Egon Schiele: Drawings and Watercolors by Jane Kallir

Revealing A Genius

Austrian Expressionist Egon Schiele produced a prolific body of work before his early death at the age of twenty-eight in 1918. The oeuvre is comprised of a few hundred oil paintings and thousands of drawings and watercolors. Schiele's oils have often been reproduced and are well recognized. However, limited access to the fragile works on paper and dispersion among several collections have made for an unbalanced representation of his work as a draftsman. This book assembles drawings and watercolors from public and private collections and reproduces work from every year of the artist's career, beginning with the juvenilia and early academic studies. The focus means that work that is rarely reproduced is represented extensively, providing a unique opportunity to study the rapid artistic development of Schiele over the course of his brief twelve-year career. The book is organized chronologically and divided into year-by-year sections. Each section includes a text that discusses the major events in Schiele's life and the interrelation between the artist's drawing and developments in his oil painting. Features a previously unpublished Schiele watercolor and several works that have never been reproduced in color. Over 350 color illustrations.

My Personal Review:
Following the introduction, the book is arranged chronologically; the first chapter covering the years up to 1907 when the artist was seventeen, followed by 1908-1909, with the successive chapters covering a year each up to 1918. The chapters open with about six or seven pages of illustrated text, to be followed by the relevant drawings; there is no bibliography.

A very readable book, the text provides a year by year account of the artist's progress; his family situation and personal life, his education and development as an artist and what influenced him. It is an intelligent and reasoned account.
The vast bulk of the book however is taken up with the drawings and watercolours. All the images are reproduced in full colour, including the monochrome drawings. It contains over three hundred illustrations which, with the exception of those illustrating the text, are presented one to a page, with the a few double page spreads. The printing is excellent and the images appear rich and strong, well conveying the subtle textures evident in the artist's work.

This is a most handsome volume, fairly modest in dimensions, but at nearly 500 pages certainly not in content. It is beautifully produced and presented; the choice of font for the text has quite obviously been given careful consideration, and perfectly complements Schiele's drawings. The images combined with the sensitively written text cannot but draw one to Schiele, and highlight what a tragic loss that he should enjoy such a short life. If anyone has any doubts about the genius of Egon Schiele, a little time spent perusing this splendid book will surely put that to rights.

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