

taire les réalités moins heureuses, celles, par exemple, des rapports fréquents d'hostilité entre les deux groupes linguistiques canadiens. Voilà un grand mérite, je pense, en nos temps si "politically correct".

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## NORTH AMERICAN FASHION IN HISTORY

**18th Century Clothing.** Bobbie Kalman. Crabtree Publishing, 1993. 32 pp., \$20.95, \$9.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-86505-492-4, 0-86505-512-2; **19th Century Clothing.** Bobbie Kalman. Crabtree Publishing, 1993. 32 pp., \$20.95, \$9.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 0-86505-493-2, 0-865505-512-0.

As part of the *Historic Communities* series, these titles look at colonial life. Previous volumes have explored village and town life, tools, crafts, etc. These titles examine garment, hairstyles, shoes and other accessories. After an initial explanation, repeated in both titles, of the most common fabrics (wool, linen, leather), distinct sections on women's, men's and children's clothing are presented. Specific items and styles are described and illustrated. In addition, related topics such as hygiene, the invention of the sewing machine, and mail-order catalogues are discussed. The context is generally North American with no particular Canadian focus.

The layout is excellent with good use of spacing, subheadings, varied print, photographs, and coloured illustrations. The writing is succinct; definitions or descriptive sentences abound. For example, "Waistcoats were sleeveless, collarless coats that looked very much like vests. They were worn beneath a coat. The front of the waistcoat was long and had one or two rows of buttons ..." (*18th Century Clothing* 23). The subtext with the illustrations is similar in style, often expanding on the regular text or providing new information.

Attempts at placing fashion within a social or economic context are less successful. Distinctions between rural and urban and working and upper classes are drawn yet are simplistic and poorly developed. Sections in both titles headed "Working clothes" seem highly selective in type of workers discussed. In the category of "servants of the rich," "livery" is the sole costume described. A section entitled "women at home" merely imparts the information that they wore cotton or linen in summer, wool in winter, aprons and a mobcap. It might have been better to have incorporated such information into the individual sections on types of clothing and have remained with the descriptive formula rather than making social commentary.

Some inconsistency of coverage also exists. Children's clothes receive better treatment in the nineteenth century volume while the same section in the other title is rather lacking. On a page describing underwear, men's ties, collars and cuffs are illustrated. The coverage of men's hairstyles consists entirely of a two-

page spread on wigs in one while in the other we find three small illustrations. A section on cosmetics is sketchy at best.

Despite the shortcomings, these titles are useful and informative. The presentation of text and graphics will make them appealing and highly readable to children. A glossary and an index enhance access. While less useful for interpretation, they are an excellent resource of fashion items and styles of the time.

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## A WALK IN THE ARTWORLD

**A Short Walk around the Pyramids & through the World of Art.** Philip M. Isaacson. Random House, 1993. 120 pp., \$25.00 cloth. ISBN 0-679-81523-6.

*A Short Walk* is a tourist's guide to artistic expression, designed to encourage young viewers to take aesthetic pleasure from a range of artistic sources: architecture, sculpture, painting, photography, even chairs and fences. Intriguingly, however, it ignores one particularly relevant art form: book illustration. For this is, after all, an illustrated book—pictures accompanied by a text that explains them.

But Isaacson seems to want readers to forget that. His text continually asserts its own irrelevance, and insists that visual art communicates automatically and intuitively, that "if we only look, we will find that art waits to delight us . . . all we have to do is want it to happen." But if that were really true, would it really need to be said at all?

It does, of course—as the mere existence of Isaacson's own text reveals. Arthur Danto once famously suggested that we could view something as art only within the context of the art theory and art history that actually provide it with its meaning and significance—within what Danto called the "artworld." It is exactly this artworld that Isaacson offers young viewers: his text provides the contexts required to make the pictures meaningful as usually understood by those in the know.

But a major tenet of the "artworld" as currently constituted is that it must deny its own existence, assert that art communicates directly—without any accompanying text, without any knowledge of context or experience. This is somehow supposed to make art seem more powerful, more magical, even more divine. In providing a text which denies the need for a text, Isaacson does exactly what the artworld so paradoxically demands. He gives readers the context they need to believe that *no context is necessary*.

I find this offensive—as offensive as the peculiarly contradictory way in which Isaacson's text continually tells us what "we" see and what "we" feel when we look at the art. As I looked at these pictures, I often didn't see or feel