

A STROLL THROUGH TATE BRITAIN



This two-hour talk is part of a series of twenty talks on the works of art displayed in Tate Britain, London, in June 2017.

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A STROLL THROUGH TATE BRITAIN

- The Aesthetic Movement, 1860-1890
- **Late Victorians, 1890-1900**
- The Edwardians, 1900-1910
- The Great War and After, 1910-1930
- The Interwar Years, 1930s
- World War II and After, 1940-1960
- Pop Art & Beyond, 1960-1980
- Postmodern Art, 1980-2000
- The Turner Prize
- Summary



West galleries are 1540, 1650, 1730, 1760, 1780, 1810, 1840, 1890, 1900, 1910

East galleries are 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000

Turner Wing includes Turner, Constable, Blake and Pre-Raphaelite drawings

Agenda

1. A History of the Tate, discussing some of the works donated by Henry Tate and others.
2. From Absolute Monarch to Civil War, 1540-1650
3. From Commonwealth to the Start of the Georgian Period, 1650-1730
4. The Georgian Period, 1730-1780
5. Revolutionary Times, 1780-1810
6. Regency to Victorian, 1810-1840
7. William Blake (1757-1827) and his Influence
8. J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851)
9. John Constable (1776-1837)
10. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, 1840-1860
11. The Aesthetic Movement, 1860-1880
12. The Late Victorians, 1880-1900

13. The Edwardians, 1900-1910
14. The Great War and its Aftermath, 1910-1930
15. The Interwar Years, 1930s
16. World War II and After, 1940-1960
17. Pop Art and Beyond, 1960-1980
18. Art in a Postmodern World, 1980-2000
19. The Turner Prize
20. Summary

LATE VICTORIANS: 1890-1900

- Boer War
- Fin de Siècle
- Degeneration



Boer War

The descendants of the original Dutch settlers in South Africa were known as the Afrikaners or Boers. Trouble between Britain and the Boers began as early as 1806 when Britain took control of the Dutch Cape colony. In 1833 the Boers founded the Orange Free State and the Transvaal where they lived peacefully until diamonds and gold were discovered on their land. Fighting started in the 1890s and in 1899 a full-scale war began. By mid-1900 the British forces had captured most of the territory but the Boers began a guerrilla war that led to the British searching out Boer fighters and moving their families into concentration camps. Resistance was over by 1902 and a treaty recognised British control and in 1910 the Union of South Africa was formed.

Fin de Siècle

Fin de siècle is a French term meaning 'end of the century' and it refers to the end of one era and the start of another. The end of the 19th century was widely thought to be a period of degeneration, but at the same time a period of hope for a new beginning. The "spirit" of fin de siècle was associated with ennui, cynicism, pessimism, and "...a widespread belief that civilization leads to decadence." The phrase initially referred to French art and artists but spread to many European countries and acquired a broader cultural meaning. The ideas developed by fin de

siècle artists led to movements such as symbolism and modernism. Fascism has been seen as a reaction against the spirit of fin de siècle. In the Victorian fin de siècle, degeneration and anxiety are expressed not only through the physical landscape which provided a backdrop for Gothic Literature, but also through the human body itself. Works such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886); Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891); H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) all explore the themes of change, development, evolution, mutation, corruption and decay in relation to the human body and mind. These literary conventions were a direct reflection of many evolutionary, scientific, social and, medical theories and advancements that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century.

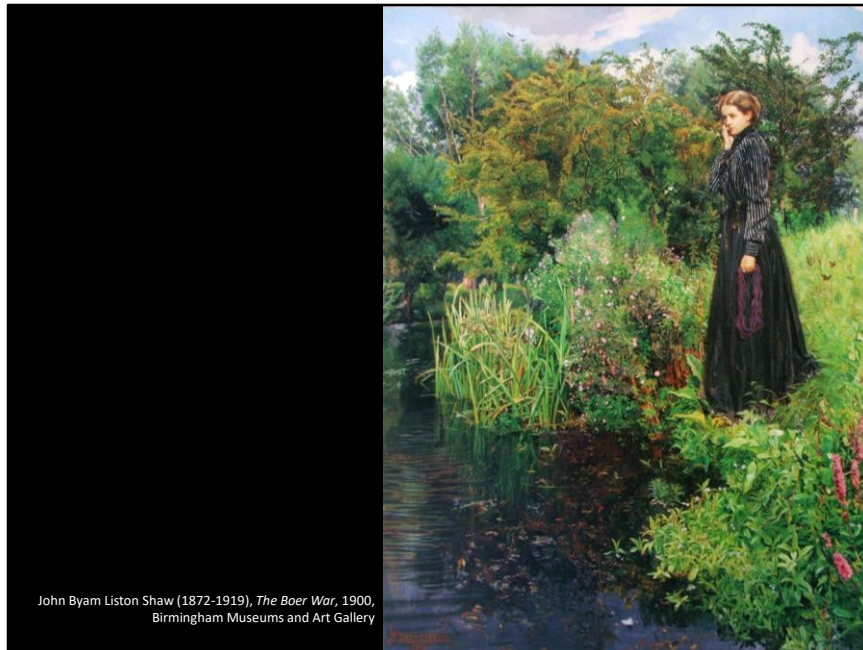
In contrast La Belle Époque was a period that dated from the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. It was a period characterized by optimism, regional peace, economic prosperity, apex of colonial empires and technological, scientific and cultural innovations. In the climate of the period, especially in Paris, the arts flourished. Many masterpieces of literature, music, theatre, and visual art gained recognition. The Belle Époque was named, in retrospect, when it began to be considered a "Golden Age" in contrast to the horrors of World War I.

In the United Kingdom, the Belle Époque overlapped with the late Victorian era and the Edwardian era.

Degeneration

Degeneration (*Entartung*, 1892), is a book by Max Nordau in which he attacks what he believed to be degenerate art and comments on the effects of a range of social phenomena of the period, such as rapid urbanization and its perceived effects on the human body. It is presented as a scientific thesis and the first signs of degeneration are traced back to the Pre-Raphaelites with their interest in all over detail.

Degeneration was accepted as a serious medical term. Not until Sigmund Freud, and the ushering in of a new age of psychoanalysis, was this idea seriously contested. Sigmund Freud remarked rather drily in his 1905 work *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, "It may well be asked whether an attribution of 'degeneracy' is of any value or adds anything to our knowledge." Nordau condemned the rising antisemitism illustrated by artists such as Richard Wagner but, ironically, Fascism used the idea of degeneration to condemn the new social freedoms, multiculturalism and modern art.



John Byam Liston Shaw (1872-1919), *The Boer War*, 1900, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery

- The sub-title is from Christina Rossetti's poem *A Bird Song* and reads
*Last summer green things were greener,
 Brambles fewer, the blue sky bluer*
- We see a **young woman dressed in mourning** and we assume from the title she is mourning the **death of a loved one killed in the Boer War**. The sub-title makes it clear she **struggles to see the beauty in nature** that she formerly saw when she was with her loved one. The **single swan feather** in the river suggests the ending of what would have been a **lifelong relationship** as the **swan mates for life**. The **ravens in flight is a symbol of death**. Her **upright posture** indicates the **stoicism** of an **English heroine** who mourns the death of a loved one who has given up his life for his country. The model was **his sister Margaret Glencair** who at the time was **mourning for her cousin** killed in South Africa.
- **Byam Shaw** as he was known was a **prolific artist** of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. He was **born in Madras, India** and moved to **London when he was six**. When he was **fifteen** his work **impressed John Everett Millais** who

encouraged him to go to **art school**. When he was eighteen he went to the **Royal Academy School** and he won the **Armitage Prize**. His early work, illustrated by this painting was heavily **influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites** even though they had first formed **fifty years previously**. He **married** a fellow artist **Evelyn Pike Nott** and they went on to have **five children**. He became interested in theatrical costume design and then became a part-time **teacher at King's College** before setting up his **own art school in Kensington** which still exists as the **Bram Shaw School of Art** and is part of **St. Martin's College**. He produced many **war cartoons** during the First World War but **collapsed and died** shortly after **aged only 46**. He rejected the idea of the artist as a bohemian. A contemporary recalled that he '**often appeared in a suit of loud checks, looking more like a bookie on a race-course than an art master**'. He conformed to the standards of the upper-middle-class professionals in which he moved and was a **committed Tory imperialist**. He combined **shyness** with a fondness for **pranks**. By the time he died his work **appeared old-fashioned** although it has been **re-appraised recently**.



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

Aubrey Beardsley, *Oscar Wilde at Work*, sketch

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

- **Decadent art** is often confused with degenerate and fin-de-siècle art with Symbolism. 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**. The movement was characterized by self-disgust, sickness at the world, general scepticism, delight in perversion and employment of crude humour and a belief in the superiority of human creativity over logic and the natural world.
- **Degenerate art** (German: *Entartete Kunst*) was a term adopted by the Nazi regime in Germany to describe Modern art. The term *Entartung* (or "degeneracy") had gained currency in Germany by the late 19th century when the critic and author Max Nordau devised the theory presented in his 1892 book, *Entartung*.
- **Symbolism** uses nature but elevates the viewer to a higher plane than the banal reality of nature. Decadence belittles nature in the name of artistry. Symbolism

was a late nineteenth-century art movement of French, Russian and Belgian origin in poetry and other arts. In the visual arts Gustav Klimt, Odilon Redon, Pierre Puvis de Chavannes and Edvard Munch were symbolists. They typically used mythology and dream images, but often used personal and private references so the meaning is obscure.

- **Grotesque art** originally referred to the decoration found in Nero's *Domus Aurea* ('House of Gold') in Rome in the 1480s. The term refers to the Italian for grotto or cave as it was thought the rooms were built underground. The decorative style became fashionable and is found in many Italian Renaissance paintings from that date onwards. The designs contained absurdities such as a horse with legs made of leaves or a man with a bird's legs so the term became used to refer to the bizarre and absurd. The term was applied backwards to the drolleries in illuminated manuscripts and gargoyles on Gothic churches. Later it was applied to characters in fiction that evoked empathy and disgust. John Ruskin defined the Symbolical Grotesque to refer to the way in which art can permit humans to grasp truths that are outside our understanding, as God's revelations by their very nature are incommunicable. In modern usage it refers to the very ugly or comically distorted.
- **Aubrey 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.
- Beardsley has been called 'the dandy of the grotesque'. For example, Beardsley's illustrations for Oscar Wilde's adaptation of *Salome* are both beautiful and revolting, sordid and stylish. He produced shockingly erotic images and yet with a year to live suddenly converted to Catholicism and asked for all his works to be destroyed. Luckily his editor did not carry out his wishes.
- *Salome: The Peacock Skirt* is a 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** (remember the **Punch cartoon** of the woman with a peacock on her head). 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**.'

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.

Max Nordau Degeneration

- In Britain degenerate art is associated with Oscar Wilde.
- 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. Whose work he thought could be explained as a product of **mental illness**. He thought the **Impressionists** suffered from a **diseased visual cortex**. Ironically, **Nordau was a Jew** (later an agnostic) and one of the **founders of the Zionist movement** even though his theory was used by the Nazis to criticize 'Jewish art' and demand Aryan purity. The Nazis defined modern art as '**degenerate art**' (*Entartete Kunst*) and this was enforced by book burning, artists being dismissed from teaching positions and curators being replaced by Party members.

Grotesque

- The word grotesque, originally a noun (1560s), from Italian grottesco (through Middle French), literally "of a cave", from Italian grotta (see grotto). The original meaning was restricted to an extravagant style of Ancient Roman decorative art rediscovered and then copied in Rome at the end of the 15th century. The word first was used of paintings found on the walls of basements of Roman ruins that

were called at that time Le Grotte (The Grottoes) due to their appearance. These "caves" were in fact rooms and corridors of the Domus Aurea, the unfinished palace complex started by Nero after the Great Fire of Rome in AD 64, which had become overgrown and buried, until they were broken into again, mostly from above.

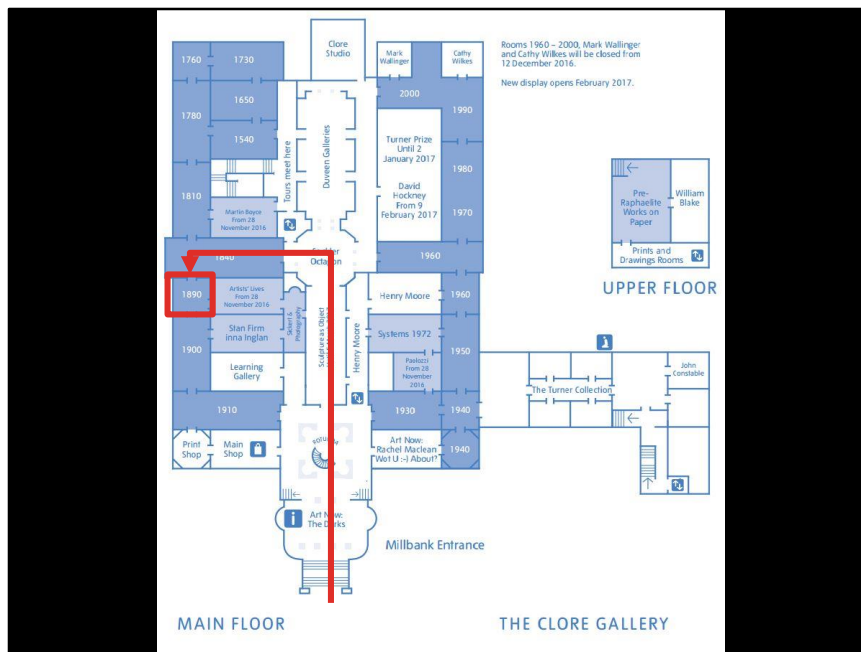
- Since the 18th century it has been used as a general adjective for the strange, fantastic, ugly, incongruous, unpleasant, or disgusting.
- John Ruskin defined the grotesque in high art as one of three forms:
 1. We jest, sometimes bitterly, about death and sin and this gives rise to grotesque art such as Holbein's *Dance of Death*. There are lighter forms which aim to amuse using terror.
 2. From a healthy and open play of the imagination, as in Shakespeare's Ariel and Titania. This delicate fairy art often descends into something more moral, serious, satirical and gloomy. In this way it connects with the evil-enjoying type of the grotesque.
 3. A thoroughly noble art arises from the use of tangible signs to express and otherwise inexpressible truth. This includes symbolical and allegorical art and poetry. Ruskin thought that representing God's infinite work was impossible for the artist and the noble grotesque, a finite attempt, was the only approach for high art. One example he gave was the flames at the feet of the angel Gabriel in Rossetti's *Annunciation* rather than the wings which were normally used to signify an angel and which were deplored by Ruskin.
- Ruskin believed the grotesque was a fundamental ingredient of Gothic architecture with its fantastic, ludicrous and sublime images. He went on to distinguish between the base grotesque and the noble grotesque. All grotesque works can be separated into the ludicrous and the fearful. The interplay of play and terror is what creates the grotesque. The mind plays with terror.

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

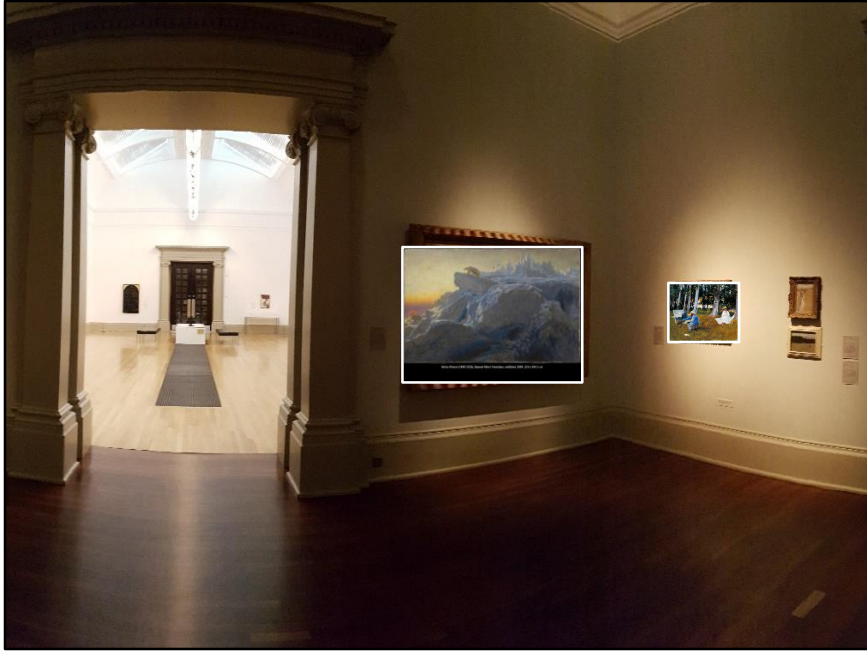


1890-1900

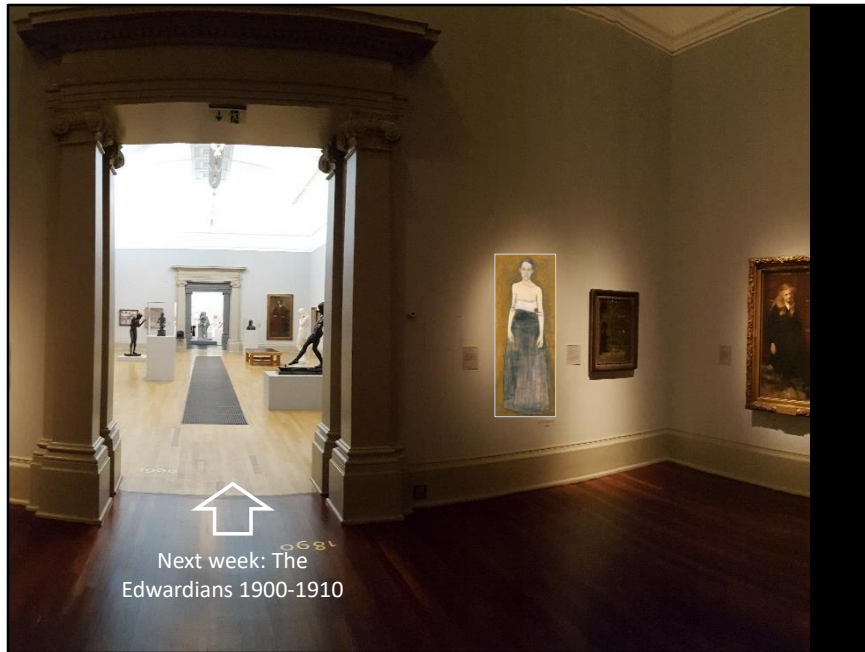
- John Singer Sargent, *Claude Monet Painting by the Edge of a Wood*, ?1885
- Sir George Clausen, 'Brown Eyes', 1891 (in the room marked 'Sickert & Photography' on this map)
- Sir William Rothenstein, 'Parting at Morning', 1891
- Sir Luke Fildes, 'The Doctor', exhibited 1891
- *Sir Alfred Gilbert, 'Model for 'Eros' on the Shaftesbury Memorial, Piccadilly Circus', 1891, cast 1925
- *Walter Richard Sickert, 'Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford', 1892
- Arthur Hacker, 'The Annunciation', 1892
- Henry Scott Tuke, 'August Blue', 1893-4
- Aubrey Beardsley, 'Caprice. Verso: Masked Woman with a White Mouse', c.1894
- Briton Riviere, 'Beyond Man's Footsteps', exhibited 1894
- Walter Richard Sickert, 'Interior of St Mark's, Venice', 1895-6
- Elizabeth Forbes, 'Volendam, Holland, from the Zuidende', ?1895
- *Robert Brough, 'Fantaisie en Folie', 1897
- *Ralph Peacock, 'Ethel', 1897
- Norman Garstin, 'Mount's Bay and Tolcarne from Trewidden Farm Footpath with Alethea and her Mother', c.1898



1. Robert Brough (1872-1905), *Fantaisie en Folie*, 1897, 102.2 x 125.7 cm
2. Alfred Gilbert, 'Model for 'Eros' on the Shaftesbury Memorial, Piccadilly Circus', 1891, cast 1925



1. Briton Riviere (1840-1920), *Beyond Man's Footsteps*, exhibited 1894, 119 x 184.5 cm

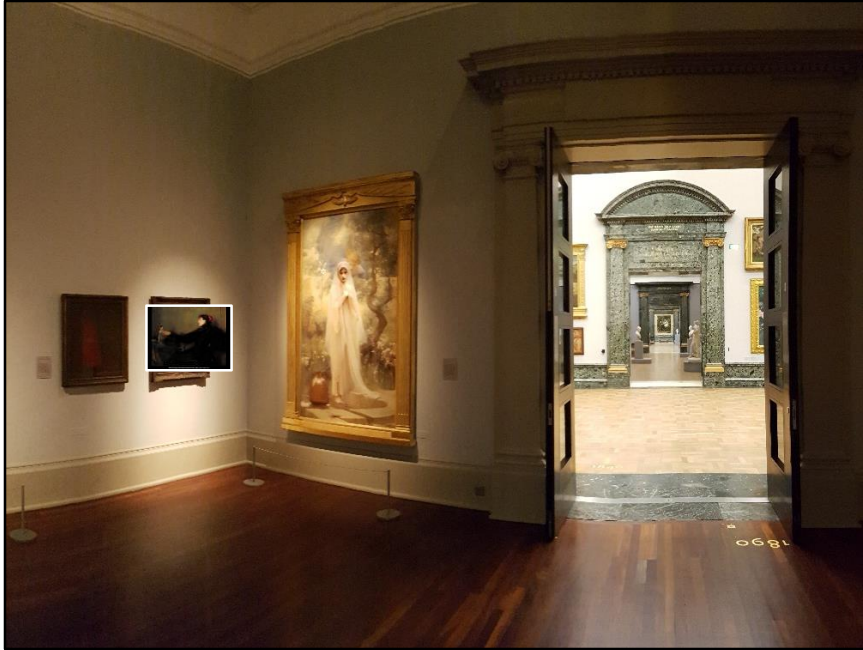


1. William Rothenstein (1872-1945), *Parting at Morning*, 1891, chalk, pastel and bronze paint on paper, 129.5 x 50.8 cm



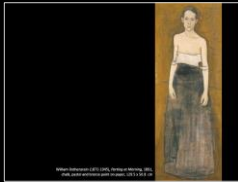
1. Ralph Peacock (1868-1946, *Ethel*, 1897, 132.7 x 74 cm
2. Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*, 1892, 76.5 x 63.8 cm

Luke Fildes, *The Doctor* (1891) was covered in the first week's talk as it was commissioned by Henry Tate and was in the collection he donated to the nation.



1. Robert Brough (1872-1905), *Fantaisie en Folie*, 1897, 102.2 x 125.7 cm

The large painting is Arthur Hacker (1858-1919), *The Annunciation*, 1892. It shows the announcement on 25 March (Lady Day, the beginning of the English new year until 1752) by the angel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that she would conceive and become the mother of Jesus, the Son of God.



Summary by Date



John Singer Sargent (1856-1925), *Claude Monet Painting by the Edge of a Wood*, ?1885, 54 x 64.8 cm

- ‘**Sargent first met Monet in 1876**, but the two artists were closest ten years later. It was probably **in 1885 that they painted together at Giverny**, near Paris. **Sargent admired** the way that Monet **worked out of doors**, and imitated some of his subjects and methods in sketches such as this. It is characteristic of Sargent to give a human view of Monet's practice and of the **patience of his wife**, who sits behind him. When he settled in London in 1885 **Sargent** was initially **viewed as avant-garde** but came to be the **greatest society portraitist of his day**.’ (Tate display caption)
- At the time of this picture Sargent had recently bought Monet's ‘Rock at Tréport’ and had written to Monet to express the **warmest admiration for his work**. This portrait of him was painted under his influence which was felt in much of Sargent's work during the years 1888–90.
- **Sargent** usually presented the sketches he made of friends and fellow artists to them as gifts, as was the tradition in artistic circles. This sketch of Claude **Monet** (1840–1926) is an exception. It remained with **Sargent** all his life and was in his studio when he died, along with several works by **Monet** that

Sargent collected.

- Sargent was an American who was brought up travelling around Europe. His father was an eye surgeon but when his two-year old daughter died Sargent's mother suffered a breakdown and the family became nomadic expatriates for the rest of their lives. They moved between Paris, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. Sargent was born in Florence in 1856. His education consisted of visiting museums and galleries and all attempts at formal training failed. His mother was an amateur artist and when he was 13 he received some watercolour lessons. Although his formal education was limited he became highly literate and cosmopolitan, accomplished in art, music, and literature and was fluent in French, Italian, and German. At 18 he attended an atelier in Paris and gained admission to the École des Beaux-Arts at his first attempt and a silver prize. A fellow student wrote that Sargent was **'one of the most talented fellows I have ever come across; his drawings are like the old masters, and his colour is equally fine.'**

References

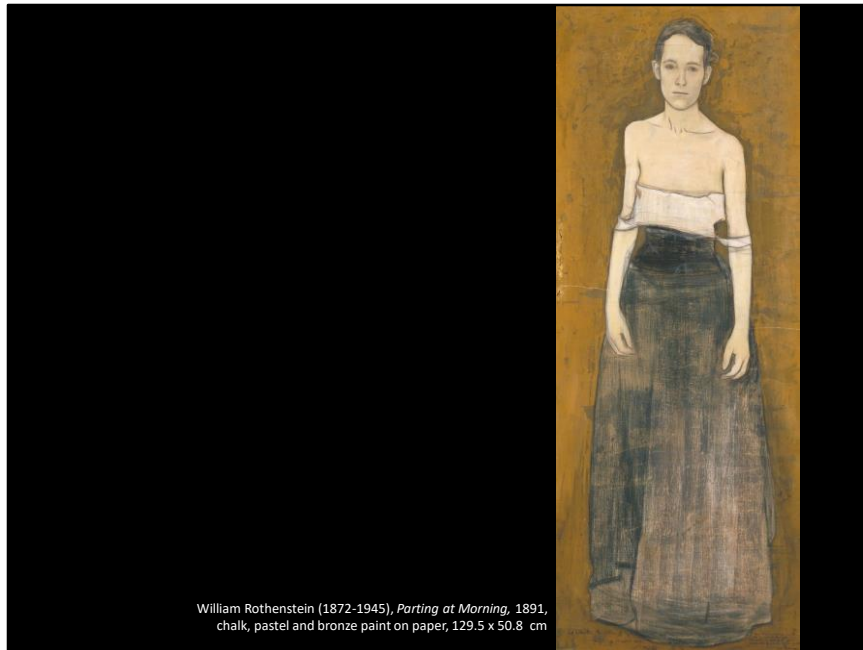
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sargent-claude-monet-painting-by-the-edge-of-a-wood-n04103>



Alfred Gilbert, 'Model for 'Eros' on the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain, Piccadilly Circus', depicting Anteros as the 'Angel of Christian Charity', 1891, cast 1925

- Tate display caption, 'This is a model for the well-known statue 'Eros' (or 'Anteros') which stands in the centre of Piccadilly Circus. It crowns the memorial fountain to the great Victorian philanthropist, Lord Shaftesbury. The sculptor wrote of 'the blindfolded Love sending forth indiscriminately, yet with purpose, his missile of kindness, always with the swiftness the bird has from its wings'. The monument [was started in 1887 and] unveiled in 1893 and was the first London statue to be cast in aluminium.'
- Anteros is the god of requited love, literally 'love returned', the punisher of those who scorn love and the avenger of unrequited love. Eros was the god of sexual attraction and his better known Roman name was Cupid.
- **Angelo Colarossi**, studio assistant to **Alfred Gilbert** whose son, also called Angelo, modelled for **Anteros** (the god of selfless love, son of Ares and Aphrodite, brother Eros, with plumed butterfly wings, symbolises the selfless philanthropic love of Salisbury for the poor) on the **Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain** in **Piccadilly Circus** at the age of 15. Very recent research suggest it is his **uncle Alessandro di Marco** who modelled earlier in Rome **for Leighton**. His original trade was organ grinder.

- The commission was first offered to Boehm who turned it down and recommended Gilbert. The **expense** involved in producing the first aluminium statue in London **financially ruined Gilbert** who returned to Bruges. A **plaster model was found smashed** in his studio and it was **later repaired** and **cast in bronze** and acquired by the Tate.
- **Sir Alfred Gilbert RA** (1854–1934) was an English sculptor and goldsmith who enthusiastically experimented with metallurgical innovations. He was a central — if idiosyncratic — participant in the New Sculpture movement that invigorated sculpture in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century. He was born in London and trained in Paris, Rome and Florence. He worked in the studio of Sir Joseph Boehm. He eloped with his first cousin and returned later to Britain. Bankruptcy forced him to flee Britain in 1901 and he lived for the next 25 years in Bruges, Belgium. His wife left him and was a patient in a mental hospital. When she died he married his housekeeper. He went to Rome where his fortunes improved and he returned to England where he was knighted and made an RA.



William Rothenstein (1872-1945), *Parting at Morning*, 1891, chalk, pastel and bronze paint on paper, 129.5 x 50.8 cm

- **‘Rothenstein** was a **19-year-old student in Paris** when he produced this painting. The verse inscribed at the bottom right is a quotation from a **poem by Robert Browning** with the **same title** as the picture, suggesting a tryst followed by abandonment. Where the poem takes the man’s point of view, the painting provides the perspective of the woman left behind.’ (Tate display caption)
- It was **originally painted on thin paper** and so would have buckled. It was later mounted on thicker paper and then backed with canvas. The figure was first sketched with charcoal and pastel and the background was then painted with bronze paint followed by the brown paint. The origin of the splits, tears and other damage is unknown.
- Rothenstein was one of the most important **links between London and Paris** during the 1890s and this is his most important work of the period. In Paris he was a **friend of Toulouse-Lautrec and Lucien Pissarro**. Toulouse-Lautrec persuaded a French dealer to put on an a show of Rothenstein’s work where this was shown and **admired by the press, Whistler and Degas**. This picture shows the **strong influence of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes**’ (‘poo-vi de chevan’) paintings of the poor,

which were admired in England as well as in Paris.

- Rothenstein wrote that 'In appearance this model recalled a phrase of Henry James': "**The wanton was not without a certain cadaverous beauty.**" I made many pastel drawings of her'. The overall style **anticipates Picasso's blue period**.
- The verse inscribed at the bottom right is a quotation of Robert Browning's poem of the same title (Rothenstein substitutes 'cliff' for Browning's 'cape'):

*Round the cliff on a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the Mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.*

- **Sir William Rothenstein** (1872–1945) was an English painter, printmaker, lecturer, and writer on art. This one of his earliest works and he to make art right up until his death in the mid-1940s. He painted many subjects including landscapes in France and representations of Jewish synagogues in London but is best known for his work as a war artist in both world wars and his portraits. There are more than 200 of Rothenstein's portraits of famous people in the National Portrait Gallery. He was Principal at the Royal College of Art from 1920 to 1935 and knighted in 1931.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/rothenstein-parting-at-morning-t07283>



Walter Richard Sickert (1860-1942), *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*, 1892, 76.5 x 63.8 cm

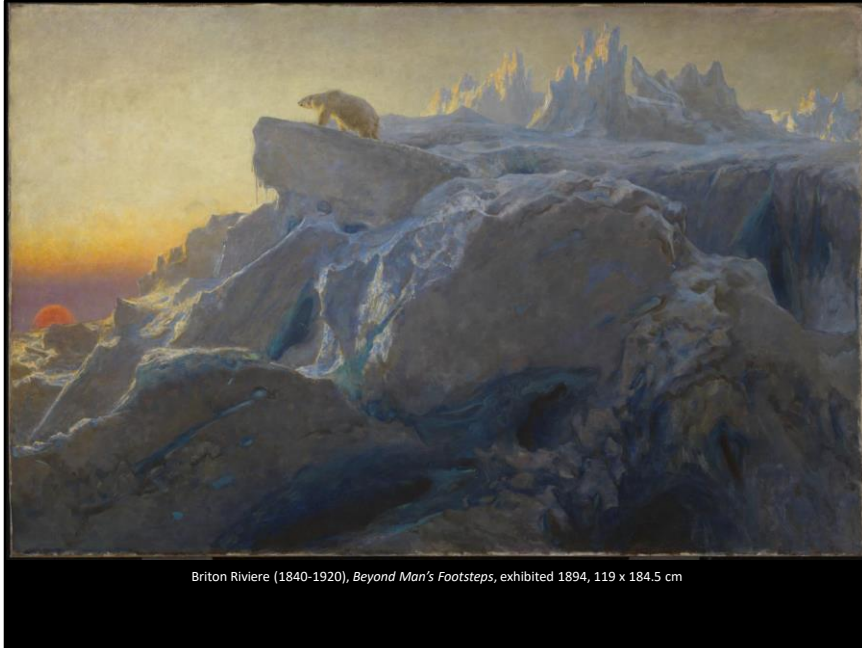
- 'In the 1880s popular music halls sprang up in London and Paris and impressionist artists such as Edgar Degas and Walter Sickert began to paint the audiences and acts. Minnie Cunningham was a successful performer whom Sickert admired. He first exhibited this picture with the subtitle '**I'm an old hand at love, though I'm young in years**', a quotation from one of her songs. Sickert gives us the point of view of an audience member and catches the strange effect of theatrical lighting.' (Tate display caption)
- "Minnie Cunningham' was born in Birmingham and became a 'serio-comic' singer and dancer in the music halls. Her career began around 1888, during which year she performed at a number of London music halls, including the Oxford, the Parthenon and Collins', being described as a 'youthful singer and dancer'. Owing to confusion with an American actress of the same name born in 1855 there has formerly been a belief that she was, when Sickert painted her, a middle-aged performer, adding an extra layer of irony and salaciousness to the songs she sang about herself in the character of an innocent schoolgirl. But, in fact, Cunningham was a young woman in her early twenties when Sickert met her in 1892, and was

described by the poet Arthur Symons in a letter to a friend as **‘very pretty, very nice, very young’**.

- Reviews were mixed. *The Birmingham Gazette* described *Minnie Cunningham* as **‘thoroughly enjoyable** and artistic ... **the picture of the Exhibition’**, and *Black and White* agreed it was **‘quite excellent’**. Several of the **negative reviews** drew attention to what they believed was the **rigid quality** of the figure. **‘How inhuman and caricature-like is the result’**, *Life* complained, **‘a pretty little girl is turned into a wooden doll’**,
- Music halls evolved from light entertainment in salon bars in the 1830s and became established as separate music hall theatres in the 1850s. Unlike a conventional theatre the audience was seated at tables and could eat, drink and smoke.
- **Walter Sickert** was a very **influential and prolific artist** but a painter’s painter. That is, he influenced many twentieth century artists even after his reputation was less well-known to the general public. He was a **colourful and charming** character who was recognised as an important artist in his lifetime. He courted many eminent personalities and was a **skilled raconteur**. In old age he cultivated his eccentric habits frequently appearing in the newspaper having changed his appearance or his name or for some controversial painting stunt.
- He was born in **Munich to a Danish father and an Anglo-Irish mother**. In 1868 the family moved to England and London remained his home although he spent time in Italy and France. He spoke fluent English, German and French and had good Italian.
- His father was a painter and illustrator but discouraged him from painting and when he was 18 he **took up acting** under the stage name **‘Mr. Nemo’**. In 1881 however, he signed for the Slade School. In 1882 he abandoned the stage to join **Whistler’s studio**.
- He denounced Whistler anti-literary theory of drawing and saw all great paintings as telling a story. He also disliked Whistler’s titles as he felt the title set the scene in which the painting could be interpreted. Regarding the **aesthetic**, he said, **‘for me it’s the rudest word I know’**.
- Sickert chose to allegorise painting as **‘a robust and racy wench’**. Dismissing Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No.3* as a **‘bad picture ... badly composed, badly drawn, badly painted’** and appealing only to English sentiment, he insisted that: **‘painting is a rough-tongued, hard-faced mistress, and her severe rule will brook no dallying of that sort’**.
- A major retrospective of his work was held at Tate Britain in 2008.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sickert-minnie-cunningham-at-the-old-bedford-t02039>



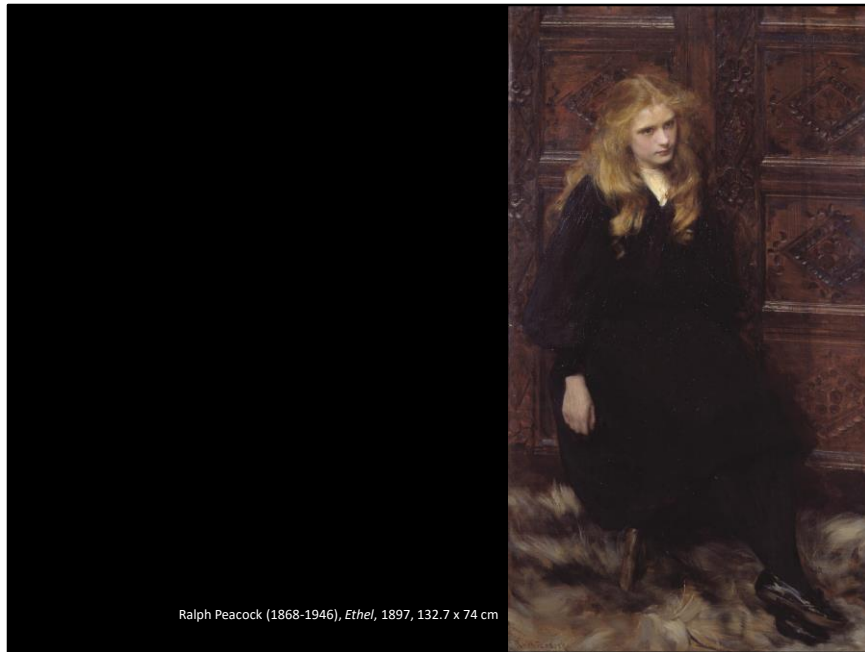
Briton Rivière (1840-1920), *Beyond Man's Footsteps*, exhibited 1894, 119 x 184.5 cm

- 'The animal painter Briton Rivière was interested in **Charles Darwin's ideas on evolution** and the **relationship of animals to man**. *Beyond Man's Footsteps* represents the Arctic as a place of **extreme and sublime beauty** where man is, as yet, nowhere to be seen and the **polar bear reigns**. Rivière did not visit the region, and based his painting on a **captive bear in London Zoo** and on dramatic written accounts of Arctic explorers.' (Tate display caption)
- **Briton Rivière** was a British artist of Huguenot descent who was born in London. His father, grandfather and other members of the family were artists. He exhibited many types of painting at the Royal Academy but his speciality was **animal painting**. He often painted dogs and their relationship with humans. His father was a drawing-master and art teacher at the University of Oxford and Briton was educated at Cheltenham College and Oxford University. He became a **regular contributor to the Royal Academy** in his early thirties. He worked from living animals and also dissected animals at the Zoological Gardens. He became an **Academician** when he was 41 and was narrowly defeated for President in 1896. His wife was an artist and they had seven children and one of his sons became a

portraitist.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/riviere-beyond-mans-footsteps-n01577>
- <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/13/arctic-fantasies-of-edwin-landseer-and-briton-riviere-polar-bears-wilderness-and-notions-of-the-sublime>



Ralph Peacock (1868-1946), *Ethel*, 1897, 132.7 x 74 cm

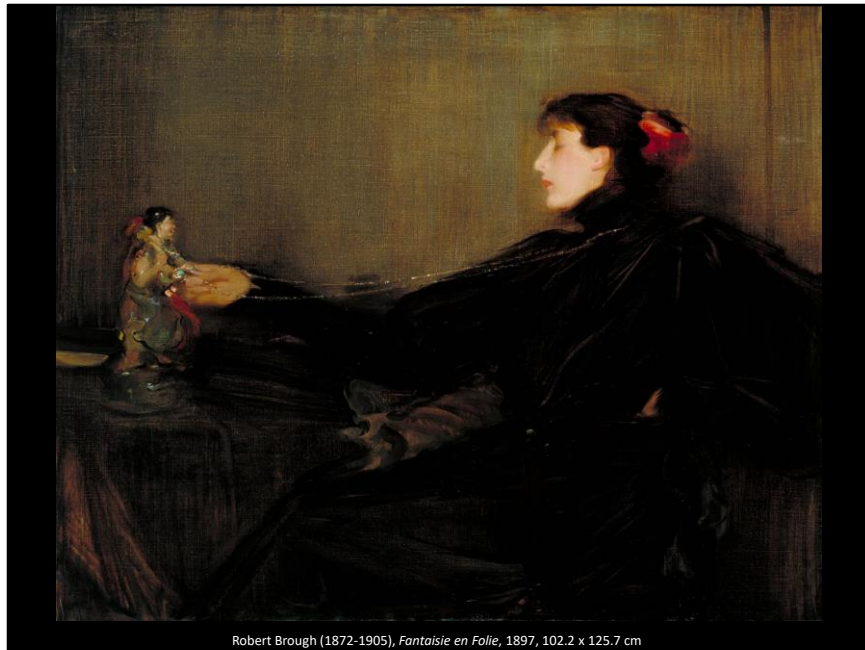
- This portrait was painted **the year the Tate Gallery was founded**, and proved to be **one of the most popular pictures** at the beginning of the 20th century. Peacock was the darling of art critics at the onset of his career, but he never reached fame. His model, **Ethel Brignall**, was fourteen when he painted her. He married her sister Edith a few years later and they lived with their two sons in Wimbledon. The wooden panelling in the background of this portrait was used as a backdrop in most of Peacock's later portraits of children. Peacock was born in Wood Green and studied at St Johns Wood Art School and then the Royal Academy School. He travelled around Europe and became a **successful portrait painter** mostly of **elegant society ladies** and their children. He was a friend of Holman Hunt and may have been influenced by him when young. In 1902 he painted a portrait of Hunt.
- He was born in London and trained as a civil servant. He took evening classes in art and one picture so impressed one artist that he was encouraged to take up portrait painting professionally. He joined the Royal Academy School and knew all the famous artists of the day including Leighton, Holman Hunt and Burne-Jones. He won a gold medal and a travelling scholarship. He travelled Europe winning

medals. In 1900 he painted the sisters Ethel and Edith Brignall and later married Edith. They had two sons and live in Wimbledon, later moving to Camden. He was also a book and magazine illustrator including *Punch*.

References

<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/peacock-ethel-n01672>

<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/speel/paint/peacock.htm>



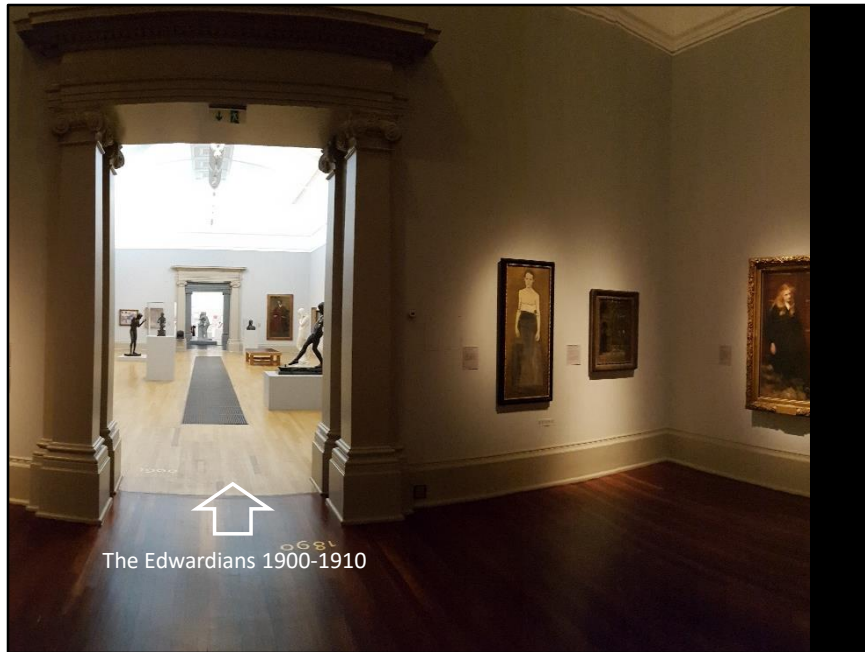
Robert Brough (1872-1905), *Fantaisie en Folie*, 1897, 102.2 x 125.7 cm

- 'The title *Fantaisie en Folie* (pronounced 'fontasy en folly') is best translated as '**Unbridled Fantasy**'. The picture's misty brushwork and harmonious, neutral palette show the **influence of Whistler**, as does the reference to music. The woman's **mysterious gesture suggests mood** rather than narrative. The work was **praised at home and abroad**, where it was widely exhibited.
- A **protégé of Sargent**, Brough built a successful practice as a **portrait painter**, but **died young, aged 34**, after a **train accident at Cudworth station, Yorkshire** when in fog a Midland Railway express overran signals and hit a passenger train killing seven people. After his death Sargent completed some of his works to provide and income for his mistress (the wife of a friend) and child. Brough seems to have regarded *Fantaisie en Folie* as his artistic testament, as he bequeathed it to the Tate Gallery' (Tate display caption)
- **Brough** was a Scottish artist who trained as a lithographer for six years before entering the **Royal Scottish Academy School**. He trained for two years in Julian's atelier in **Paris** and **settled in Aberdeen** as a portrait painter and political cartoonist. In Spain, there is a description of him spending a **week at the Prado**

gallery in Madrid, **rapt in front of** the great **Velasquez** paintings. In 1897 this portrait scored a marked success when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy. He was tall and dashing handsome and dressed like a dandy with a 'faun-like alertness and boyish enthusiasm' which made him attractive to 'both sexes'. After his death he was largely forgotten but has been described as 'one of Scotland's most important artists'. Little is known of his personal life as one of his last acts was to order his papers to be burned. His **mother** had been **lady's maid to the Duchess of Hamilton**, whose coachman John Cameron was probably the father, though there were rumours about the duke.

References

- <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/brough-fantaisie-en-folie-n01956>



1. William Rothenstein (1872-1945), *Parting at Morning*, 1891, chalk, pastel and bronze paint on paper, 129.5 x 50.8 cm