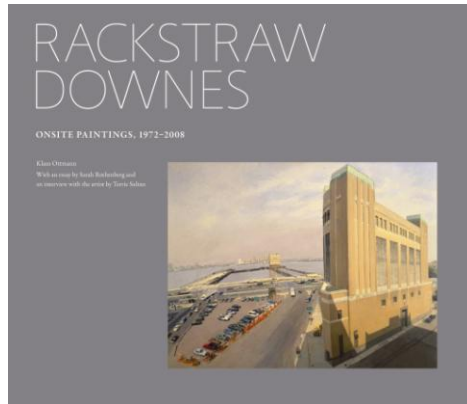


Rackstraw Downes: Onsite Paintings, 1972-2008, by Klaus Ottmann. Giles, dist. by Antique Collectors Club, 2010. 112 p. col. ill. ISBN 9781904832737 (cl.), \$39.95.



Often associated with photorealism of the 1970s, Rackstraw Downes, the British-born American painter has much to set him apart. Although he shares with other hyperrealist artists a close attention to representational detail, Downes does not work from photographs in order to create a reproduction of a certain instance in time. Instead the artist goes through often extraordinary circumstances in order to be able to paint onsite. As a result, his work does not encapsulate a captured moment in time but rather is a record of a period of weeks and months in which the artist paints his panoramas.

This catalog accompanies the first major retrospective of Downes' career curated by Klaus Ottmann of the Parrish Art Museum where the exhibit was first held. Ottmann's opening essay focuses on the artist's painting in *plein-air* and provides a detailed account of how the artist works from assembling materials to traveling out to the site to creating studies by sketching and adding on sheets of paper until he is satisfied with the composition. The process often results in long, narrow panoramas which are captured on canvas. Ottman also provides a brief biographical account and compares and contrasts Downes' work to the nineteenth-century American landscape artist Thomas Cole.

Sarah Rothenberg, artistic director of Da Camera of Houston, rhapsodizes in her essay the interplay of time and space captured in Downes' work. However generalizations such as "time enfold[ing] in space" as a distinctive aspect of the artist's work could be characteristic of examples of painting throughout history. Much more insightful is an interview of the artist by Terrie Sultan, Director of the Parrish. Downes has a long history of critical writing and this is reflected in his discussion of his own work. The artist explores in great detail some of the works featured in the exhibition, his methods and intentions in creating them, and processes he went through to locate the perfect spot for creating his compositions. The artist focuses on the creation of these featured works and his trying to "capture something that's uncapturable" (p. 90).

The catalog features large full color reproductions of all the works in the exhibition along with a selected bibliography of writings by and about the artist. For libraries looking for a larger, more scholarly and in-depth review of the Downes' career, *Rackstraw Downes* (Princeton, 2005) with its chronology, lavish illustrations (including many of the works included in this exhibition), and extensive bibliography would be a better choice. Although written for a more general audience, this catalog is recommended for libraries focusing on American or modern art.

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