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**Review of *New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes* By Elizabeth Johns, Andrew Sayers, and Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, with Amy Ellis**

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*New Worlds from Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes.* By Elizabeth Johns, Andrew Sayers, and Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser, with Amy Ellis. Canberra: National Gallery of Australia; Hartford, CT: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1998. Illustrations, appendices. 271 pp. \$39.95.

An exhibition of nineteenth-century landscape art from the United States and Australia (the latter a British colony until federation in 1901) is such an excellent idea one wonders why it has not been done before. Such an ambitious and challenging project, however, has some inherent dangers in collapsing historical differences for the sake of presentation. Assessing cultural productions must take into account distinct histories in these two "settler countries," especially in the creation of their respective national identities—as Lyn Spillman has already demonstrated in her excellent *Nation and Commemoration: Creating National Identities in the United States and Australia* (1997).

*New Worlds from Old* functions as both a catalogue for the exhibition and a resource guide with heavily referenced texts for each of the one hundred twenty-three paintings displayed, along with biographies of the twenty-three Australian and thirty-seven US artists. The five thematic groupings that frame the exhibition are discussed in three interpretive essays. Elizabeth Johns's, the most engaging

and perceptive of them, draws on current landscape scholarship from both countries. Landscape painting was practiced in the nineteenth century by artists in Australia and the US to serve as a representation of the tourist experience, a record for expedition and scientific study, an image of a physical and psychological retreat, and, finally, as a metaphor of the distance between urban society and nature at the century's end. The essay on Australian landscape painting by Andrew Sayers of the National Gallery of Australia provides excellent, well-documented insights into how culture was produced, exhibited, and understood within the nineteenth-century Australian context. He also treats the representation of Aboriginal people in a section aptly entitled "A Landscape of Dispossession," which highlights what is absent as well as present in the exhibition as a whole. The essay on landscape painting in the United States by Elizabeth Kornhauser of the Wadsworth Atheneum follows so closely the structure of the thematic exhibition titles that it seems to reiterate the catalogue information instead of providing an interpretive reading of the subject. Placing the art of these two countries side by side should be seen not as a finished statement, but the first phase of a much larger project, the beginning of a new dialogue for cultural historians of both countries.

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