



IN BRIEF
Art & Architecture

Kirsten Swinth
PAINTING PROFESSIONALS
/omen artists and the development of modern American art, 1870-1930
pp. University of North Carolina Press; distributed in the UK by Eurospan.
£37.95 (paperback, £15.95).
0 8078 2642 1

the turn of the century the "New Woman" had blazed her way into professional strongholds previously dominated by American census figures for 1890 show early half of all professional artists were women, a proportion which was to decline gradually by 1930, the end of the period studied in book. The "woman artist" had her counterpart in the "woman doctor" and the "womanist", but what made her achievement less than theirs was the precarious and undefined of what constituted profession in the visual arts. Was it defined by technical skill in drawing, by the ability to devise complex figure compositions, or render uplifting subjects? *Painting Professionals* asks at the ironies involved for women who gaining professional skills at a time of radical transformation under the impact of modernism. Kirsten Swinth regards many aspects of womanism as regrettably "anti-professional", is a value was replaced by the ascendancy idea of the inner self, expressed by an idiosyncratic individuality. Barriers were broken up around this "masculine" definition: as "to paint like a man" was a term of praise for a woman, "to paint like a woman" (Alfred Steiglitz was reported to have ended up Georgia O'Keeffe as "a woman on top"), was, at best, a means of promoting "the woman artist" as a desirable new commodity. But her fixed adversarial terms – line vs feminine, high art vs low art elite

born leisure baron Fred Harvey. Colter was a design school graduate from the heyday of the Arts and Crafts movement, and so inherited a familiar catechism: picturesque, vernacular forms, natural materials and so on. From childhood, she also imbibed a passion for Native American culture. Never licensed to practise architecture officially, she passed her design drawings on to jobbing professionals who worked them up and signed them: one reason for her subsequent underappreciation – the others, according to Arnold Berke, being the notion that an architecture serving the needs of tourism was essentially frivolous and Colter's invisibility as a woman in a man's business.

This is a rounded and intelligent account of Colter's career as a designer and collector. The buildings – rough, massive constructions of rubble and timber, pueblo-style hotel complexes and more urbane interior decorative schemes – are lovingly photographed. There is more to say on Colter's relationship with modernism – Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin compounds were just down the road, and several of his projects from the 1930s share much with Colter's work of more than a decade before. Berke also could have given a slightly more critical reading of Harvey's – and Colter's – relationship with the Native Americans, who might have been less amenable to the growth of white tourism in their heartlands if they had had the resources to protest. Indeed, the whole idea of romantic primitivism is hardly unproblematic, as a glance across at Europe during the same period would show.

KEITH MILLER

Biography

Stephen Black
EUGENE O'NEILL
Beyond mourning and tragedy
543pp. Yale University Press. £19.95
(paperback, £12.95).
0 300 07676 2

The central thesis of this biography is that Eugene O'Neill spent his adult life in a state of mourning, and that in his play *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1941, produced posthumously in 1956) he finally completed "the work of mourning" that began for him as a boy of fourteen, when he both discovered his mother's drug addiction and symbolically "lost" her. For Stephen Black, an analyst as well as a literary critic, the work of mourning is

as were many, if not most, writers of his generation. But Black does little to place his subject in this wider intellectual context. His most interesting comment comes in the introduction, where he notes that it was through "extraordinary commitment to his work and daily writing stints" that O'Neill "brought himself . . . into harmony with events". That he wrote so much and so routinely seems to be a testament to the transformative power of writing as work. In a turbulent and emotionally complex life, he used the continuity of writing to structure a framework for living. A wider notion of what "writing" means – as practice, as a way of managing experience – is never followed up; instead the book follows a narrative of psychoanalytic development that threatens to bury O'Neill under the weight of his pathology.

CLAIRE MACDONALD

Steven L. McKenzie
KING DAVID
A biography
232pp. Oxford University Press.
Paperback, £9.99.
0 19 514708 1

Some scholars are now questioning the very existence of King David; others are writing biographies. Steven L. McKenzie's David was no shepherd, did not kill Goliath, and did not relinquish the chance to kill Saul. He was a ruthless murderer who fought with the Philistines against Israel; and as King he alienated most of his subjects. How does McKenzie achieve this portrait? A recently found inscription from northern Israel contains the word *bytdwd*, widely translated as "house of David", and further references to David in other ancient inscriptions have been conjectured. But McKenzie is right to insist that none of this tells us anything about a historical person: we must rely on the Bible.

King David gives an eloquent and reasonable account of traditional literary-historical biblical scholarship. McKenzie's method runs as follows: where the text appears to defend David rather emphatically against an implied charge, then the accusation was made, and was probably true. By identifying signs of whitewashing, he recovers an unscrupulous warlord and despot. As for the rest, unless there are signs of a later addition to the original text, whatever seems plausible (and here archaeology can help to provide a cultural context) is likely to be historical. The events of David's reign are there-

Cultural Studies

Rachel Adams
SIDESHOW USA
Freaks and the American cultural imagination
289pp. University of Chicago Press;
distributed in the UK by Wiley. £38
(paperback, £12).
0 226 00538 0

It probably says something about the subject treated here that one's first instinct on opening *Sideshow USA* is to flick guiltily through its gruesome selection of photographs; yet this admirable book is far from being a prurient freakshow. Rachel Adams's style and approach are continually surprising and informative. While she mostly focuses on instances of physical abnormality, such as conjoined twins or the "microcephalic", Adams argues that being a freak isn't an intrinsic quality, "but an identity realized through gesture, costume, and staging". She substantiates this view by discussing a satisfyingly broad range of work, from that of Diane Arbus to Carson McCullers, from ethnography to Tod Browning's important 1932 film, *Freaks*. One surprise, germane to her argument, is the wide variety of people who have been considered freaks. These range from the merely unusual, such as Naomi Sutherland, a woman with very long hair, to the genuinely disturbing: Grace McDaniels, the "Mule-Faced Woman", whose alarming ugliness seemed to attract a number of ardent suitors.

The case of "Ishi", the "last wild American Indian", is one of the most striking instances of the process she describes. Ishi, found starving in the corral of a Californian slaughterhouse, was soon to find a striking apotheosis as the solitary exemplar of Native American culture. He ended his days as a living exhibit in the Hearst Museum of Anthropology, his "freakish" identity really only a construct of the savagery anthropologists attributed to him.

The idea of the freakish may now invoke images of John Merrick and the self-conscious Victorian enjoyment of "horrors". Yet Adams shows that there has been a revival of interest in the freak in our own time. The American reinvention of the word "freak" as a term of approbation began with the hippies, continued through the 1970s ("freak out!"), and persists today in the celebration of such acts (I use the word advisedly) as Slipknot and Marilyn Manson.

MICHAEL NEWTON