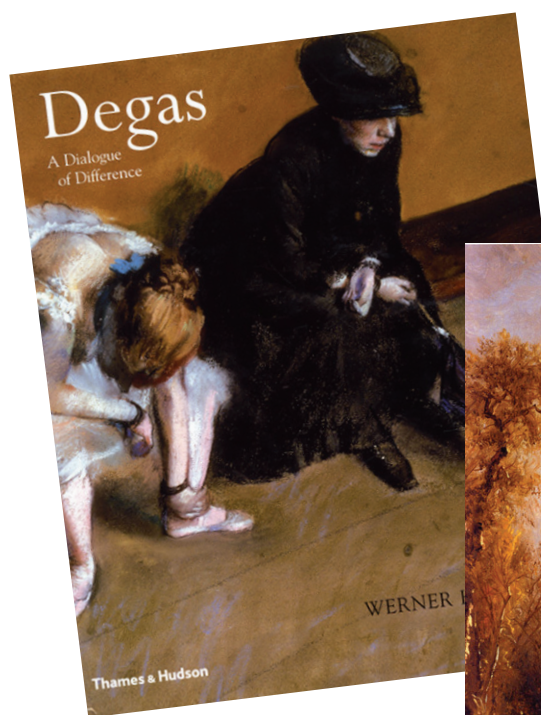




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BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS...BOOKS..



Degas, A Dialogue of Difference by Werner Hofmann, translated from the German by David H. Wilson; Thames & Hudson Ltd, 500 Fifth Avenue, New York NY 10110; 2007, 320 pages; hardcover; \$75.

This richly illustrated volume explores the pictorial world of the man whose formal innovations, commitment to realism and exploration of both the light and dark sides of contemporary society foreshadowed the art of the Twentieth Century.

Degas often took part in exhibitions with the Impressionists, but he followed his own path, charging his canvases with tension, not the harmony most often found in other Impressionist works. Degas focused on women from all walks of life: washerwomen and seamstresses, dancers and prostitutes, at work and at rest, with others and alone, focusing on the female body in all its forms.

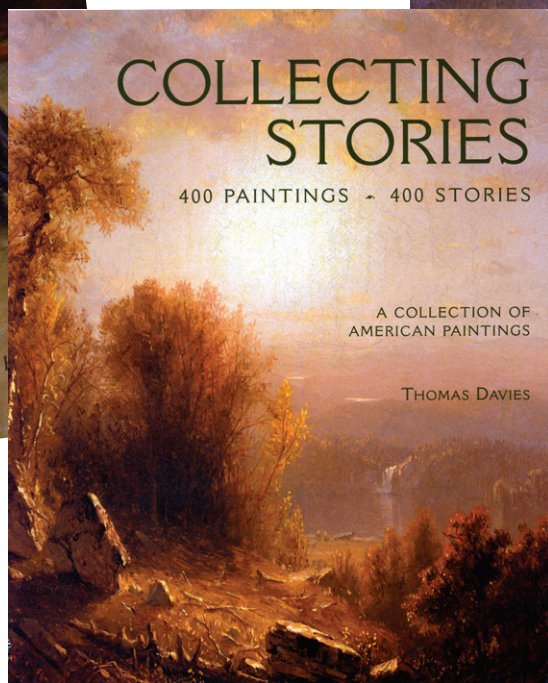
Werner Hofmann brings his own penetrating and often surprising new analyses to many of Degas' best-known works, interspersed with insights into the artist's bourgeois background. His artistic trajectory is placed within the context of the major currents of Nineteenth Century art, with David, Ingres, Delacroix, Courbet and the Impressionists among the key points of reference.

"Degas was not an Impressionist," says Hofmann at the beginning of the first chapter. Hofmann then proceeds to show not only the traditions that influenced Degas, but also his striking individuality and spirit of innovation, which forged a new artistic path into the Twentieth Century.

In this richly illustrated, remarkable book, the reader sees Degas as his contemporaries saw him, "Degas is most probably the greatest artist of our time," Pissarro wrote to his son. "The extraordinary artist named Degas is at this exhibition; ... a man apart," is how Edmond Duranty described Degas in his 1872 book on Louis Martin.

With complete indices, bibliography, chronology and index, this coffee table-sized book is a lovely and rewarding book for anyone who loves art.

—AK



Collecting Stories: 400 Paintings — 400 Stories, by Thomas Davies; Laynfaroh, 401 East 60th Street, Suite 8B, New York NY 10022; 2008, 355 pages, \$80, hardcover.

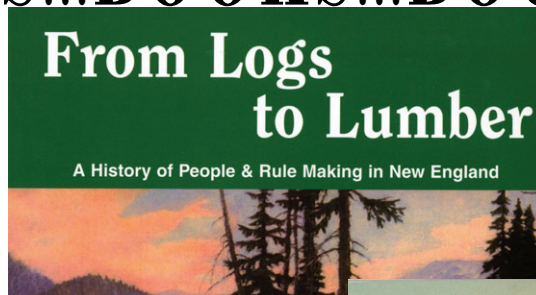
"My children grew up with paintings all around them . . . My father grew up with none." So begins Thomas Davies in his introduction to this wonderful coffee table book tracing his 40-year endeavor to collect American paintings. Just as the subtitle advertises, there are 400 pieces of artwork showcased in this handsomely produced book, each with narrative by the author recounting his purchase of the work.

Davies' father, a journalist-turned-corporate executive, had a love of the fine arts, but "the thought of buying original art simply was not something he related to," writes Davies, explaining his father's first purchase of an Aldro Hibbard New England snow scene. Bitten by the collecting bug, Davies embarked on a personal quest that encompassed acquiring Nineteenth Century Hudson River School landscapes, marine paintings, genre paintings and still lifes. Primarily, academic or representational, the works showcased in this book range from an Albert Bierstadt sunset to William Hart and Alfred T. Bricher marine scenes, to John George Brown portraits, to a Frederick Rondel still life, with other sections devoted to Tonalism, Impressionist colonies, Realism, art of the American West, illustration and contemporary works.

Davies does not play the scholar. Instead, his concise narratives about each of 236 artists provide a sketch of their lives, but more important describe the way in which he connected with their work. Woven into many of these narratives is the interesting, sometimes amusing story of how the work was acquired.

Collecting Stories will appeal to art collectors, but also to anyone who is interested in the art of collecting.

—WD



From Logs To Lumber by Dale Buttersworth and Tom Whalen, Agicook Press PO Box 511, Marshfield Hill MA 2007; 180 pages, \$35, softcover.

A book that will be of great interest to collectors of rules and tools, this effort is a fun and comprehensive tool that will provide tons of useful information. Filled with illustrations, including a collection of vintage photos from the "Glory Days of Logging," the cover features a wonderful painting by sporting illustrator Philip R. Goodwin, "Men of Mettle," that depicts loggers sending a large limbed tree down a mountainside and into a log-laden river below.

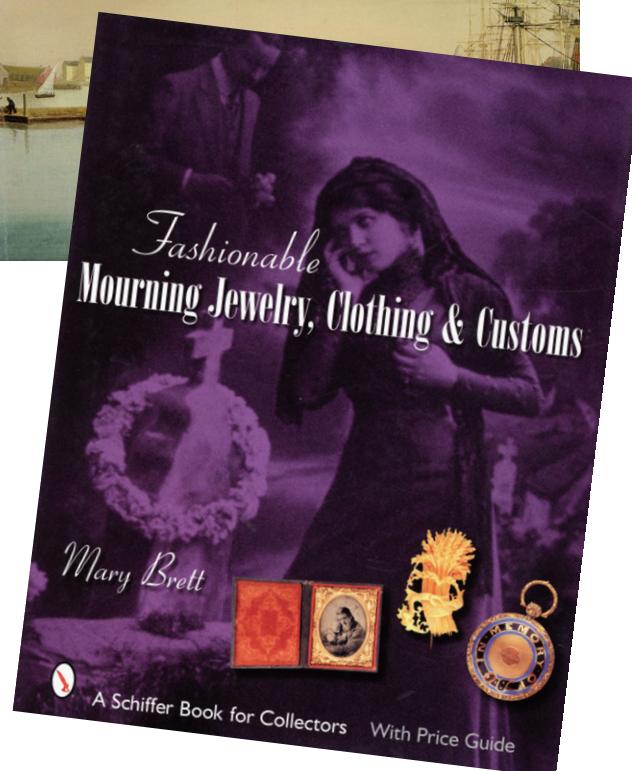
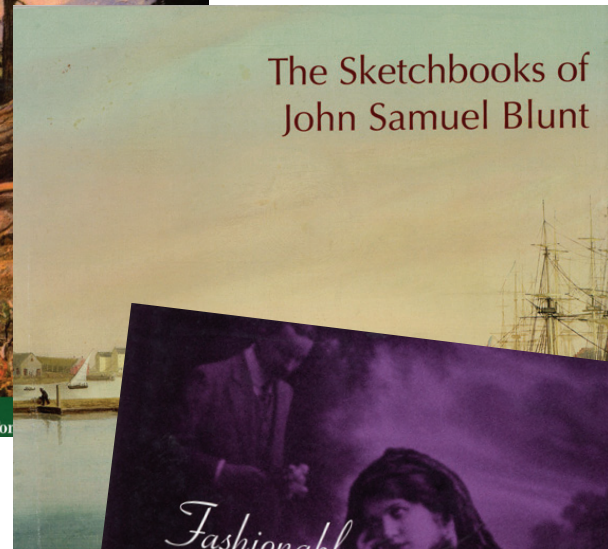
Of greater interest is the history, development and embellishment of the log rules beginning in 1820 and extending through the present day. General chapters range from a history of logging in New England and the functions of the rules, to the companies that fueled their development. The makers, the development of the walking wheels and, finally, a chronology of rule making in New England are also included. A neat book that can be ordered directly at agicook@msn.com.

—DSS

The Sketchbooks of John Samuel Blunt, by Deborah M. Child, Foreword by Diana Korzenik, The Portsmouth Athenaeum, 9 Market Square, Portsmouth, NH 03801, 2007, 120 pages; softcover, \$30.

John Samuel Blunt was born in Portsmouth, N.H., in 1798, and died in 1835 on board ship enroute from New Orleans to Boston. Through his brief career he is known to have executed miniatures, ship ornaments and signage, as well as portraits, landscapes and marine art.

Almost 180 years ago, the Portsmouth Athenaeum hosted an exhibition and raffle of Blunt's work, and in 2007 the Athenaeum again launched an exhibition of this underappreciated artist. With works collected and curated by Deborah M.



Child, Athenaeum proprietor, this catalogue raisonné contains an astounding body of rarely seen sketches and images that vividly reflect the landscape of the Northeastern region.

Child shows that Blunt was on the cutting edge in the development of his art. Had he lived longer, she speculates, he would be recognized today as a major pioneer of American art. "From his sketches, it is apparent John Samuel Blunt studied nature first-hand as he developed subject matter for his paintings. . . Such an approach to landscape painting anticipates the two major schools of landscape painting in America — the Hudson River school and the White Mountain school."

After a 1980 exhibition, many previously unknown portraits and other works by Blunt have surfaced and have been sold, including a very fine pair of fire buckets sold at Northeast Auctions, Portsmouth, N.H., August 2004.

This fascinating and revealing book is a remarkable introduction to an artist whom some speculate may have been the Borden Limner, whose portraits are renowned. While Childs believes this connection is "primarily a stylistic one," this volume supports her contention that had Blunt survived, he would have been a major force in American art.

—AK

Fashionable Mourning Jewelry, Clothing & Customs, by Mary Brett; Schiffer Publishing Ltd, 4880 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310; 2006; 224 pages, hardcover, \$59.95.

Queen Victoria was in mourning for her mother when she ascended the throne

of England in 1837 and was again in mourning when her beloved husband Albert died in 1861. She remained in mourning attire for the rest of her life, and the world (England at least) followed her lead.

As Mary Brett reveals in this fascinating book, the Victorians embraced death (the average life span was only 50 years) and for them, death was not the ultimate tragedy, but not being properly mourned was.

Therefore, the Victorians developed many means by which to mourn and remember their lost loved ones, and Brett discusses and shows items specifically associated with death customs: jewelry, photographs and painted portraits, children's, men's and women's clothes; poems, letters of sympathy; armbands, procession badges, hair receivers, announcements and horse drawn vehicles.

Symbolism in written phrases, flowers and objects is presented with many examples and more than 70 pages of a Victorian hair jewelry catalog are included, showing designs that could be ordered as keepsakes, using hair.

Explore Nineteenth Century traditions, history and objects in a blend of historical overview and collector's price guide. As with Schiffer books, the photographs are all accompanied by a complete description of the item, as well as current values for collectors and dealers in this highly collectible realm.

The book is made more valuable by the inclusion of a great deal of "mourning history," which makes it a top pick both for collector's libraries and for scholars.

—AK

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