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LITERATURE AND ART

Paul Smith

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Abstract

This special issue of *French Studies* examines a body of narratives featuring French art and artists published at representative periods during the nineteenth century (in both French and English). There are strong thematic continuities between many of the examples discussed, particularly as

regards their concern over the social and economic position of the artist, and the nature and gendering of creativity. The *topoi* of the genius and the *raté* also recur throughout. Several texts are vehicles for voicing aesthetic and political positions. And many draw closely on contemporary figures, events, and debates for their content. Yet this special issue does not aim to identify a discursive unity so much as to exhibit the variety and richness of the art novel's evolution. It is also concerned to address some of the methodological issues involved in reading this kind of text, including the selectivity of the canon, intertextual connections, and the relationship between fiction and fact. It is hoped it will not only plot some new and unfamiliar material in an area still represented for most by a mere handful of 'major' texts, but also bring some of the questions involved by this expanded configuration of the field into sharper focus.

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