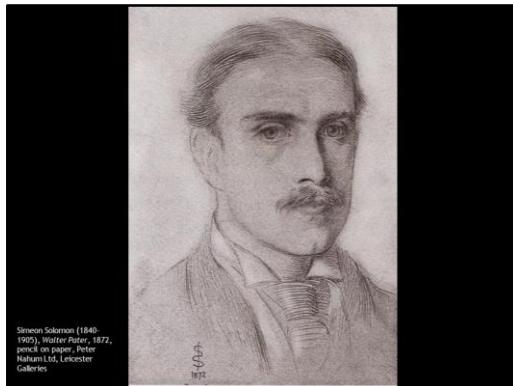




- The Aesthetic Movement in England was related to other movements such as Symbolism or Decadence in France and Decadentismo in Italy.
- British decadent writers were influenced by **Walter Pater** who argued that life should be lived intensely with an ideal of beauty.
- It was related to the Arts and Crafts movement but this will be traced back to the influence of British decorative design, the Government Schools of Design and Christopher Dresser.
- In France, Russia and Belgium Symbolism began with the works of Charles Baudelaire who was influenced by Edgar Allan Poe.
- It is related to the Gothic element of Romanticism and artists include Fernand Khnopff, Gustave Moreau, Gustav Klimt, Odilon Redon, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Henri Fantin-Latour, and Edvard Munch. These artists used mythology and dream imagery based on obscure, personal symbolism. It influenced Art Nouveau and Les Nabis (such as Édouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard and Maurice Denis).
- In Italy, Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938) promoted irrationality against scientific rationalism.



Simeon Solomon (1840-1905), *Walter Pater*, 1872, pencil on paper, Peter Nahum Ltd, Leicester Galleries

Walter Pater (1839-1894)

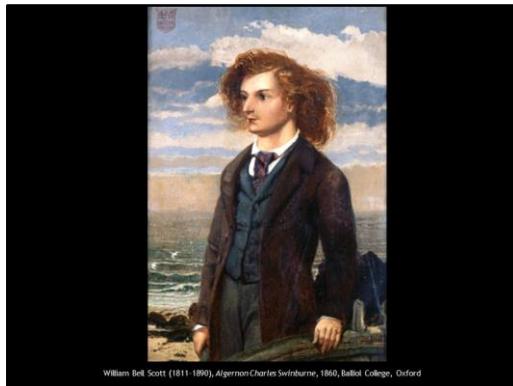
- **Essayist**, literary and art critic and fiction writer. His father was a physician but died when he was young and he was tutored by his headmaster. His mother died when he was 14 and he gained a scholarship to Queen's College, Oxford in 1858.
- He read Flaubert, Gautier, Baudelaire and Swinburne and learnt German and **read Hegel**. He did not pursue ordination despite an early interest. He stayed in Oxford and was offered a job at Brasenose **teaching modern German philosophy**. In 1865 he visited Florence, Pisa and Ravenna. He wrote early essays on Winckelmann (1867), William Morris (1868), Leonardo da Vinci (1869), **Botticelli** (1870) and Michelangelo (1871). On the Mona Lisa he wrote,
 - '**She is older than the rocks among which she sits**; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes, and lives only in the delicacy with which it has moulded the changing lineaments, and tinged the eyelids and the hands.' *The Renaissance*
- He also wrote,
 - '**All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music**'.
- And,
 - '*... get as many pulsations as possible into the given time ... To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.*'
- He was **condemned** by many as a 'rococo **Epicurean**'. In 1874 he failed to obtain a proctorship he had been promised and letters have recently been found that indicate a 'romance' with a nineteen-year-old undergraduate, an outspoken

homosexual called William Hardinge, who later became a novelist.

- Pater's work focused on male beauty, friendship and love and he was later **satirised as a typical effete English aesthete**. Later, with the popular *Marius the Epicurean* (1885) he became a minor literary celebrity and moved to London with his sisters. In 1893 his book *Plato and Platonism* was published and he returned to Oxford as a popular lecturer. He died in 1894 of rheumatic fever (streptococcal infection) aged 54.
- **His ideas formed the principles of the Aesthetic Movement.** Although he criticized Wilde's distortion of Epicureanism he was praised by Wilde and influenced the art critics Roger Fry and Kenneth Clark as well as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot.

Simeon Solomon (1840-1905)

- Pre-Raphaelite painter. Born into a well-known Jewish family and his brother **Abraham** and his sister **Rebecca** were **both artists**. At the Royal Academy School he **met Rossetti** and the other Pre-Raphaelites as well as **Swinburne and Burne-Jones**. He exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1858 to 1872. He often painted literary subjects and **scenes from Jewish life**.
- In 1873, **aged 33, his career ended** when he was arrested for attempting to commit sodomy in a public urinal near Oxford Street. Sodomy was punishable by death but the last two executed for the offence was in 1835. Solomon was fined £100 and arrested again the following year in Paris and spent three months in prison. In 1884 he entered the workhouse but he was an alcoholic and died in 1905 from complications.



William Bell Scott (1811-1890), *Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 1860, Balliol College, Oxford

William Bell Scott (1811-1890), *Algernon Charles Swinburne*, 1860, Balliol College, Oxford

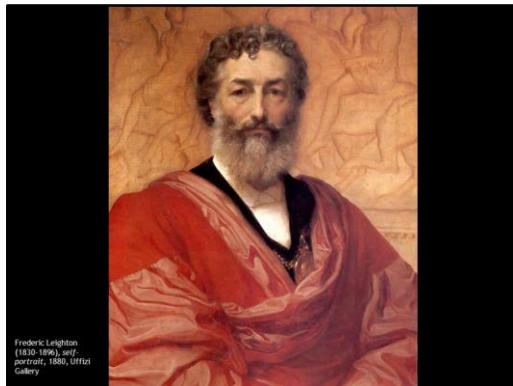
Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909)

- English poet, playwright, novelist and critic. Nominated for the **Nobel Prize in Literature every year from 1903 to 1907** and again in 1909. He was five foot four inches and had bright red hair. He was an **alcoholic and a masochist** and highly excitable. In 1879, **aged 42, he became ill** and was looked after by friends for the rest of his life in Putney. In Putney he became respectable and his friend is said to have saved his life and killed the poet.
- His father became an Admiral and he grew up on the Isle of Wight and attended **Eton College** before going to **Balliol College, Oxford**. He was **rusticated** in 1859 for publically supporting the attempted assassination of Napoleon III. He spent his holidays in **Northumberland** with his grandfather who was a baronet and considered Northumberland his native county. He would later **stay with William Bell Scott**. At Oxford he met Rossetti and William Morris.
- He is a decadent poet but Oscar Wilde **maintained** that he was a '**braggart in matters of vice**' and claimed to be a homosexual without being in the slightest degree homosexual.
- He was considered by Victorians to be the **successor to Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892)** and **Robert Browning (1812-1889)**.

William Bell Scott (1811-1890)

- Born in Edinburgh, father an engraver and his brother was a painter. In 1844, he was appointed as master of the **Government School of Design Newcastle-on-Tyne** and he worked there for **twenty years**. Painted eight large pictures of the border history for **Wallington Hall, Northumberland**. He was visited by all the **Rossetti's** in Newcastle and by **Swinburne**. Swinburne wrote two poems to Scott. In 1870 he bought a house in London and was a close friend of Rossetti but an **enemy of John**

Ruskin. He wrote poetry influenced by Rossetti and edited many books of artistic and literary criticism.



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

- Leighton was **born in Scarborough** and went to **school in London** but his artistic training was on the continent in **Berlin, Florence and Paris** (1855-1859). He could speak **French, German, Italian and Spanish** and travelled to North Africa and the Middle East. In Paris he **met Ingres, Delacroix, Corot and Millet** and so when he returned to England it was as a cosmopolitan artist with a wealth of experience.
- He associated with the **pre-Raphaelites** and from **1864** with the Royal Academy when he was made an **Associate**. He became its **President in 1878** to his death in 1896 (18 years), knighted in 1878 and made a baronet in 1886. This was painted when he had just become President and shows him as a sophisticated and cosmopolitan artist. He is dressed as a **Doctor of Oxford University** (conferred in Civil Law in 1879) and is wearing the **gold medal** of the President of the Royal Academy. There are **no tools** of the artist but behind him is a part of the **Parthenon frieze** (part of the 'Elgin marbles' collection that was acquired by Lord Elgin between 1801 and 1805). The more subtle colouring is typical of the Aesthetic Movement compared to the stark, bright colours of the Pre-Raphaelites. There are **no harsh shadows** and highlights but a suffused light spreads a glow of calm reason across the surface.
- His **beard accentuates his masculinity** although the beard had mixed associations. He was noted for his noble appearance, superhuman energy and exquisite artistic talent. He supported students with energy and fought every one's cause better than they could fight their own. He never married and rumours abound about an illegitimate child with a model or his supposed homosexuality but we may never know as he left no diaries or letters.
- Leighton was to some extent an outsider and his cosmopolitan manners caused many to question his Englishness. Leighton's first biographer, Emilie Barrington, wrote in 1906 '**his rapid utterance, his picturesque gesture, his very appearance were not emphatically English. Certain Englishmen who knew Leighton felt out**

of sympathy with him for this reason and had difficulty in recognising him as one of themselves'. George du Maurier was 'convinced that in Leighton existed indications of foreign or Jewish blood but was quite unable to discover any facts in support of this theory and was troubled on this point'.

- His **house** in Holland Park was designed by **George Aitchison** (1825-1910) and over thirty years it became a temple to aestheticism and it is now a museum and a listed building.
- He was the first painter to be made a peer but has the dubious honour of being the **shortest lived peerage**. He was made a **Baron Leighton** on 24 January 1896 and he died the next day of angina.
- He is buried in the crypt under St. Pauls cathedral with Sir Joshua Reynolds and Turner.
- He felt that **Hellenistic Greek** classicism represented **ideal, archetypical beauty**. He did not attempt to recreate an historically accurate past but emphasized the aesthetic over the didactic. He did not believe it was the purpose of art to convey moral values but he thought it should inspire and enlighten. In other words he created a balance between the extremes of Whistler and Ruskin.
- He idealised the past and presented a '**Golden Age**' of ancient Greece that reflected back and enhanced the glory of the British Empire.



Frederic Leighton, *Cimabue's Celebrated Madonna*, 1853-5, The National Gallery
 Duccio di Buoninsegna, *Rucellai Madonna*, 1285, Uffizi Gallery, Florence

National Gallery website,

- 'Cimabue's celebrated 'Madonna' is carried in procession through the streets of **Florence**; in front of the 'Madonna', and crowned with laurels, walks **Cimabue** with his **pupil Giotto**; behind are Arnolfo de Lapo, Gaddo Gaddi, Andrea Tafi, Nicola Pisano, Buffalmacco, Simone Memmi. In the right corner is **Dante**.
- This was Leighton's **first major work**, painted in Rome. It was shown at the **Academy in 1855**. It was an immediate success, and **Queen Victoria bought it for 600 guineas** on opening day. **She recorded** in her diary: 'There was a **very big picture** by a man called **Leighton**. It is a beautiful painting, quite reminding one of a **Paul Veronese**, so bright and full of light. Albert was enchanted with it - so much so that he made me buy it.'
- The subject is from **Vasari's account** of how the '**Rucellai Madonna**' was carried from the house of the 13th century painter Cimabue to the church of S. Maria Novella in Florence. Vasari also mentions **Charles of Anjou**, King of Naples, and Leighton has shown him on **horseback on the right** of the composition.'

Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574)

- Italian painter and architect who wrote ***Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects***, considered the foundation of art-historical writing.
- He was very successful in his lifetime and built a fortune.

Dante degli Alighieri (c. 1265-1321), MAJOR Italian poet and author of the *Divine Comedy*. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio are considered 'the three fountains' and Dante the 'father of the Italian language'. Dante's family supported the Guelph who

supported the Papacy and opposed the Ghibellines who supported the Holy Roman Emperor. He was promised in marriage to Gemma di Manetto Donati, but by this time Dante had fallen in love with Beatrice Portinari (known also as Bice), whom he first met when he was only nine. He frequently saw her after age 18 and set an example of 'courtly love'. When she died in 1290 he dedicated himself to religious studies.



Frederic Leighton, *Daedalus and Icarus*, c. 1869, private collection

Augustus of Prima Porta, 1st Century AD, Braccio Nuovo ('New Arm'), Vatican Museums. This statue of **Augustus Caesar** was discovered on April 20, 1863, in the **Villa of Livia at Prima Porta**, near Rome.

- This shows one of Leighton's most popular subjects, the classical world and mythology.
- **Daedalus and Icarus** is taken from **Ovid's Metamorphosis (VIII)** and it shows **Daedalus, the great inventor**, and his son Icarus who ends up flying too close to the sun.
- Leighton was President of the Royal Academy and was interested in elevating English art by basing it on Greek classical art. Leighton uses the story to represent the male nude with full academic treatment. Icarus is absorbed in his own beauty and his pose reflects the statue behind. The colour scheme is dramatic and effective but critics found the overall effect to be 'plastic' and 'as sharply cut as marble' yet the classic beauty was rare in English art (*Art Journal*, 1869).

Notes

- Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. **Daedalus** created a **labyrinth** to enable **King Minos** to hide the shameful **Minotaur**—the **offspring** of his **wife, Pasiphaë's** copulation with a bull which she had been made to love as a punishment by the gods. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Anthony S. Kline (University of Virginia)
- Daedalus had fled to Crete after killing his nephew Perdix (Talos) because he was so jealous of his nephew's invention of the saw and compasses. In another version Perdix/Talos was saved by Athena and turned into a partridge (Perdix) to save his life.
- Minos would not allow Daedalus to leave the island and reveal the secret of the maze, so in order to escape Daedalus invented wings for himself and his son. He

warned his son not to fly too high or too low but after they had both flown a long distance Icarus, 'drawn by desire for the heavens', flew too close to the sun, the wax used to hold the feathers to his wings melted and he plunged into the sea and drowned. Icarus's 'desire for the heavens' can be seen as **hubris** or spiritual longing and Leighton shows him as a hero, with a beautiful and powerful body but with an attitude of innocence and naivety. Daedalus is literally a '**cunning worker**' who, like Renaissance man, can be seen as a combination of **artist and scientist**. He is dark-skinned and hunched over while he works on strapping wings onto his beautiful fair-skinned son Icarus. The Greek Daidalos (*Δαίδαλος*) means 'cunning worker'.

- Leighton presents us with an artificial scene that he has skilfully manipulated to balance the figures and the statue with the landscape. *The Times* described the **drapery** as 'the **one conspicuous defect**' and '**deficient in beauty of line, dignity of intention, and truth to nature**'. *The Examiner* pointed out that the drapery appears to hang in the sky as there is no wind to support it; 'Exhibition of the Royal Academy: Third Article', *The Times*, Saturday, 15 May 1869, p. 12.
- The outer edge of the cape mimics a **skull**.
- Icarus is tall, muscular, fair-skinned, and his raised arm suggests the statue of **Augustus of Prima Porta** although other statues have been suggested as the source. have a similar appearance with short hair, fine features, a straight nose and prominent chin. The statue of Augustus recalls the fifth-century BCE statue of the *Spear Bearer* or *Doryphorus* by the sculptor Polykleitos.
- Daedalus can be understood in modern terms as a combination of artist and scientist. According to Diodorus, he was the first sculptor to separate the legs, extend the arms and open the eyes and he could therefore be said to be the inventor of sculpture.
- The painting could be illustrating the vanity of beauty or the hubris of science or the dangers associated with the scientific endeavour.
- In his Presidential **lecture** Leighton said that it is not the job of art to make any **moral points**. Art, he said, has a strength that has no rival, which is to **awaken sensations** 'directly emotional, and indirectly intellectual which can be communicated only through the sense of sight'.



Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), *Flaming June*, c.1895, Museo de Arte de Ponce, Puerto Rico

Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), *Danaë*, 1907-8, Leopold Museum, Vienna. Her father, King Acrisius, was told Danaë (pronounced 'dan-eye') son would kill him and so he locked her in a bronze tower or cave but Zeus came to her in the form of **golden rain** (usually shown as golden coins) and she gave **birth to Perseus**. The king cast them into the sea but Poseidon calmed the waves and they were washed up in another kingdom whose king raised Perseus but then promised not to marry Danaë only if Perseus would bring the head of the **Gorgon Medusa** which he did using Athena's shield, Hermes's winged sandals and Hade's helmet of invisibility. He brought back the head, then rescued Andromeda and visited the athletic games where he accidentally killed his old father with his javelin (or discus).

- Considered to be his **magnum opus**. It evokes the sleeping nymphs of the classical world and the idea of sleep itself. The **poisonous oleander** branch in the top right signifies the fragile link between **sleep and death** and this was painted the year before he died.
- The **figure's pose** gave Leighton a great deal of trouble. There are **five studies** of which the least successful was draped and the others nude. The draped figure looks the least lifelike showing why artists first draw the nude figure and then add clothing. One problem was making the angle of her right arm look natural.
- There are similarities with the much later Klimt but Leighton does not suggest any particular mythological narrative to justify the figure. It is just a sleeping woman in a pseudo-classical setting.

Notes

- In 1963, Luis A. Ferré, a Puerto Rican industrialist and politician, was on a trip around Europe, buying paintings and sculptures for the Museo de Arte de Ponce in

Puerto Rico, which he had founded. In Amsterdam, he found *Flaming June* abandoned in a corner. The owner said no one was interested in the painting because it was considered too old-fashioned for the time and offered it for **\$1,000** (£357, £6,657 today; it had failed to sell at auction for \$140). Ferré thought it was expensive, they entered into an agreement that Ferré would wire the money for the painting and the man gave his word of not selling it to anyone else. Ferré spent a sleepless night, worried that the gallery owner would not keep his promise and called him in the morning, assuring him that the money would be wired and asking him to keep his promise – which he did, even though other people had already gone to the gallery and liked the painting. *Flaming June* was taken to the Museo de Arte de Ponce and was prominently displayed. With the renewal of interest in Victorian art, in later years it was also loaned to important expositions around the world. *Flaming June* was on display at the Museo del Prado in Madrid in 2008 and the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart in Germany in 2009.



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

- Today he is the best known **artist of the Aesthetic Movement**. Whistler was an **American** who left for **Paris in 1855, aged 21, and never returned**. He attended the atelier of **Gleyre** but learnt on his own by copying paintings in the Louvre. Gleyre was a pupil of Ingres and taught the importance of **line** over colour and the **use of black** to produce a tonal harmony, both lessons rejected by the Impressionists.
- In France he had met Henri Fantin-Latour, Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet and Charles Baudelaire.



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *At the Piano*, 1858-9, Tate Britain

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *At the Piano*, 1858-9, Tate Britain

- This was Whistler's **first major painting** after returning to London in **1859**. It is his niece, **Annie Haden**, and her mother (Whistler's half-sister Deborah), in their London music room at 62 Sloane Street. Whistler's half-sister Deborah ('Debo' or 'Sis', the daughter of his father's first wife) married the physician, photographer and artist Francis Seymour Haden. A critic wrote of this painting, "[despite] a **recklessly bold manner and sketchiness of the wildest and roughest kind**, [it has] a genuine feeling for colour and a splendid power of composition and design, which evince a just appreciation of nature very rare amongst artists." The work is unsentimental and effectively contrasts the mother in black and the daughter in white, with other colours kept restrained in the manner advised by his teacher Gleyre.
- In 1867 Whistler quarrelled with Francis Haden and pushed him through a plate glass window. They never spoke again.
- It was rejected by the Salon but **displayed at the Royal Academy** the following year.



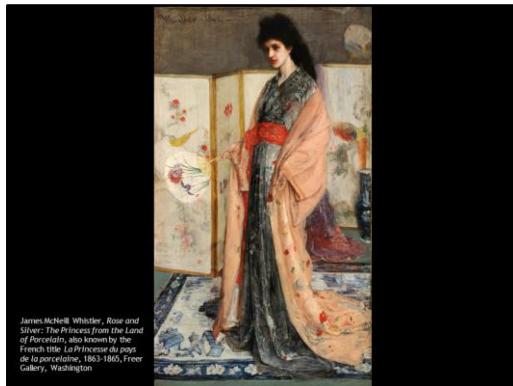
James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Green and Rose: The Music Room*, 1860-1, Freer Gallery, Washington

- The painting was originally titled *The Music Room* but Whistler later added *Harmony in Green and Rose*.
- He painted the same mother and child a few years later in the same room. This time the composition was more exciting. The mirror introduces an ambiguity in the space—who are we looking at in the mirror? The woman in the mirror is his half-sister, **Deborah Delano Haden** and her shadowy presence suggests her conventional marriage.
- The **woman in black** is wearing a **riding costume** associated with the **French courtesan**. **Annie** sits between the two life choices and maintains her privacy. A picture of a woman or girl reading is a sign of modernity as it implies education and advancement. It is similar to Degas family portrait of the period (*The Bellini Family*, 1859-60) but Whistler's high angle and use of overlapping forms predates devices that Degas would not use until the end of the century.
- This painting was given by Whistler's mother to Whistler's niece Julia Revillon who took it to Russia. On her return in 1892 she wished to sell it. Whistler insisted on at least 800 guineas but it was finally sold at auction for £199 10s. Whistler was very angry and reminded her it was a present from his mother to her mother (also called Julia).



James McNeill Whistler, *Wapping on Thames*, 1860-1864, National Gallery of Art, Washington

- Originally it was title *Wapping* but it was exhibited as *Wapping on Thames* at the Royal Academy in 1864.
- He represents the downtrodden of life in a picturesque manner. Finding beauty in modern life, as Baudelaire recommended.
- One critic wrote, '**Let us welcome Whistler in the rudest of his works.**' Other critics liked the representation of the Thames but were **shocked by the figures**, the *Realm* wrote, 'intrusion of the **hideous** figures ... we are glad to turn away', *The times* critic Tom Taylor wrote that the painting was, '**marred by a trio of grim and mean figures** ... even such powers as Mr. Whistler's do not excuse his **defiance of taste and propriety**'.
- In the foreground is Whistler's mistress **Johanna Heffernan** with **Alphonse Legros** and a **sailor**. Whistler represents her as a prostitute enticing two sailors. In the early version of this painting her bosom was displayed with a '**superlatively whorish air**'. But Whistler renders her more **ambiguously** in the final painting combining both the **spiritual and sensual elements**, like Rossetti.
- By the 1860s, **Rossetti** had acquired a cult status and Whistler **met him in July 1862** and by October they were '**thick as thieves**'.
- Wapping was polluted and full of disease, Dickens wrote about the, 'accumulated scum of humanity' in Wapping.
- The pub is still there and called *The Angel* and it is possible to sit where Heffernan was sitting.
- Whistler described the background as 'unbelievably difficult' but he was pleased with the sky, 'splendidly painted'.



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Rose and Silver: The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*, also known by the French title *La Princesse du pays de la porcelaine*, 1863–1865, Freer Gallery, Washington. Exhibited at the **Paris Salon in 1865**.

- We now come to a **very different artists** and perhaps the **most famous** associated with the Aesthetic Movement together with Oscar Wilde.
- Princess depicts a beautiful Western woman wearing a kimono and standing amidst numerous Asian objects, including a rug and screen as well as some porcelain. She holds a hand fan and looks at the viewer "wistfully". The entirety is rendered in an impressionistic manner.
- Princess was painted between 1863 and 1865 by James Abbott McNeill Whistler when he was about 30, with **Christine Spartali** (sister of the great Pre-Raphaelite artist Marie Spartali) serving as the model; Owen Edwards of Smithsonian describes Spartali as "an **Anglo-Greek beauty** whom all the artists of the day were **clamouring to paint**". Princess is one of several of Whistler's works painted during this period that depict a Western woman in **Asian surroundings** and Asian clothes.
- Whistler spent all winter of 1863-4 painting it and often scraped off everything he had painted and started again. The sittings went on until Spartali fell ill and Whistler used a model for the gown.
- When the portrait was completed, Spartali's father refused to purchase it; Whistler's large signature led another would-be buyer to withdraw. This may have led Whistler to develop his butterfly-style signature. The early history of the painting afterwards is fairly uncertain. In 1865 Princess was displayed at the Paris Salon. The following year, it was displayed at Gambart's French Gallery in London; as Whistler was in South America when the exhibition finished, his friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti received the painting. It was then sold by either Rossetti or Joanna Hiffernan, Whistler's muse and lover, to an unknown art collector thought to be Frederick Huth. Princess was returned to Whistler in 1867.
- Several years later, the portrait was **bought by Leyland** He displayed Princess in a

dining room filled with Kangxi ceramics, but was displeased how it had been decorated by a previous artist, **Thomas Jeckyll**. Whistler suggested that **Leyland modify the colouring** of the room to better accent his new acquisition; the **redesign was later handled by Whistler himself, as Jeckyll was ill**. The result was the **Peacock Room**. However, Whistler's modifications were more in-depth than those wished for by Leyland, resulting in a quarrel between the two.

Japonism

- Japonism is the influence of Japanese art, fashion and aesthetics on Western culture. During the Kaei era (1848–1854), after more than 200 years of seclusion, foreign merchant ships of various nationalities again began to visit Japan. Japonism started with a craze for collecting Japanese art, particularly ukiyo-e, of which some of the first samples were to be seen in Paris. Whistler has been considered important in introducing England to Japanese art in the same way as Paris has been considered the centre of all things Japanese in the context of Fine Art. Whistler acquired a good collection during his years in Paris before coming to England in 1859. In England the study and purchase of Japanese art by institutions had begun as early as 1852. An essential element of Japanese art, the use of conventional or flat decoration (and lack of perspective, see above) was in fact one of the propositions in Owen Jones *The Grammar of Ornament* 1856. Decorative art, if not fine art, when influenced by the principles of the arts of Japan is referred to in England as Anglo-Japanese style, distinct from the Japonisme of France.
- The first treaty was the **Convention of Kanagawa (1854)** between **Japan and the US**, negotiated by **Commander Matthew Perry** (1794-1858). Similar treaties were agreed with the UK (1854), the Russians (1855) and the French (1858). Through his mother, **Perry was a direct descendant** of the uncle of Scottish patriot **William Wallace** (d. 1305) who is commonly known as **Braveheart**. Among other mementos, Perry presented Queen Victoria with a breeding pair of Japanese Chin dogs, previously owned only by Japanese nobility. Perry had ten children and suffered from severe arthritis. He was awarded \$20,000 by the US Congress in appreciation of his work in Japan and used part of the money to publish a three volume report on the expedition.



James McNeill Whistler, *Rose and Silver: The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*, 1863-5, detail

- Detail of Whistler's painting showing the '**impressionistic**' brushwork.
- **Whistler** had spent a great deal of time in **Paris** and mixed at the **Café Guerbois** with **Manet, Legros, Fantin-Latour, Renoir, Degas, Monet and Cezanne**.
- Whistler, Henri Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros had been close friends since the late 1850s while Manet only started sharing their vision in 1861. The three formed the **Society de Trois** in 1858 and in 1865 Legros was replaced by **Albert Moore**. Whistler flamboyance and temperamental personality would have made him a natural rival to Manet had he stayed in Paris but both he and Legros moved permanently to London in 1863.
- The **Impressionists** did not come to prominence until the 1870s. They used loose brushstrokes and followed the example of painters such as Eugène Delacroix and J. M. W. Turner. They are best known for painting realistic scenes of modern life and for painting outdoors.
- The **first Impressionist exhibition was in 1872** and 12 were held between then and 1884. The name 'Impressionist' was a derisive descriptive by the critic **Louis Leroy** based on the title of Manet's painting *Impression, Sunrise* (*Impression, soleil levant*).
- Manet painting *The Luncheon on the Grass* (*Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*) and *Olympia* in 1863. The Paris Salon rejected *The Luncheon* for exhibition in 1863 but Manet exhibited it at the *Salon des Refusés* (Salon of the Rejected) later in the year. Emperor Napoleon III had initiated The *Salon des Refusés* after the Paris Salon rejected more than 4,000 paintings in 1863. *Olympia* was exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1865.



Symphony in White, No. 3, 1865-67, Barber Institute, University of Birmingham

- The term ‘symphony’ was intended to emphasize the abstract quality of the paintings, like music they have no meaning.
- The fan in 2 and 3 shows the Japanese influence. Joanna Hiffernan (with the fan) and Emelie ‘Milly’ Jones, wife of an actor friend, were the two models in No.3.
- However, the viewer can always search for a narrative in a figurative painting.
 - A newly married woman after her wedding night (according to a French critic).
 - After married life she looks sad standing by the fireplace.
 - Collapsed in the company of a sympathetic friend. The consequences of marriage?

Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl, 1861-2

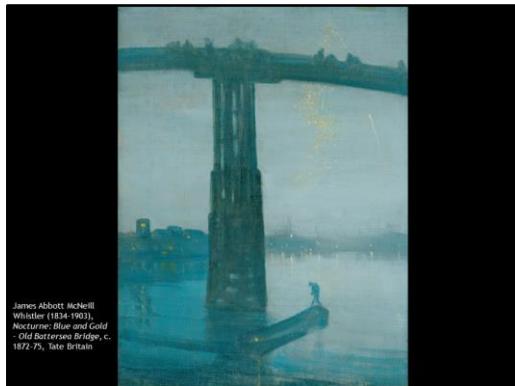
- This is one of his earliest paintings in the new style with a title linking it to the abstract nature of music
- It was first shown at the Salon des Refusés in 1863 and critics had many interpretations of he meaning.

Whistler's The White Girl – Joanna Hiffernan

- This full-length painting is a portrait of **Joanna Hiffernan** (c. 1843-after 1903) and Irish artists' model and muse romantically linked to Whistler and the French painter Gustave Courbet (1819-1877). Whistler had a six year relationship with her starting in 1860. She was described as not only beautiful but intelligent and sympathetic and was Whistler's constant companion. She had red hair and a violent temper. When they broke up, possibly because of her affair with Courbet

when Whistler was away in South America, she helped to raise Whistler's son, the result of an affair with parlour maid Louisa Fanny Hanson. In 1861 she sat for this picture in a studio (Boulevard des Batignolles) in Paris.

- This painting was originally called *The White Girl* but he later started to refer to it as *Symphony in White, No. 1* to emphasise his commitment to his 'art for art's sake' philosophy. It was rejected by the Royal Academy and the Salon in Paris but **accepted at the Salon des Refusés in 1863**. The Salon des Refusés was held as a result of the Salon jury refusing two-thirds of the paintings submitted including paintings by Courbet, Édouard Manet and Camille Pissarro. Emperor Napoleon III heard of the artists' complaints and, sensitive to public opinion, he decided to display the rejected works to allow the public to decide. **This painting and Édouard Manet's *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* are the two most famous works on display.** More than a thousand visitors a day crowded in critics had mostly **favourable views** of this painting. One thought it showed a new bride's lost innocence, others linked it to **Wilkie Collins's novel, *The Woman in White***, others thought she was a **ghost or apparition**. French critics linked it to the English Pre-Raphaelite movement and so regarded it as **somewhat eccentric**.
- The woman holds a lily and there are flowers scattered on the floor. Art historians have found the most interesting element is the bear or wold skin rug she is standing on. Whether it is a bear or a wolf has been debated and the animal's face contains elements of both. It is generally regarded as signifying animal passions which have been controlled by the woman or women. When the painting is hung at the normal height it is the most obvious element of the painting but critics at the time did not comment on it. Perhaps we try to read too much into paintings. Whistler in a letter to George du Maurier described it as '..a woman in a beautiful white cambric dress, standing against a window which filters the light through a transparent white muslin curtain – but the figure receives a strong light from the right and therefore the picture, barring the red hair, is one gorgeous mass of brilliant white.' In other words, like many artists, he described it formally in terms of light and colour. The 'Symphony' title also suggest he intended it to be an abstract assembly of formal elements rather than a symbolic painting with a deep meaning.



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne: Blue and Gold - Old Battersea Bridge*, c. 1872-75, Tate Britain

The Whistler v. Ruskin Trial

- This painting gave rise to one of the **central artistic controversy of the Victorian period**, known as the **Whistler v. Ruskin trial**. The trial tells us a lot about how the Victorians regarded art and the nature of the changes Whistler helped bring about.
- This painting and the next were exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, the year it opened. John Ruskin reviewed Whistler's work in his publication *Fors Clavigera* on July 2, 1877. Ruskin praised Burne-Jones, while he attacked Whistler:
For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [founder of the Grosvenor Gallery] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of Cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face.
- Critics by convention **did not criticize** paintings as they knew the artist had to make a living. If they did not like a painting they ignored it or made a critical comment alongside some positive points.
- Whistler, seeing the attack in the newspaper, replied to his friend George Boughton, "It is the most debased style of criticism I have had thrown at me yet." He then went to his solicitor and drew up a writ for libel which was served to Ruskin. Whistler hoped to recover **£1,000 plus the costs of the action**. The case came to trial the following year after delays caused by Ruskin's bouts of mental illness, while Whistler's financial condition continued to deteriorate. It was heard at the Queen's Bench of the High Court on November 25 and 26 of 1878.
- Although, we do not have a transcript of the Whistler v. Ruskin trial sufficient

reports were published to enable it to be reconstructed.

When asked '**Are those figures** on the top of the bridge intended for people?' Whistler replied 'They are **just what you like.**'

When the judge asked **if it was a barge** beneath the bridge,

Whistler replied 'Yes, **I am very much flattered** at your seeing that. The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a **certain harmony of colour.**'

- Whistler stressed the colour rather than a harmony of form and the form is suppressed by the overall similarity in tone and hue; with the exception of the gold dots the painting is a wash of blue, in places a thin wash that allows the canvas to show. Whistler mixed large quantities of the predominant tone that he called his 'sauce', and although he started on an easel, he often had to throw the canvas on the floor to stop the sauce running off. The sky and water were rendered by 'great sweeps of the brush of exactly the right tone.'



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne in Black and Gold The Falling Rocket*, c. 1875, Detroit Institute of Arts

- This painting was the other one displayed at the Grosvenor gallery that Ruskin criticized. It received less discussion at the trial but is the most abstract and 'modern' in its freedom and exciting invocation of fireworks at night.
- The lawyer for John Ruskin, Attorney General Sir John Holker, cross-examined Whistler:

Holker: **'What is the subject of Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket?'**

Whistler: 'It is a night piece and represents the **fireworks at Cremorne Gardens.**'

Holker: **'Not a view of Cremorne?'**

Whistler: 'If it were A View of Cremorne it would certainly bring about nothing but **disappointment** on the part of the beholders.'

 It is an **artistic arrangement**. That is why I call it a nocturne....'

Holker: 'Did it take you much time to paint the Nocturne in Black and Gold? **How soon did you knock it off?**'

Whistler: 'Oh, I 'knock one off' possibly in a **couple of days** – one day to do the work and another to finish it...'

Holker: **'The labour of two days is that for which you ask two hundred guineas?'**

Whistler: '**No, I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime.**'

- At the heart of the criticism was the idea that an **artist charged for the number of**

hours work put into the painting and by implication an expensive picture was expected to be a clear representation of something, should be **well finished** and should **exhibit the hard work** put into it through its size, the skill the artist needed to accurately represent something and the attention to detail of its finish.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Abbott_McNeill_Whistler



James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room*, 1876-7

Rose and Silver: The Princess from the Land of Porcelain 1863-5, was bought by Leyland

The Peacock Room

- *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* (better known as ***The Peacock Room***) is James McNeill Whistler's masterpiece of interior decorative mural art. He painted the panelled room in a rich and unified palette of brilliant blue-greens with over-glazing and metallic gold leaf. Painted between 1876–77, it now is considered one of the **greatest surviving aesthetic interiors**, and best examples of the Anglo-Japanese style.
- **Albert Moore** had used the **peacock** in room decoration in 1873 at 15 Berkeley Square but before then it was discussed most frequently in connection with Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution. Of course, the peacock has a long history in art and has been used since classical times to represent beauty as well as immortality, rebirth and pride.
- The painting I showed earlier, *Rose and Silver: The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*, was part of the Peacock Room.
- The Peacock Room was originally designed as a dinning room in the townhouse located at 49 Prince's Gate in Kensington. It was owned by the British shipping magnate Frederick Richards Leyland. Leyland engaged the British architect **Richard Norman Shaw** to remodel and redecorate his home. Shaw entrusted the remodelling of the dining room to **Thomas Jeckyll**, another British architect experienced in the Anglo-Japanese style.
- He covered the walls with **6th-century wall hangings** of Cuir de Cordoue that had been originally brought to England as part of the **dowry of Catherine of Aragon**. They were painted with her heraldic device, the open pomegranate, and a series of

red roses, **Tudor roses**, to symbolise her union with Henry VIII. They had hung on the walls of a Tudor style house in Norfolk for centuries, before they were **bought by Leyland for £1,000**.

- Against these walls, **Jekyll** constructed an intricate lattice framework of engraved spindled walnut shelves that held Leyland's collection of Chinese blue and white porcelain, mostly from the Kangxi era of the Qing dynasty.
- Jeckyll had nearly completed his decorative scheme when an **illness** compelled him to abandon the project. Whistler, who was then working on decorations for the entrance hall of Leyland's house, volunteered to finish Jeckyll's work in the dining room. Concerned that the **red roses** adorning the leather wall hangings **clashed** with the colours in ***The Princess***, Whistler suggested **retouching the leather with yellow paint**, and Leyland agreed to that **minor alteration**.
- During Leyland's absence however, Whistler grew bolder with his revisions.
Well, you know, I just painted on. I went on—without design or sketch—it grew as I painted. And toward the end I reached such a point of perfection—putting in every touch with such freedom—that when I came round to the corner where I started, why, I had to paint part of it over again, as the difference would have been too marked. And the harmony in blue and gold developing, you know, I forgot everything in my joy in it.
- Upon returning, **Leyland was shocked** by the "improvements." Artist and patron **quarrelled so violently** over the room and the proper compensation for the work that the important relationship for Whistler was terminated. At one point, Whistler gained access to Leyland's home and painted two fighting peacocks meant to represent the artist and his patron, and which he title *Art and Money: or, The Story of the Room*.
- Whistler is reported to have said to Leyland, '**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.**'
- The dispute between Whistler and Leyland did not end there. In 1879, Whistler was forced to file for bankruptcy, and **Leyland was his chief creditor** at the time. When the creditors arrived to inventory the artist's home for liquidation, they were greeted by *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Filthy Lucre (The Creditor)*, a large painted caricature of Leyland portrayed as an anthropomorphic demonic peacock playing a piano, sitting upon Whistler's house, painted in the same colours featured in the Peacock Room.
- He referenced the incident again in his book, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. Adding to the emotional drama was **Whistler's fondness for Leyland's wife**,

Frances, who **separated** from her husband in **1879**. Another result of this drama was **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.

- Having acquired *The Princess from the Land of Porcelain*, American industrialist and art collector Charles Lang Freer, anonymously purchased the entire room in 1904 from Leyland's heirs, including Leyland's daughter and her husband, the British artist Val Prinsep. Freer then had the contents of the Peacock Room installed in his Detroit mansion. After Freer's death in 1919, the Peacock Room was permanently installed in the Freer Gallery of Art at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. The gallery opened to the public in 1923.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Peacock_Room



E. W. Godwin (1833-1886) designed Aesthetic Movement side table, William A & S Smee Furniture Manufacturers

E. W. Godwin (1833-1886) designed Aesthetic Movement side table, William A & S Smee Furniture Manufacturers

A rare Aesthetic Movement side cabinet, designed by E.W. Godwin (1833 – 86), ebonized black finish over mahogany, drawers numbered & stamped. Anglo-Japanese brass fittings and painted.

Aesthetic Movement – Decorative Arts

- This will be covered next week in the class on the Arts & Crafts Movement.
- The **design reform movement predicated** the Aesthetic Movement and Arts & Crafts and one of its leading exponents was **Owen Jones**, architect and Orientalist. He set out the key principles of design and these became not only the basis of the **Government schools** of teaching but also the propositions which preface *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which is still regarded as the finest systematic study or practical sourcebook of historic world ornament.
- Jones identified the need for a **new and modern style** which would meet the requirements of the modern world, rather than the continual re-cycling of historic styles, but saw no reason to reject the lessons of the past. **Christopher Dresser**, a student and later Professor at the school worked with Owen Jones on *The Grammar of Ornament*, as well as on the 1863 decoration of The Oriental Courts (Chinese, Japanese, and Indian) at the South Kensington Museum, advanced the search for a new style with his two publications *The Art of Decorative Design* 1862, and *Principles of Design* 1873.
- **Aesthetic style** furniture is characterized by several common themes:
 - **Ebonized wood** (painted or stained to an ebony black finish) with gilt highlights.
 - **Far Eastern influence.**
 - Prominent **use of nature**, especially flowers, birds, ginkgo leaves, and peacock feathers.

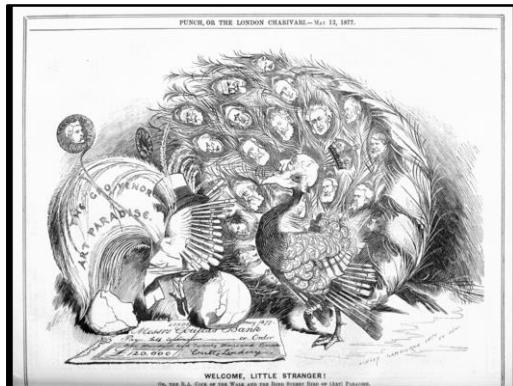
- **Blue and white** on porcelain and other fine china.
- As aesthetic movement decor **was about sensuality and nature**, nature themes often appear on the furniture. A typical aesthetic feature is the **gilded carved flower**, or the **stylized peacock feather**. Furniture may have realistic-looking 3-dimensional-like renditions of birds or flowers carved into the wood.
- Contrasting with the ebonized-gilt furniture is the use of blue and white for porcelain and china. Similar themes of peacock feathers and nature would be used in blue and white tones on dinnerware and other crockery. The blue and white design was also popular on square porcelain tiles. It is reported that Oscar Wilde used aesthetic decorations during his youth. This aspect of the movement was also **satirised** by *Punch* magazine and in the **Gilbert & Sullivan comic opera Patience** (1881).



Grosvenor Gallery, West Wing, 1877

- Founded by **Sir Coutts Lindsay** and Lady Caroline **Blanche** Elizabeth Fitzroy (a Rothschild on her mother's side) on 135-37 **New Bond Street** in London
- Unlike the Royal Academy and other exhibition spaces the paintings were hung individually with space around the frames. It was a commercial gallery but there were no signs of commerce.
- Coutts Lindsay selected the artists to hang and he favoured young artists, women artists and the avant garde. **Watts, Burne-Jones and Whistler all enjoyed a meteoric rise after the 1877 Grosvenor show.**
- **John Ruskin** went to the opening to see Burne-Jones but attacked Whistler in letter 79 of *Fors Clavigera*. Whistler sued leading to a watershed change in Victorian art appreciation.
 - At the trial *Nocturne Blue and Gold-Old Battersea Bridge* was attacked the most with the lawyer, Burne-Jones and the art critic Tom Taylor arguing for Ruskin on the labour value of art, the nature of professionalism in art and the source of aesthetic authority – artist or critic. Previously critics did not attack artists they did not like, they ignored them.
- Artists were anti-establishment, the first exhibition included,
 - Edward Burne-Jones
 - James McNeill Whistler
 - George Frederic Watts
 - William Holman Hunt
 - John Everett Millais
 - Albert Moore
 - John Roddam Spencer Stanhope
 - Frederic Leighton
 - Lawrence Alma-Tadema
 - Edward Poynter

- Among other RA members who regularly exhibited at the Grosvenor were George Clausen, Herbert von Herkomer, Valentine Prinsep, William Blake Richmond, and American John Singer Sargent. Sculptors who exhibited included William Hamo Thornycroft (RA), Edgar Boehm (RA), who exhibited from 1877-89, American Auguste Saint-Gaudens, and French modernist Auguste Rodin in 1882 (*A Bronze Mask*). Late-century artists who blended Pre-Raphaelitism in the 1880s with Aestheticism included Walter Crane, John Melhuish Strudwick, Marie Spartali Stillman, and Spencer Stanhope.
- The Grosvenor also hung works by women in its first exhibition and included them every year. Among the most well-known were: Sophie Anderson, Laura Alma-Tadema, Marie Spartali Stillman, Marianne Stokes, Louisa Starr Canzioni, Evelyn Pickering De Morgan, Louise Jopling, Anne Lea Merritt, Clara Montalba, Annie Louise Robinson Swynnerton, Princess Louise (Queen Victoria's daughter), and Dorothy Tennant. Of 1028 artists shown in the fourteen years of gallery exhibitions, **25% were women**
- It also highlighted,
 - The British Impressionists of the new English Art Club
 - The newlyn School
 - The Glasgow Boys (James Guthrie, John Lavery and others)



(Edward) Linley Sambourne, 'Welcome, Little Stranger!', *Punch*, 12 May, 1877

- This cartoon shows the rivalry between the Grosvenor on the left and the Royal Academy on the right.
 - The bird on the left is fresh from the egg and its tail feathers include '**Tissot, Burne Jones**' and '**Whistler, Watts**'. The bird wears a businessman's hat. The cheque for **£120,000** is to the Contractors and drawn on Coutts Bank showing that money is no object for the new bird. £120,000 was the cost of building and opening the Grosvenor Gallery.
 - The peacock on the right has the head of **Sir Francis Grant PRA** and a crown labelled 'Patronage' and the heads include Linley Sambourne, Millais and Leighton. The plumage also includes shillings, the entrance fee.
- Lindsay's aim was artistic and exhibition reform. Young and neglected artists and women artists, watercolour and decorative art.
- The gallery was a success but short-lived as Coutts had a mistress which although Blanche had known about since 1869 she decided to leave him in 1882. She withdrew her money and her reputation. It closed in 1890 leaving Coutts with an overdraft of £110,000. He retired to Roehampton with his mistress Kate Burfield and when his wife died in 1912 Coutts, aged 88 married her, but he only lived another year.

Linley Sambourne

Grosvenor Gallery

Julie Codell, 'On the Grosvenor Gallery 1877-90'

- 'The Grosvenor Gallery (1877-90), founded by Sir Coutts Lindsay and Lady Caroline Blanche Elizabeth Fitzroy (a Rothschild on her mother's side) on 135-37 New Bond Street in London, generated a seismic change in the conventional Victorian art world in its exhibition of then avant-garde artists

like Edward Burne-Jones, James McNeill Whistler and G. F Watts, and other leading members of the Aesthetic Movement, such as Frederic Leighton. Its unique methods of display, invitations to exhibit, support of women artists, and stunning building and interior decoration marked its ties to the Aesthetic Movement and its challenge to the Royal Academy.'

Exhibition Options for Artists

- Private galleries, dealers and one-man shows
- Royal Academy (from 1768)
- The Royal Watercolour Society (from 1804, originally the Old Watercolour Society)
- British Institution (1805-1867, but the members were aristocrats not artists and their tastes were conservative)
- The Royal Society of British Artists (1823, granted a Royal charter in 1887)
- The Free Exhibition (1847-1849), changed to the national Institution of Fine Arts (1850-1861)
- Hogarth Club (1858-1864), in Waterloo Place, Piccadilly, founded by former Pre-Raphaelites Hunt, Rossetti, Burne-Jones
- The New British Institution (1870-1876)
- Supplementary Exhibition (1869-1871)
- Dudley Gallery (1865-1918), one small room in the Egyptian Hall

References

<http://www.thefreelibrary.com/%27That+mighty+art+of+Black-and-White%27%3A+Linley+Sambourne,+Punch+and+the...-a0220059010>



George du Maurier (1834-1896), *The Aesthete*, Punch, 5 February 1876, wood engraving, p. 33

"Steeped in aesthetic culture, and surrounded by artistic wall-papers, blue china, Japanese fans, medieval snuff-boxes, and his favourite periodicals of the eighteenth century, the dilettante De Tomkyns complacently boasts that he never reads a newspaper, and that the events of the outer world possess no interest for him whatever."

Edward Linley Sambourne (1844-1910) was an English cartoonist and illustrator who worked for *Punch* for more than forty years. His house at 18 Stafford Terrace is open to the public and contains the Sambourne Museum.

George du Maurier (1834-1896) was a French-born British cartoonist and author known for his cartons in *Punch* and his novel *Trilby*. He was the father of actor Gerald du Maurier and grandfather of the writers Angela du Maurier (1904-2002, novelist of eleven books including the autobiography *It's Only the Sister*) and Dame Daphne du Maurier (*Rebecca, Jamaica Inn*). He was also the father of Sylvia Llewelyn Davies whose five boys inspired J.M. Barrie's Peter Pan.



J. Priestman Atkinson, *The Peacock Train* — "You just pull a String, and there you are!" *Punch*, 18 January 1879, page 15

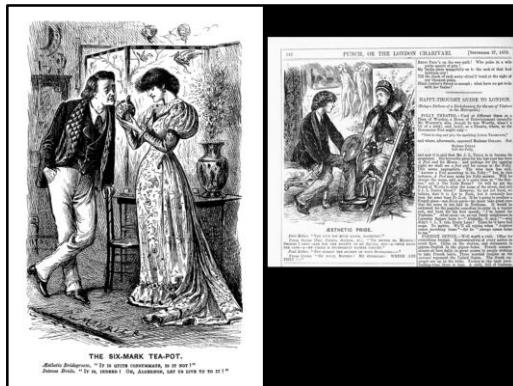
George du Maurier, Perils of Aesthetic Culture, *Punch*, 10 May 1879, p. 210

Uncle John (suddenly bursting on newly-wedded pair). "Hullo, my turtle-doves!

What's the row? Not quarrelled yet, I trust?" Edwin. "Oh dear no. We've been going in for high art, that's all." Angelina. "And drawing from casts of the Antique." Edwin. "And Angy's nose turns up so at the end, and she's got such a skimpy waist, and such a big head, and such tiny little hands and feet! Hang it all, I thought her perfection!" Angelina. "Yes, Uncle John; And Edwin's got a long upper lip, and a runaway chin, and he c-c-can't grow a beard and moustache! Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Punch Artists

As the most prominent satirical weekly of the Victorian age, and the principal home of such graphic artists as John Leech (1817-1864, prolific, started contributing in 1841, first use of the word cartoon in 1843), Richard Doyle (1824-1883, started contributing in 1843 aged 19, a very devout Roman Catholic which resulted in his resignation), John Tenniel ('Chief Cartoon', *Punch*'s leading artist), George du Maurier, Linley Sambourne and Harry Furniss (contributed 2,600 drawings, illustrated 29 books of his own), *Punch* was bound to pay frequent attention to the art world, and of course to that world's most famous, or infamous, institution, the Royal Academy.



George du Maurier, The Six-Mark Tea-pot, *Punch*, 30 October 1880, p. 194
 Aesthetic Bridegroom. "It is quite consummate, is it not?" Intense Bride. "It is, indeed! Oh, Algernon, let us live up to it!"
 Simplistically, all genuine Kangxi period (1662-1722) marks should be of six characters. In practice, reading Chinese porcelain marks is much more complex.

George du Maurier, 'Aesthetic Pride', *Punch*, 17 September 1879, p. 142
 Fond mother: "You live too much alone, Algernon!"
 Young Genius (Poet, Painter, Sculptor, etc.), "'Tis better so, Mother! Besides I only care for the society of my *equals*, and – a – such being the case – a – my circle is necessarily rather limited."
 Fond Mother, "But surely the society of your superiors - "
 Young Genius, "My *what*, Mother! My *superiors*! WHERE ARE THEY!!!"



Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898, *The Golden Stairs*, 1876-80, Tate Britain

This painting represents a mood rather than telling a story. The painting has provoked much debate and one view is that the eighteen women are spirits in an enchanted dream. The painting might also be purely decorative. It was first conceived in 1872 after a trip to Italy, the painting was begun in 1876, but not completed and exhibited until 1880 when it was shown at the Grosvenor Gallery. Clothed in vaguely Renaissance costumes, the women are painted in a monochromatic palette designed to create a sense of mood and timelessness. One of the artist's first attempts at working on such a large scale, the very vertical structure of the canvas draws the viewer's eye downward through the long parade of nearly identical women.

The underlying idea, popularised in the 1870s by the critic Walter Pater, is that 'all the arts aspire to the condition of music'. Paintings like this can be as much about design as meaning.

References

See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/burne-jones-the-golden-stairs-n04005>

See <http://smarthistory.khanacademy.org/burne-jones-the-golden-stairs.html>

See <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bj/paintings/gehler7.html>



Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Proserpine*, 1873-77, Tate Britain, (model Jane Morris)

- Rossetti worked for seven years on eight separate canvases before he finished the painting. This is the seventh version. The eighth and final version of 1882 is in Birmingham Art Gallery. He painted it a time when his mental health was precarious and his love for Jane Morris obsessive. Rossetti wrote:

She is represented in a gloomy corridor of her palace, with the fatal fruit in her hand. As she passes, a gleam strikes on the wall behind her from some inlet suddenly opened, and admitting for a moment the sight of the upper world; and she glances furtively towards it, immersed in thought. The incense-burner stands beside her as the attribute of a goddess. The ivy branch in the background may be taken as a symbol of clinging memory

- A drawing of Proserpine in coloured chalks fetched £3,274,500 at auction in London in 2013.
- He was a poet and his accompanying sonnet (top right) is of longing:

Afar away the light that brings cold cheer
Unto this wall, – one instant and no more
Admitted at my distant palace-door
Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.
Afar those skies from this Tartarean grey
That chills me: and afar how far away,
The nights that shall become the days that were.
Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing
Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign:
And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,

(Whose sounds mine inner sense in fain to bring,
Continually together murmuring) —
'Woe me for thee, unhappy Proserpine'.

Proserpine

Proserpine or Proserpina was a Roman goddess whose cult and myths were based on the Greek Persephone and her mother Demeter. She was abducted by the gods of the underworld and her mother Cere frantically searched for her. In the Greek version she was abducted by Hades or Pluto. Hades was a dark, unsympathetic figure but in the Pluto version they formed a divine couple the ruled the underworld together.

In the Roman version Ovid describes how Venus, in order to bring love to Pluto, sent her son Amor also known as Cupid to hit Pluto with one of his arrows. Proserpina was in Sicily, at the Pergusa Lake near Enna, where she was playing with some nymphs and collecting flowers, when Pluto came out from the volcano Etna with four black horses. He abducted her in order to marry her and live with her in the underworld of which he was the ruler.

Her mother Ceres, also known as Demeter, the goddess of agriculture or of the Earth, went looking for her in vain to every corner of the earth, but was not able to find anything but a small belt that was floating upon a little lake (made with the tears of the nymphs). In her desperation Ceres angrily stopped the growth of fruits and vegetables, bestowing a malediction on Sicily. Ceres refused to go back to Mount Olympus and started walking on the Earth, making a desert at every step.

Worried, Jupiter sent Mercury to order Pluto (Jupiter's brother) to free Proserpina. Pluto obeyed, but before letting her go he made her eat **six pomegranate seeds**, because those who have eaten the food of the dead could not return to the world of the living. This meant that she would have to live **six months** of each year with him, and stay the rest with her mother. This story was undoubtedly meant to illustrate the changing of the seasons: when Ceres welcomes her daughter back in the spring the earth blossoms, and when Proserpina must be returned to her husband it withers.

In another version of the story, Proserpina ate only **four pomegranate seeds**, and she did so of her own accord. When Jupiter ordered her return, Pluto struck a deal with Jupiter, saying that since she had stolen his pomegranate seeds, she must stay with him four months of the year in return. For this reason, in spring when Ceres receives her daughter back, the crops blossom, and in summer they flourish.

In the autumn Ceres changes the leaves to shades of brown and orange (her favourite colours) as a gift to Proserpina before she has to return to the underworld. During the time that Proserpina resides with Pluto, the world goes through winter, a time when

the earth is barren.



Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*, 1875-8, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*, 1875-8, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard
A replica was painted by Rossetti and is now in the Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool
with two angels below and three cherubs above.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*, 1875-8, Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard
University

A replica was sold to Frederick Leyland in 1879 and is now in the Lady Lever Art
Gallery

- Based on one of his best known poems published in the Germ.
- The four stanzas are inscribed on the frame,

*The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.*

*Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.*

*Her seemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day*

Had counted as ten years.

*(To one, it is ten years of years.
... Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)*

***Degeneration*, Max Nordau**

- Appeared in English two months before Oscar Wilde was found guilty for homosexual acts.
- Influenced by Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) who thought criminality was inherited.
- He said an age derives its ideals of morality and beauty from art. If they are absurd or anti-social or amoral they corrupt the whole of society.
- In France, 'a contempt for the traditional views of custom and morality.' He sees it as a sort of decadence, a world-weariness, and the wilful rejection of the moral boundaries governing the world.
- Condemns rising anti-Semitism of the late 19th century as a product of degeneration although, ironically, it was the Nazi Party that took up the concept of degeneration.
- He saw degeneration as a mental illness and cited the first degenerate artists as the Pre-Raphaelites.

Max Simon Nordau

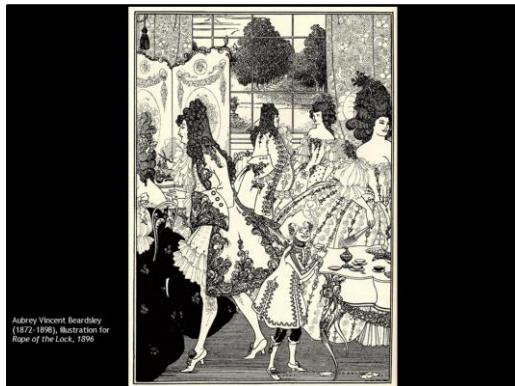
- Born Simon Maximilian Südfeld; July 29, 1849 – January 23, 1923, was a Zionist leader, physician, author, and social critic.
- He was a co-founder of the World Zionist Organization together with Theodor Herzl, and president or vice president of several Zionist congresses.
- The poem *The Blessed Damozel* was started in 1847 and first published in 1850 in *The Germ*. It was perhaps his most important work.
- The poem was criticized in *Degeneracy* (1892) by Max Nordau as exhibiting mental illness.



Aubrey Beardsley, *self-portrait*, 1892, pen and wash

Aubrey Beardsley, *Oscar Wilde at Work*, sketch

- Decadent art is often confused with degenerate and fin-de-siècle art and with the Symbolism.
- The term 'degenerate art' (*Entartete Kunst*) was adopted by the Nazis and was enforced by book burning, artists being dismissed from teaching positions and curators being replaced by Party members.
- In Britain degenerate art is associated with Oscar Wilde
- The term decadent dates from the eighteenth century and was applied to Victor Hugo and Romanticism in general. Baudelaire used the term proudly to refer to his rejection of banal 'progress'. In Britain the leading artists were Oscar Wilde and Aubrey Beardsley.
- Beardsley was a leading figure in the late Aesthetic Movement. He had a private income from his grandmother but had to sell property to pay off a 'breach of promise' claim. He took up art under the advice of Burne-Jones. He was influenced by the poster of Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Japanese prints. He said, 'I have one aim—the grotesque. If I am not grotesque I am nothing.' and wore grey suits with yellow gloves and green hair. Later he converted to Catholicism and asked his publisher to destroy all his erotic prints which he did not do. He died of tuberculosis aged 25.
- The term derived from Max Nordau's 1892 book *Entartung* (Degeneration). He drew on Cesare Lombroso the criminologist who attempted to prove people were born criminals and had criminal characteristics that could be measured. This in turn was allegedly derived from Darwin's work on evolution. Nordau attacked the Aesthetic Movement and Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Rossetti. Which he thought could be explained as a product of mental illness. He thought the Impressionists suffered from diseased visual cortex. Ironically, Nordau was a Jew (later an agnostic) and founder of the Zionist movement even though his theory was used by the Nazis to criticize 'Jewish art' and demand Aryan purity..



Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872–1898), illustration for *Rape of the Lock*, 1896

The Rape of the Lock

This was one of Beardsley's last major illustration projects. The poem is by Alexandra Pope (1688-1744) and it satirises a minor incident by comparing it to the world of the gods and in so doing satirises eighteenth century England. It is based on an actual incident and Pope satirises the story by structuring it as a classical epic and introducing sylphs, guardian spirits of virgins, and gods and goddesses. Lord Petre (the Baron in the poem), from an aristocratic, recusant Catholic family, lusted after Arabella (represented as Belinda in the poem) and cut off a lock of her hair without permission. This caused a breach between the two families. In Beardsley's illustration the Baron can be seen on the left of the picture snipping off a lock of Belinda's hair with a pair of scissors

Aubrey Vincent Beardsley

Beardsley was an English illustrator and author. His drawings in black ink, influenced by the style of Japanese woodcuts, emphasized the grotesque, the decadent, and the erotic. He was a leading figure in the Aesthetic movement which also included Oscar Wilde and James A. McNeill Whistler. Beardsley's contribution to the development of the Art Nouveau and poster styles was significant, despite the brevity of his career before his early death from tuberculosis.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde wrote, 'All art is quite useless'. In this one sentence, Wilde encapsulates the complete principles of the Aesthetic Movement popular in Victorian England. That is to say, real art takes no part in moulding the social or moral identities of society, nor should it. Art should be beautiful and pleasure its observer, but to imply further-reaching influence would be a mistake. The explosion of aesthetic philosophy in *fin-de-siècle* English society, as exemplified by Oscar Wilde, was not confined to merely art, however. Rather, the proponents of this

philosophy extended it to life itself. Here, aestheticism advocated whatever behaviour was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one's life, in the tradition of hedonism. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it.

At the end of the century there was a wave of pessimism. We see this in *The Importance of Being Ernest* (Oscar Wilde) :

Algernon: I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.

Lane: It never is, sir.

Algernon: Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

Lane: I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

The works of the Decadents and the Aesthetes contain the hallmarks typical of *fin de siècle* art. Holbrook Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties* describes the characteristics of English decadence which are: perversity, artificiality, egoism, and curiosity.

- Perversity: a concern for the perverse, unclean, and unnatural. Romanticism encouraged audiences to view physical traits as indicative of one's inner self but the *fin de siècle* artists accepted beauty as the basis of life and so valued that which was not conventionally beautiful.
- Artificiality: this belief in beauty in the abject leads to the obsession with artifice and symbolism, as artists rejected ineffable ideas of beauty in favour of the abstract. Through symbolism, aesthetes could evoke sentiments and ideas in their audience without relying on an infallible general understanding of the world.
- Egoism: a term similar to that of ego-mania meaning disproportionate attention placed on one's own endeavours. This can result in a type of alienation and anguish, as in Baudelaire's case, and demonstrates how aesthetic artists chose cityscapes over country as a result of their aversion to the natural.
- Curiosity is identifiable through diabolism and the exploration of the evil or immoral, focusing on the morbid and macabre, but without imposing any moral lessons on the audience.

The term 'decadence' was adopted by British Society in preference to the French term 'Symbolism' even though they embraced the same tenets. Beardsley's decadence merges with rejection of contemporary society by Rossetti, Morris, Leighton and others but is more extreme. The overtones of 'decadence' merge into Max Nordau's pseudo-scientific idea of 'degeneration' and both signal the end of an era and the beginning of modern art.

References

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aubrey_Beardsley

See <http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/journal/past-issues/issue-1/duggan/>

See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fin_de_si%C3%A8cle



Aubrey Vincent Beardsley (1872- 1898), The Peacock Skirt; A Portfolio of Aubrey Beardsley's drawings illustrating 'Salome' by Oscar Wilde

Black and white line block print on Japanese vellum depicting a woman, presumed to be Salome, viewed from the back, in a flowing robe with a dramatic stylised peacock design on the skirt, as well as an elaborate headdress complete with stylised peacock feathers, some of which trail down her back. To her left is a stylised peacock within a decorative dotted, scalloped border, whilst on her right is a male figure, generally assumed to be the Young Syrian, with his left arm partially outstretched, wearing a pleated knee-length robe and a headdress.

According to Stephen Calloway in his book, *Aubrey Beardsley* (London: V&A Publications, 1998, p. 66):

'Whilst retaining some slight reminiscences and mannerisms of Beardsley's Mantegnesque style, The Peacock Skirt, of all the Salome pictures, most clearly reveals his great debt to Whistler's painted decorations in the house of Frederick Leyland.'

Summary: Aesthetic Movement

- ▶ Also called 'Art for art's sake' and 'The Cult of Beauty'
- ▶ Key artists: Rossetti, Whistler, Albert Moore, Burne-Jones
- ▶ It became a fashion statement and a way of life
- ▶ It was heavily satirised
- ▶ At the end of the century it became 'Decadent' and 'Degenerate'
- ▶ It was also linked to the Arts & Crafts Movement as we shall next week

