



A B B E V I L L E P U B L I S H I N G G R O U P

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Publication date: March 2008

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An Insightful New Survey of the Most Important Realist Painter's Work

Courbet

By Ségolène Le Men

Gustave Courbet, one of the founding fathers of the realist style of painting, left behind an extraordinary body of work and a reputation of barrier-bashing. He paved the way for subsequent artists, from Impressionists to modernists, to continue to use their canvases to stretch artistic and social boundaries. **COURBET** (\$135.00, cloth; March 2008), the lucidly written new monograph from noted art historian Ségolène Le Men, importantly traces the life and legacy of the man many critics have dubbed “the first modern artist.”

Le Men’s monograph provides a new understanding of how Courbet’s past and milieu shaped his vast oeuvre. **COURBET**’s chapters are organized both chronologically and thematically: while the five chapters correspond to the successive phases of Courbet’s career, each comprises several subsections that discuss individual aspects of the painter’s work. This hybrid approach allows Le Men to present an expansive and multifaceted view of Courbet’s art, emphasizing its revolving relations with the various ideas and artistic currents of its time. With more than 300 stunning color illustrations, including all of Courbet’s most important paintings and many fine examples of his draftsmanship, this book is *the* definitive study of Courbet, available just in time for the first major retrospective of Courbet’s work in thirty years, on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (February 27–May 18, 2008).

Courbet's importance as an artist cannot be overstated. When he began his career in the late 1840s, French painting was dominated by two competing styles: neoclassicism, exemplified by Ingres, and romanticism, exemplified by Delacroix. Courbet, proud of his rural origins and guided by his strong republican beliefs, quickly established a third way. Rejecting the historical and literary subjects of the prevailing styles as too remote from actual experience, Courbet instead depicted scenes of everyday life, particularly among the peasants and the working class, with a naturalism then considered shocking. While Courbet's brand of realism bears a family resemblance to those of his contemporaries Daumier and Millet, its scope is much broader: his masterworks range from the *Burial at Ornans* (1850), a heroically scaled depiction of a villager's funeral, to the very different *Origin of the World* (1866), a notoriously explicit nude.

COURBET is the definitive study of an artist who redefined art for the modern era.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ségolène Le Men, a specialist in nineteenth-century French art, studied at the École Normale Supérieure and is currently a professor at the University of Paris X–Nanterre.

COURBET

By Ségolène Le Men

400 pages; 309 full-color illustrations; cloth with slipcase, 10-13/16 x 12-3/4"

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President and Publisher