

Recommended book: Shearer West, *Portraiture*, Oxford History of Art, (£10.34 on Amazon). An introduction to portraiture through the centuries.

- Portraits were the **most popular category** of painting in Britain and the mainstay of most **artists earnings**. There are therefore thousands of examples of portraits painted throughout the nineteenth century. I have chosen a small number of portraits that tell a story and link together some of the key artists of the nineteenth century while illustrating some of the most important aspects of portrait painting.
- In the second exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1769 of the 265 objects **a third were portraits**, sixty years later, in **1830**, of 1,278 objects **half were portraits** of which 300 were miniatures or small watercolours or and 87 sculptures. In the next 40 years **photography** became a thriving business, and in **1870** only 247, **a fifth**, of the 1,229 exhibits were portraits but only 32 were miniatures. Portrait sculptures, which photography could not emulate, increased to 117.
- The unique thing about portrait paintings is that a **recognisable likeness** is a prerequisite and so the many fashions in modern art have had little impact on portrait painting.
- The **British** have always been **fascinated by the face** of the individual.
- **Portraits had various functions:**
 - **Love token** or family remembrance
 - **Beauty**, the representation of a particular woman because of her beauty (ideal beauties were painted but were not portraits)
 - **Record for prosperity** of famous or infamous people
 - **Moral** representation of the '**great and the good**' to **emulate**. Renaissance portraits represented the '**great and the good**' and this desire to preserve the unique physical appearance of 'great men' continued into the 19th century with Watts 'House of Fame'.
 - **Honour** a person, such as **royalty** needed great portrait painters to convey the awe and majesty of their position.
 - **Propaganda**, to exaggerate the good qualities of a particular person (regal, heroic, brave, athletic, honourable)
 - **Satire**, to emphasize the bad attributes of a particular person
 - **Identification** of a person, later in the century police took photographs of

criminals

- There was always a balance between an **accurate representation** of the physical appearance of a person (and a photograph can lie) and the **idealisation** of their features (the way models were used before the Pre-Raphaelites) or **revealing** their inner character through emphasis, brushwork and lighting (but the person must be recognisable). **The Pre-Raphaelites** painted **non-idealised 'portraits'** of professional **models**, which **confused everyone**.

History of Portraits

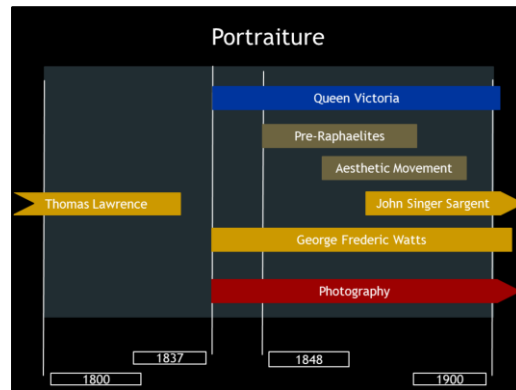
- Early 19thC: Romantic artists, such as Thomas **Lawrence** (1769-1830), painted portraits of **inspiring leaders** and **beautiful women** using lively brush strokes and dramatic lighting. There was a fashion among the wealthy for **portrait miniatures** and the leading exponent was William Charles Ross (1794-1860). Note, Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788) died before the nineteenth century.
- Mid 19th C: The **great and the good** were painted as a record for posterity (George Frederic Watts; 1817-1904). Pre-Raphaelites such as John Everett Millais (1829-1896) painted **family and friends**. 'Art for art's sake' artists painted beautiful women (Dante Gabriel Rossetti; 1828-1882) and the 'poetry of sight' (James Abbott McNeill Whistler; 1834-1903). The development of **photography** offered new ways to capture portraits (Julia Margaret Cameron, née Pattle; 1815-1879) including the poor (John Thomson).
- Late 19thC: Realist artist created objective 'portraits' depicting **lower-class** and middle-class people (Luke Fildes; 1844-1927). Impressionist artists everyday life such as **music hall** performers (Walter Sickert; 1860-1942). John Singer **Sargent** (1856-1925) was the last exponent of the British portrait tradition starting with Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641).

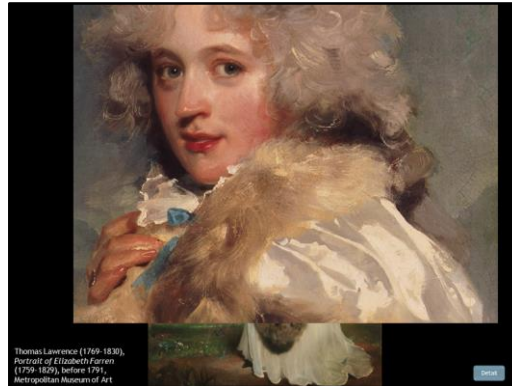
Photography

- The first year of Queen Victoria's reign saw Louis Daguerre fix the first photographic image. In **1841** Richard Beard opened **the first** public photographic studio in London and by **1851** there were **12** and **1861** over **200** with **35 in Regent Street**.



Watch the video “The Victorians with Peter Funnell, 19th Century Curator” at www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgz_IWDN5JM





Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), *Portrait of Elizabeth Farren* (1759-1829), before 1791, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, largest art museum in US, 10th largest in the world, founded 1870).

- We start with a late eighteenth-century portrait from one of the great portrait painters, **Thomas Lawrence**. It is a known and named person, Elizabeth Farren, and we know from reports at the time that it was an excellent representation. In a moment we will explore what is meant by a portrait as many pictures of people are not portraits in the conventional sense. First, it is interesting to consider the artist Thomas Lawrence and the sitter **Elizabeth Farren**.
- And we will end with the other great nineteenth century portrait painter – **John Singer Sargent**.
- Reynolds said that the artist must present their subject in a poetic manner. The Scriptures say that **St Paul**'s bodily appearance was **mean**, **Alexander** was of **low stature** – **'None of these defects ought to appear in a piece of which he is the hero'**.

Key point: '**Swagger portraits**' were popular and painted in the 'Grand Manner' (Reynolds referred to it as the 'great style' or 'grand style'). It is the portrait version of history painting. The sitters must be presented in surroundings that convey nobility and elite status and they are often full length ('swagger portraits'). We would call them ostentatious.

Sir Thomas Lawrence

Lawrence was a **child prodigy** who was **supporting his family** with his pastel portraits by the **age of ten**. At **18** he went to **London** and soon became established as a fashionable **portrait artist** and he received his first royal commission, to paint **Queen Charlotte**, wife of George III, when he was 21. He was **self-taught**, could capture a **likeness** and was a virtuoso at **handling paint (Click)**. Consider how he captures the sheen of the silk with a few dabs of white paint alongside the soft fur and the glowing skin of her cheek and the softness of her lips. Her face is animated and she seems about to speak. His un-English virtuosity meant that he was not widely appreciated after his death and some of his greatest paintings, such as this one, ended up in the US.

Lawrence was described recently as '*one of the great painters of the last 250 years and one of the great stars of portraiture on a European stage.*' He was the foremost **Regency portrait painter** and on his return from **Italy** in **1820** he was voted as **president of the Royal Academy** that evening to **replace Benjamin West** who had just died. He **never married** and when he died in 1830 at the age of 61 he was the most fashionable portrait painter in Europe. His **death** is a **mystery** as his doctor described it as due to the ossification of his aorta but his first biographer suggested it was caused by over zealous bleeding and leeching. The other **mystery** was where all his **money went**. He worked extremely hard, was paid well and **did not gamble or drink**. He kept poor or **no accounts** and was **very generous** so it is wondered if he gave it away to his family and friends. He almost went **bankrupt** and on his death his estate was worth nothing. His reputation declined after his death but has recently been partially restored.

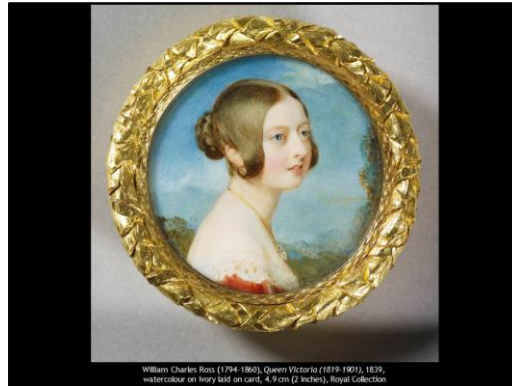
Elizabeth Farren

Farren was an **actress daughter** of a surgeon and apothecary (pharmacist). She started acting when she was young and first appeared in **London** when she was **18**. She played many parts including **Portia** (Merchant of Venice), **Olivia** (Twelfth Night), **Juliet** (Romeo and Juliet) and **Hermione** (The Winter's Tale) in Shakespeare's plays. She later **married Edward Smith-Stanley**, the **12th Earl of Derby** and although she was the subject of satire **no imputation was ever cast** on her morals. **Horace Walpole** described her as the **most perfect actress** he had ever seen. One critic wrote,

'We have seen a great variety of pictures of Mrs. Farren, but we never saw her mind and character on canvas. It is completely Elizabeth Farren: arch, spirited, elegant and engaging'.

The **Grand Manner** referred to an idealised style derived from classical art as interpreted by the Old Masters of the High Renaissance. As we know the highest genre was history painting but the term Grand Manner was increasingly applied to portraits. They were **ostentatious**, typically **full-length** and were also referred to as **swagger portraits**.

This was a major change, previously artists were paid to create a **likeness** but increasingly they represented a **mood or a personality**.



William Charles Ross (1794-1860), *Queen Victoria (1819-1901)*, 1839, watercolour on ivory laid on card, 4.9 cm, Royal Collection, **commissioned by Queen Victoria** after Prince Albert had accepted her proposal of marriage and presented to him on their wedding day 10 February 1840.

- The most frequently portrayed Victorian was Queen Victoria. I would like to examine five styles of portrait by different artists.
- **The intimate personal portrait.**
- **Portrait miniatures** were popular but **expensive**. The master was **William Charles Ross**.
- This was a **wedding present** and so a **love token**.
- They became less popular after **photography** but there was a **revival** at the end of the 19thC.
- Queen Victoria was the most portrayed person.

Key point: although little known today, Victorian portrait miniatures were very popular until photography became widespread

Alexandrina Victoria (1819-1837-1901), 63 years 7 months reign

Daughter Prince Edward, fourth son George III. His three brothers all died leaving no legitimate surviving children so she became queen at 18.

Her daughter, also named **Victoria**, was born on 21 November 1840. The Queen **hated** being **pregnant**, viewed **breast-feeding** with **disgust**, and thought **newborn** babies were **ugly**. Nevertheless, over the following seventeen years, she and Albert had a further eight children: **Albert Edward**, Prince of Wales (b. 1841), **Alice** (b. 1843), Alfred (b. 1844), Helena (b. 1846), Louise (b. 1848), Arthur (b. 1850), Leopold (b. 1853) and Beatrice (b. 1857).

Portrait Miniatures

At the beginning of the century there was a demand for portrait miniatures and **William Charles Ross** (1794-1860) painted an extraordinary **22,000** in his lifetime before succumbing to a stroke. Ross excelled at capturing happy, cheerful likenesses. After only two sittings, the

first of only 1 hour 40 minutes he completed this miniature which Victoria described as 'exceedingly like'. Ross was successful right from the start of his career and won several medals. He was appointed Miniature Painter to the Queen.

Ross was the last great miniature painter but his fashionable large miniatures were expensive and so few could afford them. **Photography**, introduced in **1839**, provided a wider public with affordable, accurate likenesses. Many miniaturists at the cheaper end of the market took up photography, while younger artists rarely pursued careers as miniaturists. At the end of the century, there was a brief revival of interest in miniature painting with the establishment in 1896 of the Royal Society of Miniature Painters.

Victoria had more portraits painted than any other Victorian personality and a study of all the artists that portrayed her is a lecture in its own right. She and Prince Albert were interested in art and commissioned many works of them and their family of **nine children**.



George Hayter (1792-1871), *Coronation Portrait of Queen Victoria*, c. 1838-40, Royal Collection

- **The grand state portrait. Shaft of light** on her upturned face like a religious Baroque painting.
- Commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1838.
- The queen thought Hayter '*out and out the best portrait painter in my opinion*'. The figure is regal but cold and aloof.
- He received no royal commissions after 1842 as the Queen came to prefer Landseer and Winterhalter.
- **What do you think?**
- The queen loved watercolour painting and the queen and prince Albert both loved painting.

George Hayter (1792-1871), English portrait painter appointed **Principal Painter** to the **Queen**, his father was an artist, he ran away to sea, secretly **married** his **father's lodger** when he was 15/16 and she was 28, had three children, wife left him, had an open affair and lived with the daughter of Sir William Cauty, had two children, so never became an RA, sent to Italy met Canova, annoyed other artists because he was so **pompous**, history painting, moved to Italy, mistress poisoned herself with arsenic, Paris, then London, took 10 years to paint 400 portraits of MPs passing the Reform Bill, 1842 knighted, by 1840s considered **old-fashioned**.

Royal Collection Description

- Before his appointment as Queen Victoria's 'Painter of History and Portrait' in 1837, George Hayter had impressed the young Princess with his skill as a portraitist and helped her with her first attempts at oil painting. Hayter was to succeed Sir David Wilkie as Principal Painter in Ordinary to the Queen in 1841. However, he received no royal commissions after 1842 as the Queen came to prefer the work, and personality, of other artists - particularly Sir Edwin Landseer and Franz Xaver Winterhalter.
- Queen Victoria commissioned this, her State Portrait, from Hayter in 1838. The 19 year-old Queen is depicted as she was at her Coronation in Westminster Abbey on 28 June of

that year. Shown seated in her Homage Chair, she wears Coronation Robes and the Imperial State Crown and carries the Sceptre with the Cross. Hayter's first background for the painting showed the Queen in Westminster Abbey, but he was to alter this later, placing her in a more generic regal setting.

- Queen Victoria's pose, with her **upturned face** illuminated by a **shaft of light**, endows the composition with a **religious spirit** reminiscent of **Baroque painting**. In fact the day **did not proceed smoothly**, as the Queen was to relate in her journal. For instance, the **Coronation Ring**, which had been made to fit her little finger, was **forced on to her fourth finger** by the Archbishop and the unfortunate Queen had to bathe her hand in iced water after the ceremony before she could remove the ring. There was, according to Lord St John, the Sub-Dean, 'a continual difficulty and embarrassment, and the Queen never knew what she was to do'. Nevertheless, she described the day as 'the proudest of my life'.



Edwin Landseer (1802-1873), *Windsor Castle in Modern Times: Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and Victoria, Princess Royal*, 1841-1845, Royal Collection

- Queen Victoria wrote, 'Landseer's game picture ... is a very beautiful picture, and altogether very cheerful and pleasing.'
- The highly finished Germanic finish to the picture was probably done to satisfy prince Albert's taste.
- The painting was **probably posed and arranged by Landseer**, it took 4 years and Victoria was not pleased by the time it took. When completed she was happy with the result, she described it as a "very beautiful picture, & altogether very cheerful & pleasing." It was hung in her sitting room at Windsor castle.
- The **dogs** are (left to right) **Cairnach** (Skye terrier, the queen's favourite breed), **Islay** (Skye terrier, begging), **Dandy Dinmont** (terrier, named after a jolly farmer in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* who owned terriers, the name was established by the mid-1800s) and Albert's favourite and personal dog **Eos** (Greyhound).
- At this time dogs were shifting from **working dogs** to family **pets** and there was a boom in dog ownership and **dog portraiture**.
- By the mid 1860s Landseer's animal paintings were selling for £6,000 to £7,000 each. *Monarch of the Glen* was declined by Parliament as it was too expensive.
- Landseer collapsed in 1862-3, his eyesight was failing, he suffered from depression and took to alcohol. He spent the last three years of his life "half out of his mind". When he died he left the enormous sum of £200,000 much of it accumulated from engravings of his work.

A Conversation Piece

Windsor Castle in Modern Times is a group portrait and was called a 'Conversation piece' —a group of people engaged in light conversation or, later, a painting that gives rise to speculative conversation on the part of the viewers. It required **multiple sittings** and so long it **annoyed Queen Victoria**.

Victoria and Albert meet in a drawing room at Windsor Castle just after Albert has come back from a day hunting. The hunting trophies are spread across the room and Victoria offers

Albert a nosegay (a small bouquet of flowers). Her eldest child, Victoria, is playing with a dead kingfisher. The scene is **entirely imaginary**. Prince Albert appears masculine figure although **Victoria is positioned in front and higher** signifying her higher position as monarch. She is, however, shown as **loving and caring** wife by giving Albert the bouquet on his return. The royal family are shown as **regal but** engaged in **homely** activities **similar** to the **middle-class**. There are four dogs in the painting which were loved family pets Victoria and Albert knew well and which added to the homely feel.

Edwin Landseer (1802-1873), known as an animal painter and for the lions in Trafalgar Square, infant prodigy, exhibited at RA aged 13, performed dissections, RA (1831), knighted (1850), declined presidency (1866), nervous breakdown in his 30s, depression, alcohol, drugs, declared insane 1872.

From the BBC website: 'His career was a story of remarkable social as well as professional success: he was the favourite painter of Queen Victoria (who considered him 'very good looking although rather short') and his friends included Dickens and Thackeray. The qualities in his work that delighted the Victorian public, however, subsequently caused his reputation to plummet, for although he had great skill in depicting animal anatomy, he tended to humanize his subjects to tell a sentimental story or point a moral.'



Franz Xavier Winterhalter (1805-1873), *The Family of Queen Victoria*, 1846, Royal Collection

- Prince Albert greatly **admired** the German painter **Winterhalter**. Winterhalter's ambition was to **paint all** the crowned heads and royal families of Europe. He painted more than 100 portraits of the British royal family. When he died in 1873 Queen Victoria thought that in time his work would rank with Van Dyck, and wrote '*there was not another portrait painter like him in the world.*'
- Winterhalter **died within months** of Landseer and together they promoted a **public image** of unsullied **domestic bliss**, **moral propriety** and idealised the young couple and endorsed a strict morality that underpinned the Victorian period.

Another **conversation piece**, a group portrait showing from left to right:

- Alfred (1844-1900, aged 2), Duke of Edinburgh later Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha
- Albert Edward (1841-1910, aged 5), The future Edward VII
- Queen Victoria (24 May 1819-1901, aged 27) and Albert, Prince Consort (26 August 1819-1861, aged 27)
- Princess Alice (1843-1878, aged 3), married Louis IV, Grand Duke of Hesse and by Rhine, daughter Alexandra, last Empress of Russia (Rasputin)
- Princess Helena (1846-1923, aged 1), married Christian of Sonderburg-Augustenburg, lived in England
- Victoria (1840-1901, aged 6, the eldest), Princess Royal later German Empress and Queen of Prussia

Her other children were:

- Princess Louise (1848-1939), later Duchess of Argyll
- Prince Arthur (1850-1942), later Duke of Connaught and Strathearn
- Prince Leopold (1853-1884), later Duke of Albany
- Princess Beatrice (1857-1944), married Prince Henry of Battenburg, daughter Victoria Eugenie became Queen of Spain

Franz Xavier Winterhalter (1805-1873), fashionable German painter of royalty across Europe, father a farmer, brother painter, remained close to his family, Academy of Arts,

Munich under Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), entered court circles in Germany (1828), travelled to Italy then went to Paris where he became a successful portrait painter of royalty, skilled at flattering portraits his reputation suffered among other artists. He intended portrait painting to be **temporary** but he was a **victim of his success** and he worked exclusively as a portrait painter and became **very rich**. Went to England in 1842 to paint Queen Victoria and in total painted 120 works. Marriage proposal rejected and he **remained a bachelor**. Napoleon III and Second Empire (1852-1870) led to an **international reputation** and so much work he employed a studio of assistants. No other artist has been so successful at royal portraits, only Rubens and Van Dyck. He lived simply and abstemiously, bought a villa in Baden-Baden. Died typhus aged 68.

Typhus

Not typhoid, it is a different bacteria. Typhus killed more soldiers on Napoleons return from Russia than the Russians. Typhus (gaol fever) killed more prisoners in the eighteenth century than public executioners (even though there were 241 capital offences). Major epidemic in Ireland 1816-19 the Year without a Summer killed 100,000. Also during Great Irish Famine 1846-49. Spread to England as 'Irish Fever'. Spread by lice endemic and inescapable, often killed court officials. Peak in 1922, 25-30 million cases in Russia, 4 million Poland. Major cause of death in prison and concentration camps (Anne Frank at 15).



Francis Grant (1803-1878), *Queen Victoria Riding Out*, 1838-1840, Royal Collection

- Could be seen as a 'genre painting' of a chaperoned eligible young lady riding with her suitors.
- **Francis Grant** (1803-1878), Scottish portrait painter who became **President of the Royal Academy** in **1866** when Landseer turned it down. Wealthy, inherited a fortune he soon spent. Passion for fox hunting. Self-taught painter, specialized in sporting subjects and graceful and refined portraits. RA (1851). 1834-79 painted 253 mostly full-length portraits.
- This painting **established Grant's career** as the leading portrait painter
- This painting was painted **for Queen Victoria**. The recently crowned Queen is riding her horse **Comus**, with her dogs, Dash and Islay ('eye-lay' or 'eye-la') in front.
- The Queen was not a great lover of Grant's work.

She is accompanied by her court (right to left):

- Viscount Melbourne (1779-1848), the Prime Minister, a favourite of Victoria at the time and he had a formative influence
- Marquess of Conyngham (1797-1879, the Lord Chamberlain),
- Sir George Quintin (Crown Equerry),
- Earl of Uxbridge (1797-1869, Lord in Waiting), and
- Hon. George Byng, later Earl of Strafford (1806-86, Comptroller of the Household).

The procession passes through an imaginary gate in **Windsor Great Park**, with a view of the castle in the far distance against a dawn sky. The Queen clearly enjoyed the creation of this very personal painting, just as she enjoyed riding out with these companions: on 31 July 1839 her journal describes Lord Melbourne sitting on a wooden horse within the artist's studio:

looking so funny, his white hat on, an umbrella, in lieu of a stick in one hand, & holding the reins, which were fastened to the steps, in the other . . . it is such a happiness for me to have that dear kind friend's face, which I do like & admire so, so like . . . and Uxbridge, George Byng, & old Quintin ludicrously like.

The tone of this passage suggests that this painting was intended almost to be **light-hearted** and **affectionate**, even perhaps a **private joke** amongst the sitters. To read it this way one

must imagine how the same image would be understood if the sitters were not recognised, in fact if this were a **genre painting**: it might then be entitled '**The Heiress**' and would be interpreted as depicting a **pretty and eligible young lady**, in mourning for her recently deceased father, chaperoned by a guardian, and courted by four top-hatted rivals, one of whom has briefly won the favour of a raised veil and sweet smile. The joke depends upon this being a substantially correct reading, except that this heiress has inherited a crown from her recently-deceased uncle and her courtiers are **seeking royal attention** rather than her hand in marriage. The fact that, after her marriage, prints were produced of the image, with Prince Albert as the principle 'suitor', draws attention to the deliberate play on the two meanings of this word.

Francis Grant

Sir Francis Grant was a **gentleman artist**; according to Queen Victoria, he had the talent of an amateur and boasted '*of never having been to Italy or studied the Old Masters.*' It looks here as if he has studied an appropriate Old Master - Van Dyck's equestrian portrait of Charles I, perhaps through the reduced version in the Royal Collection, which has a horse of identical dimensions. This clever resonance is perhaps compounded with an allusion to **Eworth's allegory** of Queen Elizabeth I sailing regally through a triumphal arch with Windsor Castle in the background (Royal Collection). Grant has also learned from Van Dyck and the Flemish school generally the idea of a limited and harmonious colour spectrum, ranging from yellowy-buff to grey-blue, the soft tonal transition creating pools of light and shadow. The application of paint is thick and rough creating an attractive texture rather like the shaggy coat of a dog, reminiscent of Rubens and his Scottish admirer, David Wilkie. In a work where no obvious symbol of rank distinguishes the Queen from her friends (for so they seem), it is appropriate that face lies in the **exact centre** of the painting and that her **blue cravat** adds a single note of pure colour in an otherwise muted palette.

Text adapted from *The Conversation Piece: Scenes of fashionable life, London, 2009*



George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Self-Portrait, Aged 17*, 1834, Watts Gallery, Guilford

- The other category is the **self-portrait**. Necessarily only of artists.
- Watts was one of the first to select people he wished to paint – **Hall of Fame**.
- Imagined a building containing vast frescos of man's creation, evolution and today's moral dilemmas – House of Life
- **Self-portrait aged 17.**
- Sir Martin Shee – 'I can see no reason why your son should take up the profession of art'
- The painting shows he was proficient in oils.
- He entered the RA School in 1835 but '*finding that there was no teaching, I very soon ceased to attend*'.
- Wild Byronic hair and open collar of the Bohemian Romantic poets.
- Another Bohemian poet was Rossetti.

Key point: 'Romantic' painters such as Watts wanted to capture famous people as a moral example

George Frederic Watts

One of the few artists who selected the sitters he wished to paint was George Frederic Watts. He had two grand projects throughout his life that he called the 'House of Life' and the 'Hall of Fame'. He was not afraid to confront the moral dilemmas of his society and was appalled by the poverty of his time. We shall see some of his social realist paintings in a later lecture. After visiting Italy in the 1840s he envisaged a building, a temple containing Michelangelo-inspired frescos. Cosmic murals starting with man's creation and describing all the moral dilemmas of the age as a series of allegorical murals. It never happened as he dreamed but he dedicated his life to creating parts of his vision. Part of the House of Life was the Hall of Fame containing all of the famous people of his age and represented in such a way that their moral character would be captured. Watts selected the people he most admired and painted them at his own expense. Watts lived until he was 87 and this long career resulted in an enormous output of 800 paintings. By the 1880s he was one of the most famous painters in the world. Since his death his reputation has fluctuated and many of his allegorical paintings are now out of fashion.

This is a self-portrait by Watts when he was just 17. Watts came from a lower middle-class struggling family that managed to send him to the studio of the sculptor William Behnes in Dean Street, Soho. His father managed to show his drawing to Sir Martin Archer Shee (1769-1850, portrait painter, became President of the RA in 1830 after Sir Thomas Lawrence who had overshadowed him), who pronounced: *'I can see no reason why your son should take up the profession of art'*. This did not put off Watts but may have encouraged his lifelong scepticism about the powers of the Royal Academy. Behnes provided Watts with plaster casts of the Elgin marbles which were installed in the British Museum in 1832. Watts said, *'The Elgin marbles were my teachers. It was from them alone that I learned.'* Watts was encouraged by Benjamin Robert Haydon, the great propagandist for the Elgin marbles which many believe inspired a whole generation of artists in Britain.

This portrait shows he was already proficient in oils when he entered the Royal Academy school in 1835 and he said, *'finding that there was no teaching, I very soon ceased to attend'*. The teaching was notoriously poor as it was carried out by rota round the Academicians who mostly tried to avoid attending and teaching. Watts was already accomplished enough to earn a living from painting portraits of the middle classes along with an occasional aristocratic portrait. In the 1840s he was even commissioned to paint a portrait of Jeremy Bentham from his wax effigy now in University College, London.

We see Watts with what we would now call a Bohemian appearance (a term that originated in France in the 1840s) with his wild, Byronic hair and open collar. The idea of the artist as a wild, unconventional character that flouted conventions developed with the Romantic poets (George Gordon Byron, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats) and was taken over by artists in the nineteenth century. A typical example is Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Presidents of the Royal Academy

1768-1792 Sir Joshua Reynolds

1792-1805 Benjamin West

1805-1806 James Wyatt (1746-1813), architect rival Robert Adam. Nicknamed 'The Destroyer' for his work on cathedrals. Presidency was a political appointment when West resigned.

1806-1820 Benjamin West

1820-1830 Sir Thomas Lawrence

1830-1850 Sir Martin Archer Shee (1769-1850), Irish, studied at Royal Dublin Society, met Reynolds, RA 1800.

1850-1865 Sir Charles Lock Eastlake

1866-1878 Sir Francis Grant

1878-1896 Lord Leighton

1896-1896 Sir John Everett Millais (Feb.-Aug.)

1896-1918 Sir Edward John Poynter

1919-1924 Sir Aston Webb

1924-1928 Sir Frank Dicksee

1928-1938 Sir William Llewellyn



George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1828-1882), oil on linen, circa 1871, National Portrait Gallery, given by Watts in 1895

- Watts at his best was the bridge between Thomas Lawrence and John Singer Sargent.
- When Alfred Tennyson sat to him in 1859 he asked him what he wanted to achieve in a portrait and Tennyson incorporated Watts's answer in *Lancelot and Elaine*,
a painter pouring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and colour of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest.
- Watts chose to represent men that he thought made or marred their country and he confessed to Cecil Rhodes, *'I'm not sure myself which you are doing'*.
- Rossetti was uncertain about this portrait, he looks melancholy, he is 43 and had started to take chloral with whisky to sleep
- By this time Watts and Rossetti were established artists but **Watts was the better known**
- Watts was a self-confessed workaholic, painting from dawn to dusk and only stopping for health reasons
- Watts was described as England's Michelangelo.
- Rossetti was known as a poet but little known as a painter as he rarely exhibited, he sold directly to his patrons
- Watts was a pioneer of the Symbolist movement.

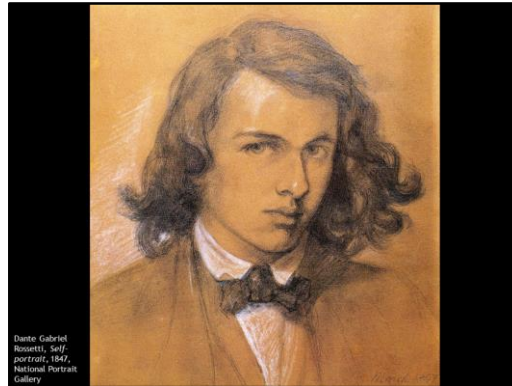
Key point: Rossetti was captured by Watts. He was unconventional but a sincere and revolutionary artist

Watts presented 17 portraits to the National Portrait Gallery including this portrait of the influential poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This one of Watts' 'House of Life' series of portraits of famous and influential people.

By 1871, Rossetti had started to take chloral with whisky to cure his insomnia but it accentuated his depression and paranoia. This was the year that Rossetti was attacked by a

minor poet called Robert Buchanan for writing 'fleshly' poetry. He defended the attack but it changed him completely and he suffered a mental breakdown the following year complete with hallucinations and accusing voices. He attempted suicide but gradually recovered and was able to paint again. He died of kidney failure in 1882.

(Note that chloral or chloral hydrate dissolves in water or alcohol and was prescribed in the nineteenth century as a sedative. It became a recreational drug and in alcohol was called 'knockout drops' and was used to prepare a Mickey Finn. Michael Finn managed the Lone Star Saloon in Chicago and he or his 'house girls' would slip clients chloral hydrate. They then dragged them to a back room, robbed them and dumped them in an alley. When they awoke the next morning they would be unable to remember what happened.)



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882, died aged 54), *Self-portrait*, 1847, National Portrait Gallery

- This is **Rossetti** when he was **19**.
- He looks similar to Watts self-portrait when he was 17, the same Romantic, **Bohemian** look ('Bohemian' was used in Paris in the 1840s and first used by Thackeray in 1848 and widely used by the 1860s)
- The following year he helped found the Pre-Raphaelites with John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt.
- He became dependent on a few **patrons** – early on **Lady Trevelyan** and **James Leathart** (lead manufacturer and secretary of Government School of Design), later major patrons **Frederick Richards Leyland** (1832-1892, ship owner, Speke Hall Liverpool, 49 Princes gate) and **William Graham** became disillusioned and, according to Rossetti, his biggest buyer in later years was **Turner** of Manchester.
- Roger Fry wrote in 1916, '*Rossetti more than any other artist since Blake may be hailed as a forerunner of the new ideas*' in English Art. Roger Fry was '*the greatest influence on taste since Ruskin*' according to Kenneth Clark. He gave the name Post-Impressionism, emphasized the formal, promoted modern art in Britain, taught at the Slade School and was a member of the Bloomsbury Group.

Key point: although Rossetti suffered from depression he was very influential during his relatively short life

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

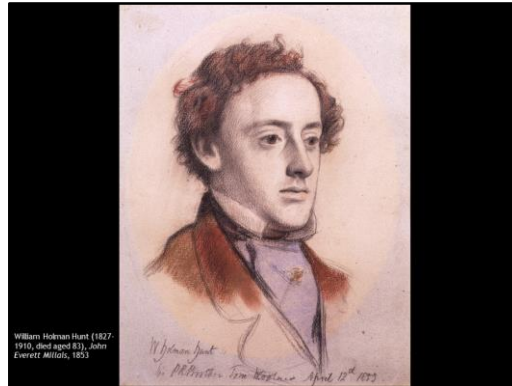
- Rossetti was the son of an Italian scholar Gabriele Rossetti, Professor of Italian at King's College London, was described by art historian Timothy Hilton as 'self-possessed, articulate, passionate and charismatic' but also 'ardent, poetic and feckless'. This is Rossetti as a young man drawn by himself. Rossetti presents himself as a Bohemian free spirit with a long, untamed mane of hair and a knowing look at the age of 19.
- Rossetti's life has been the subject of many documentaries, sufficient to say he was successful enough to be supported by private patrons with needing to exhibit, which he hated. He met **Elizabeth Siddal** in **1850** when she was sitting for his friend **Walter Deverell**. Her family had an ironmongery business and she was a dressmaker and painter.

Rossetti's fortunes started to change in 1853 when he met John Ruskin, the leading art critic of the day. The following year his father died and he experienced a life-long sense of guilt because he had neglected his father in his last years. He was described by Barbara Leigh Smith as 'very gentlemanly, even tender in manner, with a sweet mellow voice'. The same year **Ruskin founded the Working men's College** and **Rossetti** offered his services to teach art. In 1855 Rossetti sold a painting and went to Paris and the Universal Exhibition which had a section on British Pre-Raphaelite art. Their fame had already spread to France.

- Rossetti was **moody and depressed** with periods of **impulsiveness** and his relationship with Siddal had many ups and downs. It was at this time that he met **Jane Burden**, who later **married William Morris** and **Fanny Cornforth**, née Sarah Cox (1835–c.1906). In 1859 he painted one of his most important works, a picture of Fanny Cornforth. His relationship with Cornforth led to him rewriting a poem about a prostitute which he had begun much earlier. '**Jenny**' explores the complex relationship between sex, desire, respectability, and commerce. The following year **1860** he married Siddal by special license. **Eleven months** later she gave birth to a **still born** child and suffered from post natal **depression** and **ten months** later in **1862**, when Rossetti was out, she took an **overdose of laudanum**. The verdict was accidental death but a note that Rossetti suppressed points to **suicide**. Rossetti put the original manuscript of his poems in her **coffin** and the following year Fanny Cornforth moved back into his new house in Cheyne Walk. Three years after Siddal's death her memory began to haunt him and he started attending **séances** and 'communication' with his dead wife was a regular event at his house.
- Rossetti now wanted to publish all his poetry but he had buried his most important work, 'Jenny', in Siddal's coffin. Retrieving them would be difficult because **exhumation** was strictly controlled but he knew the **home secretary** Henry A. Bruce. Permission to **open the coffin** came on 28 September **1869**, and it was found the collection was damaged by water but readable, and—in keeping with the whole macabre incident—'Jenny' had been pierced by a worm.

Elizabeth Siddal (1829-1862)

- Painted by Walter Deverell, William Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
- William Michael Rossetti, her brother-in-law, described her as,
'a most beautiful creature with an air between dignity and sweetness with something that exceeded modest self-respect and partook of disdainful reserve; tall, finely-formed with a lofty neck and regular yet somewhat uncommon features, greenish-blue unsparkling eyes, large perfect eyelids, brilliant complexion and a lavish heavy wealth of coppery golden hair.'



William Holman Hunt (1827-1910, died aged 83), *John Everett Millais*, 1853

- **Hunt and Millais** were the **other two founder** Pre-Raphaelites. Hunt was hard-working and maintained the spirit of Pre-Raphaelitism all his life.
- Millais was the greatest child prodigy the country has ever seen, he entered the RA School aged 11.
- Could paint in any style, so young he was teased by the other, older student and used as a broom.

Key point: Holman Hunt was a hard working artist who maintained his Pre-Raphaelite aims to the end of his life

William Holman Hunt (1827-1910)

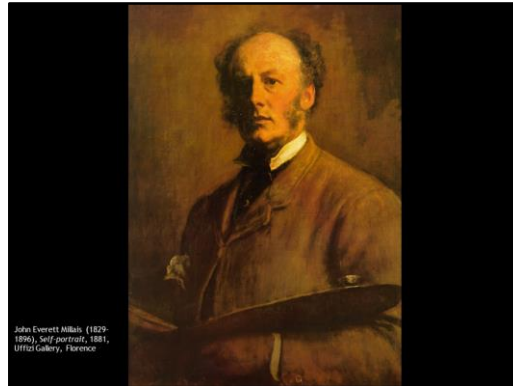
- The artist William Holman Hunt was also a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He trained at the Royal Academy Art school and married twice. After a failed engagement to his model **Annie Miller** he married **Fanny Waugh**. When she died in childbirth in Italy he married her **sister Edith**. As this was **illegal** at the time in Britain he was forced to **travel abroad** to marry her. This led to a serious break with other family members including fellow Pre-Raphaelite **Thomas Woolner** who had been in **love with Fanny** and had **married Alice**, the third sister of Fanny and Edith.

John Everett Millais (1829-1896)

- This is a portrait drawing of Millais when he was **25** and when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was starting to break up. Millais, Hunt and Rossetti were the three key founding members.
- He was a **true child prodigy**, he was only **11** years old when he was accepted to enter the Royal Academy School, its **youngest ever student**. He won a silver medal three years later and was displayed in the Royal Academy exhibition in 1846 when he was 17, with a history painting called *Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru* (London, V&A). He was the sort of artist that could **flawlessly paint anything in any style**. As he was so young he was **teased** by the other students at the Royal Academy and he said they would turn him **upside down** and use his **thick mop of blond hair as a broom** to sweep the floor.

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

The three founders were joined by **William Michael Rossetti** (1829-1919, brother of Dante and Christina, organizer, bibliographer, editor of *The Germ*, civil servant and critic, married Lucy Madox Brown), **James Collinson** (1825-1881, artist, devout Christian, became a catholic but returned to Anglicanism to marry Christina Rossetti but his conscience forced him back and they broke off the engagement, he accused Millais of blasphemy and resigned the PRB), **Frederic George Stephens** (1828-1907, art critic, destroyed all his paintings, wrote under the pseudonym Laura Savage, supported his tutor Holman Hunt until they fell out over a damaged painting and a money gift for Hunt's son) and **Thomas Woolner** (1825-1892, sculptor and poet, emigrated to Australia and returned to become a successful sculptor, had a rough and combative personality) to form the seven-member "brotherhood". Other artists were associated such as **Ford Madox Brown**, **Walter Deverell**, **George Price Boyce** (watercolour artist and Rossetti's neighbour and friend).



John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Self-portrait*, 1881, Uffizi Gallery, Florence

- This is Millais **aged 52** by then **very wealthy, a sporting country gentleman**
- He was the first artist to be given a hereditary title, of **baronet**.
- He became **President** of the RA after Sir Frederic Leighton but died the same year.
- His statue outside Tate Britain after 47 years of argument was moved to the rear of the building.
- Millais wrote to his friend, the artist Frank Holl, '*Portrait painting is **killing work** to an artist who is sensitive, and he must be so to be successful, and I well understand that you are prostrated by it.*' Holl died age 43 a few months after this letter, in the previous decade he had painted 198 portraits.

Key point: Millais was a child prodigy who made his art a successful business and became President of the RA

John Everett Millais

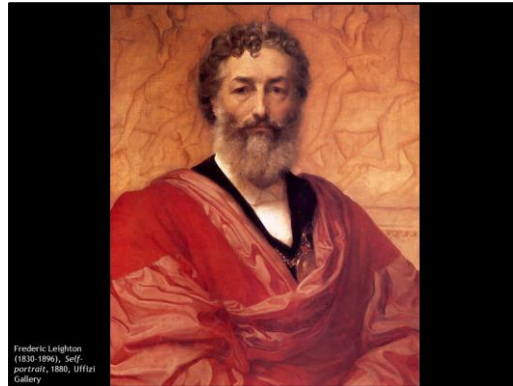
In 1881, when he was 52, he was honoured by being asked by the **Uffizi Gallery** in **Florence** to donate a self-portrait. There are approximately **1,500 self portraits** in the Uffizi Collection, the oldest, most important, and most comprehensive collection of its kind in the world. The self portraits are from artists around the world and many modern and contemporary artists continue to donate their self portraits to the Gallery.

Self-portraits seem to give us an insight into the artist's **personality** but we must remember that they are often used by the artist **to promote their skill** or as experiments in technique. In the late nineteenth century artists cultivated a notion of themselves as **free spirits** whose liberation was manifested in sexual promiscuity, cultivation of working-class attributes and asocial behaviour. This was a way for the artist to elevate their status by placing themselves outside the norms and conventions of bourgeois society. Millais was **not this type** of artist. He became a very wealthy, country gentleman interested in **hunting, shooting** and fishing. He shows himself here as a working artist in a casual jacket in the muted brown tones of the **Old Masters**. There is a **dramatic side light** accentuating his single, **all-seeing**

artists eye.

Biography

- Millais became a country gentleman and a member of the RA (and for six months its President before he **died** of what at first was thought to be influenza, but turned out to be **throat cancer**, he had been a **constant pipe-smoker**).
- Hunt remembers in his autobiography the golden-haired Millais being manhandled to the front of the Royal Academy to receive a first prize when he was very young. If it can be said of anyone he was a born painter.
- The fact that he joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) shows the extent of his revolt against the establishment but he was made an Associate Royal Academician in 1853. However, in the end he probably changed the Academy more than it changed him and he changed it by making the PRB approach acceptable. Following the splitting apart of the original PRB all traces of his bohemian and rebel life were wiped out and he became respectable, later very rich and then a Baronet and President of the Royal Academy.
- As a young man he was extremely **athletic**. His **party trick** was to **jump high into the air** without any run (like Bill Gates).
- He was **vain** about his appearance. Nearly every photograph of him shows him in **profile**, as he felt that his profile was so exceptionally handsome.
- He was an **outdoor man**, every inch a Victorian hearty.
- He was addicted to **field sports**-hunting, shooting, and fishing.
- He was a **sociable** popular man.
- He was an **indulgent father**, particularly to his daughters.
- He spent his evenings in the **Garrick Club**, when in London.
- He did not visit **sitters** to paint their portraits, they **came to his studio**. In 1886 a large **retrospective** of his work was held at the Grosvenor Gallery. After his death Sir George Reid, President of the Royal Scottish Academy of Art said, '**he was one of the kindest, noblest, most beautiful and lovable man I ever knew or hope to know**'.



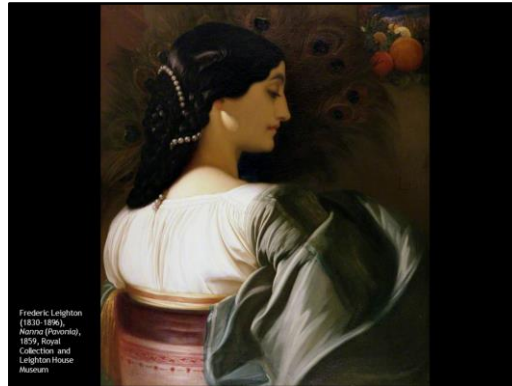
Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), *Self-portrait*, **1880**, Uffizi Gallery

Key point: Leighton was an **establishment figure** but at the forefront of innovation

Frederic Leighton

In this self-portrait, Leighton presents himself as the **epitome of the establishment**. He shows himself against a background of the Parthenon frieze, wearing the **red gown of an Oxford scholar** (he was conferred the university's doctoral degree in Civil Law in 1879) and wearing a heavy **gold medal** as **president of the Royal Academy**. This portrait, like that of Millais, was also painted for the **Uffizi Gallery** in Florence. Leighton was an enthusiastic volunteer soldier in the Artists Rifles and was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel causing **Whistler** to describe him as 'Colonel of the Royal Academy and the President of the Artists Rifles – aye, and he paints a little!'.

Leighton became an **establishment figure** but remember he painting Pavonia in 1859, a picture of the model Nanna, the same year Rossetti painted *Bocca Baciata*, a picture of the model Fanny Cornforth. Rossetti continued to be a rebel and a drug addict while Leighton come to London in 1860 and became a respectable member of society.



Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), *Nanna (Pavonia)*, 1859, Royal Collection and Leighton House Museum

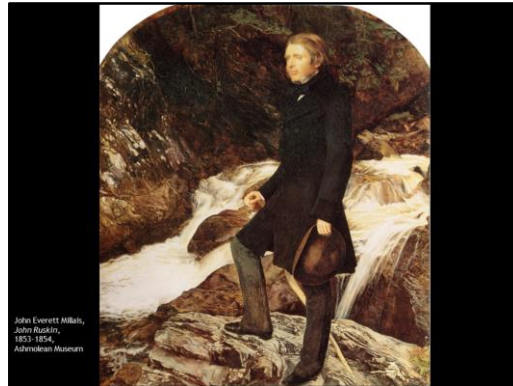
- **But** Leighton was at the **forefront** of the innovative when he was young (29) as he painted this 'portrait' of a **well known model** in Rome

Nanna (Pavonia)

- King Edward VII, King of the United Kingdom (1841-1910), when **Albert** Edward, Prince of Wales (1841-63)
- Purchased from the artist by George de Monbrison; from whom acquired by King Edward VII, when Prince of Wales, 1859
- Nanna Risi, known as 'La Nanna', the wife of a cobbler living in Trastevere, became a professional model and was the mistress in Rome of the German painter Anselm Feuerbach. Described by Leighton as 'a very handsome model', she sat to him on many occasions after his return to Rome early in October 1858.
- Three years after this work Leighton painted his 'Bianca' (404569) of identical size, which seems to be intended as a pair. Leighton contrasts two different styles of beauty: the dark brooding glamour of the peacock in 'Nanna', which is subtitled 'Pavonia' ('pavone' is a peacock in Italian) and which features a peacock's feather and the light wholesome radiance of the dove in 'Bianca' (a name which means 'white' in Italian). This pairing may not have occurred to Leighton when he painted this earlier picture, but the idea of a distilling a particular character or essence of beauty certainly seems intended.

Lord Frederic Leighton (1830-1896)

He was born in Scarborough, Yorkshire to a medical family. His father was a doctor, and his grandfather had been the primary physician to the Russian royal family in St. Petersburg, where he amassed a large fortune. Leighton's career was always cushioned by this family wealth, his father paying him an allowance throughout his life. Leighton's parents were worried about his choice of career as he wrote in a letter of 1879, "My parents surrounded me with every facility to learn drawing, but, strongly discountenanced the idea of my being an artist unless I could be eminent in art".



John Everett Millais, *John Ruskin* (1819-1900), 1853-1854, Ashmolean Museum

- The story of Millais, Ruskin and Effie.
- This portrait introduces the towering figure of **John Ruskin** (1819-1900). Ruskin supported the Pre-Raphaelites and took Millais with him and his wife to Glenfinlas in the Trossachs. He selected this waterfall as he was interested in the rock formations and undertook his own studies of these. Millais, Ruskin and his wife Effie Gray (Euphemia Chalmers Millais, Lady Millais née Gray, known as Effie Gray, Effie Ruskin or Effie Millais, 1828–1897) shared a small cottage for four months and during this holiday **Millais and Effie had fallen in love**. Millais had to **finish** the portrait in his **studio back in London** which he described as the *'the most hateful task I have ever had to perform'*. This was because by then he realised that Ruskin had mentally tormented Effie.

Key point: a portrait that involves a three way relationship between sitter, his wife and the artist



Thomas Richmond (1802-1874), *Euphemia ('Effie') Chalmers Gray*, then *Effie Ruskin* then *Effie Millais* then *Lady Millais*, oil on board, arched top, 1851, National Portrait Gallery

- The portrait was commissioned by Ruskin's father and the artist was given £20 in wine for it. After it had been shown at the Academy in 1851, Effie wrote to her mother: '**...it is the most lovely piece of oil painting but much prettier than me. I look like a graceful Doll but John and his father are delighted with it**'. She is wearing a gold and enamel bracelet brought for her by Ruskin in Geneva when they were on their way to Venice in 1849.
- Effie was born in Perth in the house where Ruskin's grandfather had committed suicide. Her family knew Ruskin's father, a wealthy wine merchant, and they encouraged the match. They married in 1848 and when she met Millais five years later she was still a virgin. Ruskin's reasons for putting off consummating the marriage are not clear. Effie later wrote to her father,

He alleged various reasons, hatred to children, religious motives, a desire to preserve my beauty, and, finally this last year he told me his true reason... that he had imagined women were quite different to what he saw I was, and that the reason he did not make me his Wife was because he was disgusted with my person the first evening 10th April.
- Effie was extremely beautiful and much sought after in society and so the reason for Ruskin's disgust have been much debated by art historians. Ruskin wrote to his lawyer:

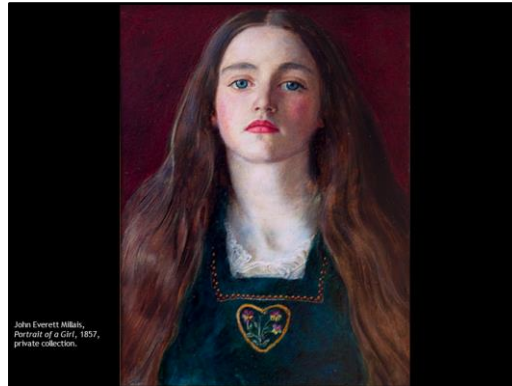
It may be thought strange that I could abstain from a woman who to most people was so attractive. But though her face was beautiful, her person was not formed to excite passion. On the contrary, there were certain circumstances in her person which completely checked it.
- Whatever the reason, with the support of her family and a number of influential friends, she filed for an annulment, causing a major public scandal; their marriage was annulled in 1854. In 1855, she married John Millais and eventually bore him eight children. The annulment meant that she could never attend an event where the Queen was present. When Millais was dying the Queen relented through the

intervention of her daughter, Princess Louise, and allowed Effie to attend an official function.

Effie Gray

Born Euphemia Chalmers Gray in Perth, Scotland, she **married John Ruskin** on 10 April **1848**, who wrote *The King of The Golden River* (1841) especially for her. From **1851**, Ruskin became a **patron** of the **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**, and **Effie modelled** for John Millais's painting ***Order of Release*** (1852-3). At the end of June **1853**, they travelled to the **Scottish Highlands**, where Millais painted **Ruskin's portrait** at **Glenfilas**. **Effie left Ruskin for Millais on 25 April 1854**, and successfully sought an **annulment**, causing a major public scandal. She **married** Millais on 3 July **1855** and they went on to have **eight children** together.

Effie Gray, initially known by the pet name of "Phemy", was born in Perth, Scotland, and lived in Bowerswell, the house where Ruskin's grandfather had committed suicide. Her family knew Ruskin's father, who encouraged a match between them. Ruskin wrote the fantasy novel *The King of the Golden River* for her in 1841, when she was twelve years old. After their marriage in 1848, they travelled to Venice where Ruskin was researching his book *The Stones of Venice*. Their different personalities are thrown into sharp relief by their contrasting priorities. For Effie, Venice provided an opportunity to socialise, while Ruskin was engaged in solitary studies. In particular, he made a point of drawing the Ca' d'Oro and the Doge's Palace, or Palazzo Ducale, because he feared they would be destroyed by the occupying Austrian troops. One of these troops, **Lieutenant Charles Paulizza**, made friends with Effie, apparently with no objection from Ruskin. Her brother, among others, later claimed that Ruskin was **deliberately encouraging the friendship to compromise her**, as an excuse to separate.



John Everett Millais, *Portrait of a Girl*, 1857, private collection.

- This is Millais's sister-in-law, **Sophie Gray (1843-1882)**, aged **13**. 10th of 15 children of George Gray and Sophia Margaret Gray, *née* Jameson (1808–1894)
- **Is this a portrait?** It was called ***Portrait of a Girl*** and **sold to George Price Boyce** for 60 guineas.
- It is a very sensual, "knowing" and direct image, which, almost inevitably, has provoked questions about the nature of Millais' relationship with his sister-in-law.
- "Alive with electric energy". Women of this period were not portrayed in a confrontational manner as it was unacceptable to Victorian society. The image is far more familiar to 21st century eyes than those of Victorian society.
- Effie, Millais lived with Sophie and her parents in Bowerswell, Perth. She started to displace Effie as his muse.
- The change from a child to a stunning teenager can be seen in three paintings *Autumn Leaves*, *Spring* (or *Apple Blossom*) and this portrait.
- It is rumoured that Effie sent her away but her parents continued to allow Millais to chaperone her.
- Was Millais too interested in her, did his wife Effie complain?
- Sophie suffered later (1868, aged 25) from **anorexia nervosa**, became obsessed, became incoherent, placed in care and died aged **39**. She was cared for by Dr Thomas Harrington **Tuke** (1826–88), a leading practitioner in lunacy who had treated Millais' friend, the painter **Edwin Landseer**.
- Millais wife Effie had been married to the art critic John Ruskin.
- The painting was displayed in 2012 at Tate Britain's major exhibition on the Pre-Raphaelites, *Victorian Avant-Garde*.
- In 1859, **Boyce** commissioned Rossetti to paint **Fanny Cornforth (Bocca Baciata)**.
- Boyce wanted to show Sophie and Alice and the RA exhibition of 1858 but Millais asked him not to as he had not completed his large painting *Spring* and did not want to be represented by two small portraits. He was having a hard time as the critics, led by Ruskin, turned against him. In later exhibitions (1898 to 1923) this portrait of Sophie was misidentified as Alice.

Key point: a painting that raises questions about the **nature of a portrait, is it a girl or Sophie**

Gray?

Sophie Gray

Sophie Gray (1843-1882, also known as Sophy) Millais's sister-in-law, **was only 13** when this portrait was painted and it was titled *Portrait of a Girl* and, I think **strangely, was sold to George Price Boyce a friend of Rossetti and joint lover of Fanny Cornforth**. The painting, or portrait of Fanny Cornforth was hung alongside that of Sophie Gray. It is difficult to understand why her parents did not want this portrait of Sophie. After Millais and his then wife Effie moved to Annat Lodge, close to Bowerswell in Scotland, her family home, she was readily available for sitting, and it seems she was beginning to displace Effie as a favoured subject. Sophie was one of Millais's favourite models in the 1850s, see *Autumn Leaves* (1856). This painting was painted in the summer and autumn of 1857 when Millais and Effie were living with her parents and sisters at Bowerswell, the family home in Perth.

There is another portrait of Alice, another of his favourite models. Both works were bought by George Pryce Boyce for himself and on behalf of his sister Joanna, also an artist. The portrait of Alice is a straightforward portrait of an immature girl.

The sensual and **'knowing' look has raised questions about Sophie's relationship with Millais** and there is some evidence that Millais wife, Effie, **sent her away** because they were growing too close. Eleven years later Sophie became unwell and was suffering from what is now called **anorexia nervosa**. She became **obsessed** with piano playing and her speech became incoherent. She married Caird, later made a baronet (like Millais) and had a daughter called Baeatrice who Millais painted and who died aged 14 in 1888. She was placed in the care of **Dr Thomas Tuke** who had **treated** Edwin **Landseer** but her mental state continued to be a problem for the rest of her life. She **died** at the age of **39**.

See <http://www.leicestergalleries.com/19th-20th-century-paintings/d/portrait-of-a-girl-sophie-gray/10207>



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882, died aged 54), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516, died aged 86), *Portrait of Fra Teodoro of Urbino as Saint Dominic*, 1515, National Gallery, recorded first in 1797 in the Palazzo Pesaro, Venice; on loan to the National Gallery since 1895 from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which acquired it in 1856.

- Very different type of portrait, or **is it a portrait?**
- **Companion** piece to *Portrait of a Girl*.
- *Bocca Baciata* ('Kissed Mouth') is from the last line of Boccaccio's *Decameron* Day 2 Story 7.

So she, who had lain with eight men, in all, perhaps, ten thousand times, was bedded with him as a virgin, and made him believe that a virgin she was, and lived long and happily with him as his queen: wherefore 'twas said: 'The mouth that has been kissed loses not its freshness; still it renews itself even as does the moon'.

- William Holman Hunt (1860) criticised the image for being a '**remarkable for gross sensuality of a revolting kind ... I see Rossetti as advocating as a principle the mere gratification of the eye**'.
- Symbolism of painting – **apple** (temptation and downfall), **rose** (Innocence), **marigold** (despair and grief)
- Or was it a reference to **Bellini**, substituting the **face of the saint** would have been regarded as a good joke by his friends
- **Acquired by South Kensington Museum in 1856** and seen by Rossetti. It is either **St Dominic** for which **Fra Teodoro** was a model or a portrait of the friar at St. Dominic. The lily is St. Dominic's attribute and the book is labelled Sanct. Dominic. The monks name is on the parapet. **Is this a portrait?** One of Bellini's last works of his long life.

Key point: in 1859 Rossetti started to paint a new type of female figure that introduced the idea of the powerful female

Bocca Baciata

I have switched to a very different type of portrait to discuss the problem of defining what we mean by a portrait. This is the first single female figure painted by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and it established a style that was later to become his signature work. It is also regarded as the first example of an 'art for art's sake' painting which was painted not as a portrait or to make a moral point but purely to look beautiful. However, we know the model was Fanny Cornforth and all his friends knew her but it was not expected to be regarded by the public as a portrait. It could be seen by some as a keepsake picture as found in Heath's *Book of Beauty*. These books were bought by women as examples of how to look beautiful but this painting contains many overt symbols that, together with its title *Bocca Baciata*, suggests it could be making a moral point. The moral of this painting is unclear however as the title refers to a line in a story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. In the story (Day 2, Story 7,) a woman called Alatiel is described as the most beautiful woman in the world. She is shipwrecked and has adventures and many lovers who fight and die over her. She eventually returns home and the story ends (translated):

So she, who had lain with eight men, in all, perhaps, ten thousand times, was bedded with him as a virgin, and made him believe that a virgin she was, and lived long and happily with him as his queen: wherefore 'twas said: 'The mouth that has been kissed loses not its freshness; still it renews itself even as does the moon'.

Rossetti title comes from the last line of the story and means the kissed mouth. We can see, therefore, that this is no typical, Victorian moral tale.

Like any good work of art it has many possible interpretations. Its ambiguity draws us in and allows us to read our own meaning into the picture. We see a beautiful woman whose beauty leads men to fight and die. The rose symbolises her innocence but the apple refers to temptation leading to downfall. The marigold, according to the 'language of flowers' means despair and grief, the consequences of her beauty in Boccaccio's story. The use of flowers to convey a message was very popular in the Victorian period and there were many books describing how to interpret the meaning of flowers.

Returning to what we mean by a portrait. In her book *Portraiture*, Shearer West, Professor of Art History, University of Birmingham, identifies the attributes of a portrait. It involves a direct relationship between the sitter and the artist and likeness is often the essence of a portrait. Because of this **element of 'copying'** the sitter **portraiture** has often been **dismissed** as a **low form of art** as it does not involve **creativity**. From the Renaissance to the early nineteenth century it was seen as a mechanical exercise and therefore **not fine art**. However, as we have seen portraiture was placed **second** after **history painting**. The reason for this is

that **portraits were only painted of important, noble people** and they were therefore akin to history paintings as they provided the viewer with **models for emulation**.

Portraiture was not an invention of the Renaissance nor a Western art form. There were Polynesian skull cults and skulls modelled out of clay in Jericho in 5000 BCE. The ancient world was replete with portraits both in ancient Greece and Rome. Although there is little portraiture in the middle ages (although see the mosaic of Emperor and Empress Justinian and Theodora in San Vitale, Ravenna) it blossomed in the fifteenth century.

Despite 'likeness' being part of the definition of a portrait the social position of the sitter can result in social or artistic conventions that reconstruct the sitter as a type or example of their period. Portraits can therefore be placed on a **spectrum** between a **specific likeness** and a **general type**. Secondly, a portrait is a balance between a **representation** of a face and body and the **character or virtues** of the person. Finally, portraits often result from a **negotiation** between the artist, the sitter and the patron who may all be different people or the same person in a self-portrait.

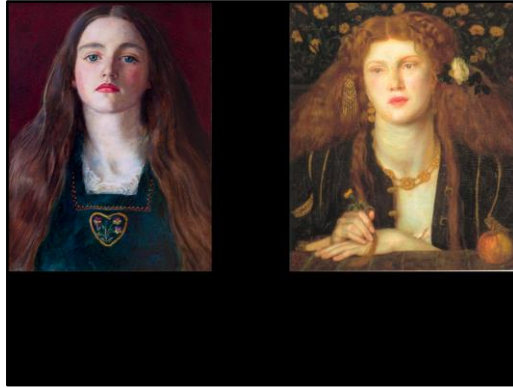
The painting was thought to have been influenced by John Everett Millais' portrait of his sister-in-law Sophie Gray (now known to be Sophy, 1843-1882) which was completed two years before and was known to Rossetti. It was painted as a present for his friend George Price Boyce to go alongside this 'portrait'.

Alan Bowness's characterization of the picture is succinct and exact:

Here is something quite new for Rossetti—a voluptuous, inscrutable image, coarse and sensual perhaps, but experienced in precisely the way that differs so essentially from the early work. And Venetian Cinquecento painting now provides Rossetti with a model that replaces his earlier preference for Florentine and Sienese Quattrocento.

Rossetti saw as most artists do, in terms of **technique** (letter to William Bell Scott on November 13, 1859:

*I have painted a little half-figure in oil lately which I should like you to see, as I have made an effort to avoid what I know to be a besetting **fault of mine**—& indeed rather common to PR painting—that of **stipple in the flesh**. I have succeeded in quite keeping it at a distance this time, and am very desirous of painting . . . various figures of this kind, chiefly as a rapid **study of flesh painting**.*



The two previous pictures hanging side-by-side.

George Pryce Boyce bought the picture of Sophie Gray for 60 guineas. He commissioned or encouraged Rossetti to paint *Bocca Baciata*, a picture of Fanny Cornforth, a lover they both shared.

Boyce is said to have bought the *Portrait of a Girl* for his sister Joanna but this is not clear. Sophie is assertive, knowing is wearing 'heart's ease'. Fanny is dreamy, languid and is holding a marigold for grief.

Unlike Millais' 1854 portrait of Sophy, his later work was not kept by the family. It was sold to George Price Boyce, a friend of Millais' pre-Raphaelite "brother", Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who painted a portrait of Fanny Cornforth, a lover he shared with Boyce, to hang alongside that of Sophy. Entitled *Bocca Baciata* ("the mouth that has been kissed") after a theme in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Rossetti's picture (1859) was described by William Holman Hunt, another member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as "**remarkable for gross sensuality of a revolting kind ... I see Rossetti as advocating as a principle the mere gratification of the eye**". As Cooper has remarked, this "*after-life*" of Sophy Gray demonstrated its "*erotic potential*".

See <http://fannycornforth.blogspot.co.uk/2014/06/the-portraits-of-sophia-gray.html>



James Abbott Whistler (1834-1903), *Arrangement in Gray: Portrait of the Painter*, self portrait, c. 1872, Detroit Institute of Arts

- Whistler was the **next generation**. He was an American who trained in Paris but lived in London most of his life.
- He was a **difficult character** and in **1867** he **threw a 'friend' through a plate-glass window** (Sir **Francis Seymour Haden**, artist, etcher, surgeon, Whistler's half-brother-in-law, married to Whistler's half-sister Deborah, had come to Paris to bury his partner and Whistler's friend James Traer and found Haden was slandering him) and he insisted his **students** always called him **'master'**. He also got into a fight with a construction worker in Paris and Haden had him thrown out of the Burlington Fine Arts Club, which was assisted by a women with whom Whistler had an alleged affair writing about his low character. In 1890 Whistler wrote *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.
- He was **not a prodigy** but came to painting slowly.
- He developed a **unique style** of art that rejected subject painting, moralising and sentiment.

Key point: Whistler was a controversial artist who helped redefine the nature of art

James Abbott McNeill Whistler

- Whistler was an American born in Lowell, Massachusetts, who spent most of his life in London where he died. He was a leading exponent of 'art for art's sake' and rejected sentimental and moral paintings. He gave his works the names of musical works, such as 'arrangement', 'harmony' or 'nocturne' to emphasize the importance of tonal harmony both in music and painting.
- Whistler came to London when he was young as his father was a railroad engineer and had a project in Russia. His father died of cholera in Russia and he moved back to his mother's home in Connecticut. He went to the Military Academy at West Point but did very badly because of his near-sightedness, poor grades, casual dress on parade, long hair, inability to follow rules and sarcastic comments. He was eventually dismissed and joined the etching division of the US Coast Survey where he learned etching techniques. With some money he made selling paintings he left for Paris, never to return to the US.
- In Paris he made friends with **Henri Fantin-Latour**, whom he met at the Louvre and

through him, Whistler met **Gustave Courbet**, **Alphonse Legros**, and **Édouard Manet**. Also in this group was **Charles Baudelaire**, whose ideas influenced Whistler. Baudelaire challenged artists to find beauty in the everyday aspects of modern life and to portray the brutality of life faithfully, avoiding the old themes of mythology and allegory.

- In **1859** he moved to **London** which he adopted as his home and over the next ten years he developed a unique style based on his theory that art should be concerned with the arrangement of colours in harmony, not with a literal portrayal of the natural world. In this self-portrait he adopts a **Rembrandt-like pose** and holds the tools of trade in his hand. In the background is the symbol he adopted of a **stylized butterfly** with a long **stinger** for a tail.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler, *Symphony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Frances Leyland*, 1871-3, The Frick Collection

- Started at Leyland's home, Speke Hall (wattle and daub Tudor mansion near Liverpool, started in 1530, leased to Leyland for 10 years) but taken back to London to finish at Whistler's home, 2 Lindsay Row. Throughout the 1871 London season **Mrs Leyland came to pose** at Whistler's house.
- Whistler's **designed** the **dress** (and many other dresses) as well as the design of the room and the frame.
- Mrs Frances Leyland **understudy** was **Maud Franklin** (1857-c.1941), who stood in for her when Maud was only **14 or 15**. She moved in with Whistler in 1875 and became Whistler's primary model around 1877. She and gave birth to **two daughters** by Whistler, Ione (c.1877, 'eye-oh-nee') and Maud (1879). She exhibited her own paintings in 1884-8, continued to model after the relationship ended, struggled financially, moved to Paris when Whistler married Beatrice Godwin in 1888 and married J. Little a wealthy New Yorker and had a son. After his death she married another wealthy American (Richard Abbott) and moved to Cannes where she died c.1941.
- In 1874 Whistler displayed the painting in his own gallery. He hired the **Flemish Gallery** behind **48 Pall Mall** for **£315**, **four times** what he paid for his house and painted the **walls pinkish grey**, the floors bright **yellow** and the couches rich, light maroon. Balanced by plants, flowers and Chinese vases. Thin blinds below the skylight subdued and mellowed the effect. He displayed 13 oils, 36 drawings and 50 etchings.
- Whistler's **Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room** was completed in 1876-7. Leyland was shocked and they quarrelled and Leyland, who had not authorised the work offered half the 2,000 guineas Whistler wanted to charge. Leyland also treated him like a tradesman by offering to pay him in pounds rather than guineas. Whistler is reported to have said to Leyland, "**Ah, I have made you famous. My work will live when you are forgotten. Still, per chance, in the dim ages to come you will be remembered as the proprietor of the Peacock Room.**"
- Adding to the emotional drama was Whistler's **fondness** for Leyland's wife, Frances, who separated from her husband in 1879. She never seems to have slept with Whistler but he

flirted with her sister Elizabeth and is said to have proposed marriage to her. Another result of this drama was Thomas Jeckyll who, so shocked by the first sight of *his* room, returned home and was later found on the floor of his studio covered in gold leaf; he never recovered and died insane three years later. Thomas Jeckyll was a British architect experienced in the Anglo-Japanese style who was appointed by Richard Norman Shaw who Leyland had appointed to remodel and redecorate his house.

- From Frick Website,
"For the wife of his chief patron of the 1870s, Whistler created an Aesthetic masterpiece in which subject and setting form one harmonious visual field. The gossamer fabrics of Frances Leyland's gown, which Whistler himself designed, seem to dissolve into a formless passage of paint at the bottom of the picture. Flouting the rules of one-point perspective, Whistler paints the chequered rug and parquet floor with squares that lie flat against the picture plane, rather than receding into space. As a result, they correspond with the incised basket-weave pattern of the frame, which Whistler also designed. The picture is a perfect synthesis of subject, costume, setting, and frame."
- Whistler's fashionable breakfasts were an early example of performance art. He colour coordinated the furnishings, the room, his own clothes, the menu and the food and he expected his guests to do the same. For Whistler inharmonious combinations were physically painful.



George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Julia Margaret Cameron* (née Pattle), c.1850-1852
 Born 11 June 1815, Calcutta, British India, died 26 January 1879 (aged 63), Kalutara, British Ceylon

Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879)

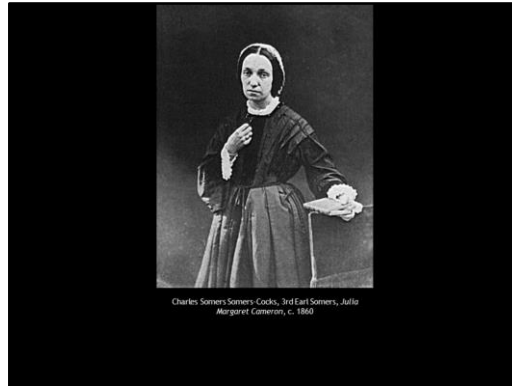
- Took up photography aged 48 (1863) when she was given a camera as a present and died 11 years later.
- She strove to capture beauty. She wrote, "I longed to arrest all the beauty that came before me and at length the longing has been satisfied."
- "Annie, my first success", 29 January 1864. Cameron's first print with which she was satisfied
- The basic techniques of soft-focus "fancy portraits" (imaginary portrait of a real or imaginary character), which she later developed, were taught to her by David Wilkie Wynfield. She later wrote, *"to my feeling about his beautiful photography I owed all my attempts and indeed consequently all my success"*.
- Born in India to an officer of the British East India Company and Adeline de l'Etang daughter of Chevalier Antoine d l'Etang probable lover of Marie Antoinette.
- From a family of celebrated beauties and was considered an ugly duckling.
- Her great-niece Virginia Woolf wrote in the 1926 introduction to the Hogarth Press collection of Cameron's photographs, "In the trio [of sisters] where...[one] was Beauty; and [one] Dash; Mrs. Cameron was undoubtedly Talent".
- Cameron stated her photographic mission thus: *"My aspirations are to ennoble Photography and to secure for it the character and uses of High Art by combining the real and Ideal and sacrificing nothing of the Truth by all possible devotion to Poetry and beauty."*

Wet Plate Collodion

- In the March 1851 issue of *The Chemist*, Frederick Scott Archer published his wet plate collodion process. The collodion (cellulose nitrate dissolved in ether and ethanol) was an alternative to egg white and decreased exposure times It became the most widely used

photographic medium until the gelatin dry plate, introduced in the 1870s, eventually replaced it. There are three subsets to the collodion process; the Ambrotype (a positive image on glass), the Ferrotypes or Tintypes (a positive image on metal) and the glass negative, which was used to make positive prints on albumen or salted paper.

- The process is:
 - Clean the glass extremely well
 - In the light pour salted (iodide or bromine) collodion onto the glass, tilt and pour unused back into the bottle.
 - In the dark (or orange light) immerse in silver nitrate for 3-5 minutes.
 - Lift, drain and protect in light proof slide holder
 - Expose for less than a second up to several minutes.
 - Develop using ferrous sulphate and fix using potassium cyanide or sodium thiosulphate.
 - Dry and varnish.



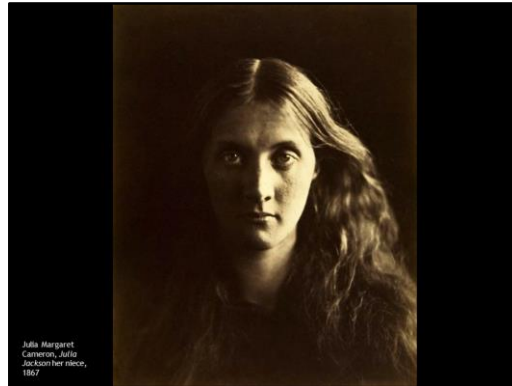
Charles Somers Somers-Cocks, 3rd Earl Somers, *Julia Margaret Cameron*, c. 1860

- Switching to photography, this self-portrait is by someone who has become one of the **most influential** of nineteenth century photographers Julia Margaret Cameron.
- She was born in Calcutta as her father was an official with the East India Company and did not take up photography until **she was 48**.
- She married an older and **well connected** man (Charles Hay, jurist, member of the Law Commission) who retired from India back to London
- Her **sister** Sarah Prinsep had **married** the artist John Prinsep in 1835. They lived in Little Holland House, Kensington and famous artists regularly visited. Her society connections enabled her to take photographs of most of the artistic and intellectual members of society.
- More in a later class on Photography.

See <http://www.vam.ac.uk/page/j/julia-margaret-cameron/>

Charles Somers Somers-Cocks

- Brother-in-law of Julia Margaret Camerson.
- Charles Somers Somers-Cocks, 3rd Earl Somers (1819-1883) was an MP until he succeeded his father when he entered the House of Lords.
- In 1850 he married Virginia Pattle.



Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879), *Julia Jackson* her niece, 1867

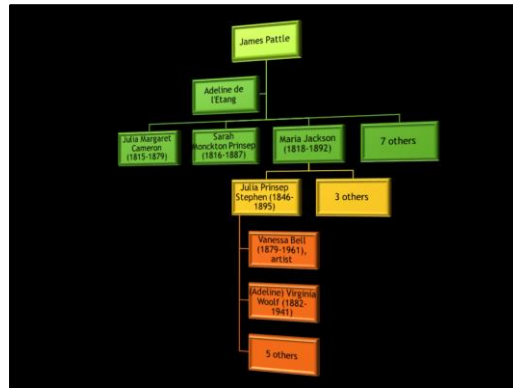
- Julia Margaret Cameron was the great aunt of **Virginia Wolf** (born Adeline Virginia Stephen)
- **Virginia Wolf's** mother was **Julia Prinsep Duckworth Stephen** (née Jackson, 1846–1895) a **renowned beauty** who modelled for Edward Burne-Jones in 1866.
- Cameron registered all her photographs with the copyright office and kept detailed records, which is why so many survive.
- Julia Prinsep Stephen [née Jackson], (1846–1895), **celebrated beauty** and philanthropist, the second wife of Leslie Stephen (1832–1904), was born on 7 February 1846, in Calcutta, India, the youngest of the three daughters of John Jackson MD (1804–1887) and his wife, Maria (1818–1892), one of the seven famously good-looking Pattle sisters. As a frequent visitor to Little Holland House she was greatly admired: she met **Edward Burne-Jones** (1833–1898), **George Frederic Watts** (1817–1904), and **William Holman Hunt** (1827–1910), all of whom drew and painted her. In **1864** both Holman **Hunt** and the sculptor Thomas **Woolner** **proposed** to her. (Her mother claimed that every man who met her in a railway carriage fell in love with her.)

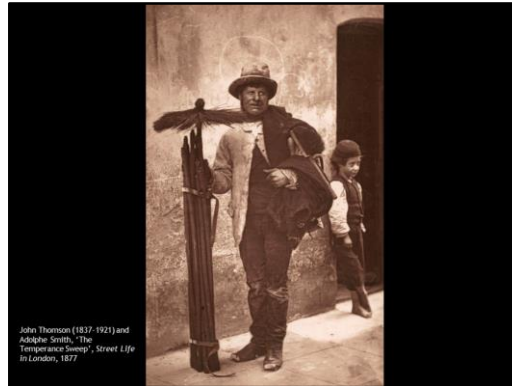
Met Museum Description

- This ethereal image is of an almost bodiless entity, as we might imagine a portrait of the soul or of a psychic state laid bare. The subject is Cameron's namesake and niece, Julia Jackson, at the age of twenty-one and shortly before her marriage to **Herbert Duckworth**. The more than twenty portraits of Julia are exceptional in the artist's oeuvre, for they do not portray her as a muse, sybil, or saint, but rather as generalized embodiments of unspecified ideals of purity, beauty, and grace.
- **Three years later**, she was a widow and the mother of three children. Her **second marriage**, in 1878, to the great Victorian intellectual Sir **Leslie Stephen**, produced the painter **Vanessa Bell** and the writer **Virginia Woolf**. In her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927), Woolf portrayed her mother as the searching, sensitive Mrs. Ramsay, ever suspended in thought. She **"bore about with her, she could not help knowing it, the torch of her beauty; she carried it erect into any room that she entered."**

Wikipedia

- In 1838, Julia Margaret Pattle married **Charles Hay Cameron**, a jurist and member of the Law Commission stationed in Calcutta, who was twenty years her senior. In 1848, Charles Hay Cameron retired, and the family moved to London, England. **Cameron's sister, Sarah Prinsep**, had been living in London and hosted a salon at Little Holland House, the dower house of Holland House in Kensington, where famous artists and writers regularly visited. In 1860, Cameron visited the estate of poet Alfred Lord Tennyson on the Isle of Wight. Julia was taken with the location, and the Cameron family purchased a property on the island soon after. They called it Dimbola Lodge after the family's Ceylon estate.





John Thomson (1837-1921) and Adolphe Smith, 'The Temperance Sweep', *Street Life in London*, 1877

- **Photography** enabled portraits to be produced of people who were **previously unrecorded**.
- This is **John Day**, turned out of his home aged **10**, **slept rough**, obtained some work. In 1877 was a happy father of a **large family** in Lambeth Walk. A **master sweep** who is prosperous and respected.

Key point: Photography allowed people to be recorded that previously could not afford a portrait and who no one thought it worthwhile to record.

LSE Digital Library:

Born in Lambeth, the son of a road-mender, John Day was sent out to work when scarcely more than **ten** years old. His **father** was decidedly **addicted to drink**, and was in the habit of taking his son on **Sunday** to public-houses, where drink was sold in defiance of the Licensing Act. So long as the child had a few halfpence for beer, he was in the parental eyes a good boy; but when his meagre earnings had been thus uselessly spent, his father came to the conclusion that he could not afford to keep him, and that it was high time the boy should **fight his own way** in the world. He was therefore turned out of his home, and had to resort to the friendly, if cheerless shelter of railway arches; or at times he would sleep on a barge, and profited by the opportunity to wash his solitary shirt in the canal, and hang it up on the rigging of his temporary home, while he disported himself amidst the tarpaulin till it dried. At time when there was nothing to be done at the flour-mill, he obtained a little work as **assistant** to a neighbouring **chimney-sweep**; but in either employ he rarely made more than **3s per week**.

[...]

He is now the happy father of a large family, he lives in a house near Lambeth Walk, where he once humbly worked in the capacity of a mere assistant. As a master sweep he has an extensive connexion. The money he earns enables him to subscribe to several **benefit societies**, and he is entitled to receive from them **10s. a week in**

sickness, while his wife will have **£46** given her at **his death**, or he will receive **£18** should **she die first**. Altogether he is both prosperous and respected throughout the neighbourhood, where he ardently advocates the cause of **total abstinence**, and is well known as the **temperance sweep**.



Walter Sickert (1860-1942), *The Acting Manager or Rehearsal: The End of the Act*, (portrait of Helen Carte), c. 1885

- **Helen Couper-Black** (later **Carte**) was an **outstanding business woman** here depicted by Walter Sickert aged 24
- **Sickert adored the theatre** and loved to paint inside
- A powerful piece of *chiaroscuro* that would have pleased Rembrandt.
- Is she collapsed in **exhaustion** after a rehearsal?

Helen Carte (1852-1913) was the **second wife** of impresario and hotelier **Richard D'Oyly Carte**. **She ran** the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and the **Savoy Hotel** from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th. She attended the **University of London** from 1871-74 and became a **business manager**. In his 1922 memoir Henry Lytton wrote:

She was a born business woman with an outstanding gift for organisation. No financial statement was too intricate for her, and no contract too abstruse. Once, when I had to put one of her letters to me before my legal adviser... he declared firmly 'this letter must have been written by a solicitor.' He would not admit that any woman could draw up a document so cleverly guarded with qualifications.

Walter Sickert

Pupil of Whistler and friend of Roger Fry (1866-1934, artist, art critic and member of the Bloomsbury Group), he was **married three times**, a rumbustious and charismatic man. A quintessentially English artist who **travelled abroad** to the English enclave of Dieppe and the English tourist location of Venice. However, he was **born in Munich** to a **Dutch father** and an English mother who was the illegitimate daughter of the English astronomer Richard Sheepshanks. Walter was brought to England to avoid German conscription, failed to get a job at the British Museum, and decided to become an **actor** using the pseudonym **Mr Nemo**. He enrolled at the **Slade** but left to become Whistler's assistant. Whistler sent him to Paris where he **met Degas**, another great painter of the theatre.

He took copper plates and an engraving needle around with him. He was very successful in his business dealings and was well paid.



Unidentified photographer, John Singer Sargent in his studio in Paris, 1885 (aged 29)

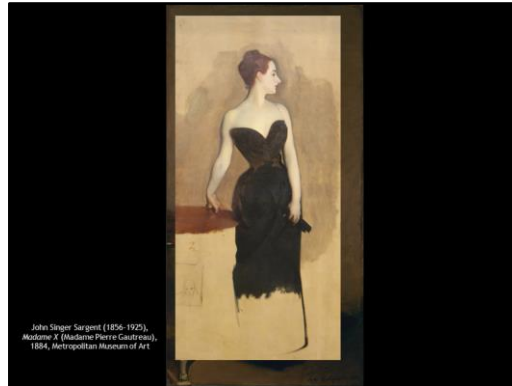
- This is John Singer Sargent, the **leading society portrait painter** at the end of the nineteenth century as Sir Thomas Lawrence had been at the beginning.
- Travelled extensively as a child-Paris, Germany, Italy, Switzerland. No formal education but highly literate.
- He was described as ‘an **American** born in **Italy**, educated in **France**, who looks like a **German**, speaks like an **Englishman** and paints like a **Spaniard**.’ The last point refers to his veneration for Velazquez.
- On the easel is his **most famous and notorious painting**.

Key point: Sargent was considered the leading portrait painter of his generation and one of the greatest portrait artist of the nineteenth century.

John Singer Sargent (1856-1925)

Sargent was considered the **leading portrait painter** of his generation and one of the greatest portrait artist of the nineteenth century.

His father was an eye surgeon but after his older sister dies at the age of two his mother suffered a breakdown and they spent the rest of their lives travelling. They were based in Paris but travelled to Germany, Italy and Switzerland. They stopped in Florence, where Sargent was born in 1856. His parents lived modestly on a small inheritance and avoided society. Although he had no formal education he grew up to be a highly literate and cosmopolitan young man, accomplished in art, music, and literature. He was fluent in English, French, Italian, and German. At seventeen, Sargent was described by Stanley Olsen in his book *John Singer Sargent: His Portrait*, 1986 as ‘*wilful, curious, determined and strong*’ (after his mother) yet ‘*shy, generous, and modest*’ (after his father).



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art

- The intention was to create a positive **sensation** in Paris but the picture **shocked and scandalised**.
- Sargent later wrote: '*I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done*'.
- There are mixed views of Madame Pierre Gautreau from 'stopped traffic in the street' to poorly educated and boorish.

Key point: a controversial portrait that scandalized society showing how little it takes to shock

Madame X

Sargent and Madame Pierre Gautreau (1859-1915) collaborated on this portrait in order to create a sensation at the Paris Salon of 1884. She did not commission it but Sargent pursued her unlike most of his clients. Sargent wrote to a mutual friend:

*I have a great desire to paint her portrait and have reason to think she would allow it and is waiting for someone to propose this homage to her beauty.
...you might tell her that I am a man of prodigious talent.*

She moved to France when she was eight and was later introduced to French high society. She became one of Paris's conspicuous beauties, as she was a pale-skinned brunette with fine features and an hourglass figure. She used lavender-coloured face and body powder to enhance her complexion, to dye her hair with henna, and to color her eyebrows.

The original portrait had one shoulder strap hanging down and people were shocked and scandalized. It was described as a 'flagrant insufficiency' of clothing. Although the painting failed to establish as a society artist in France it achieved its objective in England and America. When he sold it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art Sargent wrote to the director, 'I suppose it is the best thing I have ever done'.

Most writers believe she attracted much admiration due to her elegance and style

and she married Pierre Gautreau, a French banker and shipping magnate and she was rumoured to have had numerous affairs. Her beauty is described as 'having stopped traffic in the street'. However, some research indicates all this was the creation of later writers and she was rarely mentioned in society pages until the scandal of the public portrait and no affairs are known to have taken place. She has been described as poorly educated, boorish, vapid and naïve and she fell into obscurity after the scandal.

What is Portrait Painting?

1. Lawrence: dramatizing the great and the good
2. Ross: providing an intimate record (replaced by photography)
3. Hayter: conveying pomp and majesty
4. Landseer: 'conversation pieces'
5. Watts: recording the famous and infamous for posterity
6. Rossetti: a means to tell a story
7. Thomson: capturing an image of a previously unknown class
8. Sickert: the evocation of everyday life



What is a Portrait Painting?

1. Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), *Portrait of Elizabeth Farren*, painted portraits of inspiring leaders and beautiful women using lively brush strokes and dramatic lighting.
2. William Charles Ross (1794-1860) there was a fashion among the wealthy for portrait miniature.
3. George Hayter (1792-1871) produced what could be seen as propaganda.
4. Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) produced groups in conversation that acted as conversation pieces.
5. George Frederic Watts (1817-1904) produced his 'Hall of Fame' recording the great and the good for posterity.
6. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) used a 'portrait' to tell a story
7. John Thomson (1837-1921) captured photographic images and recorded life stories in *The Streets of London*.
8. Walter Sickert (1860–1942) evoked the impression of everyday lives such as music hall performers and impresarios.

A portrait is a record of a person or a group for posterity but this reminds us of Byron's cynical comment on the end of fame,

*To have, when the original is dust,
A name, a wretched picture and worse bust*
Don Juan, Canto I, 218

'Dispelling the Myths Surrounding Nineteenth-Century British Art' by Laurence Shafe
Portrait Painting Slide List

1. Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830), *Portrait of Elizabeth Farren* (1799-1829), before 1791, Metropolitan Museum of Art
2. William Charles Ross (1794-1860), *Queen Victoria* (1819-1901), 1829, watercolour on ivory laid on card, Royal Collection
3. George Hayter (1792-1871), *Coronation Portrait of Queen Victoria*, 1838, Royal Collection
4. Edwin Landseer (1802-1871), *Windsor Castle in Modern Times: Queen Victoria, Prince Albert and Victoria, Princess Royal*, 1841-1846, Royal Collection
5. Franz Xaver Winterhalter, *The Family of Queen Victoria*, 1846, Royal Collection
6. Francis Grant (1803-1878), *Queen Victoria Riding Out*, 1838-1840, Royal Collection
7. George Frederic Watts, *Self-Portrait, Aged 59*, 1854, Watts Gallery, Guildford
8. George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), *Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (1828-1882), oil on linen, circa 1871, National Portrait Gallery
9. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Self-portrait*, 1847, National Portrait Gallery
10. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Becca Bodele*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
11. Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516, died aged 86), *Portrait of Fra Teodoro of Udine as Saint Dominic*, 1515, National Gallery, recorded first in 1792 in the *Palazzo Pesaro*, Venice; on loan to the National Gallery since 1895 from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which acquired it in 1826
12. William Holman Hunt (1827-1910, died aged 83), *John Everett Millais*, 1853
13. John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Self-portrait*, 1881, Uffizi Gallery, Florence
14. John Everett Millais, *Portrait of a Girl*, 1857, private collection
15. John Everett Millais, *John Ruskin* (1819-1902), 1853-1854, Ashmolean Museum
16. James Abbott Whistler (1834-1903), *Arrangement in Gray: Portrait of the Painter*, self-portrait, c. 1872, Detroit Institute of Arts
17. James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl*, 1861-2, National Gallery of Art, Washington
18. Julia Margaret Cameron, née Pattle (1815-1879), *Self-portrait*, c. 1870
19. John Thomson and Adolphe Smith, *'The Temperance Sweep', Street Life in London*, 1877
20. Walter Sickert (1860-1942), *The Acting Manager or Rehearsal: The End of the Act* (portrait of Helen Carte), c. 1885
21. Unidentified photographer, *John Singer Sargent in his studio in Paris*, 1885 (aged 29)
22. John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Madame X* (Madame Pierre Gautreau), 1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art