

accelerated “drive to fill the gaps in its postwar collection, notably Abstract Expressionist and Pop works” (p. 41), as well as the academy’s expansion into a much-enlarged physical plant, is destined to enhance its reputation into its third century.

Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary

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Eakins Revealed: The Secret Life of an American Artist. By HENRY ADAMS. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. xv, 583 pp. Illustrations, biographical key, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.)

The Revenge of Thomas Eakins. By SIDNEY D. KIRKPATRICK. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006. ix, 565 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$39.95.)

In recent years, the life and work of Thomas Eakins has gained renewed critical and scholarly attention. In 1984 a cache of documents emerged that had been collected from Eakins’s studio by Charles Bregler. The following year the collection was purchased by the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. As a result of this new source material, Eakins scholars have begun to interrogate not only the meticulous technique of the artist’s paintings but the peculiarities of his life. Henry Adams takes this mode of investigation to an extreme in *Eakins Revealed*, performing a Freudian analysis of the artist’s psyche as a method of explaining the tensions in his paintings. Sidney Kirkpatrick, on the other hand, in *The Revenge of Thomas Eakins*, presents a biography that hearkens back to the days after Eakins’s death but before the Bregler papers, when Eakins was simply hailed as one of America’s greatest realist painters. These two books on the life and art of Thomas Eakins present startlingly different impressions of the artist and his work.

Adams states early in his book that he intends to dismantle the heroic idea of Thomas Eakins that began with Lloyd Goodrich’s 1933 biography, to “cut through the pious rhetoric” that he believes has been produced by previous art historians, including Kathleen Foster and Elizabeth Johns (p. 31). In doing so, Adams comes close to vilifying the artist, emphasizing everything unsavory about his life and art. The book opens by revealing the scandals, obsessions, and oddities of Eakins’s life, some of which have come to light through the Bregler papers, others of which were previously whitewashed by Goodrich. These include everything from family quarrels and Eakins’s mother’s struggles with mental illness to Eakins’s own obsession with nude bodies, his penchant for dirty jokes, his excessive consumption of milk, and the damning accusation of incest brought against him. After laying out the lurid facts of Eakins’s life, Adams proposes to analyze

the artist's life and work in Freudian terms.

Outside of the retelling of scandal and strangeness, the interest in Adams's book comes from the author's insistence on examining the disturbing elements and psychological tensions in Eakins's paintings, rather than simply praising them as realist masterpieces or dismissing them as technical studies. However, the book suffers from unsubstantiated assumptions regarding the pictures, including too many descriptions of sitters as looking "depressed." Moreover, Adams speculates on everything from what occurred within the walls of Eakins's Mt. Vernon Street home to the ways in which the artist's parents treated him. Due to the unconvincing nature of many of these statements, the author's attempts to read the paintings through the artist's psychology often fall short.

Kirkpatrick, in sharp contrast to Adams, provides a chronological history of Eakins's life, from youth through old age, without polemics or theory. Rather, Kirkpatrick offers historical, economic, and technical information that provides context for Eakins's professional choices and personal development. While Adams's book is hampered by speculation, Kirkpatrick fails to provide citations for much of his information, leaving the reader to wonder about source material or simply trust the author. Additionally, Kirkpatrick often relies on the facile terminology of "truth" and "honesty" in describing Eakins's paintings, and his analysis of the artwork lacks interest and originality, with the possible exception of a motion picture metaphor that recurs to describe some of Eakins's more monumental pictures.

The most fascinating aspect of reading these two new books on Thomas Eakins is the striking contrast between their characterizations of the artist. The most remarkable example is their description of Eakins's relationship with his family. Adams proposes that the Eakins family was "seriously dysfunctional" (p. 66), that Eakins's father was likely "stingy, autocratic, and rather cold about emotional matters" (p. 136), and his mother, at the height of her mental illness, likely engaged in disturbing sexual behavior toward her son (p. 435). His analysis of Eakins's artwork is largely based on this description of his family. Kirkpatrick, conversely, portrays Eakins's father as kind, beloved, and devoted to his family, Thomas's "steadfast companion to the end" (pp. 20, 23, 452), and his only mention of Eakins's mother is to state that "little is known about his mother or the influence she had on her son" (p. 23). These analyses of the Eakins family dynamics are indicative of the very different approaches taken by these two authors toward the artist. The reader benefits from both perspectives in her own analysis of the revelations and the revenge of Thomas Eakins.