



## Lawrence Alma-Tadema

*Rosemary J. Barrow*

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## **Lawrence Alma-Tadema** Rosemary J. Barrow

Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836-1912), was one of the finest and most distinctive of the Victorian painters. Dutch-born, he moved to London in 1870 and became famous for his depictions of the luxury and decadence of the Roman Empire, set in fabulous marbled interiors or against a backdrop of dazzling blue Mediterranean sea and sky. An amusing portrait of an exuberant personality who carved out a brilliant career for himself at the heart of London's artistic and cultural elite. But above all she subjects the paintings to a fresh scrutiny, and reveals that Alma-Tadema, a knowledgeable student of antiquity, repeatedly used literary and archaeological allusions in his paintings to play a game of interpretation with his viewers. Time and again the seeming innocence of the scenes he depicts is subverted by a mischievously placed inscription or statue, suggesting to the initiated a darker and usually risqué meaning. Their beauty and their remarkable mastery of light, colour and texture. With its intriguing insights into his personality and intentions, this book should provide a challenging reassessment of a major artist.

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