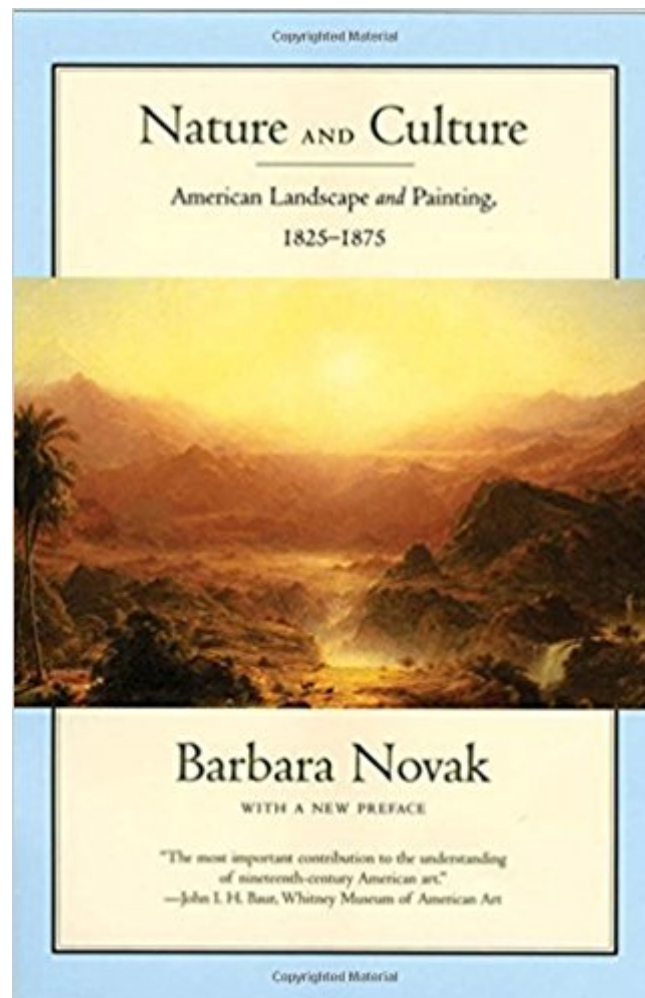


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# Nature And Culture: American Landscape And Painting, 1825-1875, With A New Preface



## Synopsis

In this richly illustrated volume, featuring more than fifty black-and-white illustrations and a beautiful eight-page color insert, Barbara Novak describes how for fifty extraordinary years, American society drew from the idea of Nature its most cherished ideals. Between 1825 and 1875, all kinds of Americans--artists, writers, scientists, as well as everyday citizens--believed that God in Nature could resolve human contradictions, and that nature itself confirmed the American destiny. Using diaries and letters of the artists as well as quotes from literary texts, journals, and periodicals, Novak illuminates the range of ideas projected onto the American landscape by painters such as Thomas Cole, Albert Bierstadt, Frederic Edwin Church, Asher B. Durand, Fitz H. Lane, and Martin J. Heade, and writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Frederich Wilhelm von Schelling. Now with a new preface, this spectacular volume captures a vast cultural panorama. It beautifully demonstrates how the idea of nature served, not only as a vehicle for artistic creation, but as its ideal form. "An impressive achievement." --Barbara Rose, The New York Times Book Review "An admirable blend of ambition, elan, and hard research. Not just an art book, it bears on some of the deepest fantasies of American culture as a whole." --Robert Hughes, Time Magazine

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Nature and Culture is more than a study of landscape painting: it is the story of the American imagination finding what will suffice. Wonderful is the only adequate word for Novak's 'reading' of American painting. Like the opening of the new American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of

Art, Nature and Culture is an important event. Miss Novak herself has some of the sublimity of the landscapes she analyzes. Her book is awesomely good."--Anatole Broyard, The New York Times

"An admirable blend of ambition, élan and hard research. Novak is not one of that vanishing line of critics who tend to treat the history of art simply as the history of pictorial form. Instead, she disentangles and shows the content behind the forms: the iconography that links painting to the culture of its time. Hers is not just an art book, it bears on some of the deepest fantasies of American culture as a whole."--Robert Hughes, Time

"A model of its kind, a thoroughly engrossing study of the intersection of history and esthetics."--James R. Mellow, Art News

Barbara Novak is Helen Goodhart Altschul Professor of Art History Emerita at Barnard College and Columbia University. She is the acclaimed author of *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* ("surely the best book ever written on the subject"-Hilton Kramer, The New York Times Book Review) and *Nature and Culture* ("awesomely good"-Anatole Broyard, The New York Times). She has been a Commissioner of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery for the last twenty-five years.

I found *Nature and Culture* sufficiently engaging and enjoyable to order the other two books in Ms. Novak's "trilogy". The positioning of the landscape painters within the influences of their artistic, literary, philosophic, religious, national, and economic culture is successfully done. Ms. Novak does an admirable job of bringing their world "to life". There is a "price" to be paid, however. *Nature and Culture* is not an easy read. Some of the terminology employed by Ms. Novak does not exist in any of the three dictionaries I own; for several passages it was necessary to engage in google searches to ascertain what it was she was discussing.

I bought it on my kindle and it is very handy to have there for me. I don't have any complaints. This book is for someone who likes the art world and learning about how artists learned and discovered how to create these amazing works of art.

I enjoy studying the biography of the Hudson River School artists and this book is virtually indispensable.

Excellent reference book in studying art of the 1800's

Nature and Culture is one of those breakthrough books that makes you wonder how a field could possibly have missed the obvious for so long. Ms. Novak looks at American landscape painting from 1825-1875 from the perspective of what those landscapes meant to contemporaries, by drawing on nonpainting sources. This is a critical step forward because landscape painting for this group had a theological and philosophical context that is remote to us in these post-Darwinian days. The intent of the artists and the perceptions of the first viewers are in many ways as remote from us in the 21st century as the cave dwellers in Lescaux. I found this work to be exceptionally well balanced and provocative. I will never again be satisfied to understand a work only from my own perspective and time. Ms. Novak has opened up a whole new world for me that I should have been able to open for myself, as someone trained as a social historian. I humbly thank her for helping me extend my understanding of art beyond where it would otherwise have gone. Well done! Enjoy!

I read this book in the 80s and had much of it underlined. It's missing from my library; I must have lent it to someone and can't recall who. I miss it. I remember some great chapter headings and much discussion of Manifest Destiny -- America as the new Promised Land. It was full of good observations. Excellent interpretation.

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