

FRANCIS, RELL G. *Cyrus E. Dallin: Let Justice Be Done*. Provo, Utah: Published for the Springville Museum of Art, Springville, Utah, in cooperation with the Utah American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, 1976. 262 pp. \$13.95.

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Radical stylistic changes in late nineteenth and twentieth century art and accompanying accommodations in taste have for many years resulted in frequently undeserved scorn for more traditionally inclined or "academic" works of art from the same period. In the case of sculpture of the type, in fact, such attitudes have caused a virtual banishment of many fine and expressive pieces from public view to basement or attic storage areas (dependent upon their weight, one would suppose) or, even worse, into oblivion. Indeed, it was not before the late 1960s and 1970s that an effective countering of this broadly-based critical tendency began to make significant progress. Today, such art historians and museum curators as Wayne Craven, William H. Gerdts, John Dryfhout, and now Rell G. Francis in his concise, but somehow very full, study of Cryus E. Dallin's life and works, seek successfully to fill an informational and critical gap that has existed since the early writings of Lorado Taft and Chandler Post.

Mr. Francis states that the purpose of his study is "to introduce, interpret, and identify rather than evaluate," and establish "a factual basis upon which historians and art critics may build . . ." (p. xiv). Additionally, the author hopes his book "will help establish . . . Dallin in the position he deserves as one of the foremost American sculptors of the past century" (p. xv). Exceeding his first two objectives, Francis has written a book that is often very moving in its collected insights regarding the sculptor's triumphs, tribulations, and character.

However, it seems obvious from further reading in the volume that what the writer feels to be Dallin's deserved position *may not* correspond totally to the actual place in American art that is due him. For instance, a comparison made early-on by Francis and Frederic Remington (p. xiii), seems to finally imply that the cowboy-loving Remington (short-lived and "reared in the East") was able to establish a *lasting* reputation, while the Indian-loving Dallin (long-lived and born and raised in the West) was not, this based somehow upon their cowboy and Indian subject

matter. The fact of the matter is, of course, that while Dallin was most often the designer of larger “monumental” forms possessing great dignity and believability, Remington was both the painter and sculptor of vivid and often remarkably convincing works expressive of compelling action on a scale more easily related to by more people over the years. Also, as both Francis and John C. Ewers (who provided the foreword to this volume) point out (p. xiv), people tend to be aware of and even admire “monuments” (quotations marks mine) without knowing the names of the artists who created them, while tabletop sculpture and easel painting tend to be identified *by* the artist.

Yet Francis is correct in his belief that Dallin should be better known and understood than he is, and this book (if it is generally read) goes far to bring that about. It is excellently organized into two main parts and nine chapters with an epilogue and offers clear statements and careful documentation concerning: (1) Dallin’s early struggles over his well-known Paul Revere monument; (2) the artist’s Indian subjects (my own favorite chapter); (3) “Mormon Church Themes” (perhaps the weakest treatment in the book); (4) “Public Figures”; (5) “Ideal Subjects, Portraits, . . . and Other Works”; (6) “The ‘Pioneer Mother’ Controversy” (questionable as a subject deserving of a separate section); and then, regarding a second, more purely biographical part, chapters concerning (7) the man Dallin; (8) his “Family and Friends” (not as rewarding a study as it could have been, I think); and (9) a “Vindication” in connection with his almost lifelong struggle (called “Dallin’s obsession”) to get the *Revere* set into place in Boston.

The epilogue then gets the reader quickly through Dallin’s death, memorial services, burial, and, finally, the most recent tributes paid to the artist by the people of Arlington Heights, Massachusetts (an elementary school was named after him there in 1957), and Springville, Utah (bicentennial activities in both Springville and Arlington Heights, the former town’s events including not only publication of the Francis book, but a fine exhibition of Dallin’s works). The study also includes extensive and informative “Notes,” and an “Appendices” section contains listings of: (a) “Known Works” categorized, located (or unlocated), and dated; (b) “Brief Chronology”; (c) a “Partial List” of Gorham statuettes; (d) “Paintings” (thirty-eight landscapes); (e) “Awards, Degrees, and Honors”; and (f) “Major Exhibits.” Further, a telling selected bibliography and a good, workable index conclude the publication.

Profusely illustrated in black and white, the Francis book makes use of a tremendous variety of well-placed reproductions including a

multitude of old photographs of lost works. The number of these “location unknown” pieces creates a sad commentary indeed upon the neglect that Dallin’s work has suffered to date.

Finally, as a result of reading this engrossing and surprisingly comprehensive study, both the student of American sculpture and the layman *will*, I think, discover that Dallin was a more sensitive and profound and prolific artist, a more expansive mind, and, generally, a much richer and more complex personality than most of us had known him to be.