



American Adversaries: West and Copley in a Transatlantic World (Museum of Fine Arts, Houston)

Emily Ballew Neff, Kaylin H. Weber

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American artists and innovators Benjamin West (1738–1820) and John Singleton Copley (1738–1815) changed the way history was recorded in the 18th century and became America’s first transatlantic art superstars. Initially friends but eventually bitter rivals, the artists painted contemporary events as they happened, illustrating the transformation of imperial power through diplomacy between British Americans and the Iroquois, and through transatlantic trade, exploration, and the natural history of the West Indies.

Focusing on two iconic works, West’s *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) and Copley’s *Watson and the Shark* (1778), *American Adversaries* charts the rise of contemporary history painting, and offers a compelling examination of American history and New World exploration. Featuring more than two hundred color reproductions of paintings, works on paper, and objects that informed the artists, this handsome volume also includes essays that shed new light on, among other subjects, West and Copley within the context of the Royal Academy and the use of Western and Native American objects in cultural diplomacy.

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