

New York R. Macbeth gallery.

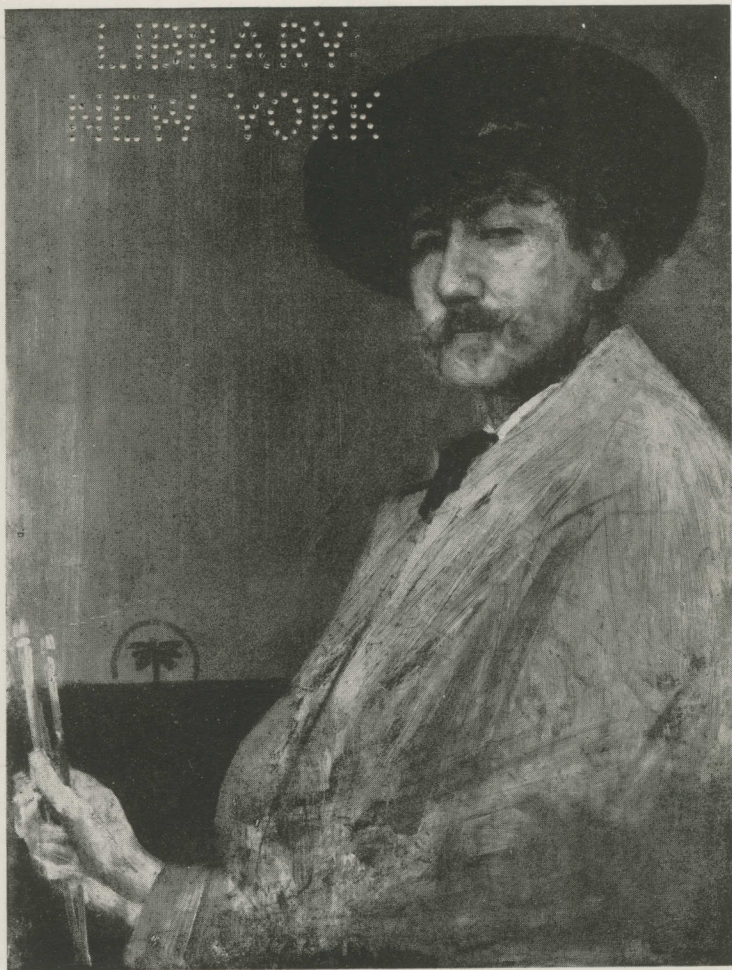
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WHISTLER

1834-1903

FROM ART REFERENCE



LOAN EXHIBITION

APRIL 14 — MAY 10
1947

MACBETH GALLERY

11 East 57th Street

New York 22

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JUST SEVENTY YEARS ago this month the Grosvenor Gallery in London opened its first exhibition.

This was the gallery founded by Sir Coutts Lindsay in protest against the Royal Academy's antagonistic attitude toward the more progressive artists. The exhibition was an invitation affair and Whistler of course was invited to participate. He sent, among other pictures, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, an impression of fireworks in Cremorne Gardens, London.

Little did Whistler or Sir Coutts realize at the time that this picture would soon be the center of as stormy and acrimonious a controversy as ever shook the foundations of London art circles.

Ruskin, then the overlord and arbiter of England's esthetic taste, was outraged when he saw the picture and expressed his opinion of it in the following terms: "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."

Whistler resented this defamation of his art and sued Ruskin for libel. The trial began November 25th, 1878, and lasted two days. The jury awarded Whistler one farthing damages.

The Grosvenor Gallery has long since ceased to exist; Whistler and Ruskin have long since departed the confusing scene of attack and counter-attack, but,—*The Falling Rocket* still lives on in its subtle beauty and simplicity, an impressive refutation of the charges brought against it by stupid, unyielding prejudices which, born of and sustained by mistaken concepts of tradition, would forever enslave art in the strait-jacket of "Academism." All too often is original expression akin to original sin!

It is fitting then that this picture, distinguished for the quality of its art, and memorable, too, for its apostolic service in the cause of free and untrammelled expression, should, so many years after its first stormy reception, find its permanent abode in the same gallery with its creator, for The Detroit Institute also owns Whistler's *Self Portrait*, included in this exhibition.

In this day of re-appraisal of artistic values Whistler is again becoming a very important factor; perhaps even more important as we realise the great advance in art appreciation in this country since his time. This increase in knowledge and culture makes for keener analysis, greater discrimination. Distance in time, too, begets calmer, more enlightened judgment.

Whistler's life is so colorful, so filled with controversial matters, so accented with his rapier-like thrusts at this or that "enemy," real or fancied, that in reading the many accounts about him we are apt to wander in a voluminous mass of words and in the man to lose sight of his art.

But now, however, since the sound and the fury which attended so much of his career has subsided to an echo, and from this vantage point of time, we need no longer be particularly concerned with Whistler as a wit, his biting comments, his legal entanglements; or even with his "white lock." And if he was something of a *poseur* this too may be forgotten. Indeed we can largely forget all such things now in the more compelling, more immediate fact of his art.

What is important to remember about Whistler is that while enjoying the role of extrovert whether in public appearances, at the breakfast table, or when dining out, and in other ways attracting attention to himself, no artist ever was more serious in his studio, none ever more passionate in his desire to extract the essence of beauty

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from the physical aspects of nature. He loved the beautiful in nature, not so much in its objective forms, as in the opportunity these gave him to weave color harmonies into subtle, imaginative design, with a genius for suppressing all but those elements absolutely essential to the pattern that first took shape in his mind.

In the imaginative, intangible essence of his "harmonies," "nocturnes," "arrangements" in which he carries simplification and sensuous beauty to a point where paint seems to lose all its materiality and becomes a sort of etherealised, sublimated medium of expression, Whistler certainly was in revolt against the dry crust of tradition that "inspired" the work of so many of his contemporaries.

Yet Whistler worshipped at the shrine of tradition giving not lip service merely but his whole self to its changeless, timeless principles. And he was not diverted from his purpose by the seductive, captivating siren of form. Form was the outer shell only, not the real substance of tradition,—of art.

He worshipped nature, too, but never was he completely subservient to external circumstances. Nature aided him and he acknowledged the debt. Nature started him off but always he finished alone.

And in some of his more objective pictures there is a quality, a particular simplicity, that bespeaks a searching for abstract expression, for a broad and lovely synthesis in creative design,—for simplicity in its highest esthetic sense.

But the quality of strength is not lacking. He learned from Courbet that robust vigor is not incompatible with the quest of beauty; that these elements, strength in beauty, beauty in strength, may be combined in equal or varying measure to effect a union that is at once harmonious, subtle, yet vital.

How well he learned this lesson can be felt in *Coast of Brittany*, and in other pictures not included in this exhibition. He learned, too, from Japanese art the value of elimination, to preserve only such essentials in keeping with a lifelong singleness of purpose,—simple, sensuous, creative design.

But though however susceptible he was to influences of his own time, and of more remote years his work ever bears the priceless stamp of quality, of refinement, of individuality—special birthright only of the most searching, most responsive, sensitive souls.

And, now, almost forty years after Whistler's last one-man exhibition in New York (Metropolitan Museum, 1910, Painting in Oil and Pastel by James A. McNeill Whistler) he is again presented, not at full-length, it is true, but still comprehensive enough to give pleasure in the beauty and refinement of his art, and to aid in a re-accounting of his genius, his originality, and, not least, his influence on the art of his own time, and later.

R. G. MCINTYRE

With deep gratitude I acknowledge the generous and complete cooperation of museums and private owners who responded without a single exception to my request for loans. Needless to say that failing such helpfulness, plans for this exhibition could not possibly have been fulfilled.

My special thanks are due Mr. Frederick W. Colburn, art critic and writer, first vice-president Lowell Art Association, which owns Whistler House, whose knowledge of Whistler is profound. Mr. Colburn turned over for my use much of his collected material relating to this artist's work which revealed many pictures of which I had no previous knowledge.



NO. 7 THE LAST OF OLD WESTMINSTER

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| 1. THE LITTLE BLUE BONNET; BLUE AND CORAL | circa 1895 |
| Lent by Mrs. Howard W. Maxwell, Jr. | |
| 2. WESTMINSTER PALACE, NOCTURNE | circa 1880-5 |
| Lent by the Johnson Collection, Philadelphia | |
| 3. THE GOLDEN BAY, IRELAND; GRAY AND GOLD | 1900 |
| Lent by M. Knoedler & Co. | |
| 4. NOCTURNE; THE SOLENT | circa 1872-4 |
| Lent by the John Levy Gallery | |
| 5. LA PRINCESSE DU PAYS DE LA PORCELAINE | circa 1863-4 |
| Lent by Worcester Art Museum | |
| 6. THE ARTIST IN HIS STUDIO | 1874 |
| Lent by The Art Institute of Chicago | |
| 7. THE LAST OF OLD WESTMINSTER | 1862 |
| Lent by Museum of Fine Arts, Boston | |
| 8. PRETTY NELLIE BROWN | circa 1897 |
| Lent by Mrs. S. Emlen Stokes | |
| 9. RUE DES BUTTES, MONTMARTRE | 1859 |
| Lent by Worcester Art Museum | |
| 10. THE MASTER SMITH OF LYME REGIS | circa 1895 |
| Lent by Museum of Fine Arts, Boston | |
| 11. OLD BATTERSEA BRIDGE | circa 1872-5 |
| Lent by Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover | |
| 12. COAST OF BRITTANY | 1861 |
| Lent by Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford | |



No. 12 COAST OF BRITTANY

13. MISS LILLIAN WOAKES 1890-1
Lent by Phillips Memorial Gallery, Washington
14. ON THE THAMES circa 1863
Lent by Canajoharie Art Gallery, Canajoharie, N. Y.
15. NOCTURNE; SOUTHAMPTON WATERS circa 1872-5
Lent by The Art Institute of Chicago

16. NOCTURNE IN BLACK AND GOLD; THE FALLING ROCKET circa 1875
(An impression of fireworks in Cremorne Gardens, London)
Lent by The Detroit Institute of Arts

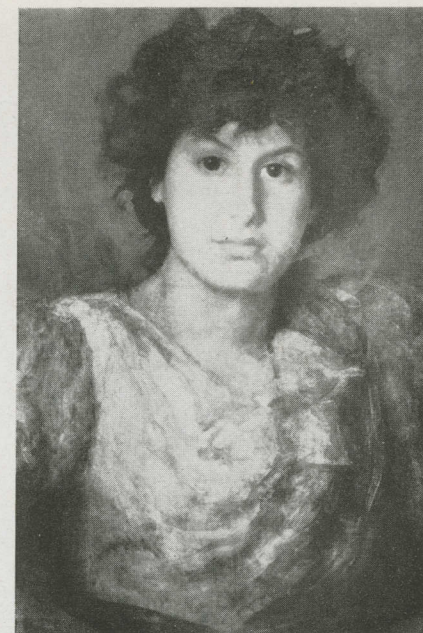
Exhibitions: London, Dudley Gallery, 1875; London, Grosvenor Gallery, 1877 (see foreword to catalogue of Macbeth exhibition); London, Goupil Gallery, 1892; Boston, Copley Hall, Whistler Memorial Exhibition, 1904; London, New Gallery, Whistler Memorial Exhibition, 1905; Paris, Musée Nationale du Luxembourg, Exposition des Oeuvres de James McNeill Whistler, 1905; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1907; New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Paintings in Oil and Pastel by James A. McNeill Whistler, 1910; New York, Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, Paintings by Contemporary English and French Painters, 1922-23.

References: Arthur Jerome Eddy, *Recollections and Impressions*, 1903, p. 140; Théodore Duret, *Histoire de J. McN. Whistler et de son Oeuvre*, 1904, p. 65; Léonce Bénédite, "Whistler," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 1905, Vol. 47, pp. 151-2; E. R. and J. Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 1908, Vol. I, pp. 199-211 (revised ed., 1911, p. 232); Elisabeth Luther Cary, *The Works of James McNeill Whistler*, 1913, pp. 64-5; *American Magazine of Art*, September, 1921, p. 301; E. R. and J. Pennell, *The Whistler Journal*, 1921, p. 4; Nathaniel Poussette-Dart, *James McNeill Whistler*, 1924; James Laver, *Whistler*, 1930; *Newsweek*, May 20, 1940, *Echoes of a Whistler*; *Art Digest*, March 1, 1947, p. 24; E. P. Richardson, *The Art Quarterly*, 1947, Vol. X, No. 1.

Purchased from Whistler by Samuel Untermyer, New York, 1892 (£840.)

Purchased by E. J. Rousuck, 1946

Purchased by Dexter M. Ferry, Jr., Esq., from E. J. Rousuck, of Scott and Fowles, New York, 1946, and presented by him to The Detroit Institute of Arts.



No. 13 MISS LILLIAN WOAKES

17. THE THAMES FROM BATTERSEA BRIDGE 1863
Lent by Francis M. Weld, Esq.

18. PORTRAIT OF MR. ELDON (INTIMATE FRIEND OF WHISTLER) circa 1883
(A note on back of picture in Walter Sickert's handwriting gives 1883 as the probable date of portrait. Sickert was a pupil and friend of Whistler)
Lent by Mrs. C. R. Hotchkiss

19. THREADNEEDLE STREET circa middle '60's
Lent by Dr. C. J. Robertson

20. SELF PORTRAIT 1867
(Whistler's famous "white lock" appears for the first time in this portrait)
Lent by The Detroit Institute of Arts

21. LA NAPOLITAINE; ROSE ET OR (MME. CARMEN ROSSI) circa 1898-1901
Lent by Wellesley College, Farnsworth Museum

22. CREPUSCULE; NOCTURNE IN OPAL circa late '60's
Lent by The Toledo Museum of Art

23. THOMAS CARLYLE circa 1873
Lent by Haverford College, Haverford, Pa.

24. THE VIOLINIST circa 1893
Lent by The Cleveland Museum of Art

25. THE OLD GENERAL DEALER circa late '60's
Lent by Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence

26. THE DUET; HARMONY IN BLUE circa 1874
Lent by Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence



NO. 16 NOCTURNE IN BLACK AND GOLD; THE FALLING ROCKET

27. BLUE AND SILVER, DIEPPE circa 1884
Lent by Mrs. George Putnam
28. ROSE AND RED BARBER SHOP, LYME REGIS circa 1895
Lent by Holbrook Collection, University of Georgia Museum of Art, Athens
29. DAWN; SEA AND SKY circa late '80's
Lent by Mrs. C. R. Hotchkiss
30. MARINE; BLUE AND GRAY circa late '80's
Lent by Mrs. Huttleston Rogers
31. ARRANGEMENT IN PINK AND PURPLE circa early '70's 90's
Lent by The Cincinnati Art Museum
32. LA MERE GERARD circa late '50's
Lent by Baruch Feldman, Esq.
33. MARINE; FIGURES ON THE SANDS circa late '80's
Lent by Mrs. C. R. Hotchkiss
34. FETE ON THE SANDS, OSTEND circa 1887
Lent Anonymously



NO. 36 ON THE BEACH, DIEPPE

WATER COLORS

35. SAN GIORGIO - *Pastel* circa 1901 1880
Lent by The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington
36. ON THE BEACH, DIEPPE circa 1884
Lent by Mrs. C. R. Hotchkiss
37. GRAY AND SILVER; PARC MONCEAU, PARIS 1892-3
Lent by M. Knoedler & Co.

PASTELS

38. VENICE 1880
(Inscription on back in Whistler's hand: "For Boehm whose art is exquisite and whose sympathy is sufficient." Sir Joseph Edgar Boehm executed a bust in terra-cotta of Whistler, 1872)
Lent by Amherst College Museum of Fine Arts
39. BASE OF THE TOWER, VENICE 1880
Lent by Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover
40. WOMAN IN JAPANESE DRESS circa 1873
Lent by The Cleveland Museum of Art
41. VENETIAN SCENE 1880
Lent by M. Knoedler & Co.
42. THE SALUTE, VENICE 1880
43. CLOUDS AND SKY 1880

DRAWINGS

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| 44. | SELF PORTRAIT | circa late '80's |
| | Lent by Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence | |
| 45. | CANAL, VENICE | 1880 |
| | Lent by Mrs. C. R. Hotchkiss | |
| 46. | CANAL, VENICE | 1880 |
| | Lent by Kennedy & Co. | |
| 47. | GROUP OF PEN-AND-INK DRAWINGS DONE WHEN A CADET AT WEST POINT | 1851-4 |
| | Lent by Mrs. Ralph Long | |

