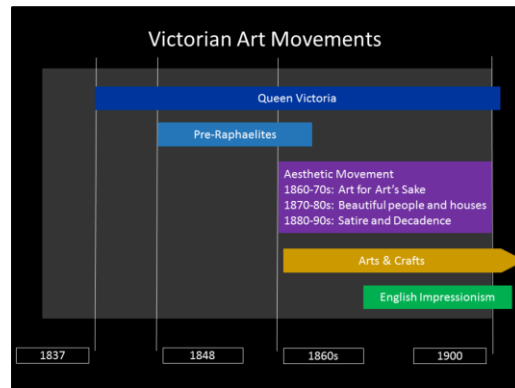




- The Aesthetic Movement in England was related to other movements such as Symbolism or Decadence in France and Decadentismo in Italy.
- British decadent writers were influenced by **Walter Pater** who argued that life should be lived intensely with an ideal of beauty.
- It was related to the Arts and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



Art Movements

- **Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood**, founded by a group of three (Millais, Holman Hunt, Rossetti), then four more (Woolner, Stephens, W. M. Rossetti and Collinson), in 1848. They rejected laziness in painting and wanted to return to nature and represent its intense colours, complexity of form and infinite detail. It caused an enormous impact and the style influenced artists through the rest of the century but as a brotherhood the artists had gone their separate ways by 1853.
- **Aesthetic Movement**, also called 'art for art's sake', emphasized the aesthetic rather than making a moral point or telling a story. It can be considered the British equivalent of **French Symbolism** and it led to the **Decadent** art movement at the end of the century. Artists include Whistler, Leighton, Albert Moore and Edward Burne-Jones. In the 1880s and 90s it became very fashionable to have Aesthetic domestic interiors and it was satirized in cartoons and plays.
- **Arts & Crafts**, a movement that combined the fine and decorative arts and which had an enormous international influence at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is associated with William Morris but as we shall see it had many other precedents. It also became fashionable.
- **English Impressionism**, in this category I include schools, such as the Newlyn School (Stanhope Forbes), the Glasgow School and artists influenced by French Impressionism such as John Singer Sargent. However, English Impressionism took its own path and is associated with the New English Art Club, the Camden Town Group and Whistler's pupil, Walter Sickert, although this takes us into the twentieth century.

Artistic Controversies

Controversies show use where art is challenging existing assumptions and bringing about change. Amongst others we see,

- 1851 Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents* was seen as blasphemous
- 1860s The representation of the nude

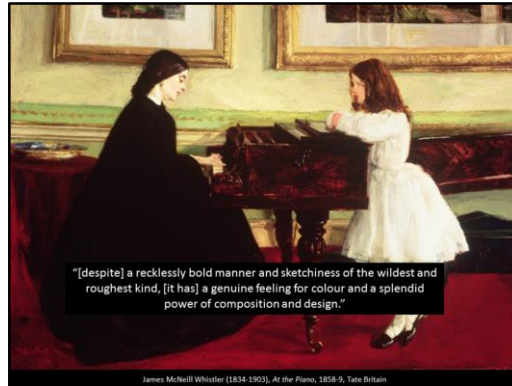
- 1871 Rossetti and the 'Fleshly School' controversy
- 1878 'Art for Art's Sake' led to the Whistler v. Ruskin trial
- 1880s William Morris and Socialism
- 1895 The trials of Oscar Wilde's for indecent behaviour
- 1892 Max Nordau and his book *Degeneration*



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

James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), 'The Old Farm', The French Set, 1858, etching, V&A

- Whistler was born in Lowell, America the son of a railroad engineer who died of cholera aged 49 (in 1849) in St Petersburg. Whistler was prone to fits of temper and insolence as a child but took to art and joined the **Russian Imperial Academy of Fine Arts aged 11**. He spent some time in London with his brother-in-law the physician and artist **Francis Haden**. When his father died the family had little income and moved back to his mother's home town in America. He started training as a minister but it did not suit him so he applied to the United States **Military Academy at West Point** where he was admitted on the strength of his family name as his father had taught drawing there and other family members had attended. He was nearsighted and had a poor health record, had long hair, floated the regulations and made sarcastic comments. He was dismissed and got a job as draughtsman and although he was only there two months **learned to etch**. He decided to become an artist and in **1855 he set out for Paris never to return**. He learnt traditional techniques in the Gleyre's atelier, in particular, line is more important than colour and black is the fundamental colour of tonal harmony both lessons rejected by the Impressionists. He produced 'The French Set' of etchings and in 1858 met **Henri Fantin-Latour and through him Gustave Courbet, Alphonse Legros, Édouard Manet and Charles Baudelaire**.
- Today he is the best known **artist of the Aesthetic Movement**.
- Whistler is one of the great etchers who Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669), Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) and James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Whistler may have been introduced to etching by his brother-in-law Francis Haden who was an authority on the etchings of Rembrandt and a master of etching himself.



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

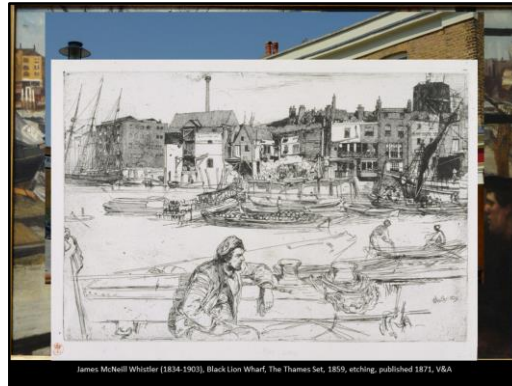
- This was Whistler's **first major painting** after returning to London in **1859**. It is his niece, **Annie Haden**, and her mother (Whistler's half-sister Deborah), in their London music room at 62 Sloane Street. Whistler's half-sister Deborah ('Debo' or 'Sis', the daughter of his father's first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



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

- The painting was originally titled *The Morning Call* and he renamed it *The Music Room* and later added *Harmony in Green and Rose*. It is set in his sister's house in Sloane Street and his distortion of perspective with the tilted floor and the use of the mirror reflect artistic ideas being discussed in Paris at the time. *At the Piano* is wide and expansive but *The Music Room* is tall, narrow and claustrophobic.
- He painted the same mother and child a few years later in the same room and his intention may have been to exploit the contrast between Annie in white and her cousin Ethel Boott in black. This time the composition was more exciting. The mirror introduces an ambiguity in the space—who are we looking at in the mirror? The woman in the mirror is his half-sister, **Deborah Delano Haden** and her shadowy presence suggests her conventional marriage. Whistler added her reflection later.
- The **woman in black** is wearing a **riding costume** associated with the **French courtesan**. **Annie** sits between the two life choices and maintains her privacy. A picture of a woman or girl reading is a sign of modernity as it implies education and advancement. It is similar to Degas family portrait of the period (*The Bellini Family*, 1859-60) but Whistler's high angle and use of overlapping forms predates devices that Degas would not use until the end of the century.
- Annie explained later that on one occasion she burst in tears because of the strain of posing for so long. Whistler realised he was asking too much of a 12 year-old and was extremely kind to her. He went out and bought her a leather writing set as a gift to cheer her up. Whistler though could not get Annie's head right and when Frederick Leighton suggested it was 'out of harmony' with the rest of the painting Whistler immediately rubbed out the head only a week before the Royal Academy deadline. However, his mother heard had had painted a portrait of Annie and 'Debo' and asked for it.

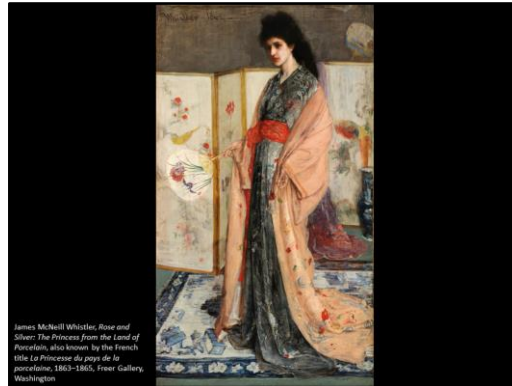
- This painting was given by Whistler's mother to Whistler's niece Julia Revillon who took it to Russia. On her return in 1892 she wished to sell it. Whistler insisted on at least 800 guineas but it was finally sold at auction for £199 10s. Whistler was very angry and reminded her it was a present from his mother to her mother (also called Julia).



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Wapping on Thames*, 1860-1864, National Gallery of Art, Washington

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

his personal favourites; a framed impression of it appears in the background of his celebrated Portrait of Whistler's mother. It attracted many imitators. The minute and crisp delineation of bricks and old woodwork of the wharf buildings inspired the romantic prints made by Graham Sutherland and other young etchers in the late 1920s.



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

- In the mid-1860s Japanese art and dress became fashionable.
- *Princess* depicts a beautiful Western woman wearing a kimono and standing amidst numerous Asian objects, including a rug and screen as well as some porcelain. She holds a hand fan and looks at the viewer "wistfully". The entirety is rendered in an impressionistic manner.
- Princess was painted between 1863 and 1865 by James Abbott McNeill Whistler when he was about 30, with **Christine Spartali** (sister of the great Pre-Raphaelite artist Marie Spartali) serving as the model; Owen Edwards of Smithsonian describes Spartali as "an **Anglo-Greek beauty** whom all the artists of the day were **clamouring to paint**". Princess is one of several of Whistler's works painted during this period that depict a Western woman in **Asian surroundings** and Asian clothes.
- Whistler spend all winter of 1863-4 painting it and often scraped off everything he had painted and started again. The sittings went on until Spartali fell ill and Whistler used a model for the gown.
- When the portrait was completed, Spartali's father refused to purchase it; Whistler's large signature led another would-be buyer to withdraw. This may have led Whistler to develop his butterfly-style signature. The early history of the painting afterwards is fairly uncertain. In 1865 Princess was displayed at the Paris Salon. The following year, it was displayed at Gambart's French Gallery in London; as Whistler was in South America when the exhibition finished, his friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti received the painting. It was then sold by either Rossetti or Joanna Hiffernan, Whistler's muse and lover, to an unknown art collector thought to be Frederick Huth. Princess was returned to Whistler in 1867.
- Several years later, the portrait was **bought by Leyland** He displayed Princess in a **dining room** filled with Kangxi ceramics, but was displeased how it had been

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

Japonism

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



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

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



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

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

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

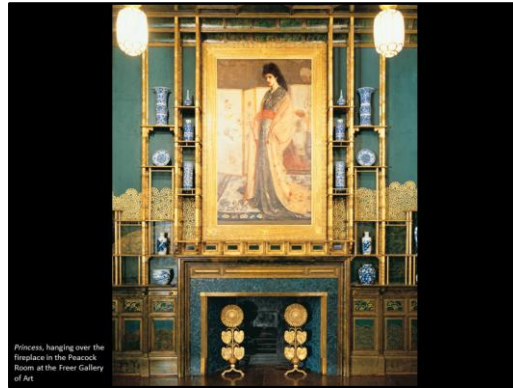
- This is one of his earliest paintings in the new style with a title linking it to the abstract nature of music
- It was first shown at the Salon des Refusés in 1863 and critics had many interpretations of the meaning.

Whistler's *The White Girl* – Joanna Hiffernan

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

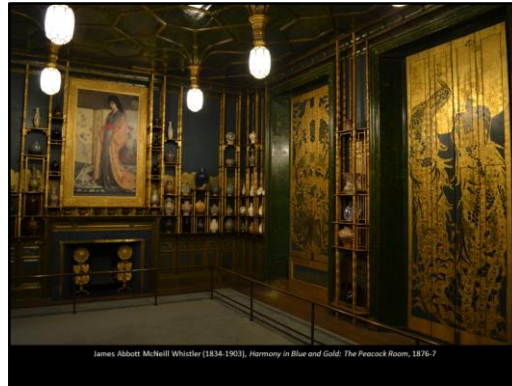
when Whistler was away in South America, she helped to raise Whistler's son, the result of an affair with parlour maid Louisa Fanny Hanson. In 1861 she sat for this picture in a studio (Boulevard des Batignolles) in Paris.

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



Princess, hanging over the fireplace in the Peacock Room at the Freer Gallery of Art

- The painting I showed earlier was part of the Peacock Room.



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

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

The Peacock Room

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

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

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

Frances, who **separated** from her husband in **1879**. Another result of this drama was **Jeckyll who, so shocked** by the first sight of his room, returned home and was later found on the floor of his studio covered in gold leaf; he **never recovered** and **died insane** three years later.

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

References

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



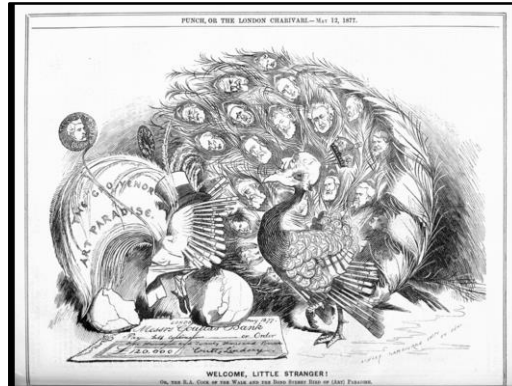
E. W. Godwin (1833-1886) designed Aesthetic Movement side table, William A & S Smee Furniture Manufacturers

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

Aesthetic Movement – Decorative Arts

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

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



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

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

Linley Sambourne

Grosvenor Gallery

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

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

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

Exhibition Options for Artists

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

References

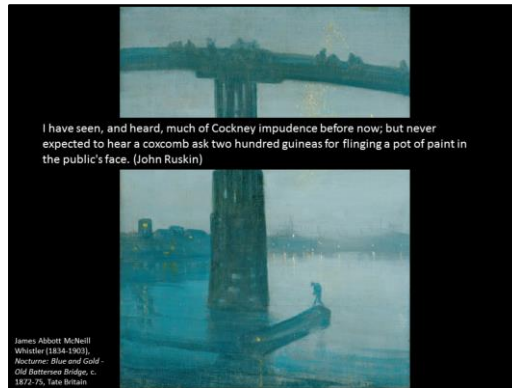
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Grosvenor Gallery, West Wing, 1877

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

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



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

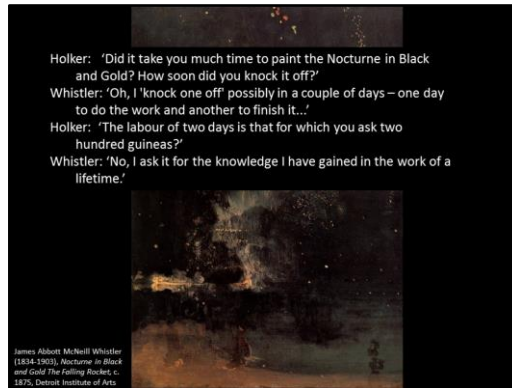
- In 1866 Whistler decided to travel to **Valparaiso, Chile to fight the Spanish**. Scholars have puzzle over his motivation. Whistler stated he was asked by some South Americans as a 'West Point' man and he was very proud of his military training but, unlike his brother, he had never fought. He may have thought this the opportunity to display his military prowess as a swashbuckling Southern gentleman (even though he was born in New England). Whatever the reason Whistler's painted his first three night paintings while he was there. He later, thanks to the suggestion of his patron Frederick Leyland he re-titled them 'nocturnes'.
- On his return him contributed *Symphony in White, No. 3* but critics in England and France were not sympathetic and between 1868 and 1870 he showed only a single painting at the Royal Academy and none in France. He experimented with classical nudes in drapes but criticized himself for his lack of formal training in the life class. He had lost his sense of artistic direction. He was short of money, despised the English and began a major family crisis by arguing with his brother-in-law and pushing him through a plate glass window. In 1869 his half-brother George died.
- In 1871 he painted his ailing mother, *Arrangement on Grey and Black, No. 1* (colloquially called *Whistler's Mother*) and this to have been a turning point. At the same time he was rejecting Realism for Aestheticism and he chose to go out on the Thames at night with Walter Greaves (1846-1930) and paint his Nocturnes. Greaves was a neighbour who was a boat builder and waterman and his father had been the boatman for J. M. W. Turner.
- Whistler painted several more **nocturnes** over the next ten years, many of the **River Thames** and of Cremorne Gardens, a pleasure park famous for its frequent fireworks displays, which presented a novel challenge to paint. In his maritime nocturnes, Whistler used paint he had thinned with copal, turpentine and linseed

oil, creating what **he called a 'sauce'**, which he applied in thin, transparent layers, wiping it away until he was satisfied. To this ground he applied lightly flicked colour to suggest ships, lights, and shore line. Some of the Thames paintings also show compositional and thematic similarities with the **Japanese prints of Hiroshige**.

The Whistler v. Ruskin Trial

- This painting gave rise to one of the **central artistic controversy of the Victorian period**, known as the **Whistler v. Ruskin trial**. The trial tells us a lot about how the Victorians regarded art and the nature of the changes Whistler helped bring about.
- This painting and the next were exhibited in the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, the year it opened. John Ruskin reviewed Whistler's work in his publication *Fors Clavigera* on July 2, 1877. Ruskin praised Burne-Jones, while he attacked Whistler:
*For Mr. Whistler's own sake, no less than for the protection of the purchaser, Sir Coutts Lindsay [founder of the Grosvenor Gallery] ought not to have admitted works into the gallery in which the ill-educated conceit of the artist so nearly approached the aspect of wilful imposture. I have seen, and heard, much of **Cockney impudence** before now; but never expected to hear a **coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face**.*
- Critics by convention **did not criticize** paintings as they knew the artist had to make a living. If they did not like a painting they ignored it or made a critical comment alongside some positive points.
- Whistler, seeing the attack in the newspaper, replied to his friend George Boughton, "It is the most debased style of criticism I have had thrown at me yet." He then went to his solicitor and drew up a writ for libel which was served to Ruskin. Whistler hoped to recover **£1,000 plus the costs of the action**. The case came to trial the following year after delays caused by Ruskin's bouts of mental illness, while Whistler's financial condition continued to deteriorate. It was heard at the Queen's Bench of the High Court on November 25 and 26 of 1878.
- Although, we do not have a transcript of the Whistler v. Ruskin trial sufficient reports were published to enable it to be reconstructed.
When asked '**Are those figures** on the top of the bridge intended for people?' Whistler replied '**They are just what you like.**'
When the judge asked **if it was a barge** beneath the bridge, Whistler replied '**Yes, I am very much flattered** at your seeing that. The picture is simply a representation of moonlight. My whole scheme was only to bring about a **certain harmony of colour.**'
- Whistler stressed the colour rather than a harmony of form and the form is suppressed by the overall similarity in tone and hue; with the exception of the gold dots the painting is a wash of blue, in places a thin wash that allows the canvas to

show. Whistler mixed large quantities of the predominant tone that he called his 'sauce', and although he started on an easel, he often had to throw the canvas on the floor to stop the sauce running off. The sky and water were rendered by 'great sweeps of the brush of exactly the right tone.'



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

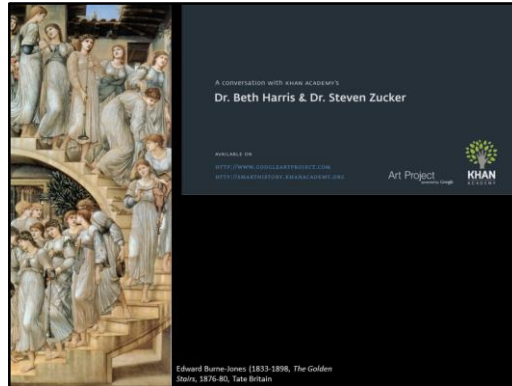
hours work put into the painting and by implication an expensive picture was expected to be a clear representation of something, should be **well finished** and should **exhibit the hard work** put into it through its size, the skill the artist needed to accurately represent something and the attention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

References

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

EDWARD BURNE-JONES





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

- This painting **represents a mood** rather than telling a story. The painting has **provoked much debate** and one view is that the **eighteen women are spirits in an enchanted dream**. The painting might also be **purely decorative**. It was first **conceived in 1872** after a **trip to Italy**, the painting was **begun in 1876**, but not completed and **exhibited until 1880** when it was shown at the **Grosvenor Gallery**. Clothed in **vaguely Renaissance costumes**, the women are painted in a **monochromatic palette** designed to create a sense of mood and timelessness. One of the artist's first attempts at working on such a large scale, the very **vertical structure** of the canvas draws the viewer's eye downward through the long parade of nearly identical women.
- The underlying idea, popularised in the **1870s by the critic Walter Pater**, is that **'all the arts aspire to the condition of music'**. Paintings like this can be as much about design as meaning.

Notes

- The film contains:
 - Van Eyck, *Ghent altarpiece*, 1432
 - John Everett Millais, *Ferdinand Lured by Ariel*, 1850, Tate Britain
 - George Frederic Watts, *Paolo and Francesca*, 1872-1884 (?)
 - Frederic Leighton, *Return of Persephone*, c. 1891, Leeds Museum and Gallery

References

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

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

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



Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-1898), *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, 1884, Tate Britain

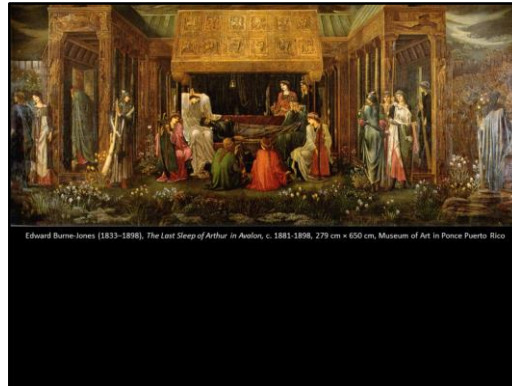
See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Cophetua_and_the_Beggar_Maid_\(painting\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King_Cophetua_and_the_Beggar_Maid_(painting))

Edward Burne-Jones: Picture of the Year

- The painting illustrates the story of '**The King and the Beggar-maid**', which tells the legend of the **prince Cophetua** (pronounced coe-FET-you-ah) and his love for the **beggar Penelophon**. The tale was familiar to Burne-Jones through an **Elizabethan ballad** published in Bishop Thomas Percy's 1765 *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* and the sixteen-line poem ***The Beggar Maid*** by Alfred **Tennyson**.
- King Cophetua was exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1884 and became **Burne-Jones's greatest success** of the 1880s for its technical execution and its themes of power and wealth overborne by beauty and simplicity. It was heralded as the '**picture of the year**' by *The Art Journal* and 'not only the finest work Mr Burne-Jones has ever painted, but **one of the finest pictures ever painted by an Englishman**' by *The Times*. The painting was exhibited in France in **1889**, where its popularity earned Burne-Jones the **Legion of Honour** and began a vogue for his work. The artist's wife Georgiana Burne-Jones felt 'this picture contained more of Edward's own qualities than any other he did.'
- On seeing the painting Fernand Khnopff (a major influence on Gustav Klimt) wrote, '**Two chorister-boys** perched above are singing softly, and in the distance, between the hanging curtains, is seen a dream, so to speak, of an autumn landscape, its tender sky already dusk, expressing all sweet regret, all hope in vain for the things that are no more, the things that can never be.'
- As mentioned the painting is based on the theme of the **inferiority of riches** and **power of love**. The rejection of the material for the spiritual held particular **relevance for a French generation** influenced by Symbolist writers and artists who

had promulgated similar ideas. Burne-Jones's wife Georgiana stressed the importance of this aspect of *King Cophetua* and noted that her husband painted it during the divergence of opinion between himself and Morris, on the subject of **Socialism**. Jean Maxime ('Max') Monier de la Sizeranne wrote that it seemed to him and his friends as though in standing before it they had 'come from the Universal Exhibition of wealth to see the symbolical expression of the **Scorn of Wealth**'.

- There could be a more **personal explanation** as the face of the **beggar girl** looks like his wife **Georgiana** Burne-Jones (see his 1883 portrait of her). Burne-Jones had had an **affair** with **Maria Zambaco Cassavetti** from about 1866 to 1869. In 1869 Burne-Jones attempted to leave his wife, which caused a scandal, and she tried to persuade him to commit suicide with her by the canal in Little Venice. She continued to appear in his paintings, such as *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1872-7) and *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870). Some have identified the face in this painting as that of **Frances Graham** who was born in 1858 and was the daughter of his patron William Graham, MP and merchant. She met him when she was 15 and he was 40 and described him later as 'my greatest friend for all my grown-up life). Burne-Jones doted on her and was distraught when she married John ('Jack') Horner in 1883 when she was 25 and he was 40. The **anemones** in the painting are a symbol of rejected love which may be a comment on his wife or his mistress.



Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon*, c. 1881-1898, 279 cm × 650 cm, Museum of Art in Ponce Puerto Rico

- *The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* is considered by some to be Burne-Jones 'last and greatest work'. It is certainly epic in scale. It was commissioned by the Earl of Carlisle to hang on a wall in his library and it is massive, over six metres wide. Burne-Jones started on it in 1881 and worked on it for 17 years. During the 1880s many of his friends died and he increasingly felt isolated and aware of his mortality. He agreed the commission should be cancelled but continued to work on the giant canvas. He immersed himself in the work and identified himself with Arthur. He wrote, 'above all the picture is about silence.' Towards the end of his life he wrote, 'I need nothing but my hands and my brain to fashion myself a world to live in that nothing can disturb. In my own land I am king of it.' His widow described *Arthur* as a 'task of love to which [the artist] put no limit of time or labour.' The day before he died he was still working on *Arthur*.
- It was loaned to the Tate in 1929 and when the war started in 1939 it was removed from its stretcher, rolled up and stored in a box. In 1963 the owner's decided to sell it through Christies where Brian Sewell was working at the time. It was delivered only a week before the sale and when removed from the box 24 years of spiders and detritus fell out. To try to unroll the heavy canvas it was tacked to a tapestry bar which was slowly raised. Christie's Chairman, Peter Chance, arrived and as he reached the centre of the canvas it began to tear from the bar. Chance was a short man and the rapidly curling canvas surrounded and enclosed him. He fought his way out destroying the canvas. Some say that the person trapped in the canvas was Brian Sewell himself but this is the way he tells the story. A canvas should never be rolled face in but that is what happened as it fell and the floor was covered in paint flakes and the painting was extensively damaged. Sewell called a friend, Joan Seddon, who was a restorer and they both worked on it for 30 hours, from Friday to Monday morning, repainting the flowers. Nothing was said and it

was sold to the founder of the Ponce Museum of Art in Puerto Rico. Burne-Jones was out of favour at the time so there was no objection to its export and the Museum relined, cleaned and stretched it. When the Ponce Museum was being refurbished in 2009-10 the work was shown at Tate Britain together with Leighton's *Flaming June*. Brian Sewell saw the painting for the first time in 45 years and was appalled by the quality of the irises, bluebells and forget-me-nots but he could not tell if it was his work, restorers at the Ponce Museum or one of Burne-Jones assistants, or even by Burne-Jones himself.

References

- <http://zooskbriansewell.blogspot.co.uk/>
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Sleep_of_Arthur_in_Avalon

BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE
AND BEAUTIFUL HOMES





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

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

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

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



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

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

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

Punch Artists

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



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

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



Royal Worcester "Aesthetic" Teapot and cover, double-sided, 1882, Designer James Hadley (English)

- The teapot was based on Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta ***Patience*** which was a **satire** on the Aesthetic Movement particularly **Rossetti** and Algernon Charles Swinburne. Oscar Wilde was not as well known as he had not published his first volume of poetry.
- Coincidentally, 1882 was the year both Darwin and Rossetti **died** only 10 days apart.
- I want to talk about the inscription on the base as it links art with Darwin's theory but first a little more about the operetta.

Notes

- Sold at Sotheby's recently for £5,000 to The Tea and Coffee Museum, London
- The teapot design was registered on 21 December 1881 and the costume is based on the first Gilbert and Sullivan opera *Patience* that opened in April 1881, a satire on the Aesthetic Movement.
- Rossetti had been attacked for immorality by Robert Buchanan (under the pseudonym "Thomas Maitland") in an article called "The Fleshly School of Poetry", published in *The Contemporary Review* for October 1871, a decade before *Patience*.
- Rossetti died on 9 April 1882 of a kidney disease and Charles Darwin on 19 April 1882 of a heart attack.



Original cast members Frank Thornton, Durward Lely and John D'Almeida in Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *Patience*, produced at the Opera Comique, London, on 23 April 1881. (Cabinet photograph by Elliott & Fry, London, 1881)

- This is the original cast of *Patience*. Victorians would have described them as **effeminate**, a word that was widely used during the period but it did **not mean homosexual**.
- It referred to men who were **not manly** and who were regarded only as '**soft**' men whose relationships with women **did not respect the social conventions** regarding separation of the sexes.
- In Shakespeare's time, for example, effeminacy referred to being too womanish, feeble, self-indulgent and too intimately involved with women, and was **most commonly used in relation to heterosexual young men**.
- Gilbert and Sullivan was **parodying** the **Aesthetic Movement as it had become so important**. It was like the hippy movement in the 1960s and in the same way the hippy movement was about love, the aesthetic movement was about beauty. It was **not just a fashion but a way of life** and a major cultural movement.

Notes

Effeminacy

- I also think of the Count's page **Cherubino** in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786), he is described as **infatuated with all women** and his punishment as it is the opposite of his character is to be sent to an army unit.

Patience

- In *Patience* '**twenty lovesick maidens we**' wait for the **aesthetic poet Bunthorne** but he is in love with a simple milkmaid called Patience. (In the end Bunthorne's friend Grosvenor goes off with Patience and 'Nobody [is] Bunthorne bride'.)



- This song is based on the poem 'The Aesthetic' by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, based on Swinburne's 'The Aesthetic' (1889) and the poem 'The Aesthetic' by Patmore and William Morris). It **parodies the aesthete** by combining the qualities and occupations of a **normal young man** with their aesthetic and poetical life style in which they have twenty young maidens swooning and waiting for them outside the door.
- **(Play)**
- **Did you hear all the topical references?**
 - **Chancery Lane**, centre of London's law courts. A respectable young man hoping to rise in the legal profession, not an aesthete.
 - **Somerset House**, a massive building on the Strand containing a large number of unaesthetic bureaucrats.
 - **Grosvenor Gallery**, an art gallery for modern art that had just opened in 1877 in Bond Street. It was funded by Sir Coutts Lindsay and his wife Blanche. Its first directors were J. Comyns Carr and Charles Hallé. The gallery proved crucial to the Aesthetic Movement because it provided a home for those artists whose approaches the more classical and conservative Royal Academy did not welcome, such as Edward Burne-Jones and Walter Crane. The walls were scarlet damask above a dado of dull green and gold (thus '**greenery-gallery**')
 - **Sewell and Cross**, a fashionable London firm of drapers that sold cloth by the yard and tailor-made and 'off the hook' goods.
 - **Howell and James**, jewellers and silversmiths in Regent Street, opened in 1819. In 1881 it added art pottery galleries to the shops.
 - '**Monday Pops**', held at London's original main concert hall, the St James's Hall, Regent Street. It was famous for its 'Monday Pops' concerts and Ballad Concerts.
 - **Waterloo House**, Pall Mall south side looking towards Trafalgar Square, a well-known fashionable shop for ladies selling dresses, cloaks and carpets.

- **Francesca de Rimini** was mentioned because of her love for Paolo; a love that landed them both in hell. A historic character from the time of Dante Alighieri and mentioned by Giovanni Boccaccio. She married Giovanni Malatesta and fell in love with his brother Paolo, who was also married. They had an affair that lasted ten years until they were discovered and killed by Giovanni. Dante in *The Divine Comedy* places them both in the second circle of hell reserved for the lustful. They are trapped in an eternal whirlwind.



Royal Worcester 'Aesthetic' Teapot and cover, double-sided, 1888, Designer James Hadley (English, 1850–1903)

- Let us return to the teapot. The base is inscribed '**FEARFUL CONSEQUENCES - THROUGH THE LAWS OF NATURAL SELECTION AND EVOLUTION OF LIVING UP TO ONE'S TEAPOT**'
- First of all, why 'Living up to one's teapot'? Whilst a student at Oxford University Oscar Wilde once said "**I find it harder and harder every day to live up to my blue china**". So clearly this part is a reference to Oscar Wilde's then famous comment
- Why did this teapot, produced to cash in on the publicity around *Patience*, **mention Darwin's theory?**
- To unravel the complex links between Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution we need to **imagine** ourselves **back in the Victorian world**.
- By the 1890s, Social Darwinism was giving rise to fears concerning the **degeneration of society** demonstrated by degenerate art, but more of that later.
- It is clear from this inscription that Darwin's ideas were **well known** and seen to be **relevant** to the Aesthetic Movement.
- **But how well known?**

Oscar Wilde

- Wilde married Constance Lloyd (1884–98) in 1884 and they had two sons Cyril Holland (1885) and Vyvyan Holland (1886).
- At the height of his fame and success, while his masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), was still on stage in London. The Marquess of Queensberry left his calling card at Wilde's club with 'For Oscar Wilde, posing somdomite [sic]'

written on it. Encouraged by the Marquess of Queensbury's son Lord Alfred Douglas Wilde initiated a libel case. Queensbury was arrested for criminal libel, a charge that carried a penalty of up to two years in prison. Male homosexual prostitutes were called as witnesses and Wilde dropped his charges but the evidence led to his own arrest and trial for gross indecency with other men. It also left Wilde bankrupt. Gross indecency was introduced in 1885 (Criminal Law Amendment Act) and was used if sodomy could not be proved. Until 1861 the penalty for sodomy was death (Buggery Act 1533).

- After two more trials he was convicted and imprisoned for two years' hard labour. In 1897, in prison, he wrote *De Profundis*, which was published in 1905, a long letter which discusses his spiritual journey through his trials in contrast with his earlier philosophy of pleasure. Upon his release he left immediately for France, never to return to Ireland or Britain. There he wrote his last work, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), a long poem commemorating the harsh reality of prison life. He died destitute in Paris at the age of 46.

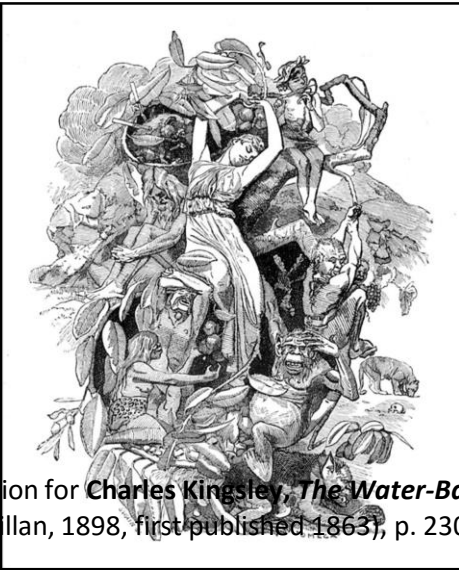
How Did Homosexuality Evolve?

- It has been shown that although there is some genetic basis to homosexuality it is limited. For example, if one identical male twin is homosexual there is only a 20% chance the other has the same sexual orientation even though their genes are identical.
- It is not exclusive to humans, hundreds of species exhibit homosexual behaviour and in some animal species a percentage of the population is entirely homosexual, e.g. bonobos and male bighorn sheep.
- Male homosexuality has been closely studied but lesbianism has not been studied as much.
- There are various theories about how male homosexuality evolved:
 - That genes that code for homosexuality are associated with other traits that increase the likelihood of successful children, such as better parenting skills. There is evidence that women find effeminate men more attractive. So an exclusively homosexual male might be an unusual extreme example of an effeminate male and it might be cultural.
 - That the genes expressed in women make them more attracted to men and they have more children. There is some evidence that mothers who have homosexual children have more children.
 - Another theory is that one homosexual in a family might help bring up his related children more successfully, e.g. a helpful homosexual uncle can help children survive better. The evidence for this is mixed and it seems to depend on the culture.
 - Men with older brothers are more likely to be homosexual. This might be because the mother develops an immune response to the proteins that have a role in developing the male brain. As this only develops after a

number of heterosexual children have been born it is less likely to be evolved away.

- We are assuming homosexual men don't have children but before the modern period homosexual men often married and had children.
- The figures appear to be low, a survey in the UK in 2013 found that only 7% of men said that had ever had any sexual experience with another man.

Linley Sambourne, illustration for Charles Kingsley, *The Water-Babies* (London: George Allen, 1898, first published 1863), p. 230



- The final interplay between science and beauty I would like to discuss is degeneration.
- This is concerned with progress.
- Although the concern about **degenerate art** did not develop until the 1890s this illustration **from 1863 spells out the danger**.
- In *The Water Babies*, Kingsley tells of a group of humans called the Doasyoulikes who are allowed to do "whatever they like" so gradually lose the power of speech, **degenerate into cavemen and then gorillas that are shot**.
- Kingsley was making the point that evolution does not necessarily imply improvement, it can lead to degeneration.
- The idea was clear, for example in Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire* (1776-1789) but following Darwin's ideas it was linked to the degeneration of the human race and social Darwinism.

Notes

- As early as 1862-3 and written partly as a satire on Darwin's *The Origin of Species* was Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*.
- It was very popular in England but fell out of favour because of its dismissive or insulting references to Americans, Jews, Blacks, Catholics and the Irish.
- Kingsley also (controversially, nowadays) likens the Doasyoulikes to the natives of Africa, by mentioning that one of the gorillas shot by Du Chaillu "*remembered that his ancestors had once been men, and tried to say, 'Am I Not A Man And A Brother?'*", but had forgotten how to use his tongue."
- We can see in Linley Sambourne's illustration that the Doasyoulikes degenerate. At the top they are sitting around playing musical instruments and as they are not working hard they gradually degenerate, first into cavemen, then apes and finally beasts. The last Doasyoulike is **shot by Paul Du Chaillu** who was very famous at the

time the book was written.

- He had just returned from Africa in the early 1860s with the first stories of gorillas, like, he thought a cross between humans and apes, as intelligent as humans and extremely violent.
- The point being made by Kingsley is that evolution does not imply progress. As Darwin was aware evolution has no direction, we are not getting more and more evolved or better and better.
- Some people say, 'but surely we are more advanced than bacteria?' Their argument is that over millions of years the complexity of organisms increases but this can be explained without progress.
- Life starts out as simple as it gets so over time it will obviously get more complex and over a long period very complex. However, there is no direction and no steady progress. Evolution is all ups and downs.
- The woman is a **fairy who is teaching Tom**, the water baby about life. She shows him a book which contains colour pictures illustrating the history of the Doasyoulikes.
- Little pigs ran about crying 'Come and eat me' and they waited until the pigs ran against their mouths and took a bite.
- "Why," said Tom, "*they are growing no better than savages.*", "*And look how ugly they are all getting,*" said Ellie. "*Yes; when people live on poor vegetables instead of roast beef and plum-pudding, their jaws grow large, and their lips grow coarse, like the poor Paddies who eat potatoes.*"



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

Aubrey Beardsley, *Oscar Wilde at Work*, sketch

- Decadent art is often confused with degenerate and fin-de-siècle art and with the Symbolism.
- The term **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.
- **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 sked 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.

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**

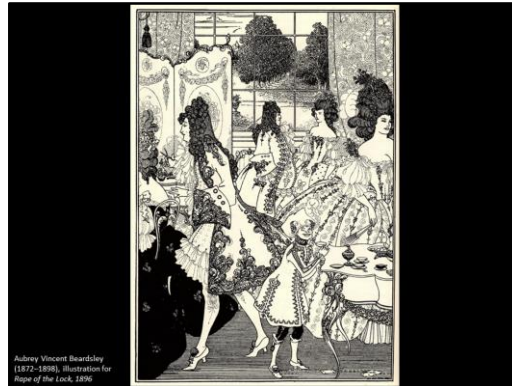
Aesthetic Movement and Pre-Raphaelite artists such as Rossetti. Which he thought could be explained as a product of **mental illness**. He thought the **Impressionists** suffered from **diseased visual cortex**. Ironically, **Nordau was a Jew** (later an agnostic) and one of the **founders of the Zionist movement** even though his theory was used by the Nazis to criticize 'Jewish art' and demand Aryan purity.

- Ironically, the term '**degenerate art**' (*Entartete Kunst*) was **adopted by the Nazis** and was enforced by book burning, artists being dismissed from teaching positions and curators being replaced by Party members.

Grotesque

- The word grotesque, originally a noun (1560s), from Italian grottesco (through Middle French), literally "of a cave", from Italian grotta (see grotto).[1] 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.



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

The Rape of the Lock

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

Aubrey Vincent Beardsley

- Beardsley was an English illustrator and author. His drawings in black ink, influenced by the style of **Japanese woodcuts**, emphasized the **grotesque, the decadent, and the erotic**. He was a leading figure in the Aesthetic movement which also included Oscar Wilde and James A. McNeill Whistler. Beardsley's contribution to the development of the Art Nouveau and poster styles was significant, despite the brevity of his career before his early death from tuberculosis.
- In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde wrote, '**All art is quite useless**'. In this one sentence, Wilde encapsulates the **complete principles of the Aesthetic Movement** popular in Victorian England. That is to say, real art takes **no part in moulding the social or moral identities** of society, nor should it. **Art should be beautiful** and pleasure its observer, but to imply further-reaching influence would be a mistake. The explosion of aesthetic philosophy in *fin-de-siècle* English society,

as exemplified by Oscar Wilde, was not confined to merely art, however. Rather, the proponents of this philosophy extended it to life itself. Here, **aestheticism advocated whatever behaviour was likely to maximize the beauty and happiness in one's life**, in the tradition of hedonism. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it.

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

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

Lane: It never is, sir.

Algernon: Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

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

- The works of the Decadents and the Aesthetes contain the hallmarks typical of *fin de siècle* art. Holbrook Jackson's *The **Eighteen Nineties*** describes the characteristics of **English decadence** which are: perversity, artificiality, egoism, and curiosity.
 - **Perversity**: a concern for the perverse, unclean, and unnatural. Romanticism encouraged audiences to view physical traits as indicative of one's inner self but the *fin de siècle* artists accepted beauty as the basis of life and so valued that which was **not conventionally beautiful**.
 - **Artificiality**: this belief in beauty in the abject leads to the obsession with artifice and symbolism, as artists rejected ineffable ideas of beauty in favour of the **abstract**. Through **symbolism**, aesthetes could evoke sentiments and ideas in their audience without relying on an infallible general understanding of the world.
 - **Egoism**: a term similar to that of ego-mania meaning **disproportionate attention placed on one's own endeavours**. This can result in a type of alienation and anguish, as in Baudelaire's case, and demonstrates how aesthetic artists chose cityscapes over country as a result of their aversion to the natural.
 - **Curiosity** is identifiable through diabolism and the **exploration of the evil or immoral**, focusing on the **morbid and macabre**, but without imposing any moral lessons on the audience.
- The term '**decadence**' was adopted by **British Society** in preference to the **French term 'Symbolism'** even though they **embraced the same tenets**. Beardsley's decadence merges with rejection of contemporary society by Rossetti, Morris, Leighton and others but is more extreme. The overtones of '**decadence**' **merge into Max Nordau's pseudo-scientific idea of 'degeneration'** and both signal the end of an era and the beginning of modern art.

References

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

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

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



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

- Black and white line block print on Japanese vellum depicting a woman, presumed to be Salome, viewed from the back, in a flowing robe with a dramatic stylised **peacock design on the skirt**, as well as an elaborate **headdress** complete with **stylised peacock feathers**, some of which **trail down her back** (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**.'

SUMMARY: AESTHETIC MOVEMENT

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

NEXT WEEK:
THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT

