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*Mahonri Young: His Life and Art* Thomas E. Toone; *A Song of Joys: The Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young—Sculptor, Painter, Etcher* Norma S. Davis

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THOMAS E. TOONE. *Mahonri Young: His Life and Art*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997. xiii; 206 pp. Chronology, illustrations, notes, index. \$75.00.

NORMA S. DAVIS. *A Song of Joys: The Biography of Mahonri Mackintosh Young—Sculptor, Painter, Etcher*. Provo, Utah: M. Seth and Maurine D. Horne Center for the Study of Art, Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 1999. 305 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$65.00.

Reviewed by Todd A. Britsch

Suppose the moderator of a popular quiz show were to ask the identity of the following person: He visited the studios of both Rodin and Maillol and watched them work. He was hailed from across the lobby of the Cirque de Paris by Ernest Hemingway, joined a club that boasted Theodore Roosevelt as a member, and was driven to Jack Sharkey's training camp by Jack Dempsey. He often had lunch with Thornton Wilder and was a close friend of Leo Stein and his sister Gertrude. He was delighted when Charles Morgan II, president of Amherst, wrote that Robert Frost and Morgan were interested in exhibiting his work at the college. He taught a number of the nation's finest young art students, was well acquainted with most of The Eight (America's leading twentieth-century realist painters), and married the daughter of one of the best American impressionists. It is unlikely that these or additional equally impressive clues would lead many to the correct answer: Mahonri Mackintosh Young, the Salt Lake City–born sculptor and painter and grandson of Brigham Young.

Such is the fate of this artist, who, though hailed as one of America's leading sculptors during his lifetime, is known today primarily by a few specialists and by a small number of Utahns who recognize him as the sculptor of the Brigham Young statues at the nation's capitol and Brigham Young University or as the designer and sculptor of the *This Is the Place* monument in Salt Lake City. But things are changing for the reputation of Mahonri Young. After years of consignment to brief mention, footnotes, and unpublished academic papers, he has recently become the subject of two thoroughly illustrated books that are certain to make a much larger audience aware of his multiple artistic contributions. The earlier of these books (published in 1997) is by Thomas E. Toone, a professor of art history at Utah State University, and is based on his 1982 doctoral dissertation at Pennsylvania State University. Norma S. Davis, the author of the more recent volume (published in 1999), is an emeritus professor of humanities at Brigham Young University and the biographer of the American painter Florence Kate Upton.

Mahonri Young was born in 1877 to Mahonri Moriancumer and Agnes Mackintosh Young in Salt Lake City. He lived an apparently idyllic life at the factory of the Deseret Woolen Mills until his father died when Mahonri was seven. After he, his mother, and his two small brothers moved to the city, he received the first bit of his meager formal education in a home school and in the Twentieth Ward School. At seventeen he attended his one day of high school, after which he decided to directly pursue his ambition to become an artist (an ambition shared and realized by a surprising number of his boyhood friends). Newspaper illustration work and study with local artists—especially James T. Harwood, one of the early Utahns to study in Paris, France—led him to study at the Art Students' League in New York City and ultimately to study and work for several years in Paris. There, Young became familiar with a variety of artistic styles, including the revolutionary movements led by Picasso and Matisse, but he rejected most of Modernism and held to what could be called American realism.

Even after extensive training, Young was slow in building a reputation and clientele. He and his family (he married Cecilia Sharp in 1907 and shortly thereafter had two children) lived on the edge of poverty for a number of years. The Youngs spent most of their married life in New York City and nearby Leonia, New Jersey, and Mahonri became well integrated into the New York art scene. But despite excellent connections and memberships in important artistic associations (he belonged to the Association of American Painters and Sculptors, which organized the famous Armory Show where he exhibited several works), Young struggled for commissions and was pleased with opportunities that artists of later times might disdain. He designed exhibits on the Hopi, Apache, and Navajo tribes for the Museum of Natural History and made medals for awards or decorations for schools.

Young's reputation as a painter, engraver, and sculptor slowly grew, and sales of his works eventually brought in a good income. In fact, he had few financial difficulties after his marriage in 1931 to J. Alden Wier's daughter Dorothy (Cecilia died of cancer in 1917). But despite his increasing fame, he had to compete vigorously for the two commissions that he desired the most, the monument commemorating the entry of the Mormon pioneers into the Great Salt Lake Valley and the statue of Brigham Young that the State of Utah intended to place in the Capitol in Washington, D.C. He was successful in both instances. He was still trying to undertake additional projects when he died in 1957 at the age of eighty. In addition to his other numerous awards, he received the singular honor of being made a member of the American Academy of Arts, Music, and Literature in the years just prior to his death.

Both of the recent books tell Mahonri Young's story quite effectively, but Davis adds significant information that Toone's book lacks. With the exception of masters' theses, the beginnings of serious scholarship on Young go back to a dissertation that Wayne K. Hinton presented to the Brigham Young University History Department in 1974. While Hinton had access to some of the Young materials now housed in the Harold B. Lee Library, that collection was unfortunately quite disorganized, resulting in errors in chronology and detail in his work. Toone seems to have relied on much of the same material, but since the time of Toone's dissertation work, a great number of documents have been discovered, and librarians at BYU have organized the older material as well. Davis has taken full advantage of these rich resources, and she provides a great amount of this new information. In addition, she appears to have been an indefatigable researcher—checking sources, interviewing family members, running down names and newspaper interviews, identifying figures in photographs, in effect leaving little to guesswork. This thoroughness, combined with a very sympathetic writing style, makes for a convincing treatment of the biographical material. Readers will come away from the book feeling that they have a fuller sense of the artist, his aesthetic preferences, and the real challenges of his life.

The illustrative material in Toone's book is well selected and nicely reproduced. It is a pleasure to see the variety in Young's work and to be able to note his exceptional draftsmanship and his dynamic use of color. A quick glance at the book is enough to convince readers that Mahonri Young was an outstanding artist in several media. Toone also includes photographic documentation of Young's life and career.

Davis's *Song of Joys* is one of the most beautiful scholarly art books that I have seen. The design work of Adrian Pulfer and Matt Scherer is extraordinary. The page format (by my measurement 9½" x 12") allows for impressive reproductions. In addition to providing many images of the artist's work, Davis has supplied a valuable selection of newly discovered photographs of Young, his family, and his friends.

Because publishing art books is very expensive, authors often must forgo desirable features for financial reasons. But I wish that both books could have included at least a few more reproductions of works by other artists. Appropriately, both Toone and Davis compare Young's works with European or American artists by whom Mahonri was influenced or with whom they would like to draw a contrast. Unfortunately, the lack of reproductions illustrating these comparisons forces the reader to rely on an often faulty memory or to rush out for reference works.

I also had a little difficulty with the placement of the illustrations in both books. Each author (rightly, I believe) has chosen to include figure numbers to avoid interrupting the flow of the text. But occasionally a

photograph or reproduction is placed several pages before or after the page where it is discussed. I found myself looking around in the book to see if the illustration was included at all. Perhaps Toone and Davis could have employed some kind of parenthetical reference when it seemed important.

Toone's editors did not always serve him well. A number of writing errors have slipped by, including dangling modifiers (56, 69, 120, 193, and others), the use of *this* as a pronoun with an unclear or abstract antecedent (53, 98, 107), and quite a few awkward and unclear statements. I was also troubled by some of Toone's terminology. "Classical" and "Classic" seem to be used in varying senses—sometimes referring to Greek- or Roman-influenced works but elsewhere appearing as synonyms for "traditional" or "older." More disturbing is the designation of Delacroix, Ingres, Corot, and Courbet as impressionists (104). This reference comes in a discussion of the Armory Show, but if that show used such a strange classification for these artists, Toone should surely have let the reader know.

The Davis text is considerably cleaner. It contains a few errors, including quotation marks used with indented quotations (18, 133, 182), a misspelling of Dorothy (190), and a use of "medium" when a plural is needed (153). However, the flow of the fine text is generally undisturbed by editing mistakes.

The adult Mahonri Young, despite his ancestry and upbringing, was never a participating member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He liked cigars and wine, and he found it humorous when he had to go to church twice in one day. Both Toone and Davis deal directly with Young's relations with the Church, and each shows Young's devotion to his Mormon heritage and friends. Davis is particularly strong in this respect.

A final note: both books would be stronger if they contained more aesthetic analysis of Young's work. They make it clear that Young was a significant artist but only occasionally tell us what makes his work successful. Both authors are gifted in critiquing art—see, for example, Davis on the Seagull Monument (134) and Toone's scattered comparative comments. I would like to have seen more full-scale analysis of the major works.

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