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Frederic Church: The Art and Science of Detail

Jennifer Raab

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Frederic Church: The Art and Science of Detail Jennifer Raab
Frederic Church (1826–1900), the most celebrated painter in the United States during the mid-19th century, created monumental landscapes of North and South America, the Arctic, and the Middle East. These paintings were unsurpassed in their attention to detail, yet the significance of this pictorial approach has remained largely unexplored. In this important reconsideration of Church's works, Jennifer Raab offers the first sustained examination of the aesthetics of detail that fundamentally shaped 19th-century American landscape painting. Moving between historical context and close readings of famous canvases—including *Niagara*, *The Heart of the Andes*, and *The Icebergs*—Raab argues that Church's art challenged an earlier model of painting based on symbolic unity, revealing a representation of nature with surprising connections to scientific discourses of the time. The book traces Church's movement away from working in oil on canvas to shaping the physical landscape of Olana, his self-designed estate on the Hudson River, a move that allowed the artist to rethink scale and process while also engaging with pressing ecological questions. Beautifully illustrated with dramatic spreads and striking details of Church's works, *Frederic Church: The Art and Science of Detail* offers a profoundly new understanding of this canonical artist.

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