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A Seamless Web: Transatlantic Art in the Nineteenth Century

Cheryll L. May

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In recent years, American art scholars have increasingly focused on the importance of cross-cultural exchanges during nineteenth century. As essayist Francois Brunet puts it, mid-nineteenth century landscapes were "transnational...permeated by complex transactions where 'American' originality produced itself not only in imitation of or reaction against 'European' influences,...but as critical mirroring and incorporating of 'European' images." Articles in this collection make clear that the "conversation of cultures" went both ways, with American artworks and culture also affecting European artistic and literary practice. Essays explore the transnational origin of many types of American artworks, from stained glass windows, which usually copied their European originals with great exactitude, to paintings and sculptures using distinctly American motifs, such as the Puritan and the cowboy, to distinguish American art students from their Parisian masters. It also examines American cultural icons, particularly the American Indian, appropriated by European writers and artists and philosophers to embody primeval wisdom. A distinguished international group of scholars, including Brunet, Robert Rydell, and Peter Gibian, offer valuable perspectives to the ever-broadening field of transnational cultural studies.

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