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Sarah Betzer, *Ingres and the Studio: Women, Painting, History*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012. 328 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, and index. \$84.95 U.S. (hb). ISBN: 978-0-271-04875-8.

Review by Barbara Ann Day-Hickman, Temple University.

Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres is undoubtedly one of the most compelling portrait artists from the modern era. Trained in academic art from the age of eleven, later apprenticed with Jacques Louis David, he subsequently maintained an authoritative role in the academic tradition throughout his sixty-year career. In 1801 he received the Prix de Rome, in 1825 was appointed a member of the French Academy and, in 1829, professor in the École de Beaux Arts. From 1835-1841, he was appointed the director of the French Academy in Rome, responsible for training French students according to the principles of classical antiquity and renaissance art. Subsequently, after returning to Paris, he completed seven remarkable portraits of accomplished women, such as Julie Mottez, Marie d'Agoult, and the renowned actress, Rachel.

In this study, Sarah Betzer addresses Ingres's work not only in terms of his own distinctive approach to female portraiture but also his influence on his most illustrious students: Amaury-Duval, Henri Lehmann, Théodore Chassériau, Hippolyte Flandrin and Victor Mottez. To approach the uniqueness of Ingres's style, the author first considers the artist's intentions, classical inspiration, and the formal techniques he developed for his rendering of female portraiture. Betzer initially explains how Ingres wanted to represent his subjects according to academic prerogatives for serious *history painting*, rather than rendering attractive but ephemeral representations of women in the lighter vein of contemporaneous portraiture. Furthermore, Betzer endeavors to demonstrate the pivotal role of particular women as critics, agents, as well as subjects in Ingres's art. That is, in addition to being models for Ingres and his students, many of Ingres's subjects were also inspirational and responsive conduits for members of the *ingriste studio* wherein "...women sitters played decisive roles and emerged as vital interlocutors in a shared aesthetic project" (p. 13).

According to academic principles, history painting was considered superior to genre art or the empirical replication of personal, domestic, and still-life scenes. To realize a more elevated purpose for female portraiture, Ingres drew from models found in Greek and Roman antiquity or notables, such as Raphael, from the Italian renaissance. Academic art thus privileged a moral and aesthetic ideal or *beau idéal* that represented the world not as "the mere replication of nature" but rather as transcribed through the model of Greek and Roman classicism. Furthermore, academic standards endorsed the primacy of line and drawing "which captured the underlying essence of an object" over color and indefinite form which expressed only "the surface sensuality—the brute materiality of nature" (p. 11).^[1]

In his emphasis on linearity and sculptural simplicity Ingres did not, however, want to dismiss the empirical and luscious sensuality of contemporaneous French décor and fashion. To remain congruent with his time, the master tried to establish a precarious tension between classical inspiration and contemporaneous trends. But unlike his academic predecessors, such as David, who endorsed representations of the male as the quintessential ideal, Ingres turned to female portraiture with the

seriousness and technical precision of history painting. While David had experimented with the serious rendering of the female subject in, for example, his portrait of *Madame Juliette Recamier* (1800), Ingres brought this theme to completion. "What David left unfinished, in the broadest sense, Ingres returned to and made over into the defining substance of his artistic identity: the female body and the female subject" (p. 29). But in order to realize the higher purpose of female portraiture, he incorporated such classical principles as abstract monumentality, an intellectual tone, and a clear linear design in the rendering of his subject.

Despite his conservative training, Ingres's innovations in portraiture ultimately transcended any particular school by encompassing both the "real" subject drawn from nature and the academic "ideal." The author points out, for example, how Ingres included a reflective mirror behind many of his female subjects as a way to register the particularity of the sitter portrayed in present time as compared with the timelessness of the reflected image. Thus, Ingres incorporated both the model in the foreground of the picture and the mirrored image of the subject displayed as a flattened, emotionless more abstract reflection behind her (pp. 32-40).

Chapter one emphasizes how Ingres's models were not merely the objects of the artist's gaze but active agents in their own representational fashioning. Notably, Ingres chose to work with society women, such as Mme de Senonnes, the Baronne de Rothschild, the Princess de Broglie, and Mme Moitessier, who were independent, self-interested, and notably "resistant" to Ingres's particular approach to their representation (pp. 53-54). Specifically, the artist tried to imbue his subjects with Winckelmann's notion of stillness and grandeur that was apparent in classical sculpture. His portrait of *Mme. Moitessier, Seated* (1856), for example, displays a frontal gaze with "eyes spaced widely apart" and "the monumental width and solidity reminiscent of Arcadia" drawn from the famous Roman fresco from Heraculaneum entitled *Heracles finding his Son Telephos* (pp. 55-57). By comparing the sitter with Arcadia, Betzer demonstrates how Ingres transformed Mme Moitessier from a representative of the French *nouveau-riche* "...into a goddess of antiquity and an icon of female abundance" (p. 60). At the same time, the artist rendered her gown and jewels with such effective detail that the sitter appeared to be *chez soi* in the lush opulence of her own salon.

In chapter two, the author likewise traces the significance of Ingres's aesthetic influence on his student following in both Paris and at the Villa Medici in Rome. While the master continued to pursue a balanced tension between imitation and idealization in his own art, he ordered his students to focus their work on the accurate replication of nature. But critics pointed out how Ingres unabashedly corrected his student's work according to his own idiosyncratic principles (p. 81). The French Academy, therefore, censured Ingres in 1839 for promoting his own style rather than endorsing prescribed academic standards. And while critics such as Théophile Gautier passionately eulogized the distinctness of Ingres's portraiture, Charles Baudelaire lambasted the master for his "masculinized" and "intellectual" portrayal of women fashioned in the unappealing style of the *bas bleu* tradition (p. 95).

Betzer's subsequent three chapters treat the proactive influence of three notable women, Julie Mottez, Marie d'Agoult, and Rachel, on Ingres's style and technical rendering of their portraits (p. 96). Julie Mottez, the wife of Victor Mottez, for example, became an important critic and model for the artists in Ingres's studio. Betzer identifies her as a female catalyst who "fostered homosocial bonds" among Ingres's following, particularly among those who shared a common vocabulary based on classical antiquity (p. 141). But Julie Mottez was also an artist and art collector in her own right who influenced the portraits that she inspired by Victor Mottez, Théodore Chasseriau, and Ingres.

Betzer develops her most compelling chapter on Marie d'Agoult's fascination with Ingres's portraiture. She also treats the philosophical and biographical evolution of d'Agoult's portraits under the aegis of Ingres's students. In 1842, D'Agoult became particularly intrigued with Ingres's allegorical representation of song and dance in the painting entitled *Cherubini and the Muse of Lyrical Poetry* (1842).

D'Agoult, was particularly fascinated by the "authoritative" representation of Terpsichore, a tall allegorical figure in a white toga standing behind the composer who stretches her arm out over Cherubini's head as if to "take possession of the man" (p. 146). Henri Lehmann, one of Ingres's students, painted d'Agoult in a series of portraits which portray her increasing sense of singularity and authority. In 1843, for example, Lehmann executed a starting profile portrait of d'Agoult where she claims her own power, not as a counterpart to her former, talented paramour, Franz Liszt, but as an androgynous subject in her own right. In the profile portrait she appears to be alert, engaged, yet reflective, and self-contained, holding a half-open book in her lap (p. 174).

In the final chapter, Betzer considers Ingres's representation of Rachel as the allegory of classical tragedy in portraits rendered from 1853-1856. Betzer notes how Rachel portrayed roles in this vein throughout her stage career. It would seem fitting, then, that Ingres, Théodore Chassériau and Amaury-Duval cast the famous Jewish actress as the muse Melpomene, symbol of Tragedy, in a series of dramatic portraits with an antique Roman setting. In 1850, Théodore Chassériau represented Rachel as Melpomene in a painting that conveyed her vitality and warmth when cast as a north African Jewess. The portrait was successful because it maintained both the "exotic and slightly sensual" appeal of the subject that may have been "inspired perhaps by Chassériau's trips through Algeria and north Africa" (p. 203). In contrast, Amaury-Duval does not achieve such an effective tension between the real actress and her antique transcription due to his flat, linear rendering of her portrait primarily as allegory. Betzer concludes that, in the latter case, the actress appears to be a "cold and defeminized, disembodied figure" that was ultimately "ugly, desexed...and lifeless" (p. 208).

Though Ingres and members of his studio were sometimes unable to achieve a balanced tension between the imitation and idealization of their subject, Betzer maintains that their incorporation of allegory did provide the essential "scaffolding" for the "modern" aesthetic (pp. 220-221). By returning to classical and renaissance traditions, Ingres and his students were able to transform female portraiture from ephemeral into serious, abstract and timeless subject matter.

Betzer concludes her illuminating study by referring to Ingres's stylistic influence on Edgar Degas as is apparent in his monumental representation of *The Bellelli Family* (1863). Despite the particularity of the domestic setting and dense imperial décor, the women (Mme Bellelli and her two girls) display the expressionless, abstract, and sculptural qualities so characteristic of Ingres's female portraiture (p. 121).

Without doubt, Betzer effectively points out the unique origins for Ingres's approach to female portraiture and his distinct influence on a handful of painters marked by his inspiration and technique. The author likewise explains the provenance and technical rendering of each female portrait either done by Ingres or one of his students. But she does not include much contextual information about the socio-political situation in Paris and Rome when Ingres and his following were most actively engaged in female portraiture. Furthermore, with the exception of Marie d'Agoult and Julie Mottez, the author incorporates very little biographical information about the subjects of Ingres's portraits. If women collaborators held such an important integrative role in the *ingrisme* project, the author might have elaborated further on their criticism as well as endorsement of Ingres's idealized aesthetic. [2]

Overall, Betzer's book is thoughtful, challenging, and impeccably well-documented. The quality of the reproductions is superb and the illustrations are well-placed in the text. Her argument about Ingres's antique inspiration for his female portraits, though somewhat repetitive, is well-supported by ample evidence from frescos, paintings, and antique sculpture. The author's discourse, can however, be somewhat daunting. Her sentences are often, long, complex, with specialized references not readily accessible to lay readers outside the field of art history.

NOTES

[1] For a more general overview of Ingres's life and oeuvre, see Andrew Carrington Shelton, *Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867)* (London, New York: Phaidon, 2008), p. 11.

[2] For more extensive social and biographical information about the dialogic relationship between Ingres and his most recognized female sitters, see Susan L. Siegfried, *Ingres: Painting Reimagined* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 74, 134-135, 137-139, 142.

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