

The aim of the course is to dispel the myth that France was the only place where artists innovated and that misconception that English art was wholly derivative from French art. This myth first arose in the early twentieth century because of a small number of commentators and art historians. I demonstrate that English art was lively, innovative and exciting reflecting the history and culture of Victorian England.

The course provides an overview of English art during the nineteenth century in order to show how art reflects the history and culture of the period, and to consider the role of artists in changing social and cultural assumptions. The nineteenth century was a time of enormous change and the art is related to these socio-economic trends. We see how Britain's lead in the industrial revolution and its growing population and wealth led to new markets for art. It also led both to a new confidence offset by a nostalgia for times past. The gradual emancipation of the poor, workers and woman was reflected in various art works of the period. The course will examine the latest art historical ideas regarding the key artists and artistic movements.

Recommended Books

General

Lionel Lambourne, *Victorian Painting*, Phaidon, 2004 (Amazon used £14 + delivery). A large and comprehensive summary of Victorian art.

Academic Painting

Matthew Craske, *Art in Europe 1700-1830*, Oxford History of Art (Amazon £31 new, £1.23 used). To understand academic art it is necessary to look at art across Europe in the eighteenth century. A dense but well written book of eighteenth century art with an emphasis on British and French art.

Portraiture

Shearer West, *Portraiture*, Oxford History of Art, (Amazon £10.34 + delivery). An introduction to portraiture through the centuries.

David Piper, *The English Face*, National Portrait Gallery, 1978 (Amazon used £1.04 + delivery). The representation of the face in England through the centuries.

Landscape Painting

Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford History of Art (Amazon £9.79 new). The book goes from the beginnings in the fifteenth century to the present day but this puts nineteenth century landscape into a useful perspective.

Photography

John Thomson, *Victorian London Street Life in Historic Photographs* (Amazon £16.99 new, £4 used). 37 photographs first published in the 1870s with a description of each person based on an interview at the time. The best evocation of the Victorian period available.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, Princeton University Press (Amazon £13.95 new). An excellent and well-written summary.

Arts & Crafts Movement

Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement*, Thames and Hudson (World of Art) (Amazon, £8.95 new). A useful summary of the movement.

Aesthetic Movement

Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Art for Art's Sake: Aestheticism in Victorian Painting*, Paul Mellon Centre (Amazon £34.70 new, £24 used). An excellent history of the movement but expensive.

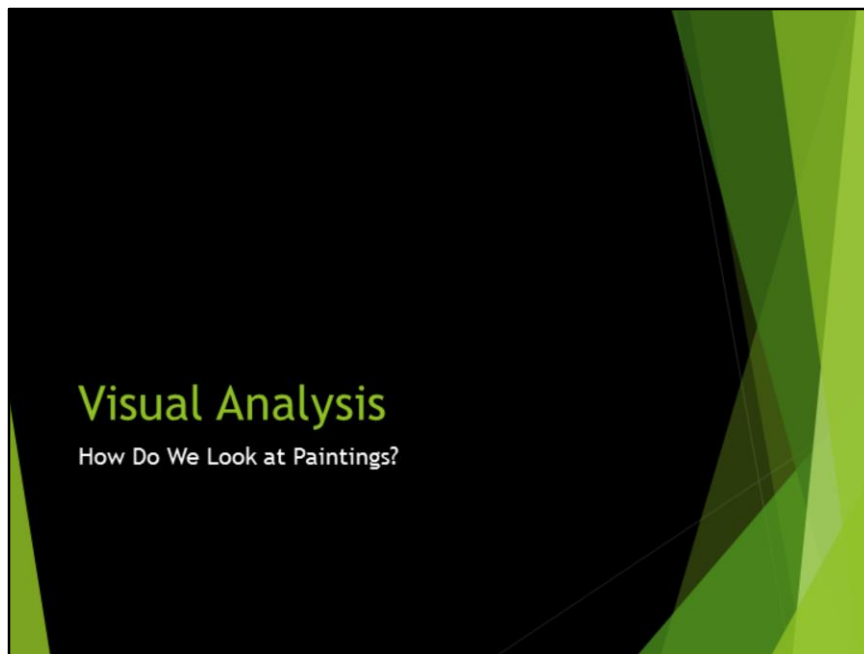


I would first like to go round the class learning your names. I will find out more about you as we go along.

Nineteenth-Century British Art Course Plan

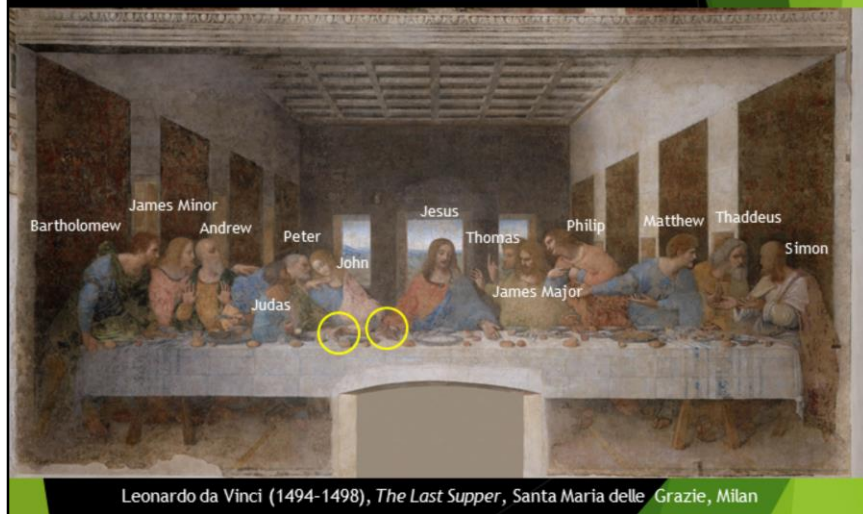
1. Introduction & Academic painting
2. Portrait painting
3. Landscape painting
4. Social Realism, Genre and Orientalism
5. Photography
6. Women in art
7. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
8. Arts & Crafts Movement
9. Aesthetic Movement to Degeneration
10. English Impressionism and Fin-de-Siècle

- There are ten areas and ten classes but if you wish to discuss each topic in more detail then we have enough material here for two or even three terms of 10 classes.
- Alternatively, we could do a rapid overview this term and then spend a whole term on *each* of these areas.
- For example, I spent a whole year at university studying nineteenth-century British landscape.
- No need to decide now and we will see how we proceed over the next two or three weeks.



- Before I begin though I would like to very briefly ways of looking and analysing a painting.
- I am sure many of you have read about visual analysis or attended talks so I would like to give a one-slide summary.
- Again, this subject could occupy a whole term on its own.

The Triangle of Analysis



- This my approach, when I look at a work of art there are three areas of questions,
 - First, there are the **factual** questions, who is the artist, what is the title, when was it painted and exhibited, who was the patron and so on.
 - Second, we can examine what are called the formal properties, the composition, shapes, colours, perspective, techniques used and so on. At its extreme formalism in art history maintains that everything important about a work of art is contained within the work and its visual properties. **Connoisseurship** is often formal as it involves examining styles and the way, for example, one artist paints a hand or an eye compared with another. For an art historian the formal analysis is the **starting point**. It is a very careful and detailed description of the purely visual aspects of the work.
 - In the nineteenth century the **Vienna School** of Art History promoted formal analysis and by comparing styles they attempted to avoid all judgements involving personal taste. Art historians such as **Alois Riegl** (1858-1905) and **Heinrich Wölfflin** (1864-1945) rejected all discussion of content and meaning as unscientific, metaphysical speculation.
 - In the twentieth century, with the advent of abstraction, **Maurice Denis** and **Roger Fry** argued it is the formal properties that give us

pleasure not the subject matter. **Denis** wrote that a painting was '*essentially a flat surface covered in colours arranged in a certain order.*' **Clive Bell** (Art, 1914) distinguished between something's actual form and its 'significant' form. He maintained the artist used the artistic medium to capture a thing's true or 'ideal' inner nature or essence rather than its mere outward appearance. So called 'structuralists' continued to argue that real art expressed the essence of things although later they argued that social preconceptions and mental processes filter all structures.

- Finally, and perhaps the biggest area is the meaning. This can be approached in different ways. One of the most important names is **Erwin Panofsky** (1892-1968) who distinguished between:
 - The primary or natural subject matter. For example, a painting of the Last Supper would be described as 13 men sitting round a table.
 - The **iconography** or secondary or conventional subject matter. This brings in culture and cultural conventions. We would recognise it as **The Last Supper**, a story from the Bible and this would include interpreting the significance of conventions and symbols, such as Judas sitting on the opposite side of the table or, as in Leonardo's famous fresco, the person who is grasping a small bag, symbolizing the 30 pieces of silver; he has also knocked over the **salt pot** - another symbol of betrayal. His head is also positioned in a lower position than anyone in the picture, and is the only person left in shadow. The hand of Jesus and Judas head for the same bowl as he said 'He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.'
 - The **iconology** or tertiary or intrinsic meaning. This takes into account personal, technical and cultural history and considers the work as a product of a historic environment. It is the art historian asking 'What does it all mean?'. We might ask why did Leonardo choose to represent the Last Supper in this way. We might speculate that Leonardo was commissioned to paint *The Last Supper* because it was at one end of a refectory, a common convention at the time, until we find that the room was not used as a refectory when the fresco was painted but a mausoleum for the Sforza family. The painting contains several references to the number 3, which represents the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity. The Apostles are seated in groupings of three; there are three windows behind Jesus; and the shape of Jesus' figure resembles a triangle.
- The study of signs and meanings is called **semiotics**. We can study an art work like a **detective story**. What is it a picture of and what is it about? What are the objects represented and what do they signify. The painting

may contain signs, symbols, metaphors and allegories and refer to mythology, literature, moral tales and historic or current events. The art historian must beware of what is called the **Gombrich Dictionary Fallacy**, namely that the sign and its meaning are fixed). There are also more extreme views such as expressed in Roland **Barthes's** (1915-1980) '*The Death of the Author*' in which he argues against considering the intentions and biographical details of the author (or artist) or at least only regarding this as one view among many. The essential meaning of a work depends on the impressions of the reader or viewer, rather than the writer or artist.

- The meaning of an art work can also be interpreted within a specific world-view or **ideology**, such as feminism, modernism, Marxism or Freud's theories.
 - We can look at how it was received at the time and over the years since, known as **reception theory**.
-
- We will try out the triangle of analysis as we go along.

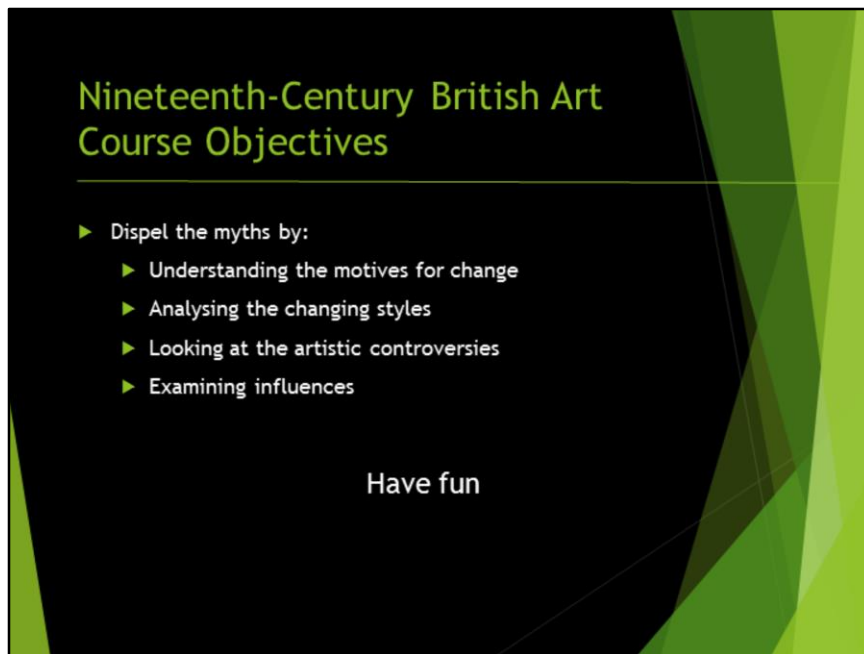
Visual Analysis. How should we look at paintings? Art historians research the history of the painting, its reception over the years and they carry out a form of visual analysis to better understand the object. There are basically three forms of visual analysis, to consider an art object:

- As an historic artefact. Look at the context of its production and provenance, the artist's life, any facts concerning its production, all relevant dates, the history of ownership, known as the provenance, its exhibitions history and any press or other critical comments. This can be expanded by considering its reception over the years and by carrying out scientific analysis such as Infrared reflectography to see any underdrawing, x-ray fluorescence to study individual brushstrokes and chemical analysis of the pigments. The art historian will also situate the painting historically in terms of what influenced it and what it influenced.
- As an object that encodes meaning at many levels. The study of signs and meanings is called **semiotics**. An art work is like a detective story that contains clues to its meaning on two levels, the content as symbols with individual meaning, known as iconography and the analysis of the subject of the painting within the culture of the period, known as iconology. As a purely visual object. This is known as formalism and it involves the study of its composition, colour, lines, shapes and textures. In its extreme form it states that everything necessary to understand a work is contained within it. It might consider line in terms of eye movement, shape as areas defined by edges, colour, texture, tone, form as 3D shapes, positive and negative shapes and depth. It is most often

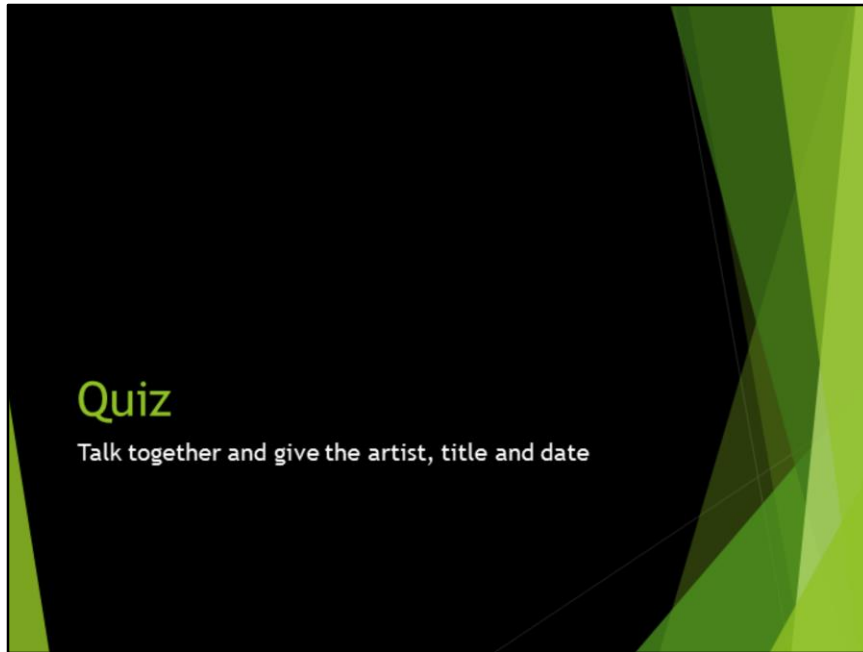
used to analyse abstract works as they do not represent anything.

Apostles

- **Simon Peter**, 'who was called Peter', first pope, 'Rock of my Church', fisherman, denied him thrice, **keys**, crucified upside down by Nero.
- **Andrew**, Simon Peter's brother, fisherman, early texts say bound to a Latin cross but later a '**saltire**' or X-shaped cross.
- **James Major**, son of Zebedee, the Elder, **scallop shell**, pilgrim's staff and hat, first to be executed (by Herod Agrippa by sword), fiery temper (?)
- **John** the Apostle, James's brother, only one not to be martyred, died of old age, same person as John the Evangelist, author of the gospel
- **Philip**, asked by Jesus how to feed 5,000, basket of loaves, Tau cross (like a 'T'), martyred upside down cross or beheaded
- **Bartholomew** (Nathanael in John), mission to India and Armenia where he was beheaded or flayed and crucified head downwards, knife and **flayed skin**
- **Thomas** (also called Didymus, John), questioned Jesus's resurrection, travelled to India, the Twin, finger in Christ's side, spear, **builder's square**
- **Matthew** the tax collector, also called **Levi** (Mark, Luke, not in John), said to have written the gospel, could write Greek and Aramaic
- **James Minor** son of Alphaeus (a tax collector, not in John), the little or lesser or younger, carpenter's saw, **fuller's club**, book, crucified in Egypt
- **Thaddaeus** (also Jude, son of James in Luke and John), is he Jude, brother of Jesus?, executed by **axe** in Beirut in Syria
- **Simon** the Cananean or Zealot (not in John), boat, cross and saw, fish or **two fishes**, lance, oar, men being **sawn in half**, may be brother of Jesus (previous marriage of Joseph)
- **Judas Iscariot** (son of Simon Iscariot), replaced by Matthias, kiss and betrayal 30 pieces silver, praised by some as the betrayal led to salvation for humanity, hanged himself



- The course is called 'Dispelling the Myths'.
- The myths are dispelled by understanding the **motives** for change in British art
- Analysing the changing **styles and the** ways in which artists innovated
- Looking at the **controversies**
- Examining how artists were **influenced** and who they influenced in turn
- The **myth** is that English art was of **secondary** importance and that the only nineteenth-century art that matters is **French art**.
- French art was, until recently, regarded as the start of modernism, modern art.
- I will show that many **innovations** took place in England before France and that there was cross Channel interaction between artists.
- I do this by giving an overview of nineteenth-century art and artists that focuses on the **controversies** where those controversies indicated changes that **influenced** many later artists.
- **Have fun**, so let's start with a quiz...



- So, let's have some fun with a quiz.
- There is **no pressure**, this is **not competitive** and I will not be picking on you **individually**.
- It will simply enable me to understand how much you **already know** about nineteenth-century art so I don't **waste your time**.
- First, I would like you to discuss each painting with you neighbour or neighbours for a couple of minutes and I will then ask you to call out your answer.
- The pictures that follow are in the sequence of the next nine subject areas, starting with portraits.



Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

- **Academic painting - History painting.**
- It is not an historical event, it could be mythological, it is a biblical or classical scene that **ennobles** the viewer.

Benjamin West

Anglo-American painter (born Springfield, Pennsylvania) of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was the second president of the Royal Academy in London, serving from 1792 to 1805 and 1806 to 1820 (James Wyatt, architect, the Destroyer of cathedrals was in between). He was offered a knighthood by the British Crown, but declined it, believing that he should instead be made a peer. A friend of Benjamin Franklin, painted *Death of Socrates* and met John Wollaston who had been a famous painter in London. Travelled to Italy and copied Titian and Raphael. Went to London in 1763 and never returned to America. Appointed historical painter to the court at £1,000 a year, encouraged George III to found the Royal Academy. *The Death of General Wolfe* is his most famous painting.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1*, famous under its colloquial name *Whistler's Mother*, 1871, Musée d'Orsay.

- **Portrait**

- It is not my intention to analyse these paintings now as we will come back to them on the course. I just want to know how much you know already.
- The first has a well-known title ***Whistler's Mother*** that raises questions about what do we mean by a **portrait**.
- Does anyone know the title Whistler originally gave the painting? In his 1890 book *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, he writes:

Take the picture of my mother, exhibited at the Royal Academy as an 'Arrangement in Grey and Black.' Now that is what it is. To me it is interesting as a picture of my mother; but what can or ought the public do to care about the identity of the portrait?

- The subject is Anna McNeill Whistler, his mother but there is a story that his beautiful young neighbour, **Helena Amelia Lindgren** (1855-1931) sat in Anna's place when she was tired but without her mother's permission. Whistler particularly liked her hands. He had first asked her mother for permission to paint

her older sister but her mother refused. Helena found out and approached Whistler secretly.

- The painting, like the *Mona Lisa*, has become iconic and has been used in advertisements to symbolise motherhood.



John Constable (1776-1837), *The Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery

- **Landscape**
- The next painting is another easy one but I am interested if you know the date it was produced. Also, does anyone know if this was well received or was it criticized and if so why?
- Some of you may also know that when it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy it had a different name. It was called *Landscape: Noon* suggesting a classical landscape showing the cycles of nature.
- A very tricky question is what happened to this painting in 1824? It was shown in Paris where it received a **gold prize** presented by Charles X (in Constable's absence). The painting influenced **Eugene Delacroix** (1798-1863) who made extensive, freely painted changes to the sky and distant landscape. Delacroix in turn influenced the Impressionists.

Notes

- *The Cornfield* was first exhibited in 1827 as *Landscape: Noon* and other paintings were submitted with the name *Landscape*. It was just a generic title.
- Constable's last painting was *Arundel Mill and Castle*. He died on 31 March 1837

and it was exhibited at the Royal Academy that May in the new rooms in Trafalgar Square. It shows slimy posts, an old mill and Arundel Castle in the background. Two children are fishing in the foreground and it can therefore be seen as hopeful although there is a blasted tree stump. One can see hints of his addiction to Gainsborough and his other hero, Rubens.

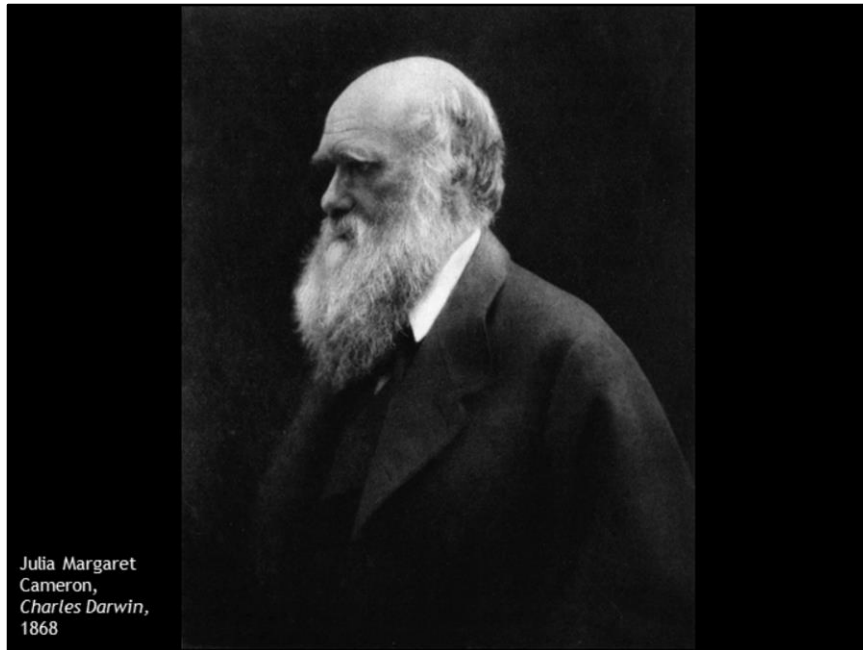
- The day before he died he walked home from the Academy with Leslie and heard a child crying. It was a little beggar girl who had hurt her knee so he gave her a shilling (about £4 today in terms of purchasing power, £36 in terms of labour value) and some kind words.
- When he moved to Hampstead Heath and then Salisbury in 1821-24 he studied skies, he called his sketches 'skying' He studied the work of Luke Howard, a businessman who studied meteorology who created the names 'cumulus' (Latin for 'heap', fair weather produced by thermals), 'cirrus' (Latin 'ringlet', high clouds indicating a frontal system), 'stratus' (grey skies) and 'nimbus' (rain clouds).
- When it was exhibited at the RA it was seen and praised by Théodore Géricault. The painting caused a sensation when it was exhibited with *View on the Stour near Dedham* and a view of Hampstead Heath by Constable at the 1824 Paris Salon (it has been suggested that the inclusion of Constable's paintings in the exhibition was a tribute to Géricault, who died early that year). In that exhibition, *The Hay Wain* was singled out for a gold medal awarded by Charles X of France, a cast of which is incorporated into the picture's frame. The works by Constable in the exhibition inspired a new generation of French painters, including Eugène Delacroix. All Constable's paintings were bought by the French dealer John Arrowsmith. They were sold through another dealer to My Young on the Isle of Wight and on his death it was bought by the collector Henry Vaughan who bequeathed it to the Tate on his death.



Augustus Leopold Egg (1816-1863),
Past and Present, No. 1, 1858, Tate
Britain

Augustus Leopold Egg (1816-1863), *Past and Present, No. 1*, 1858, Tate Britain.

- **Social realism**, genre painting and orientalism
- This is a very tricky one but it is in Tate Britain so you might have seen it. It was first exhibited without a title but with a quotation and it is the first of a triptych of paintings that tell a moral story. If you don't know the painting can anyone tell me what they think is going on.



Julia Margaret Cameron, *Charles Darwin*, 1868

- **Photography**
- You may recognise the person portrayed in this photograph, it is Charles Darwin, but do you know the photographer?
- Julia Margaret Cameron had a short photographic career as she was only given a camera at the age of 48. Her style was not widely appreciated in her day but she has become one of the most influential photographers of all time.
- She was taught photography by David Wilkie Wynfield (1837-1887) and at this time it was a messy and technically difficult process involving wet glass plates.
- She was very well connected in high society and a shrewd business woman so she took photographs of many of the leading historical figures and registered each one with the copyright office. We therefore have a very complete record of her work and in some cases it is the only photograph of a historic figure. Famous figures such as Alfred Tennyson (Tennyson wrote, "I prefer 'The Dirty Monk' to the others of me"), George Frederic Watts, W. M. Rossetti, Thomas Carlyle, John Frederick William Herschel and Henry Longfellow.



Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828 or 1834-1925), *Nameless and Friendless*. "*The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty*" (Proverbs 10:15), 1857

- **Women Artists**

- A little known artist but I show it to illustrate one of the **problems** faced by women artists in the nineteenth century.
- Osborn began showing her work at the **Royal Academy** when she was **just 17** and continued to do so over a period of **40 years**. This is her **most famous** work which has been called 'The most ingenious of Victorian widow pictures.' A recently orphaned woman is standing with her brother and attempting to make a living as an artist by offering a picture to a dealer while two 'swells' on the left ogle her.
- A possible literary source for the painting is Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control*, first printed in 1810 and re-published in the 1850s, which tells the story of Laura Montreville who tries unsuccessfully to sell her paintings in order to help save her father from financial ruin. On her fourth attempt a young man agrees to display it in his shop on a sale or return basis.

Osborn never married and died aged 97 in 1925.

Notes

- The young woman and boy in the painting are probably a brother and sister who have been recently orphaned. She is trying to earn money by selling paintings.
- Osborn's father was a vicar and she was the eldest of nine and started drawing her brothers and sisters. The family moved to London and she enrolled at the Dickinson's Academy, Maddox Street. She first exhibited at the RA in 1851 when she was 17. She exhibited over 40 years until 1893. She had wealthy patrons and painted genre pictures, children and women in distress. She nursed the sick in the Franco-Prussian war and she had a novel dedicated to her. She never married and died aged 97.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/osborn-nameless-and-friendless-the-rich-mans-wealth-is-his-strong-city-etc-proverbs-x-15-t12936/text-summary>
<http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/emily-mary-osborn-nameless-and-friendless.html>



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents* ('The Carpenter's Shop'), 1849-50, Tate Britain.

- **Pre-Raphaelites**
- This is a bit of a trick as when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1850 it was given **no title**, but accompanied by a biblical quotation: '*And one shall say unto him, What are those wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*' (Zechariah 13:6). However, I am looking for either of the two titles normally used for the painting.
- Does anyone know if this was well received when it was first shown and if not why not?
- **Charles Dickens** accused Millais of portraying Mary as an alcoholic who looks, "*...so hideous in her ugliness that ... she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England.*"
- Dickens also wrote, "*wry-necked boy in a nightgown who seems to have received a poke playing in an adjacent gutter.*"

- The painting made the Pre-Raphaelites famous and started a debate on modernity and its relationship with **symbolic realism**.

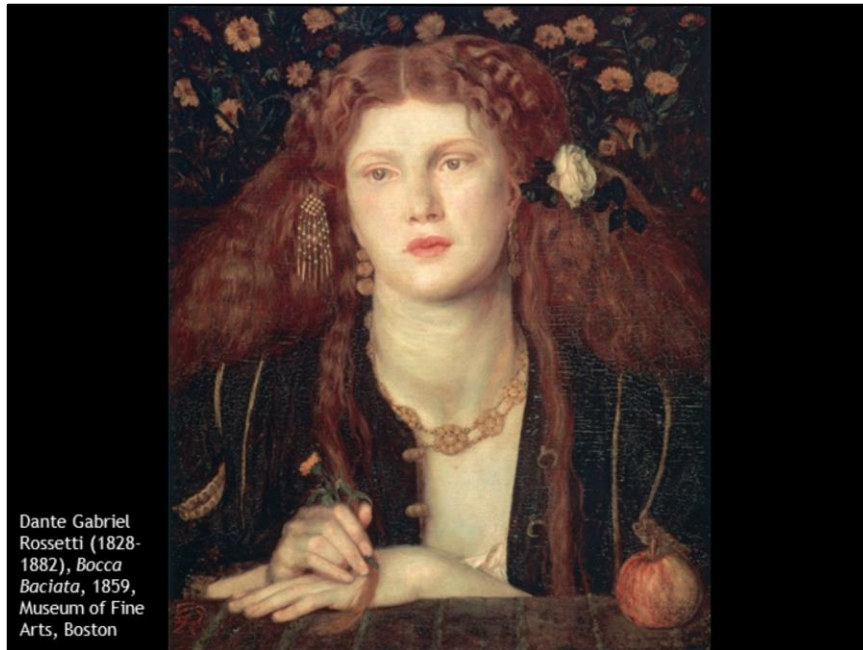
Notes

- **Modernity** typically refers to a **post-medieval** historical period, one marked by the move from feudalism toward capitalism, industrialization, secularization, rationalization, the nation-state and forms of surveillance. Charles Baudelaire is credited with coining the term "modernity" (modernité) to designate the fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in an urban metropolis, and the responsibility art has to capture that experience.
- Some say **modernism** began in the **1870s** and it includes the activities and creations of those who felt the traditional forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organization, and activities of daily life were becoming **outdated** in the new economic, social, and political environment of an emerging fully industrialized world. The poet Ezra Pound's 1934 injunction to "**Make it new!**" was the touchstone of the movement's approach towards what it saw as the now obsolete culture of the past. Nevertheless, its innovations, like the stream-of-consciousness novel, twelve-tone music and **abstract art**, all had precursors in the 19th century. A notable characteristic of Modernism is **self-consciousness**, which often led to experiments with form, along with the use of techniques that drew attention to the processes and materials used in creating a painting, poem, building, etc. Modernism explicitly **rejected** the ideology of **realism** and makes use of the works of the past by the employment of reprise, **incorporation**, rewriting, recapitulation, revision and **parody**.



William Morris, 'Trellis' woodblock printed wallpaper, 1864, Victoria & Albert Museum

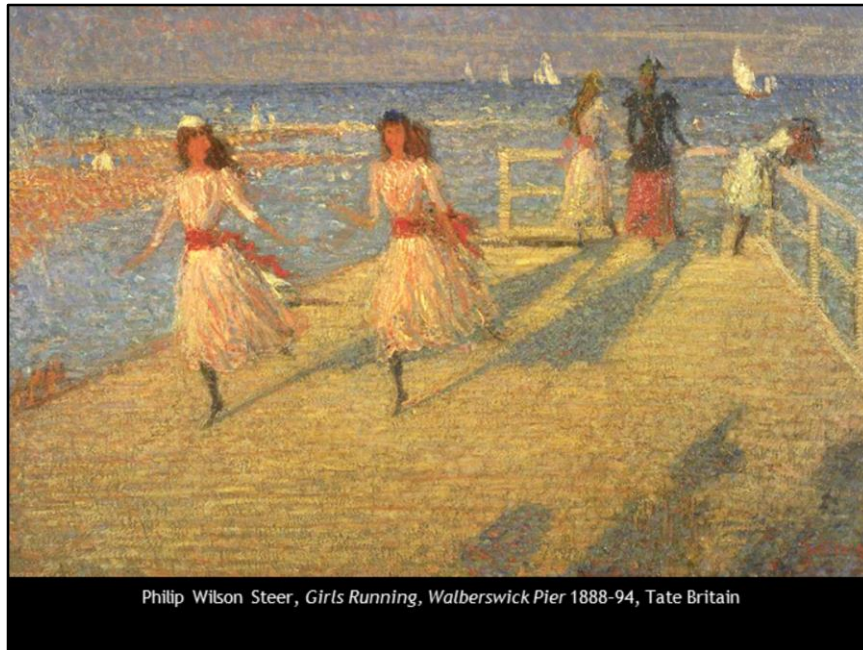
- **Arts & Crafts**
- This is the **first wallpaper** that **William Morris** designed so it may not be familiar. The first wallpaper he **issued** in 1864 was called '**Daisy**'.
- Morris wanted to create art for everyone but insisted that everything should be **handmade** by craftsmen using ancient skills. This meant that they were **expensive** and so in his time they were not widely used and some influential figures, such as **Oscar Wilde**, did not like them. However, they had a long-lasting effect on wallpaper design and design in general.
- Even though it was expensive **Morris**, as a wealthy person, always regarded **wallpaper** as '**makeshift**' decoration and **preferred woven textile hangings** for his own home.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

- **Aesthetic Movement**
- The paintings are getting harder to identify and this one is in an American gallery. I try to show paintings that can be found in galleries in England but I sometimes have to show key paintings that are in private collections or were sold overseas.
- The title is an Italian expression, does anyone know what it means?
- Bocca Baciata means '*mouth that has been kissed*' and it is taken from the last line of a story by Giovanni **Boccaccio (131-1375)** called *Decameron* (Day 2, Story 7) where it is used as the culmination of the tale of **Alatiel**: a beautiful **Saracen** (i.e. Muslim) princess who, despite having had sex on perhaps ten thousand occasions with eight separate lovers in the space of four years, successfully presents herself to the King of the Algarve (Southern Portugal) as his virgin bride. The last line translated reads,

'The mouth that has been kissed does not lose its savour, indeed it renews itself just as the moon does.'



Philip Wilson Steer, *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier*, 1888–94, Tate Britain

- **English Impressionism**
- **Steer's** painting at **Walberswick** are some of the most **authentic Impressionist** style paintings produced in Britain. Steer has reworked the **dashed, broken surface** of the painting to convey a sense of **energy and dynamism**. The girls were originally **holding hands** as you can see from their shadow. The work was seen as leading edge, avant garde art. Vitriolic **critics** branded the works '**crudely horrid**', an 'aggressive affectation' or plain '**evil**' and almost nobody wanted to buy them. Lucien **Pissarro** wrote to his father, Camille,
'Here is a real artist! However, he has had doubts because the others laugh at him and no one understands him.'
- Post-dated 1894, the picture has been reworked. The scene was done from **memory** not painted on the spot. Steer was the **first** living artist to be given a **solo exhibition** at the **Tate** gallery. Steer was going **beyond** the **Impressionists** representation of the natural world and combining **Symbolism** and **Realism**. The Symbolists were concerned with the **inner meaning** and the Realists with the **strict appearance** of the world. Steer invokes the appearance of the holiday scene but

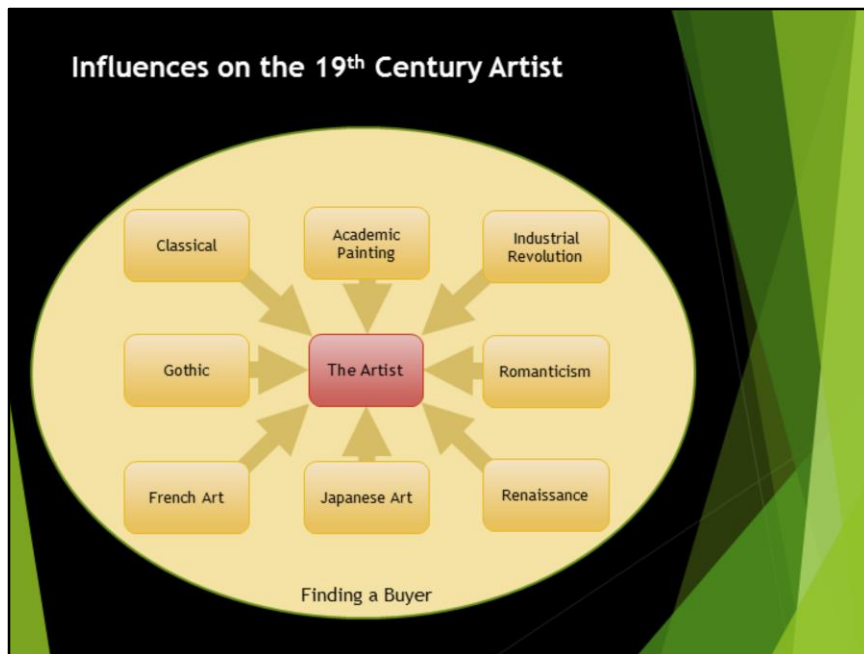
works the paint surface to the extent that we are drawn to consider deeper meanings.

Main Themes

- Britain's lead in the industrial and agricultural revolutions, the growing population and wealth and the rise of the middle class.
- The growth of the British Empire to almost a quarter of the Earth's total land area.
- The gradual emancipation of the poor, workers, woman and black people

Main political themes of nineteenth century

- Britain's lead in the industrial and agricultural revolutions, the growing population and wealth and the rise of the middle class.
- The growth of the British Empire to almost a quarter of the Earth's total land area.
- The gradual emancipation of the poor, workers, woman and black people.



Influences on the 19th Century Artist

- The assumption that the Classical period represented the high point of art
- Academic painting, the Old Masters, history painting, promoted by the Royal Academy from 1768 onwards
- Science and industrialisation (Great Exhibition, decorative art)
- Romanticism, in broad terms the rejection of the Age of Enlightenment's assumption that reason could solve all problems
- Renaissance, Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Titian and their rejection by the PRB
- The formal properties of Japanese art. Foreign merchant ships began visiting in 1848, Anglo-Japanese influence from 1862
- French art (Aesthetic movement, through Whistler and others but not Impressionism until later)
- Gothic honesty and the romanticism of the pseudo-medieval period

Not Covered in the Lecture

Artistic Controversies

- Constable's landscapes, particularly his late landscapes
- Turner's late work

- The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as an anarchic organisation
- Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents*
- Social realism, Augustus Egg, *Past and Present*
- Photography as art
- Women artists
- The female nude
- Charles Darwin's explanation for beauty
- 'Art for Art's Sake' and the Whistler v. Ruskin trial
- Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School'
- William Morris and Socialism
- Oscar Wilde's homosexuality
- Max Nordau and his book *Decadence*

Key Facts about the Nineteenth Century

- Life expectancy increased from 38 in 1837 to 48 by 1901
- In 1840, 1 in 6 children died before the age of one and one third before 5 (in slums it was a half).
- Surprisingly, if we remove child mortality then life expectancy was similar to today. Degenerative disease was very low compared to today (e.g. heart diseases, cancer, dementia, diabetes, arthritis). The reason was a lot of exercise and a healthy diet. People died of infections that can be cured today.
- Things had got better, in the early 18th century the death rate was 80 per 1,000 (i.e. each year on average 80 died out of every 1,000 people) but by 1840 it had reduced to 23 per 1,000. For comparison purposes the worst country in world today is Sierra Leone with a death reate of 22.1 per 1,000 and the UK is 8.8 per 1,000.
- The population of England was 10.5 million in 1801, the year of the first census, and it grew to 16.8 million in 1851 and 30.5 million by 1901. It was 53 million in 2011.

Key Historic Events

- George III (b. 1738, King 1760, d. 1820), French Revolution followed by the war with France known as the Napoleonic Wars. In later life the king suffered from mental illness and his son George, prince of Wales, took over as Regent in 1810. From the 1790s there were a succession of bad harvests. The Napoleonic Wars led to famine because of the poor harvests and the French blockade and following the War Corn Laws were introduced that fixed a high price for corn and therefore bread and workers dropped because of the soldiers returning to work. There were riots and in 1819 the Peterloo Massacre took place in St. Peter's Field Manchester when people were calling for parliamentary representation. 1811-1816 was a bad time leading to dissent and the 'Gagging Acts' which made it illegal to hold a meeting of

more than 50 people. After 1815 the labourer's struggle turned to crisis and recession.

- George IV (b. 1762. Regent 1810, King 1820, d. 1830), dissolute, wasteful, disliked and influenced by his favourites. The Royal Pavilion was built for George IV between 1787 and 1823 and it was revered by fashionable Regency society. In 1820, the Cato Street conspiracy was an attempt to assassinate the entire cabinet following the death of George III.
- William IV (b. 1765, King 1830, d. 1837), the 'Sailor King'. Was King when a New Poor Law (1834) created workhouses (note: poverty was not seen as a social problem: destitution was felt to be the result of character weakness. It was believed that those in dire need would accept the workhouse and the Law would work wonders on the moral character of the poor). The child labour Factory Act (1837) said that children under nine were not allowed to work, between 9 and 11 they could work for 8 hours a day and between 11 and 18 a maximum of 12 hours a day. The Slave Abolition Act of 1833 abolished slavery in the British Empire with exceptions and the Reform Act (1832) gave seats to new cities and abolished 'rotten boroughs' and increased the electorate to 1 in 6 adult males. There were protest against pay cuts leading to the Tolpuddle martyrs of 1834. Terrible conditions in the countryside led to the burning of haystacks and the destruction of farm machinery. These were known as the Swing Riots and were led by a fictitious Captain Swing. The causes included enclosure and the taking of common land, abject poverty - the worst in Europe, poor harvests but high grain prices because of the Corn Laws, the church's 10% tithe and an oversupply of labour. Conditions were made worse by the introduction of automation (such as threshing machines) and the terrible harvests of 1828-29. The following acts were passed:
 - 1829 Metropolitan Police established
 - 1833 Factory Act and the abolition of slavery
 - 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (PLAA). Following the 1832 Reform Act, the PLAA was intended to reduce the poor rates; it was not intended to help the poor who suffered as a result of the legislation. The PLAA replaced the existing poor laws and was responsible for the establishment of workhouses throughout the country. The poor were treated as criminals and people starved rather than apply for poor relief because that meant that they would become inmates of the dreaded 'poor law bastilles'.
- Alexandrina Victoria (b. 1819, 1837 Queen, 1840 married, d. 1901). Started her reign with the 'Hungry 40s'. The new Poor Law resulted in riots in 1837

and 1838 and led to the rise of Chartism. The poor were largely ignored or subject to patronising charity, exemplified by Samuel Smiles pamphlet *Self Help* (1859). The Great Exhibition of 1851 was organised by Henry Cole and Prince Albert. Prince Albert died in 1861 leading to Queen Victoria retiring from public life. In 1866 she again re-opened Parliament for the first time.

Significant events during her reign:

- 1842 and 1844 Railways Act
- 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws
- 1847 Factory Act
- 1848 Chartists March, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
- 1851 Great Exhibition
- 1853-1856 Crimean War
- 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act established divorce courts
- 1862 International Exhibition
- 1867 Second Reform Act extended franchise to most working men.
- 1860s Aesthetic Movement, radical, anti-Victorian, how we live our lives, anti-materialistic
- 1877 Grosvenor Gallery opens
- 1878 Whistler v Ruskin trial
- 1882 Married Women's Property Act
- 1884 Third Reform Act extended franchise to most adult males
- 1888 County Councils Act
- 1897 Women's Compensation Act

Summary

- ▶ Victorian art has been misunderstood
- ▶ The art will tell us a lot about Victorian society
- ▶ There are seven thematic classes - Academic painting, portraits, landscape, social realism, photography and women in art
- ▶ Followed by four movements - Pre-Raphaelites, Arts & Crafts, Art for Art's Sake and English Impressionism and the Fin-de-Siecle

Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Nineteenth-Century British Art
by Laurence Shafe

Class 1a: Introduction - Slide List

1. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*, famous under its colloquial name *Whistler's Mother*, 1871, Musée d'Orsay.
2. John Constable (1776-1837), *The Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery
3. Augustus Leopold Egg (1816-1863), *Past and Present, No. 1*, 1858, Tate Britain.
4. Julia Margaret Cameron, *Charles Darwin*, 1868
5. Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828-1925), *Nameless and Friendless. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty" (Proverbs 10:15)*, 1857
6. John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents* ('The Carpenter's Shop'), 1849-50, Tate Britain.
7. William Morris, 'Trellis' woodblock printed wallpaper, 1864, Victoria & Albert Museum
8. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
9. Philip Wilson Steer, *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier*, 1888-94, Tate Britain