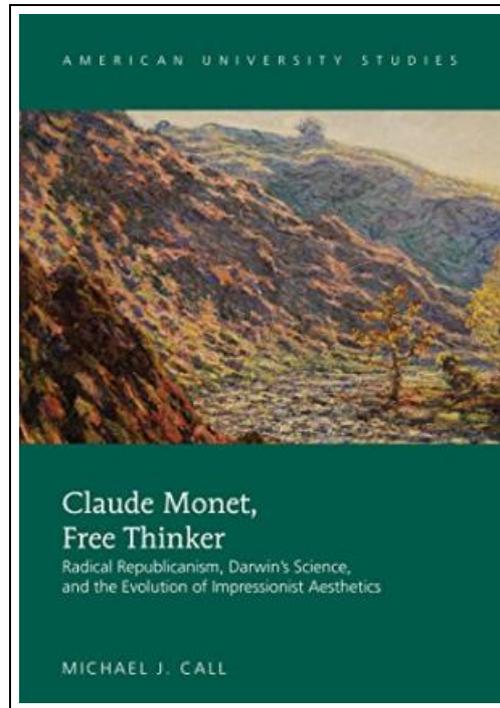


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Reviews

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(Janie Wilkinson)

CLAUDE MONET, FREE THINKER: RADICAL REPUBLICANISM, DARWIN S SCIENCE, AND THE EVOLUTION OF IMPRESSIONIST AESTHETICS (HARDBACK)



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Peter Lang Publishing Inc, United States, 2015. Hardback. Book Condition: New. 230 x 155 mm. Language: English . Brand New Book. This revolutionary interdisciplinary study argues that Monet s artistic practices and choices were the direct result of his political stance as a nineteenth-century libre penseur, a position characterized by radical republicanism, a progressive social agenda, and fierce anticlericalism. His efforts to create a style reflecting his personal political code led him to produce paintings proclaimed by like-minded free thinkers as a science being constantly perfected (Gustave Geffroy), that is, emphasizing only observable phenomena in the immediate present through scrupulous, insistent on-site observation, capturing the raw data of sensations and sensory experience and purporting to record a world free of embedded meaning. Darwin s world similarly comes with no prepackaged reassurance of humankind s privileged place in it; it is instead a space in which all varieties of organisms and species compete for limited resources in a struggle for survival. The Darwinian model of nature appears to have influenced Monet s artistic production increasingly as his style evolved over several decades. In opposition to post-Renaissance art that privileged the human presence in both representation and the viewing act, Monet s later paintings create a sense of virtual and visual equality among all observable phenomena. The human-and the viewer, by extension-is thus represented as neither separate from nature as a disengaged observer nor superior to it but rather co-equal with all other organic life forms surrounding it. This approach, while echoing Darwin s admiration of nature and its laws, also reminds humankind of its own fragility and the hard choices it must make to avoid extinction.

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