



- The aim of the course is look at nineteenth-century British art in new ways and so to dispel the myths. One of these myths is that France was the only country in the nineteenth century where artists innovated and another is that British art was wholly derivative from French art. These myths first arose in the early twentieth century because of the rapid changes that took place in Britain at the end of the Victorian period. The anti-Victorian rhetoric was fuelled by a small number of British commentators and art historians who valorised French art and criticized British art. I will show that Victorian art was lively, innovative and exciting and reflected the history and culture of the period.
- Art reflects the social conventions and expectations of the period and in Britain's rapidly changing industrial society there were many controversial innovations and styles. We shall see how Britain's lead in the industrial revolution and its growing population and wealth led to new markets for art. It also led both to a new confidence offset by a respect for the classical period and a nostalgia for an imagined romantic medieval period. The gradual emancipation of the poor, workers and woman was reflected in a number of art works of the period.
- **My background:** a degree in art and architecture from Birkbeck College, followed by an MA from the Courtauld Institute where I specialised in nineteenth century art and a PhD from the University of Bristol. I have published various papers including parts of two books and I have spoken at conferences here and in the USA. I give talks at the Esher Centre on

art history and I run a course at the White House centre in Hampton every Wednesday from September to March. This course is based on one I gave in Hampton last year.

Recommended Books

General

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

Academic Painting

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

Portraiture

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

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

Landscape Painting

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

Photography

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

Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood

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

Arts & Crafts Movement

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

Aesthetic Movement

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



- Introductions and registration.

COURSE PLAN

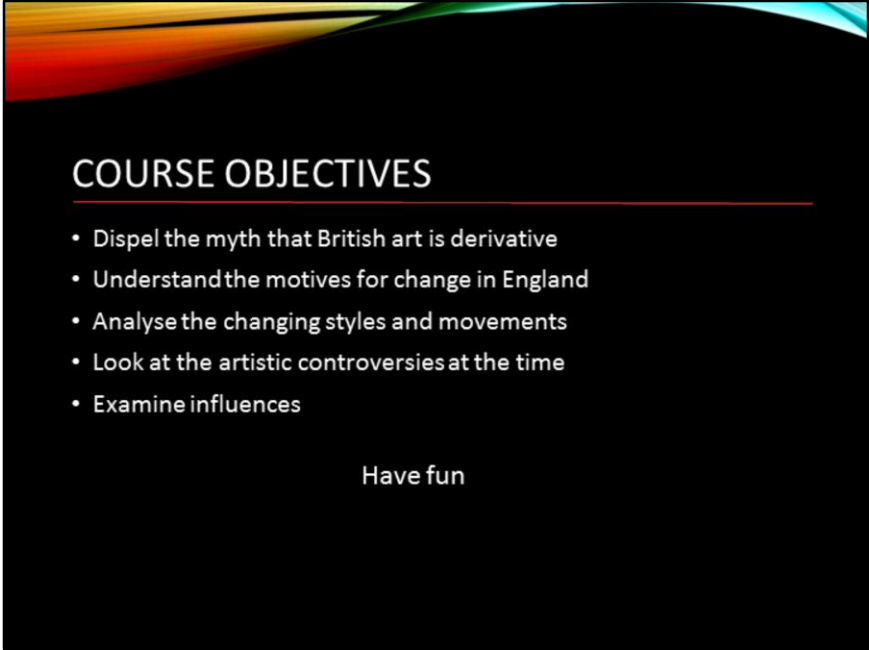
This Term

1. Introduction
2. Academic painting
3. Portrait painting
4. Landscape 1
5. Landscape 2
6. Social realism
7. Photography
8. Women in art 1
9. Women in art 2
10. Summary

Next Term

1. Introduction
2. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 1
3. Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood 2
4. Aesthetic Movement 1
5. Aesthetic Movement 2
6. Arts & Crafts Movement 1
7. Arts & Crafts Movement 2
8. English Impressionism
9. Newlyn, Glasgow & Camden
10. Summary

- The course consists of two terms each of ten lectures. The first series of ten lectures examines British, in fact mostly English, art in terms of the genres and the second series of ten lectures examines the period in terms of the major movements.
- This term I start with the Royal Academy and the type of art it taught followed by the genres in order of their popularity. Finally, this term, I deal with the fifty percent of the population who were often represented in paintings but who had great difficulty in becoming artists.
- This week I start with a brief introduction to one way of examining and analysing paintings, followed by an interactive session when we look at a number of Victorian paintings together.
- Finally, today I finish by looking at some of the influences on the Victorian artist.



COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Dispel the myth that British art is derivative
- Understand the motives for change in England
- Analyse the changing styles and movements
- Look at the artistic controversies at the time
- Examine influences

Have fun

- The myths are dispelled by understanding the **motives** for change in British art
- Analysing the changing **styles and the** ways in which artists innovated
- Looking at the **controversies**
- Examining how artists were **influenced** and who they influenced in turn
- The **myth** is that English art was of **secondary** importance and that the only nineteenth century art that matters is **French art**. French art was, until recently, regarded as the start of modernism, modern art.
- My argument is that there is no hierarchy and there is **no progress in art**. Art reflects the society in which it was produced.
- There is such a thing as a more accurate representation of a person or a scene and this can be measured by a computer program but some societies regard the creation of accurate representations as unimportant. It is also true that creating an accurate representation demonstrates a skill. Whether such a skill is relevant to an artist depends on what the artist is trying to achieve. In a society when an accurate representation can be obtained by pressing a button such a skill may not be valued by many artists although it may still impress many viewers.
- In the nineteenth century many **innovations** took place in England before France and that there was cross Channel interaction between artists.

- I will also look at the **controversies** where those controversies indicated changes that **influenced** many later artists.
- **Have fun**




Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain* 1917, replica 1964, Tate, the original 'readymade' is now lost

What is art?

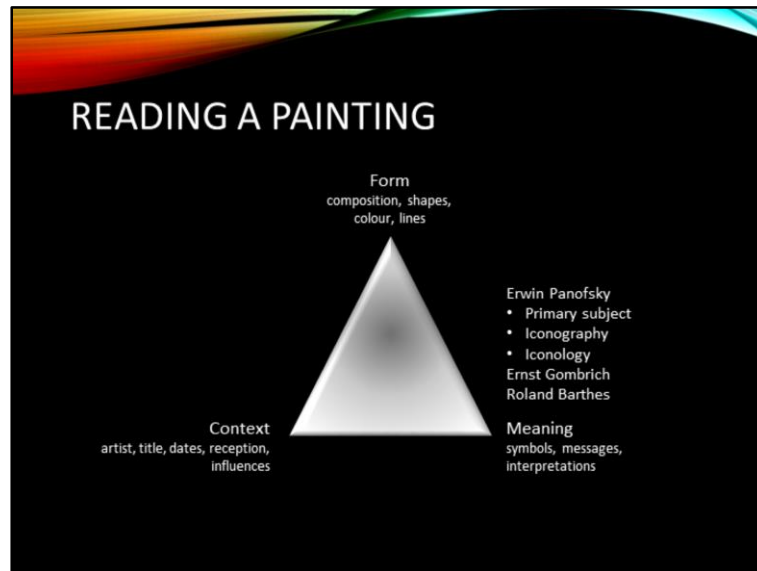
- Wikipedia on art summarises the views of some leading theorists:
- The nature of art has been described by philosopher Richard Wollheim as "one of the **most elusive** of the traditional problems of human culture". Virtually every known human culture has certain objects or performances that are intentionally constructed for an aesthetic or religious or ceremonial or propaganda purpose.
 - **Communicating emotions.** Art has been defined as a vehicle for the **expression or communication of emotions and ideas**, a means for exploring and **appreciating formal elements** for their own sake, and as mimesis or **representation**. Leo Tolstoy identified art as a use of **indirect means to communicate** from one person to another. Benedetto Croce and R.G. Collingwood advanced the idealist view that **art expresses emotions**, and that the work of art therefore essentially exists in the mind of the creator.
 - **Beauty.** The theory of **art as form with aesthetic properties** has its roots in the philosophy of **Immanuel Kant**, and was developed in the early twentieth century by **Roger Fry** and Clive Bell.
 - **Practical.** In many cultures art has a practical religious, ceremonial or celebratory function and sometimes, but not always, this is associated with an aesthetic

- appeal.
- **A way to understand the world and/or one's self.** More recently, thinkers influenced by **Martin Heidegger** have interpreted art as the **means by which a community develops for itself a medium for self-expression and interpretation.**
 - **Institutional.** George Dickie has offered an **institutional theory** of art that defines a work of art as **any artefact** upon which a **qualified person** or persons acting on behalf of the social institution commonly referred to as "the art world" has conferred **"the status of candidate for appreciation"**.
 - **European invention.** Larry Shiner has described fine art as "not an essence or a fate but something we have made. Art as we have generally understood it is a **European invention** barely two hundred years old."
 - **Undefinable.** One school of thought is that certain concepts, such as Wittgenstein's remarks about games, are, by their nature, undefinable. We can always find an example outside any definition.
- The artist Marcel Duchamp resigned from the Society of Independent Artists in New York when the committee refused to accept *Fountain* as a work of art even though their constitution said that all works of art submitted would be accepted. The committee issued a press release saying, 'The *Fountain* may be a very useful object in its place, but its place is not in an art exhibition and it is, by no definition, a work of art.'
 - According to the Tate, "in 2004 *Fountain* topped a poll of 500 British art experts as the single most influential artwork of the twentieth century, ahead of Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* 1907 and Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* 1962. Simple in form but rich in metaphor, the work has generated many interpretations over the years, and continues to be seen as a work that challenges – or, at the least, complicates – conventional definitions of art."



VISUAL ANALYSIS: HOW TO LOOK AT PAINTINGS

- At the beginning of the nineteenth century **art could be defined** as what was **taught** to be good art by the **Royal Academy**.
- Before I begin though I would like to very briefly ways of looking and analysing a painting.
- I am sure many of you have read about visual analysis or attended talks so I would like to give a short summary of a particular approach I favour.



- There are three types of description:
 1. about the **form**, the formal properties of the painting such as its **size** and the composition;
 2. about the **context**, the artist, the background and the influences; it is also concerned with the background to the historical period, the provenance, i.e. the history of purchases, and its reception over time by different viewers and audiences (reception theory), and what critics and reviewers wrote about it at the time and since;
 3. and about the **meaning**. An art historian called Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968) divided his analysis of the meaning into three parts, the primary subject matter, what it is about, next, particular symbols, such as a **dog** representing fidelity, sometimes called the **iconography** and thirdly the **overall meaning**, such as a **political statement**, called the **iconology**. The distinction between iconography and iconology was made by Panofsky in an essay he wrote in 1955. The limits of iconography were pointed out by Ernst Gombrich (1909-2001) in 1972 when he described the 'dictionary fallacy'. This is the idea that a symbol has a single meaning that we can just look up as if it were in a dictionary, such as a dog always meaning simply 'fidelity'. He also rejected levels of meaning and any personal or psychological intention on the part of the artists as this is in general unavailable to the viewer. A French philosopher called Roland Barthes (1915-

1980) took this idea further in his 1967 essay *The Death of the Author*. The meaning of a painting is always determined by each viewer and Barthes argued that what we might know of the artists intentions should only be regarded as one view with no special significance. A work of art, when launched into the world, takes on a life that is independent of the author and is self-sustaining. There is no real meaning that we can find through research or by interrogating the author.

Notes

- Erwin Panofsky defined 'iconography' as the study of subject matter in the visual arts and 'iconology' as an attempt to analyse the significance of that subject matter within the culture that produced it.
- *The Death of the Author* is a 1967 essay by the French literary critic and theorist **Roland Barthes**. The French title was *La mort de l'auteur* an intentional pun of Thomas Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* as it had many authors over centuries. Barthes's essay argues against traditional literary criticism's practice of incorporating the intentions and biographical context of an author in an interpretation of a text, and instead argues that writing and creator are unrelated. Barthes was writing about literary texts but his work is often applied to paintings. He argues against considering the intentions and biographical details of the author (or artist) or at least only regarding this as one view among many. The essential meaning of a work depends on the impressions of the reader or viewer, rather than the writer or artist. The ultimate, eternal intended meaning of a work can never be reached but as Barthe wrote, every work is "eternally written here and now", with each re-reading, because the "origin" of meaning lies exclusively in "language itself" and its impressions on the reader.

References

- Panofsky, Erwin. "Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art." In *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History*. By Erwin Panofsky, 26–54. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955.
- Gombrich, E. H. "Aims and Limits of Iconology." In *Symbolic Images*. By E. H. Gombrich, 1–25. London: Phaidon, 1972.
- Barthes, R., <http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes>



John Everett Millais, *Isabella*, 1849, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

- Here is an example of how to apply the approach.
- There are three areas of questions,
 - First, we can examine what are called the formal properties, the composition, shapes, colours, perspective, techniques used and so on. The advantage of this is we do not need to know anything about the painting or its meaning. At its extreme formalism in art history maintains that everything important about a work of art is contained within the work and its visual properties. **Connoisseurship** is often formal as it involves examining styles and the way, for example, one artist paints a hand or an eye compared with another but that does require detailed knowledge of many works. For an art historian the formal analysis is the **starting point**. It is a very careful and detailed description of the purely visual aspects of the work.
 - The painting has a circular composition that ties together all the figures and in particular the eyes of the figures are linked to the vicious kick of the man at the front. The perspective is distorted with the table elongated on the right hand side and the figures flattened. Millais eliminates strong light and shadow (called 'chiaroscuro') and exaggerates adjacent colours and tones, such as the servants white cloth against his black tunic but

whose lower body virtually disappears as his yellow stockings merge with the background. Millais also carefully characterises each figure with equal precision. Other distinctive Pre-Raphaelite features are the use of friends and family as models, the unusual poses and the inclusion of multiple, distinct patterns and images.

- In the nineteenth century the **Vienna School** of Art History promoted formal analysis and by comparing styles they attempted to avoid all judgements involving personal taste. Art historians such as **Alois Riegl** (1858-1905) and **Heinrich Wölfflin** (1864-1945) rejected all discussion of content and meaning as unscientific, metaphysical speculation. In the twentieth century, with the advent of abstraction, **Maurice Denis** and **Roger Fry** argued it is the formal properties that give us pleasure not the subject matter. **Denis** wrote that a painting was '*essentially a flat surface covered in colours arranged in a certain order.*' **Clive Bell** (*Art*, 1914) distinguished between something's actual form and its 'significant' form. He maintained the artist used the artistic medium to capture a thing's true or 'ideal' inner nature or essence rather than its mere outward appearance. So called 'structuralists' continued to argue that real art expressed the essence of things although later they argued that social preconceptions and mental processes filter all structures.
- Second, there are the **facts**, which we need to learn—it was painted by John Everett Millais (1829-1896), his first work in the Pre-Raphaelite style, called *Isabella or Lorenzo and Isabella*, painted shortly after the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in September 1848 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1849. It is 103 x 142.8 cm. There was no patron and Millais used his friends and family as models. It was purchased by the Walker Art Gallery in 1884. In 1873 Andrew Barclay Walker (1824-1893), a Liverpool brewer and alderman donated £20,000 to Liverpool for a new art gallery to commemorate his term as mayor. Walker was not noted as patron or collector of art.
- Finally, and perhaps the biggest area is **the meaning**. This can be approached in different ways. As I said, one of the most important names is **Erwin Panofsky** (1892-1968) who distinguished between:
 - The primary or natural subject matter. For example, this could be described as a painting of 12 people around a table with one standing.
 - The **iconography** or secondary or conventional subject matter. This brings in culture and cultural conventions. We might recognise it as an episode from Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) *Decameron* called 'Lisabetta e il testo di basilico' (1349 - 1353), reworked by John Keats's (1795-1821) as the poem, *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*. Taking one element, Isabella's brother has knocked over the **salt pot** – a symbol of betrayal that may relate to the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's (1749-1832) description of Leonardo da Vinci's (1452-1519) *The Last Supper* 1495–8 (Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan), an important source for the

painting. Tate Britain on their website describe it as 'an unconscious or covert visual innuendo with an unambiguous equivalent for ejaculation'. The implication he is 'ungoverned, impetuous, driven by his appetites' and that is realised later when he later murders Lorenzo, Isabella's lover, and buries the body.

- The **iconology** or tertiary or intrinsic meaning. This takes into account personal, technical and cultural history and considers the work as a product of a historic environment. It is the art historian asking 'What does it all mean?' There are many possible interpretations, for example, it could be a criticism of Victorian loveless marriages of the type Isabella's brothers wish her to make.
- The study of signs and meanings is called **semiotics**. We can study an art work like a **detective story**. What is it a picture of and what is it about? What are the objects represented and what do they signify. The painting may contain signs, symbols, metaphors and allegories and refer to mythology, literature, moral tales and historic or current events. The art historian must beware of the previously mentioned **Gombrich Dictionary Fallacy**, namely that the sign and its meaning are fixed.
- The meaning of an art work can also be interpreted within a specific world-view or **ideology**, such as feminism, modernism, Marxism or Freud's theories.
- We can look at how it was received at the time and over the years since, known as **reception theory**.

Notes

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

tone, form as 3D shapes, positive and negative shapes and depth. It is most often used to analyse abstract works as they do not represent anything.

References

Carol Jacobi, *Sugar, Salt and Curdled Milk: Millais and the Synthetic Subject*, Tate Britain website



Leonardo da Vinci (1494–1498), *The Last Supper*, Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan

- Another example.
- The primary or natural subject matter. For example, a painting of the Last Supper would be described as 13 men sitting round a table.
- The **iconography** or secondary or conventional subject matter. This brings in culture and cultural conventions. We would recognise it as **The Last Supper**, a story from the Bible and this would include interpreting the significance of conventions and symbols, such as Judas sitting on the opposite side of the table or, as in Leonardo's famous fresco, the person who is grasping a small bag, symbolizing the 30 pieces of silver; he has also knocked over the **salt pot** - another symbol of betrayal. His head is also positioned in a lower position than anyone in the picture, and is the only person left in shadow. The hand of Jesus and Judas head for the same bowl as he said 'He that dippeth *his* hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.'
- The **iconology** or tertiary or intrinsic meaning. This takes into account personal, technical and cultural history and considers the work as a product of a historic environment. It is the art historian asking 'What does it all mean?'. We might ask why did Leonardo choose to represent the Last Supper in this way. We might speculate that Leonardo was commissioned to paint *The Last Supper* because it was at one end of a refectory, a common convention at the time, until we find that the room was not used as a refectory

when the fresco was painted but a mausoleum for the Sforza family. The painting contains several references to the number 3, which represents the Christian belief in the Holy Trinity. The Apostles are seated in groupings of three; there are three windows behind Jesus; and the shape of Jesus' figure resembles a triangle.

Apostles

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



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Work*, 1852-1863, exhibited 1865, Manchester Art Gallery
 See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Work_(painting))

- The interesting thing about this painting is that Ford Madox Brown wrote a detailed guide to the meaning he intended but let us start with the **form**. Looking at the formal properties is always a good way to start as it requires no knowledge of the artists, its history or the context.
- **What do we mean by a paintings formal properties:**
 - **Composition** – curves, diagonals, triangles, rhythm and spacing
 - **Space** – perspective, both aerial and linear, walking through the picture, how close are we to the picture space?
 - **Form** – such as the sculptural form of bodies, form achieved by chiaroscuro, form created by line and by colour
 - **Tone** – the contrast of light and shade, chiaroscuro.
 - **Colour** – and its use to create a mood and convey an emotion
- The first and simplest formal property is its **size**, it is a **big painting** and large paintings were reserved for history paintings, the highest genre of academic art.
- However, the style and approach are revolutionary which undermines the conventions of history painting.

- We will start with **composition**.
- Brown designed the frames and often used **an arched frame** or pictorial device reminiscent of religious altarpieces.
- To see the overall form it is best to **half close your eyes**
- There are **two versions** of this painting, one in **Manchester Art Gallery** and the other in **Birmingham Art Gallery**.
- The **Manchester** version is the one that **Brown exhibited**, it is the larger version and it was commissioned by **Thomas Plint** based on an early sketch he was shown by Brown.
- This is the **Manchester version** shown without its frame.
- The other version is smaller and was commissioned by **James Leathart** for **£315** in 1859. It is now in the **Birmingham Art Gallery**. It was completed the same year as the original. Brown replaced the portrait of his wife Emma with one of Leathart's wife, Maria.

Socio-Political – Work and Cleanliness

- Overall, the painting is usually described as being about the **nobility of work** and the **social importance of clean water**.
- We have all heard about the Victorian work ethic and '**cleanliness is next to Godliness**' and this painting is based on those ideas and so to understand the painting as it was understood at the time we need to understand these Victorian values.
- The main theme and the title is the ennobling nature of **work** which is expanded upon in **Thomas Carlyle's Past and Present**. One of Carlyle's extended metaphors likens work to digging an ever widening river that drains a pestilent swamp of ignorance.
- The workers divide into groups as we saw earlier including the idle rich and the 'brain workers', Thomas Carlyle on the left and F. D. Maurice, holding a bible on the right.
- **F. D. Maurice** the Christian reformer created Working Men's Colleges at which Ford Madox Brown lectured. **Maurice gave lectures** on the '**Great Unwashed**' and the relationship between cleanliness and godliness.
- Thomas Carlyle wrote in **Past and Present**,
 - **Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labour, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work!**
Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valour against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man.
- In the same book Carlyle creates the character of **Bobus Higgins, a corrupt sausage maker** who uses horsemeat in his product to undercut competitors. In the painting the billboards being carried down the road read 'Vote for Bobus'. Bobus is being portrayed as a corrupt politician.
- The other influence was Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (3 volumes in 1851, a fourth by 1861) and his 1849 article in the *Morning Chronicle* in which he wrote, 'I shall consider the whole of the metropolitan poor under three separate phases, according as they will work, they can't work and they won't work'.

Notes

Form

- Note there is a distinction between 'form' as a shorthand for the formal properties of a painting and 'form' meaning, for example, the shape of a figure in the painting.



Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), *Work*, 1859-1863, Birmingham Art Gallery

Meaning

Floral symbolism

- The Victorians and in particular the Pre-Raphaelites were consumed by floral mania and the meaning of flowers. Brown, a keen gardener painted with botanical accuracy. However, because of the number of floral dictionaries published there were often conflicting meanings. Along the bottom of the frame is a quotation from Genesis (3:19), 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread'. This refers to Adam and Eve's labour as punishment for eating from the Tree of Knowledge. In the centre of the painting a young red-headed labourer carries a pail of water and in his right hand is an apple held up to be seen. This is the symbol of temptation and is a reminder that labour leads from Original Sin to redemption and so the apple represents the dignity of labour.
- Many Victorians and Victorian artists were **obsessed** with the '**language of flowers**', including Thackeray, Edward Lear, John Ruskin and Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Particularly the Pre-Raphaelites including Ford Madox Brown.
- It linked contemporary polite social with scientific observation.
- Brown was a **keen gardener** and always painted with botanical accuracy.
- Decoding flowers must be used with care as there were many **contradictory** floral dictionaries in the Victorian period. In *Nicholas Nickleby*, Nicholas said to his mother, with a certain pre-Freudian naivety, he knew of no '**language of vegetables which converts a**

cucumber into a formal declaration of attachment’.

1. A young labourer carrying a pail full of water **holds out an apple**, this symbol of Temptation and original sin reminds the Victorian that work is part of God’s punishment and it leads to redemption from original Sin. The apple emphasises the dignity of labour.
2. Next to him a girl with **red hair holds a carrot**, long associated with red hair. Red hair was a fetish of the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Rossetti. Red hair was also associated with the Irish and a large proportion of the navvies in England were Irish. The Great Irish Famine of 1845-8 resulted in millions over Irish families emigrating. On the bank to the right Brown shows an unemployed ‘young shoeless Irishman’ and his wife. As they were so poor the Irish were often the first to contract cholera and fever. In fact many thought the Irish were responsible for generating and communicating diseases. Two of the peasants on the bank Brown tells us are reduced in strength by fever.
3. The young orphaned child modelled by Brown’s son Arthur (who died in infancy prior to the completion of the painting) **carries daisies**, the flowers of childhood and innocence.
4. The **elm trees** in the background are symbols of **dignity** and frame the dignity of work.
5. The **potman** wears a small boutonniere of **fuschias and sweet peas**, emblems of **taste and departure**. This supports Brown’s comment that he has ‘vulgar tastes’ and his wares (beer) are transitory compared with the infinite nature of water.
6. The labourer on the left shovelling **chews the stem of a china or species rose**, symbolising beauty and emphasising the beauty of his labours.
7. The **tract distributor** wears a spray of **Hepatica flowers** in her bonnet a symbol of **confidence** used to establish her haughty character.
8. The woman in front modelled on **James Leathart’s wife Maria** (on Brown’s wife Emma in the Manchester painting) holds a leaf-shaped parasol and **feminine beauty** as Brown notes is a ‘**flower that feeds upon the sun**’. But it is a symbol of **Vanitas**, Brown warns ‘**health may fail, beauty fade, pleasures through repetition pall—I will not hint at the greater calamities to which flesh is heir.**’
9. **On the left is a chickweed seller** or what was colloquially called a ‘Botany Ben’. Brown tells us he lived in ‘Flower Street’ and sold wild flowers and herbs for culinary, medicinal and decorative purposes. In his hat is a spray of wild grain, straw and plantain and he carries **chickweed, symbol of ingenious simplicity** to match his ‘effeminate gentleness’. The **straw** was often used, for example, by Hogarth in his painting of Bedlam Hospital, to **signify madness** and Henry Mayhew in London Labour and the London Poor tells us that beggars and those on the bottom rung of society often feigned madness to gain sympathy and greater sales.



Édouard Manet (1832-1883), *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, Courtauld Gallery, London


Édouard Manet (1832-1883), *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*, 1882, Courtauld Gallery, London

- This is not a British painting but it can be seen in London at the Courtauld Gallery. I chose it because a book called **12 Views of Manet's Bar** has been written with a chapter for each interpretation. The interpretations are at the level of what Panofsky would call the iconology so I can give you various examples of what this means.
- Factually, it is a French nineteenth-century painting by Édouard Manet (1832-1883) called *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*.
- I have summarised four interpretations from the book, so you can see the range:
 1. **Marxist interpretation.** Many interpretations revolve around the meaning of the reflection in the mirror being incorrect. We know from **X-ray analysis** that Manet's **moved the reflection of the barmaid to make it less and less correct**. Many barmaids at the Folies-Bergère were **prostitutes**. As her reflection is not '**correct**' it has been suggested it **represents a memory**. If she is then she is offering herself to a client she is turning herself into a **commodity** and so like all commodities she aims to produce desire through representation. It is a study of the effects of **capitalism and consumerism**.
 2. **Feminist interpretation** is that women were limited into the jobs they could take on and so many were forced into prostitution. Manet to our attention the exploitation of women, both in *Olympia* and in this painting.

3. **Psychological interpretation.** B. R. Collins interprets the **barmaid's look** as “**day dreaming**”, “**coldly detached**”, “tired and glum”, “absent, weary, dispirited” and Clark categorizes the look as “not quite focused on anything” all of which Collins believes creates an **elusiveness and inaccessibility** reinforced by the hard textures that dominate the work resulting in a “**drama of invitation and denial**”. This, he suggests, highlights the theme of the painting “**the psychological gap between the sexes**”, not a result, as Baudelaire claims, of women's stupidity but **because of their Otherness**.
 4. **Political interpretation.** The presence of **English Bass Pale Ale** rather than **German beer** has been taken as signifying that this is an anti-German painting a decade after the Franco-Prussian War.
- As you can see each interpretation is based on a particular world-view and we often talk about a person being a Marxist or a feminist. These are world-views or ideologies that provide a particular approach to analysis based on treating certain aspects as more important than others. These overlap, so both a Marxist and a feminist might focus on the exploitation of women but for a Marxist it is part of the exploitation of the working class in a society that turns everything into a commodity but for a feminist it is an example of the wide range of ways that a male dominated society controls and exploits women.

Notes

- **Art historical interpretation.** As most of the painting is a reflection in a mirror and a **mirror is a flat surface** presenting an illusion of the world so the painting is about the illusory nature of painting. It is Manet's final work and he could be making a comment on his life's work. Plato criticized artists for taking us further away from the true reality of things by creating an illusion.
- T. J. Clark thinks that an artist uses new techniques, novel perspectives and subjects to **put established belief under pressure** and this creates public hostility and inflamed reactions. He argues that in those **things not mentioned** but left unsaid **in reviews** we can learn something about **what really matters to a society**. **Prostitution was not mentioned** in the press reviews as it cuts across normal class boundaries as it exposes the self to someone seen as inferior, it is not something that is talked about.
- S. Levine speculates on the possible links between the barmaid, whose name is Suzon as an un-biblical Susannah “longing for sexual knowledge” and as a woman “who awakened his memory of his mother's happy smile of sensual rapture.” Suzon worked at the *Folies-Bergère* in the early 1880s.



INTERACTIVE ANALYSIS: A QUIZ

- So, let's have some fun with applying the analysis.
- The quiz **follows the course** over the next two terms.
- There is **no pressure**, this is **not competitive** and I will not be picking on you **individually**. It will simply enable me to understand how much you **already know** about nineteenth-century art so I don't **waste your time**.



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

- **Academic painting - History painting.**
- What do we mean by a 'history painting'? It is not necessarily an historical event, it could be mythological, it is a biblical or classical scene that **ennobles** the viewer.
- Why was this painting almost rejected as a history painting? It does depict a very well known and important historic event. It is because the figures are wearing contemporary clothes rather than classical robes. The event had taken place only eleven years previously but the subject matter made it a fitting example for a history painting for which contemporary dress was considered unsuitable. While it was being painted, several influential people, including Sir, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792) advised him to clothe the figures in classical robes. He refused and when it was completed George III refused to purchase it because the clothing compromised the dignity of the event. The painting eventually overcame all these objections and helped change the nature of history painting by making historical accuracy important.

Benjamin West

Anglo-American painter (born Springfield, Pennsylvania) of historical scenes around and after the time of the American War of Independence. He was the second president of the Royal

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



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

- **Portrait**
- It is not my intention to analyse these paintings now as we will come back to them on the course. I just want to know how much you know already.
- The first has a well-known title ***Whistler's Mother*** that raises questions about what do we mean by a **portrait**.
- Does anyone know the title Whistler originally gave the painting? In his 1890 book *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, he writes:
Take the picture of my mother, exhibited at the Royal Academy as an 'Arrangement in Grey and Black.' Now that is what it is. To me it is interesting as a picture of my mother; but what can or ought the public do to care about the identity of the portrait?
- The subject is Anna McNeill Whistler, his mother but there is a story that his beautiful young neighbour, **Helena Amelia Lindgren** (1855-1931) sat in Anna's place when she was tired but without her mother's permission. Whistler particularly liked her hands. He had first asked her mother for permission to paint her older sister but her mother refused. Helena found out and approached Whistler secretly.

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



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

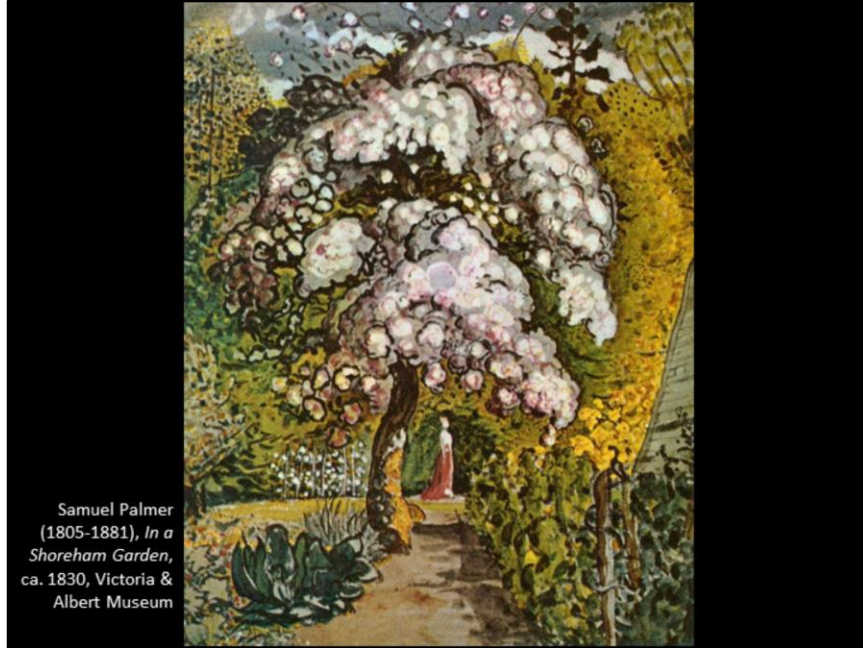
- **Landscape**
- The next painting is another easy one but I am interested if you know the date it was produced. Also, does anyone know if this was well received or was it criticized and if so why?
- Some of you may also know that when it was first exhibited at the Royal Academy it had a different name.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

Notes

- *The Cornfield* was first exhibited in 1827 as *Landscape: Noon* and other paintings were submitted with the name *Landscape*. It was just a generic title.
- Constable's last painting was *Arundel Mill and Castle*. He died on 31 March 1837 and it was exhibited at the Royal Academy that May in the new rooms in Trafalgar Square. It shows slimy posts, an old mill and Arundel Castle in the background. Two children are

fishing in the foreground and it can therefore be seen as hopeful although there is a blasted tree stump. One can see hints of his addiction to Gainsborough and his other hero, Rubens.

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



Samuel Palmer
(1805-1881), *In a
Shoreham Garden*,
ca. 1830, Victoria &
Albert Museum

Samuel Palmer (1805-1881), *In a Shoreham Garden*, ca. 1830, Victoria & Albert Museum

- **Landscape**
- A very different type of landscape also in the Romantic tradition.
- Samuel Palmer knew and was influenced by William Blake.
- This artist had an exhibition at the British Museum to mark the 200th anniversary of his birth.
- The garden is in a town the artist lived in near Sevenoaks, Kent, called Shoreham. He lived there from 1826 to 1835 and founded an artists colony. The colony was known as the Ancients and they were all followers of William Blake (1757-1827).
- In Shoreham he fell in love with Hannah Linnell, the 14-year-old daughter of his artist friend John Linnell. It was Linnell who first introduced him to William Blake in 1824.



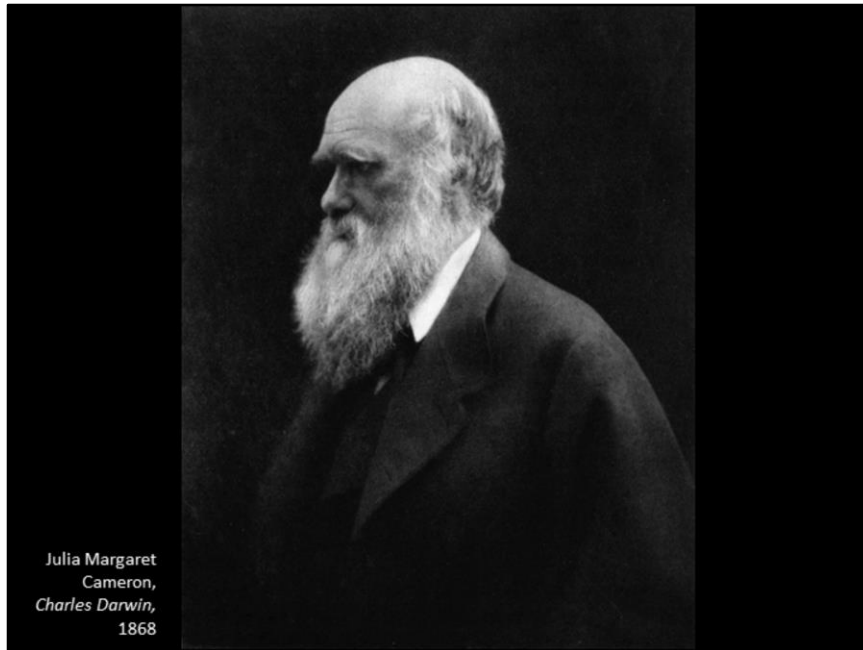
Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), *The Fighting Temeraire tugged to her last berth to be broken up*, 1838, 1839, National Gallery

- **Landscape**
- Another form of Romantic landscape, in this case a seascape.
- A very well known painting and artist but do you know the approximate date?



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

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



Julia Margaret Cameron (née Pattle; 1815-1879), *Charles Darwin*, 1868

- **Photography**
- You may recognise the person portrayed in this photograph, it is Charles Darwin, but do you know the photographer?
- **Julia Margaret Cameron** had a **short photographic career** as she was only given a camera at the **age of 48**. Her style was not widely appreciated in her day but she has become one of the most influential photographers of all time.
- She was taught photography by David Wilkie Wynfield (1837-1887) and at this time it was a messy and technically difficult process involving wet glass plates.
- She was **very well connected** in high society and a shrewd business woman so she took photographs of many of the leading historical figures and registered each one with the copyright office. We therefore have a very complete record of her work and in some cases it is the only photograph of a historic figure. Famous figures such as **Alfred Tennyson** (Tennyson wrote, "I prefer 'The Dirty Monk' to the others of me"), **George Frederic Watts**, **W. M. Rossetti**, **Thomas Carlyle**, John Frederick William Herschel and Henry Longfellow.
- She was the sister of the well-known society beauty Julia Prinsep Duckworth Stephen (née Jackson, 1846–1895), the mother of (Adeline) Virginia Wolfe (née Stephen; 1882-1941).



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

- **Women Artists**
- A little known artist but I show it to illustrate one of the **problems** faced by women artists in the nineteenth century.
- Can anyone tell me what they think is going on in the painting?
- Osborn began showing her work at the **Royal Academy** when she was **just 17** and continued to do so over a period of **40 years**. This is her **most famous** work which has been called 'The most ingenious of Victorian widow pictures.' A recently orphaned woman is standing with her brother and attempting to make a living as an artist by offering a picture to a dealer while two 'swells' on the left ogle her.
- Osborn never married and died aged 97 in 1925.

Notes

- A possible literary source for the painting is Mary Brunton's novel *Self-Control*, first printed in 1810 and re-published in the 1850s, which tells the story of Laura Montreville who tries unsuccessfully to sell her paintings in order to help save her father from financial ruin. On her fourth attempt a young man agrees to display it in his shop on a sale or return

basis.

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

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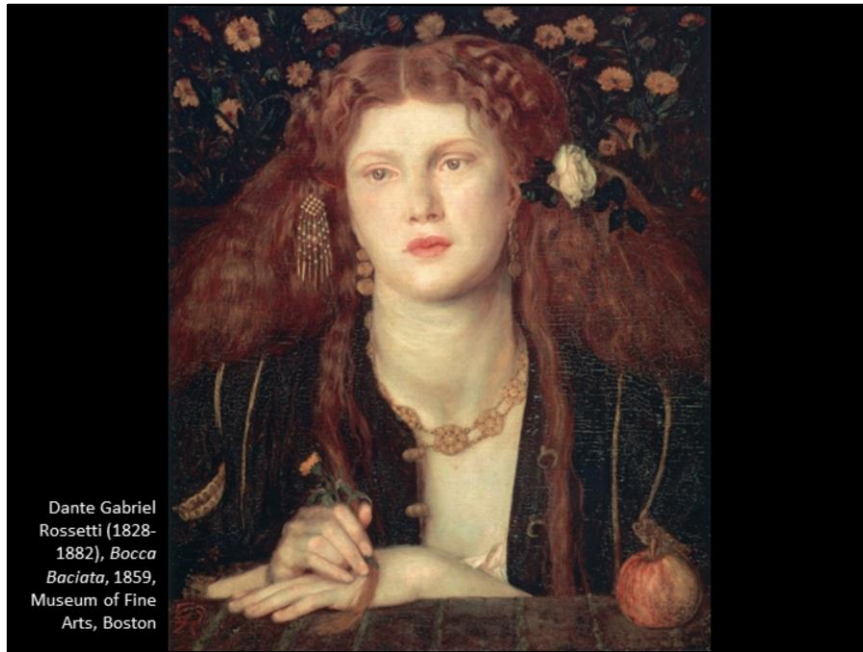
John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents* ('The Carpenter's Shop'), 1849-50, Tate Britain

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



William Dyce (1806-1864), *Pegwell Bay, Kent – a Recollection of October 5th 1858, ?1858-60*. Tate Britain

- A later painting in the style of the Pre-Raphaelites.
- This is one of the paintings in Tate Britain so you might know it. The artist is not very well known. It shows the artist's family gathering shells, a popular Victorian activity but what scientific event does this painting celebrate?



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

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

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



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

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



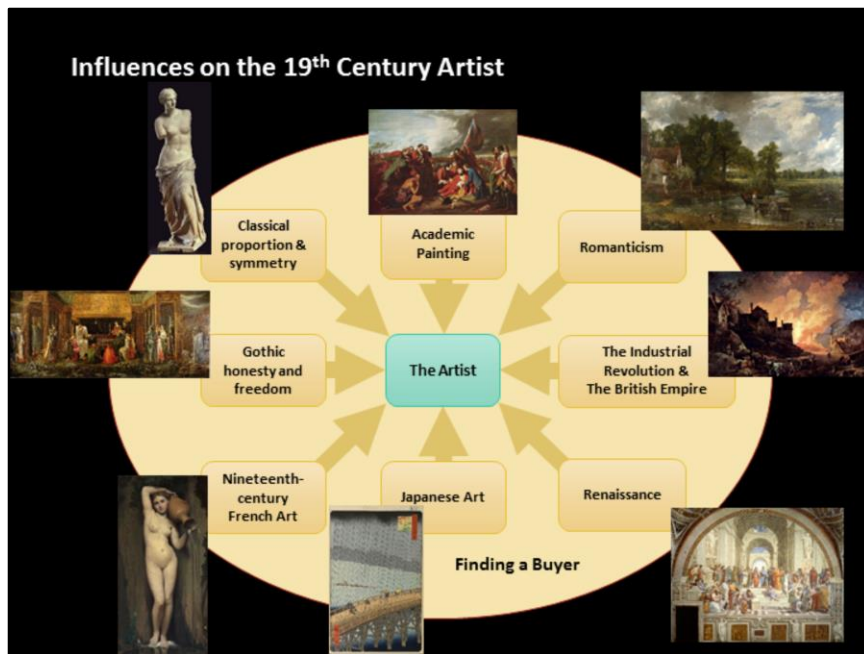
Philip Wilson Steer, *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier*, 1888–94, Tate Britain

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



- A quick reminder of the best known ten paintings representing the ten topics that will be covered this term and next:
 - Academic painting: Benjamin West (1738-1820), *The Death of General Wolfe*, 1770, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa
 - Portrait painting: Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), *Bocca Baciata*, 1859, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
 - Landscape: John Constable (1776-1837), *The Hay Wain*, 1821, National Gallery
 - Social Realism: Augustus Leopold Egg (1816-1863), *Past and Present, No. 1*, 1858, Tate Britain
 - Photography: Julia Margaret Cameron (née Pattle; 1815-1879), *Charles Darwin*, 1868
 - Women in Art: Emily Mary Osborn or Osborne (1828 or 1834-1925), *Nameless and Friendless. "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty"* (Proverbs 10:15), 1857
 - Pre-Raphaelites: John Everett Millais (1829-1896), *Christ in the House of His Parents* ('The Carpenter's Shop'), 1849-50, Tate Britain
 - Aesthetic Movement: James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1*, famous under its colloquial name *Whistler's Mother*, 1871, Musée d'Orsay
 - Arts & Crafts: William Morris, 'Trellis' woodblock printed wallpaper, 1864, Victoria

- & Albert Museum
- English Impressionism: Philip Wilson Steer, *Girls Running, Walberswick Pier*, 1888–94, Tate Britain



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

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

Philip James de Loutherbourg (1740-1812), *Coalbrookdale by Night*, 1801, Science Museum

Raphael (1483-1520), *The School of Athens*, 1509-11, Vatican City

Hiroshige, *Sudden Shower Over Shin-Ohashi Bridge and Atake*, 1857

Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), *La Source*, from 1820-1856, Musée d'Orsay

Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon*, c. 1881-98, Ponce Museum of Art, Puerto Rico

Alexandros of Antioch, *Aphrodite of Milos* or *Venus de Milo*, 130-100 BCE, Louvre

- Finally, one way to consider why a particular type of art arises at a particular time is to look at it from the artists point of view.
- **The 19th century artist experienced certain influences:**
 - **Academic painting**, the Old Masters, history painting, promoted by the Royal Academy from 1768 onwards
 - **Romanticism**, in broad terms the rejection of the Age of Enlightenment's assumption that reason could solve all problems
 - **Industrial Revolution and the British Empire**, science, change and industrialisation (Great Exhibition, decorative art) and the growth of trade and the

- British Empire.
- **Renaissance**, Raphael, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Titian and their rejection by the PRB
- **Japanese Art**, the formal properties of Japanese art. Foreign merchant ships began visiting in 1848, Anglo-Japanese influence from 1862
- **Nineteenth century French art** and **Impressionism** was introduced by Whistler and his pupils Walter Richard Sickert and Philip Wilson Steer and others.
- **Gothic** honesty and the freedom of the pseudo-medieval period discussed by John Ruskin in *The Stones of Venice* (1851-3).
- **Classical**: The assumption that the Classical period represented the high point of art, a view of art first described in detail by Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574) in his *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550).

Not Covered in this Lecture

Artistic Controversies

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



POLITICAL CHANGES

- Britain's lead in the industrial and agricultural revolutions, the growing population and wealth and the rise of the middle class.
- The growth of the British Empire
 - The largest empire in history;
 - almost a quarter of the world's land area
 - and a fifth of the world's population.
- The gradual emancipation of the poor, workers, woman and black people
- Resulted in rapid change

Main political themes of nineteenth century

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

Key Facts about the Nineteenth Century

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

Key Historic Events

- George III (b. 1738, King 1760, d. 1820), French Revolution followed by the war with France known as the Napoleonic Wars. In later life the king suffered from mental illness and his son George, prince of Wales, took over as Regent in 1810. From the 1790s there were a succession of bad harvests. The Napoleonic Wars led to famine because of the poor harvests and the French blockade and following the War Corn Laws were introduced that fixed a high price for corn and therefore bread and workers dropped because of the soldiers returning to work. There were riots and in 1819 the Peterloo Massacre took place in St. Peter's Field Manchester when people were calling for parliamentary representation. 1811-1816 was a bad time leading to dissent and the 'Gagging Acts' which made it illegal to hold a meeting of more than 50 people. After 1815 the labourer's struggle turned to crisis and recession.
- George IV (b. 1762. Regent 1810, King 1820, d. 1830), dissolute, wasteful, disliked and influenced by his favourites. The Royal Pavilion was built for George IV between 1787 and 1823 and it was revered by fashionable Regency society. In 1820, the Cato Street conspiracy was an attempt to assassinate the entire cabinet following the death of George III.
- William IV (b. 1765, King 1830, d. 1837), the 'Sailor King'. Was King when a New Poor Law (1834) created workhouses (note: poverty was not seen as a social problem: destitution was felt to be the result of character weakness. It was believed that those in dire need would accept the workhouse and the Law would work wonders on the moral character of the poor). The child labour Factory Act (1837) said that children under nine were not allowed to work, between 9 and 11 they could work for 8 hours a day and between 11 and 18 a maximum of 12 hours a day. The Slave Abolition Act of 1833 abolished slavery in the British Empire with exceptions and the Reform Act (1832) gave seats to new cities and abolished 'rotten boroughs' and increased the electorate to 1 in 6 adult males. There were protest against pay cuts leading to the Tolpuddle martyrs of 1834. Terrible conditions in the countryside led to the burning of haystacks and the destruction of farm machinery. These were known as the Swing Riots and were led by a fictitious Captain Swing. The causes included enclosure and the taking of common land, abject poverty - the worst in Europe, poor harvests but high grain prices because of the Corn Laws, the church's 10% tithe and an oversupply of labour. Conditions were made worse by the introduction of automation (such as threshing machines) and the terrible harvests of 1828-29. The following acts were passed:
 - 1829 Metropolitan Police established
 - 1833 Factory Act and the abolition of slavery
 - 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act (PLAA). Following the 1832 Reform Act, the PLAA was intended to reduce the poor rates; it was not intended to help the poor who suffered as a result of the legislation. The PLAA replaced the existing poor laws and was responsible for the establishment of workhouses throughout the country. The poor were treated as

criminals and people starved rather than apply for poor relief because that meant that they would become inmates of the dreaded 'poor law bastilles'.

- Alexandrina Victoria (b. 1819, 1837 Queen, 1840 married, d. 1901). Started her reign with the 'Hungry 40s'. The new Poor Law resulted in riots in 1837 and 1838 and led to the rise of Chartism. The poor were largely ignored or subject to patronising charity, exemplified by Samuel Smiles pamphlet *Self Help* (1859). The Great Exhibition of 1851 was organised by Henry Cole and Prince Albert. Prince Albert died in 1861 leading to Queen Victoria retiring from public life. In 1866 she again re-opened Parliament for the first time. Significant events during her reign:
 - 1842 and 1844 Railways Act
 - 1846 Repeal of the Corn Laws
 - 1847 Factory Act
 - 1848 Chartists March, Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
 - 1851 Great Exhibition
 - 1853-1856 Crimean War
 - 1857 Matrimonial Causes Act established divorce courts
 - 1862 International Exhibition
 - 1867 Second Reform Act extended franchise to most working men.
 - 1860s Aesthetic Movement, radical, anti-Victorian, how we live our lives, anti-materialistic
 - 1877 Grosvenor Gallery opens
 - 1878 Whistler v Ruskin trial
 - 1882 Married Women's Property Act
 - 1884 Third Reform Act extended franchise to most adult males
 - 1888 County Councils Act
 - 1897 Women's Compensation Act



MODERNITY

- Change and the modern world
- Charles Baudelaire and modernity
- British art and modernity
- Modernism is a late 19th-century art movement

- In a broad historic sense the modern world started with the **Renaissance and the Reformation** and the end of feudalism.
- The modern world can be understood in terms of rapid **fundamental changes** to social and cultural practices and norms.
- The late eighteenth century and nineteenth century was a time of **revolution** and agricultural and **industrial innovation** and change which brought about fundamental disruption and changes in society.
- **Charles Baudelaire** encouraged artists to embrace this change and saw 'The Painter of Modern Life' as someone who could capture the beauty of the fleeting and ephemeral experience of modern life.
- **British art** in the nineteenth century went through many **fundamental changes** as a result of these changes in society.
- In a narrow sense 'modernism' describes an art movement of the late nineteenth century that is concerned with **formalism and abstraction**.

Notes

- The word 'modern' was first used in 1585 to mean present or recent times.
- **Modern** typically refers to a **post-medieval** historical period, one marked by the move from feudalism toward capitalism, industrialization, secularization, rationalization, the nation-state and forms of surveillance.

- **Charles Baudelaire** is credited with coining the term "**modernity**" (modernité) in his 1864 essay 'The Painter of Modern Life', to designate the fleeting, ephemeral experience of life in an urban metropolis, and the responsibility art has to capture that experience.
- **Modernity** refers to a period marked by a questioning or rejection of tradition; the prioritization of individualism, freedom and formal equality; faith in inevitable social, scientific and technological progress and human perfectibility; rationalization and professionalization; a movement from feudalism (or agrarianism) toward capitalism and the market economy; industrialization, urbanization and secularization; the development of the nation-state and its constituent institutions (e.g. representative democracy, public education, modern bureaucracy) and forms of surveillance. **Modernity** is related to new modes of transport (railways, automobiles, aeroplanes), new media (photography, film, digital), new materials (plate glass, steel, dyes, man-made materials), new sources of energy (steam, oil, electricity) and new forms of communication (telegraph, telephone, television, Internet). For some modernity is a result of the systemic application of the scientific method to the world. That is, the application of verifiable observation and reason rather than a belief in myths, magic and miracles.
- **Modernism** is concerned with more and more rapid change and the ability to accept and embrace change. Modernism is therefore an attitude. Modernism can therefore be seen as a reaction to modernity and it may embrace or reject all or aspects of modernity.
- Modernism is also more narrowly used as a term describing an art movement in the late nineteenth century which includes creating abstractions to express feelings rather than using mimetic representations. In this sense Paul Cézanne is often called the '**Father of Modernism**'. In this sense **modernism** began in the **1870s** and it includes the activities and creations of those who felt the traditional forms of art, architecture, literature, religious faith, philosophy, social organization, and activities of daily life were becoming **outdated** in the new economic, social, and political environment of an emerging fully industrialized world. The poet Ezra Pound's 1934 injunction to "**Make it new!**" was the touchstone of the movement's approach towards what it saw as the now obsolete culture of the past. Nevertheless, its innovations, like the stream-of-consciousness novel, twelve-tone music and **abstract art**, all had precursors in the 19th century. A notable characteristic of Modernism is **self-consciousness**, which often led to experiments with form, along with the use of techniques that drew attention to the processes and materials used in creating a painting, poem, building, etc. Modernism explicitly **rejected** the ideology of **realism** and makes use of the works of the past by the employment of reprise, **incorporation**, rewriting, recapitulation, revision and **parody**.
- **Postmodernism** is a late 20th-century movement in the arts, architecture and art criticism that departs from modernism by its introspective use of irony and scepticism applied to the world and to itself. It is associated with the re-evaluation of the Western value systems, the view that all truth is socially constructed, that truth is found through methodical enquiry or that truth is found through achieving harmony with nature and/or one's inner self.



SUMMARY

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



- There are extensive notes for every talk on my website. Each talk is a PDF file of about 30-40 pages so, in total the 20 talks are about 700 pages. Needless to say, you are not expected to read it all but it provides some useful background information.