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Looking into Walt Whitman: American Art, 1850-1920

Ruth L. Bohan

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Why is Walt Whitman's face as familiar as his poetry? In answering this question, Ruth Bohan tells a story of self-invention and portraiture. Whitman approached successive editions of *Leaves of Grass* as opportunities to establish close, dynamic links between his poetry and visual representation. Bohan shows as well that Whitman, who sought out friendships with numerous artists, left a legacy absorbed after his death into the fabric of American modernism.

Looking into Walt Whitman provides ample evidence that the poet's engagement with the visual arts extended beyond photography into painting, printmaking, and sculpture. Through discussion of Whitman's gradual emergence as an American, democratic, and radical figure, the book opens new ways to assess his impact upon such artists as Thomas Eakins, Joseph Stella, and Marsden Hartley.

Biography, art history, and the history of literature come together in Bohan's rich, suggestive book. Based on years of research, it presents valuable information about Whitman portraiture; the publishing of his masterpiece, *Leaves of Grass*; artists' responses to his transgressive persona; and Robert Coady's work on *The Soil*, among other pivotal topics.

The many images, reproduced in color or as duotones, will be of significance both to Whitman specialists and to readers seeking an introduction to Whitman's role as a poet who vitally shaped both the visual and literary arts of America.

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