

Body Doubles



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Late nineteenth-century Britain experienced an explosion of interest in sculpture. Sculptors of the "New Sculpture" movement engaged in a wide range of experimentation, seeking a new direction and a modern idiom for their art. This book analyzes for the first time the art-theoretical concerns of the late-Victorian sculptors, focusing on their attitudes toward the representation of the human body. David J. Getsy uncovers a previously unrecognised sophistication in the New Sculpture through close study of works by key figures in the movement: Frederic Leighton, Alfred Gilbert, Hamo Thornycroft, Edward Onslow Ford, and James Havard Thomas. These artists sought to activate and animate the conventional format of the ideal statue so that it would convincingly and compellingly stand in for both a living body and an ideal image. Complicating the conventions that had characterised much previous sculpture in Britain, they fervently pursued a commitment to the mimetic rendering of the body in three dimensions. In response to the problems and perils of such a commitment, late-Victorian sculptors worked to develop strategies that allowed them to accommodate naturalism and symbolism as well as the materiality of sculpture. Getsy offers an analysis of the conceptual complexity of the New Sculpture and places its concerns within the larger framework of the development of modern sculpture.

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