused by the uneven quality of the files and film supplied by the many museums of art who own the wide range of paintings they granted permission to reproduce here for a fee. You can see the same problems repeat.

As an academic, landscape architect, and amateur landscape painter, I find it interesting what others may say about the subject, because personal experience, training, and culture guide what is presented and not presented-- any book often says more about the paradigms and perspectives of the authors than about the actual subject they are writing about. It is not easy to write a history of such an extensive subject. If one has never thought much about the subject, one will learn about the general trends and the basic evolution of landscape painting from a Western perspective. To learn the nuances of landscape painting, its diversity, influences, and approaches is a lifetime of

exploration. I can understand why Canadians often feel ignored. Historic and significant landscape painting by the Group of Seven, Tom Thomson, and Emily Carr were not included. As an American, these Canadian paintings energized me as a teenager to strive to see landscape in a different way and were much more influential for me than European painters from any period. And as an American from the center of North America, the en plein air paintings of George Catlin integrating exploration, anthropology, and landscape painting together was especially influential. The paintings and large dioramas by Francis Lee Jacques depicting landscape accurately and scientifically, blending landscape painting with wildlife painting were also extremely formative, but the book does not cover such details.

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