

Art in History, History in Art

Chapters from British History Seen Through Works of Art

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OBENAUŠOVÁ, S. *Art in History, History in Art*. Olomouc: Palacký University 2015, 176 p. ISBN 978-80-244-4659-2.

As suggested by the title itself, this book offers reflections on moments of British history through works of art. Yet it is much more than a reader might assume from the title. There is a profound academic insight into the history and art in this publication. Of course, one may say that history and its significant events as well as artists and their iconic works of art have been a target of interest of many scholars since 19th century. Truly there are numerous academic works dealing with history and art matters from various angles. Only few of them, however, provide a combinatory attitude of insight regarding both previously mentioned fields. Instead of purely descriptive text, the author of this book has chosen a combination of knowledge of both fields without separating it. Through this merge, the author has developed a captivating commentary on history and art as an inseparable unit.

The book is intended as an academic paper yet it is, in my opinion, meant to capture the attention of even wider audience. It is divided into ten chapters with the first one being an introductory section to provide readers with author's motives for writing the book as well as to suggest the content for readers to prepare for what is coming. Each of the nine chapters deals with one significant work of art, author or set of artistic works or idealistic movements. For instance, the journey starts with the chapter devoted to

the Bayeux Tapestry, in which we learn about historical customs, fashion and ideology from the displayed sceneries on the tapestry. In other words, through the picture and what is in it we uncover the wide-ranging history. This pattern has been applied throughout all chapters.

There is a wide range of art works selected representing different eras. As suggested before, the book starts with the Bayeux Tapestry telling us about the invasion of England by Normans and continues with the next chapter in which we learn about the 16th century England through portraits of the Queen Elizabeth. We discover the 17th century London through St. Paul's Cathedral, an architecture monument designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Also, there is an appreciative attention payed to the sociology, ideology and customs of the times seen in the sections about William Hogarth and His Morality Tales and William Turner and Slave Trade. Then we move to the Victorian era in England and learn about the uniqueness of the Crystal Palace, the 19th century masterpiece of architecture. In the next two chapters we stay in the time of industrial revolution to explore the Arts and crafts movement, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Story of Wealth and Art in Glasgow. The depictions of art and historic events escalate the atmosphere as the last chapter deals with tough times of Britain at wars. The abilities of royal artists to capture the moments of war are as vivid for the reader as they can be in a picture.

The text itself, supported by numerous pictures and photographs, is structured chronologically in a way the reader feels like reading a story or a novel. This is, in fact, a refreshing way of providing the readers with one's ideas. Personally, it sometimes feels as the author really experienced the events or actually was present at the time. It gives something more to the content of this book, something special which can be compared to the '*uniqueness of spirit of the place*'. It is a quality, or a feeling, often being appointed to significant places where historical events and their importance have left an unspecified, yet glorious aura. This phenomenon is often referred to as '*Genius Loci*' and I can honestly say that, when reading the chapters of this book, I caught myself feeling a bit excited, almost as the spirit of the past had spoken to me. There is no wonder I felt emotional when finishing the book. If you are a fan of history and art I honestly recommend the book to you to enjoy the extraordinary journey. For those who are new to the fields, this piece may be just the right one to begin with.

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