

# Connecting Whistler

Essays in Honour of Margaret F. MacDonald

Edited by  
Erna Hermens,  
Joanna Meacock and  
Grischka Petri

First published 2010.

Copyright for the texts © the authors, 2010, all rights reserved.

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted.

Title illustration: James McNeill Whistler,  
*Arrangement in Grey: Portrait of the Painter*,  
Detroit Institute of Arts. Photo: Wikimedia Commons.

All images from the authors' private archives except:

© Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow: 2.1, 8.1, 8.2, 9.1; 9.2; Library of Congress, Washington, DC: 3.1, 10.2; © Philadelphia Museum of Art: 4.1; © University of Glasgow, Special Collections: 6.3, 6.6; © Victoria & Albert Museum, London: 5.1; © Whistler Etchings Project: 13.1, 13.2, 13.3; Wikimedia Commons: 1.1, 14.1., 15.1.





Margaret F. MacDonald

# Contents

	Preface · iii
	Abbreviations and Bibliography · v
Norman MacDonald	40 Years with Margaret and Jimmy · 1
	Beginnings
Georgia Toutziari-Stewart	Working on an Electronic Correspondence · 5
Pamela Robertson	Whistler's <i>St Luc</i> · 10
	Dominoes, Kimonos and Fans
Victoria Irvine	Whistler and the Cancan Dancer: A Case Study of <i>Finette</i> · 17
Claire McKechnie	Pots and Paints: James McNeill Whistler and the <i>Lange Leizen</i> · 23
Nick Pearce	'Blue porcelain ... and ... coy maidens' – Some Thoughts on Whistler's <i>Purple &amp; Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks</i> · 29
Robyne Erica Calvert	An Artistic Fan in Victorian Society · 35
	Pigment and Frame
Sarah Parkerson Day	Framing & Connecting: Whistler, Freer and the <i>Little Blue Girl</i> · 43
Erma Hermens	A Note on Whistler's Venetian pastels: Bright Beauty – Merry Lightness and Daintiness · 49
Joyce H. Townsend	Connecting to Whistler the Painter · 57
	Etchings
Ailsa Boyd	'Something vibrates back': Whistler and Henry James · 63
Meg Hausberg	Whistler Etchings: The Bacher Connection · 71
Joanna Meacock	The General and the Colonel; or Scalping the Hostiles · 77
Grischka Petri	Wunderlich's Whistler Etchings: Excerpts from Accounts of the Trade in Prints · 89

	Echoes and Appreciations
Genevieve Warwick	Ode to Art and Beauty · 97
Sabine Wieber	London – Vienna · 105
Robert Gibbs	A Whistlerian in Prague: Viktor Stretti and Joseph Pennell · 111
Patricia de Montfort	Whistler in the Twentieth Century · 115
	Bibliography of Margaret F. MacDonald · 121

## Preface

This Festschrift for Margaret MacDonald is to honour what Whistler surely would have called 'the experience of a lifetime'. This compilation of essays presents a wide range of connections to Whistler. Despite the great variety, in each of these papers Margaret's work and influence, as scholar, colleague and friend, is present. The authors connected Whistler to their own interests and work, building on the huge body of research and knowledge gathered by Margaret, and addressing many of her wide-ranging interests such as nineteenth-century dress, women's studies, artistic practice, printmaking, European connections and the list goes on.

The contributions show how omnivorous nowadays art historians are, but also how many connections to Whistler can be made; theoretical, visual, practical. Several papers are written by Margaret's present and former PhD students who would happily nominate her the mother of all supervisors. In Germany, doctoral supervisors are called 'Doktorvater' or 'Doktormutter', and nobody earns the title of a 'doctoral mother' more than Margaret MacDonald. When her 'doctoral children' discovered new evidence, she would encourage them: 'Go on, prove me wrong!' Her open mind is an example to all scholars.

As a colleague and friend there was always time for coffee and cake, and lively discussion about Whistler, art, life (both academic and normal), the Glasgow Women's Library, films, travel, good food, watercolour painting and countryside escapades. Margaret brings real life with her. She is the kind of person who can always be counted on when it matters, and always get her priorities right – people first.

Margaret is also one of those scholars who is very generous in sharing knowledge, always encouraging new research and enthusing young scholars who are about to enter academia, and particularly the wonderful world of Whistlerian studies. Through this volume we wish to thank her for all of that and much more. But of course this Festschrift would not have been made without the enthusiasm and work from all the authors, and we are grateful for their contributions.

Erma Hermens, Joanna Meacock, Grischka Petri, editors

Glasgow, December 2010



## Abbreviations and Bibliography

- C Katherine A. Lochnan, Harriet K. Stratis and Martha Tedeschi (eds), *The Lithographs of James McNeil Whistler*, 2 vols (Chicago: Art Institute, 1998).
- FGA Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
- GUL University of Glasgow, University Library, Special Collections Department, MS Whistler
- GUW *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855–1903*, ed. by Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp, including *The Correspondence of Anna McNeill Whistler, 1855–1880*, ed. by Georgia Toutziari, online edition, Centre for Whistler Studies, University of Glasgow, 2003–2006, <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence/index.htm>
- K Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler* (New York: Grolier, 1910).
- L Number in Frits Lugt, *Les Marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes* (Amsterdam: Vereenigde Drukkerijen, 1921) and the *Supplément* (Den Haag: M. Nijhoff, 1956).
- LC Library of Congress, Washington DC
- LC.PWC Library of Congress, Washington DC, Manuscript Division, Pennell-Whistler Collection
- M Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels and Watercolours* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).
- NYPL New York Public Library
- SGML Standard Generalized Markup Language
- YMSM Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret F. MacDonald, Robin Spencer and Hamish Miles, *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980).



Norman MacDonald

## 40 Years with Margaret and Jimmy

After completing a Fine Art degree at Leeds, Margaret Flora MacInnes came to Glasgow to do a teacher training course at Jordanhill. She was rescued from this career by Andrew McLaren Young, who gave her a research assistant post, making abstracts of Whistler letters. Among her colleagues were Robin Spencer and Helen Drabble (now Langdon). There seems to have been no great dedication involved – I am told that lots of novels got read in the afternoons.

Andrew did not want Margaret to do a PhD on Whistler, so she took up the subject of the training of Scottish artists in the late eighteenth century. This involved a lot of time in Rome, visits in which I happily participated from 1970 – we were married in 1969. Margaret spent her time in the Vatican and the Accademia di San Luca. We stayed at the British School and at the weekends took buses into the Colli Albani, and once walked for miles out the Appian Way. Trips to Naples and Florence were also involved, and after the thesis material was gathered we took to visiting smaller Italian cities. These trips ended when Kathy was born in 1976.

Work on the thesis ended when Andrew died in 1975, and Margaret undertook, with Robin Spencer and Hamish Miles, to complete his catalogue raisonné of Whistler's oils. While working on this, and after its publication in 1980, Margaret freelanced for many years, publishing *Whistler's Mother's Cookbook* (1979, republished 1995), working on her catalogue of Whistler's works on paper, and consulting on putative Whistlers. Many stories could be told of this, such as that of the dubious Venice pastel with an even more dubious butterfly which resurfaced years later with another butterfly and a spurious certificate of authenticity from M. F. MacDonald. We used to claim that there were three categories of dud Whistler – ones the girls could spot, ones I could spot, and ones Margaret had to look at carefully.

There were many trips to America during these years, taking Kathy and Helen (born 1980) along – I saw a lot of zoos and science museums. We made many friends over there – gallery people such as Ruth Fine, Martha Tedeschi, Martha Smith and Linda Merrill, dealers such as Tom Colville, collectors such as John and Collis Larkin, Julie and Anita Zelman, Paul and Elaine Marks, and Peter and Paula Lunder. The catalogue raisonné of Whistler's works on paper was published in 1995, and earned Margaret her DLitt.

By this time Margaret's style as an art historian was fully formed. By early training (the Leeds course was half art history, half practical fine art), by the immense influence of Andrew McLaren Young, and by the nature of her own activities, she has been led to focus on sites and subject, media and the artist's hand. Absence from the academic career path for 20 years also kept her

away from the temptations of critical theory and post-modernism, while her own painting has always been naturalistic rather than abstract or conceptual.

By the time her catalogue raisonné appeared, Margaret was involved, with Nigel Thorp and Patricia de Montfort, in the online catalogue of Whistler's letters. She had begun to supervise graduate students – Joanna Meacock on Rossetti, Georgia Toutziari on Anna McNeill Whistler. For a while she shared office space with the Fox Talbot letters group – Larry Schaaf, Kelly Wilder and Jeanette Fenyő. Once I retired I became an honorary fellow in the Whistler group and a consulting editor for the Fox Talbots. I researched biographical data on Whistler's correspondents and political & literary references, and interpreted the mathematical formulae and physical terminology in Fox Talbot's letters. The Fox Talbot Thanksgiving parties were fabulous, and Jeanette introduced us to the wonderful chamber music weeks at Paxton House.

Once the Whistler correspondence was online, Margaret moved to History of Art to work on the online catalogue raisonné of Whistler's etchings, with Grischka Petri, Meg Hausberg, Joanna Meacock, Sue Macallan and Graeme Cannon. This, of course, is still ongoing, in spite of Margaret's formal retirement. The project has been supported by a major grant from the AHRC, and by the Lunder Foundation.

In parallel with these activities, Margaret has worked on many exhibitions and related books: *Whistler*, Tate Gallery, Musée d'Orsay & National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, 1994–1995, with Richard Dorment; *Whistler and Holland*, Rijksmuseum, 1997, with J. F. Heijbroek; *Whistler, Women and Fashion*, The Frick Collection, 2003, with Susan Galassi and Aileen Ribeiro; *Whistler in Venice*, Burrell, 2003; *Palaces in the Night*, 2003; *Whistler's Mother: An American Icon* (edited) 2003; *Whistler and Zoran Mušič in Venice*, IVAM Valencia, 2005, with Ramon Escriva; *Whistler and Russia*, The State Tretyakov Gallery, 2006–2007, with Galina Andreeva. Next in line should be *Whistler on the Thames* with Patricia de Montfort, at Dulwich, and there are tentative plans for *Whistler in France*. This would force us to spend time along the Loire, in Dieppe and Normandy.

These projects led to lots more travel, including many visits to Venice. We visited Zoran Mušič and Ida Barbarigo in their Palazzo (between the Accademia and the Guggenheim), and enjoyed wonderful meals from their cook – her *risi e bisi* was a revelation. Valencia in summer and Moscow in winter were both fascinating. We also continued to visit the USA, both the familiar cities and the new centre of Whistler activity at Colby College in Maine. A highlight was to go to Winslow Homer's studio at Prout's Neck, stand on the rocks and watch the famous waves crash in.

Finally I want to say something about Margaret's maternal attitude to her books. Due to a takeover of the publisher and lack of interest by the larger company, the first edition of the *Whistler's Mother's Cookbook* was remaindered. Margaret bought 5000 copies – I thought she had gone mad. We had a large garage under our house, and for years this stack of books stood there like the original atomic pile in the Chicago University squash court. But she sold them all! Now she has repeated this folly, buying back two books from Lund Humphreys. Anyone interested in a copy of *Palaces in the Night*? Or twenty copies of *Whistler's Mother*?





**Fig. 1.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Painter's Mother*, 1871, oil on canvas, 144.3 × 162.4 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Georgia Toutziari-Stewart

## Working on an Electronic Correspondence

The online publication of the Whistler Correspondence including Anna Whistler's (1804–1881) 267 letters (<http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence>) provides a wealth of sources of art/historical and sociological interest to a vast range of scholars. Researchers can examine the Whistler writings both for the light they throw on the mentality of the period, and for constructing narratives relating to the life and artistic production of James McNeill Whistler and his circle. The edition of Anna Whistler's Correspondence was part of the online Whistler publication and its electronic dissemination was only made possible through the generosity of the Whistler Centre team, Dorothy and Bob Kemper, sponsors and my PhD supervisor and mentor Margaret F. MacDonald without whose help, constant support and tremendous patience in checking endlessly the transcribed annotated texts the project would have been impossible to achieve. This article gives me great pleasure to re-visit the edition and establish what it means to work on correspondence material.

When I started reading the letters of Anna Whistler, who is known to the wider public as the model and mother of one of the most famous portraits in the world, *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* (fig. 1), I was faced with two main tasks: first, to deal with the editorial aspect of a correspondence project and second, to treat the intellectual content of a rich commentary that ranged from the evolution of travel to imperialist Russia and from the antebellum South to New England and Europe.

The electronic annotation of the letters was undertaken with reference to editorial and technical guidelines and practice defined by the Whistler Centre's project management team. The letters had to be transcribed as clearly and as accurately as possible but being part of a bigger electronic project meant that technical difficulties would be inevitable: footnotes were often repeated. SGML was the markup language used for the annotation of the text and interestingly enough, twentieth-century electronic language tools did not take away the flavour of nineteenth-century writing. Organising the edition chronologically seemed to make sense since it carried Anna Whistler's story forward from the first letter, as a young girl in 1829, to her last letter from her retirement home at Hastings, England in 1878. I consulted all original manuscripts written by Anna housed at archival collections on both sides of the Atlantic. The chronology of the letters, often provided by Anna, allowed for a thematic approach to subjects and defined the main phases of her life: life as a young Mrs Whistler, the Russia years (1843–1849), Civil War era (1861–1864), and the London years (1864–1875) living with James.

I remember my eagerness to get to know who Anna Whistler was, her personal anxieties and course of life and what her correspondence entailed. I also remember asking if her letters would be interesting to scholars keen in the research and collection of comparative data, and construction of historical narrative. Would the letters provide what is essential for this construction: questions related to matters of class, gender and ideology? I was also interested in why she was classed a 'symbol of American Motherhood', a description formed from her portrayal, by her son, as *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*. I wanted therefore to set Anna in context, and see how she acted in comparison to other women of her era, and whether she could be used as a model of research to justify a true representation of nineteenth-century American womanhood.

Having these questions in mind, I employed the methodology of the social historian. This involved an empirical approach complemented by intellectual and historical work. The process of transcribing and researching the letters covers the former, while the process of annotating aims to help the reader grasp the document's content and recreate the context that gave rise to the document. The combination of both empirical and intellectual work undertaken defined the intellectual course of my PhD thesis.<sup>1</sup>

#### The letters: writing style

Anna's letters were formed in a family context that was often threatened by economic instability, deaths and transatlantic travels. A close examination of the correspondence shows how the letters were treated by the author: often written in haste, with the effect of time on paper and ink producing a blurred text often unreadable. Economy, reflecting on the family's poor welfare, meant that every inch of the papers was used. At other times she treated a letter as a journal: she would start writing early in the week but would not finish until days later, recounting the intervening events.<sup>2</sup> For her, a letter was another way to share pleasure, but in doing so it had to be well written. As Anna Whistler wrote to James: 'in writing letters to parents or friends dear Jemie you wish to give, as well as to receive pleasure; & it pains us to see words mis-spelt, or letters mis-shapen.'<sup>3</sup>

Editing a correspondence also means getting acquainted with and translating a writing style: Anna Whistler's letters have the quality of oral exchange, an extension of speech. The tone of her voice changes depending on the recipient: on one hand we have a moralistic conversation between mother and son, heavily tied with family bonds, underlined by her domestic and religious duties. On the other hand we have an informal spontaneous way of writing providing a commentary on people's lives, places and events. Anna Whistler managed to make her letter writing possess a form which is exclusively its own. Letter writing was for Anna Whistler a way of living through people's lives and sharing their experiences, as she wrote to James: 'And when letters bring me intelligence of how you are passing your days I can at least in imagination follow you thro the routine of all that interests you.'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Toutziari, PhD thesis: *An Annotated Edition of the Correspondence of Anna Whistler*, Glasgow, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Anna Matilda Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 9, 20, 22 and 24 February 1849, G UW 06387 (GUL W383).

<sup>3</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 26 September 1848, G UW 06365 (GUL W361).

<sup>4</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 26 September 1848, G UW 06365 (GUL W361).

## Themes

Examination of comparative material showed that the repetition of the same content in parallel forms was a standard norm of letter-writing manuals in the nineteenth century,<sup>5</sup> and Anna, brought up in this culture, did not escape its effects. Birth, death, sickness, business, war, charity, religion, education, politics and financial insecurities are often mixed together in a letter, revolving around her family and her loved ones. The repetition of these themes together with her life in London and her role for a short period of time as her son's agent, model and housekeeper allowed me to construct a coherent narrative assessing change through time, exploring questions of social and art / historical interest.

Her writings from Russia reflect the politics of an Imperialist regime, and illustrate a politically corrupt system with strict educational laws. In addition, they introduce us to a group of people whose actions represent social upward mobility through mercantile success: a phenomenon of frequent occurrence in the Victorian world. In her London writings she vividly portrays the mechanics of the London art world, and in particular, issues of patronage, dealing and collecting. In her transatlantic travels she takes us to the life on board the steamers and highlights their importance in the mail service between Europe and the USA. The massive circulation of mail supported the business that enabled the circulation of passengers. The circulation of Anna's letters empowered her own transportation and her journeys created enriching life experiences, which shaped her outlook and character. In her own words, 'A ship is the school to teach patience.'<sup>6</sup>

## Identity of character

In addition to the writing style, and repetition of themes, correspondence material can illuminate the character of the writer and how it was shaped by the context in which she was brought up. Anna's correspondence illustrates a domestic and religious identity, which was formed within the sphere of the family home, and moulded by religious revivals that spread across America in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Her main concerns, anxieties and labours were domestic. She maintained several houses during her life, ensuring good housekeeping, either through her own labour or through supervising 'servants' (using her own words). A large household in Russia with a number of servants, coachmen and cook; various houses in the USA kept with often limited financial means, and James's artistic residence in London, provided a sufficient number of tasks for Anna to display her admirable domestic abilities.

Anna would have probably been accustomed to contemporary evangelical literature that promoted women as virtuous, kind and Christian mothers.<sup>7</sup> Historian Barbara Welter's definition of the 'Cult of True Womanhood' has long been recognised as the decisive work on the formation of a woman's identity in Anna's era, and was used as the model for the analysis of Anna's domestic and religious identity<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Cécile Dauphin, 'Letter Writing Manuals in the Nineteenth Century', in *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Roger Chartier, Alain Boureau and Cécile Dauphin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 112–57 (p. 132).

<sup>6</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to Catherine J. McNeill, 2 November 1829, G UW 06347 (GUL W344).

<sup>7</sup> The idea of Domestic Piety is explored fully by Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women and Religion in Early America, 1600–1850. The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (London: Routledge, 1999), pp. 131–32.

<sup>8</sup> See the essay 'Religion and Domesticity', G. Toutziari, PhD Thesis, 2002. Also see Barbara Welter, 'The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820–1860', *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), pp. 151–74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*:

Piety and purity are two further character traits reflected through the lines in Anna's writings. Historian Marilyn Westerkamp, in examining the notion of pious superiority among white middle class American women, established its qualities as common in the first half of the nineteenth century, deriving mainly from the Evangelical revivals. For Westerkamp piety and purity, constructed in a domestic environment, made 'women the ideal choices for motherhood, raising the next generation of virtuous citizens.'<sup>9</sup> As Anna wrote to her son regarding a newly-wed relation, 'if she can be firm in principle & piety, her light may guide others to choose the straight road, and God will bless the union if she be the faithful witness for Jesus in her intercourse with the old world.'<sup>10</sup>

## Conclusion

A domestic and religious identity, a pious and pure character, Anna, through her blurred and rushed writing texts unfolded in front of our eyes a microcosm of society, which was threatened at times but it also, produced trade and culture. In writing letters, Anna Whistler was probably driven by a wish to keep a family together. However, her scrawls, as she often called them,<sup>11</sup> full of her own personal flavour and expression, gave me the chance to provide the published edition of her correspondence and the first scholarly text on her life and letters. It also gave me the chance to ascertain what it means working on correspondence material as an editor (accepting the writer's dignity and personal writing style) and as a historian (counter questions related to matters of class, gender and ideology). Above all it gave me the privilege to study through her writings a true representation of nineteenth-century American womanhood.

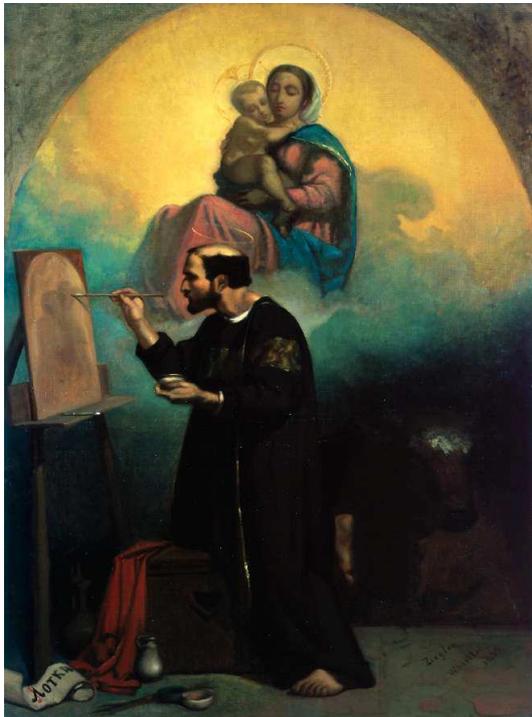
*Woman's Sphere in New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, 'The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relationships Between Women in Nineteenth Century America', *Signs*, 1, no. 1 (1975), pp. 1–29; Glenna Matthews, *Just A Housewife* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Matthews, p. 135.

<sup>10</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 22 December 1848, 1 and 4 January 1849, W374.

<sup>11</sup> See Anna Matilda Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 15, 16 and 18 September [1848], GUW 06363; 30 September and 12 October 1848, GUW 06368; 5 November 1848, GUW 06371; 9 April 1850, GUW 06394.





**Fig. 2.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Copy after J.-C. Ziegler*, 'La Vision de St Luc', 1857, oil on canvas, 92 × 68 cm; signed and dated l.r.: 'Ziegler / Whistler / 1857', The Hunterian, University of Glasgow  
Gift of Warren Adelson, GLAHA 53957



**Fig. 2.2** James McNeill Whistler, *Copy after E. A. Odier*, 'La Retraite de Moscou', 1857/1858, oil on canvas, 91.5 × 66.0 cm; signed l.r.: 'Odier / Whistler', Colby College Museum of Art  
Gift of Warren Adelson, 2005.041

Pamela Robertson

## Whistler's *St Luc*

Margaret MacDonald's contribution to Whistler studies through her publications and exhibitions has been immense. One of the earliest of her publications was the catalogue raisonné of Whistler's paintings, co-authored with Andrew McLaren Young and Robin Spencer with contributions from Hamish Miles (1980, Yale University Press; YMSM). One group of works which was, at that time, little documented were the early copies from Whistler's student days in Paris. Recently new information has emerged which extends our understanding of this formative period. That new information also richly illustrates the multifarious connections that Margaret has established over the past 40 years across the wide Whistler landscape, in particular the often delicate balance in relationships between academe, the commercial world, and private collectors; many of these are now colleagues, admirers and friends.

In 2005, Warren Adelson of the Adelson Galleries, New York, acquired two previously untraced Whistlers, his copies after Jules-Claude Ziegler's *La Vision de St Luc* of 1839 and Edouard Alexandre Odier's *La Retraite de Moscou* of 1833 (YMSM 15 and 17; figs 2.1 and 2.2). The original of the latter had been a matter of speculation in the catalogue raisonné. Later that year, Mr Adelson gifted the paintings to two public collections: the Odier to Colby College Museum of Art, Maine, and *St Luc* to the Hunterian. Colby is emerging as an important holding of Whistler etchings through the recent generosity of Peter and Paula Lunder, long-term supporters of their alma mater and of Whistler studies, including Glasgow's correspondence and etchings research projects. In 2009 a consortium agreement, funded by the Lunder Foundation, was signed between the University of Glasgow, the Freer Gallery of Art and Colby to support a triennial symposium rotating round each of the collections. The first of these, in 2011, will be held in honour of Margaret. The other gift, to the Hunterian, was also in honour of Margaret, of whom Warren Adelson has written:

Margaret's contribution to Whistler studies has been peerless in the quality of her scholarship. Her attention to the critical details of Whistler's life and work and her empathy for the artist have given the world a portrait of this stellar painter and graphic artist and an appreciation for the subtlety and lyricism of his art that would not be recognized without her vision. The art world is richer by far for her service.<sup>1</sup>

For a brief period around 1857 to 1858 Whistler earned money in Paris copying paintings in the French national collection for private clients (See Appendix A). The practice was not solely

<sup>1</sup> Warren Adelson to Pamela Robertson, 17 September 2010.

commercial but recognised as an invaluable part of a young artist's training. As Ingres exhorted: 'Go to [...] the old masters, talk to them – they are still alive and will reply to you. They are your instructors; I am only an assistant in their school.'<sup>2</sup> An additional benefit was the contact not just with pretty women (if *Trilby* is to be believed,<sup>3</sup> fig. 2.3) but more importantly contact with other artists. Whistler met Fantin-Latour in the Louvre in the autumn of 1858 and through him was introduced to other artists, including Courbet (who had himself copied Ziegler's work).<sup>4</sup> Though Whistler did not meet Manet till 1861, there were connections beforehand. Manet had been a pupil of Couture from 1850 to 1856; Whistler copied part of Couture's celebrated *Romains de la Décadence* of 1847. In 1852 Manet copied Boucher's *Diane au Bain*, which Whistler subsequently copied. Both artists copied Velasquez's *La Réunion des Cavaliers* – Whistler, unrecorded and Manet in 1859–1860.



AMONG THE OLD MASTERS

**Fig. 2.3** George du Maurier, *Among the Old Masters*, from *Trilby* (London: Osgood, McIlvanie & Co., 1894), p. 11

The accounts of Whistler's copies are in the main retrospective, comprising scant references by contemporaries and notes by Pennell from interviews late in Whistler's life.<sup>5</sup> While Whistler, perhaps unsurprisingly, could not always remember the detail of the artists he had copied, his recall of the compositions was sound and he was in no doubt as to the quality of his own work:

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Anne Koval, *Whistler in his Time* (London: Tate Gallery Publications, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> George du Maurier, *Trilby* (London: Osgood, McIlvanie & Co., 1894), p. 10 and ill. p. 11 (fig. 2.3).

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Georget, *Courbet, le poème de la nature* (Paris: Gallimard, Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1995), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> The principal references in chronological order are: W. L. B. Jenney, 'Whistler and Old Sandy in the Fifties', *American Architect*, 59 (1 February 1898); Freer Diaries Bk 12, 1902, Freer Gallery of Art; Arthur J. Eddy, *Recollections and Impressions of James A. McNeill Whistler* (Philadelphia and London: Lippincott, 1903); Théodore Duret, *Histoire de J. McN. Whistler et son oeuvre* (Paris: Floury, 1904); L. M. Lamont (ed.), *Thomas Armstrong, C.B.: A Memoir* (London: Secker, 1912); and Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell, *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1921). There are also references in Anna Whistler's correspondence, see GUW 06476, 06480, 06485, 06487 and 06495.

'There were very wonderful things even then, the beginning of harmonies and purple schemes. I suppose it must have been intuitive.'<sup>6</sup>

Jules-Claude Ziegler (1804–1856) was a successful artist of wide-ranging skills, energy and ambition. The drama and directness of his compositions and draughtsmanship were frequently praised by the French critics. He had trained in Paris under Ingres and François-Joseph Heim, exhibited at the Paris Salons between 1831 and 1848, and was appointed the cross of the Légion d'Honneur in 1838. His lasting memorial is the large-scale fresco scheme for the cupola of La Madeleine – *L'Histoire du christianisme* (1835–1838). In 1839 he diversified into ceramics, setting up and designing for the successful salt-glazed stoneware factory at Voisinlieu, near Beauvais. He was also actively interested in printmaking and photography, and published studies on ceramics and colour theory.<sup>7</sup> The last two years of his life before his early death were spent as Director of the Musée de Dijon and head of its art school. His friend, the poet and critic Théophile Gautier acknowledged his erudition and lively personality, described his striking appearance at the end of his life:

[...] sa haute taille, sa construction athlétique, sa face puissamment modelée, ses cheveux abondants et noirs, où peu de fils argentés se montraient, ses dents superbes, ses yeux d'un noir brillant, pleins de vie et d'intelligence, faisaient croire chez lui à une de ces carrières d'artiste à la Titien.<sup>8</sup>

Examples of his paintings are in many French provincial museums.<sup>9</sup>

The Evangelist St Luke, patron saint of doctors and artists, is often depicted painting the Virgin Mary, a particularly popular subject in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The distinguished roll call of artists includes Rogier Van der Weyden, Jan Gossaert, Hugo van der Goes. It was a rarer subject in the nineteenth century. Ziegler's choice fits within the revival of interest in France in religious painting in the early to mid nineteenth century and followed on from his success at the Salon of 1838 with *Le Prophète Daniel dans la Fosse aux Lions* (Musée de Nantes). *St Luc*, at nearly three metres high, was a major statement. The original had been acquired from the Paris Salon of 1839 (2140) and most likely went on display in the Luxembourg in 1857 as a tribute to the artist who had died at the end of 1856. Whistler's selection was therefore of a topical work of art which had been celebrated in its day.<sup>10</sup> Gautier had described it as the happy marriage of a line worthy of Ingres and colour related to Zurbaran.<sup>11</sup> Ziegler and others in Paris were greatly influenced by Spanish painting newly available through private collections such as those of Marshal Jean de Dieu Soult and Alejandro María López as well as Louis-Philippe's Galerie Espagnole. This formed part of the argument for

<sup>6</sup> Pennell (1921), p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> *Études céramiques: Recherche des principes du beau dans l'architecture, la céramique et la forme en général* (Paris: Mathias et Paulin, 1850); *Traité de la couleur et de la lumière* (Paris: De Hennuyer, 1852).

<sup>8</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Portraits Contemporains* (Paris: G. Charpentier, 1874), p. 271.

<sup>9</sup> For more information see Jacques Werren, *Jules Ziegler: Peintre, céramiste, photographe* (Le Mans: Éditions de la Reinette, 2010). This new biography focuses on Ziegler's ceramic work, but includes a chapter on his painting.

<sup>10</sup> My colleague, Peter Black, has suggested that Whistler may have seen a parallel between St Luke and his brother-in-law, the amateur artist, Seymour Haden, which was represented in this depiction of a doctor at the easel, who seems to be a precise worker rather than an inspired genius.

<sup>11</sup> Théophile Gautier, 'salon de 1839', *La Presse* (30 March 1839), quoted in Stéphane Guégan, 'From Ziegler to Courbet: Painting, Art Criticism, and the Spanish Trope under Louis Philippe' in Gary Tinterow and Geneviève Lacambre, *Manet/Velázquez: The French Taste for Spanish Painting* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 195.

the acquisition of *St Luc* for the crown. The work was purchased for 5,000 francs, making it the most expensive painting in the list of purchases for the civil list of 1839.<sup>12</sup>

The painting was transferred by the state to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dunkirk in 1872. A smaller version, either a sketch for or after the major work is held in the Musée Magnin, Dijon, part of the legacy of Maurice Magnin in 1938. A version also appears in pride of place in the late portrait photograph by Félix Nadar, though puzzlingly the composition on the signed print in the Musée d'Orsay is shown in reverse, a probable error in printing.<sup>13</sup> Whistler's copy is in all respects, bar the omission of a group of attendant putti in the clouds at right and the simplification of the floor tiling, a faithful representation of the original at approximately one third of its scale. (The Odier copy was similarly scaled down making the two comparable in size and suggesting they were conceived as part of a group which would hang together.)

The dating of the copy is problematic. Whistler's request to copy the painting is undated, but endorsed as dealt with on 5 June.<sup>14</sup> As the original is not formally recorded as going on display in the Luxembourg until November 1857, YMSM dates the work to 1858. However the rediscovered copy is dated 1857. Either Whistler had access to it earlier than its recorded date of public display at the Luxembourg, or it was completed very quickly at the end of 1857. An error in Whistler's dating is unlikely as he would have shipped it off to his client soon after completion.

The re-emergence of the paintings also confirms the client as Charles Phelps Williams. Various names are associated with the group of copies: Captain Williams from West Point, a gentleman friend of Captain Williams of Stonington, a whaling captain, a man from Stonington, Dick Palmer from Stonington, as well as Captain Williams of Stonington.<sup>15</sup> The Adelson Galleries provenance traces the two copies from their first owners, Charles P. Williams (1804–1879) and his wife, Georgia Palmer Babcock (1837–1910), of Stonington, Connecticut; by family descent to their nephew, Harry S. Babcock, also of Stonington; then via A. R. Blanchard, agent (6 December 1939) to Benjamin Flayderman (9 December 1939); and thence by descent to his son Norman, an arms and militaria dealer, until their acquisition in 2005 by Warren Adelson.<sup>16</sup> C. P. Williams features in Anna Whistler's correspondence. An unexplained rudeness of his prompted uncharacteristic hostility from her, which she conveyed to her son: 'I cant [sic] write you a sketch of his rudeness at me for I never have personal intercourse with him, but I hope you may never seek him though he & Bessie & Georgie B are from Stonington.'<sup>17</sup> The theme was repeated in subsequent letters.<sup>18</sup>

The group of French copies is in many ways a curiosity in Whistler's oeuvre. Their subjects – figurative compositions illustrating heroic deeds, military action, religious and mythological subjects – give little hint of what was to follow and show a narrow range, confined mainly to French artists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The majority, as commissions, were driven by client wishes, though at times Whistler painted for himself. The early Turner<sup>19</sup> and Velazquez follow his personal enthusiasms, and Ziegler's Spanish interests would have appealed

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Musée d'Orsay, PHO1991-2-47.

<sup>14</sup> Whistler wrote to the Director of the Musées Nationaux requesting permission to copy the painting at the beginning of June 1858, GUW 09215.

<sup>15</sup> See citations in note 6.

<sup>16</sup> Adelson Galleries to Pamela Robertson, 17 September and 4 October 2010.

<sup>17</sup> GUW 06476.

<sup>18</sup> GUW 06480, 06485 and 06495.

<sup>19</sup> Other commissions are likely. Anna Whistler to James McNeill Whistler, 17 August 1857, GUW 06487, for example refers to a possible commission from Ralph King, a family connection, for a copy of Anne-Louis Girodet's *The Entombment of Atala*, 1808, Musée du Louvre, INV 4958. No such copy is known.

to him as well as to Mr Williams. Nonetheless they are an important way-marker in Whistler's early days of independence as he established himself as a painter in Paris.

Margaret is currently building on the work of Kennedy and others through the major Whistler Etchings Project. The challenge and opportunity for the next generation of Whistler scholars is to build on what she has established; and that should include an updated and fully colour-illustrated edition of YMSM.

#### Appendix: Originals of Whistler's French copies, 1857–1858

François Boucher (1703–1770) <i>Diane Sortant du Bain</i> , 1742, oil on canvas, 57.0 × 73.0 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris YMSM 20, Plate 5 – untraced	Édouard Alexandre Odier (1800–1887) <i>La Retraite de Moscou</i> , 1833, oil on canvas, 261.0 × 198.0 cm, Musée de Picardie, Amiens YMSM 17 – Colby College Museum of Art, Maine
Thomas Couture (1815–1879) <i>Romains de la Décadence</i> , 1847, oil on canvas, 77.5 × 46.6 cm, Musée d'Orsay, Paris YMSM 18 – untraced	Jean-Victor Schnetz (1787–1870) <i>Les Adieux du Consul Boetius à sa Famille</i> , 1826, oil on canvas, 31.0 × 26.0 cm, Musée des Augustins, Musée des Beaux Arts de Toulouse YMSM 13 – untraced
Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805) <i>La Cruche Cassée</i> , 1771, oil on canvas, 109.0 × 87.0 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris YMSM 14 – untraced	Jacques-Claude Ziegler (1804–1856) <i>La Vision de St Luc</i> , 1839, oil on canvas, 293.5 × 212.0 cm, Musée des Beaux-Arts et Laac, Dunkerque YMSM 15 – Hunterian, University of Glasgow
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) <i>Roger délivrant Angélique</i> , 1819, oil on canvas, 147.0 × 190.0 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris YMSM 11 – Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow	Unknown, <i>An Inundation</i> YMSM 16 – untraced
Pierre Mignard (1612–1695) <i>La Vierge aux Raisins</i> , 1640, oil on canvas, 121.0 × 94.0 cm, Musée du Louvre, Paris YMSM 12 – untraced	Diego de Silva Velázquez (1599–1660)* <i>Gathering of Gentlemen</i> , oil on canvas, 47.2 × 77.9 cm, Musée du Louvre YMSM 19 – untraced

\* Now accepted as workshop of Velázquez.



**Fig. 3.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Finette*, K.58, state VI, Library of Congress, Washington DC, FP – XIX – W576, no. 58.

## Whistler and the Cancan Dancer: A Case Study of *Finette*\*

*'Everything that interested him he made use of  
[...] the women he danced with at night were his  
models by day' — E. & J. Pennell (1911)*<sup>1</sup>

The expatriate American artist James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) was drawn to actors and dancers as models throughout his life, and concepts of performance and celebrity form a significant part of his oeuvre and artistic persona. Whistler's own calculated newspaper responses and self-styled, dandified image promoted his status as a celebrity, simultaneously granting him a stage to discuss his artistic theories while conforming to the more decadent, performative aspects of Aestheticism.<sup>2</sup> His attraction to performers was therefore natural; Whistler moved in similar social circles of many actors and dancers, and as Whistler struggled financially through his early career, the promotional benefits of painting a recognisable person were significant. Above all, actors and performers had the ability to project character and move well.<sup>3</sup> Nellie Farren, Connie Gilchrist, Kate Munro, Lady Valerie Meux, Lady Archibald Campbell and Loïe Fuller were actresses and dancers painted or drawn by Whistler during his lifetime.<sup>4</sup> Margaret F. MacDonald's research on Whistler's models has largely focused on the arena of fashionable dress, considering Whistler's role in designing aesthetic dress while examining his varying 'fashionable' social circles, from the aristocracy to the *demi-monde*. The Hunterian Art Gallery's drypoint of Whistler's *Finette* (fig. 3.1) presents a case study that explores the use of a celebrity subject

\* This essay is dedicated to Margaret F. MacDonald for the endless advice, support and fun she has provided over the years.

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> See Amelia Jones, "Clothes Make the Man": The Male Artist as a Performative Function', *Oxford Art Journal*, 18, no. 2 (1995) and Andrew Stephenson, 'Refashioning Modern Masculinity: Whistler, aestheticism and national identity' in *English Art 1860–1914: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. by David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000). Whistler also performed on stage himself in 'Under an Umbrella' with Isabella Langdale Fowke (1850–1929) in 1876. See the diary of Alan Summerly Cole, 27 March 1872 – 18 April 1885 (GUW 13132) and the memoirs of Charles James Whistler Hanson, c.1903 (taken from GUW 02246).

<sup>3</sup> Margaret MacDonald, Susan Grace Galassi & Aileen Ribeiro, with Patricia de Montfort, *Whistler, Women, & Fashion* (New York and New Haven & London: The Frick Collection in association with Yale University Press, 2003), p. 146.

<sup>4</sup> Whistler reputedly painted a portrait of the actress Sarah Bernhardt (YMSM 399; whereabouts unknown). Whistler also painted the portrait of the actor, Sir Henry Irving (*Arrangement in Black, No.3: Sir Henry Irving as Philip II of Spain*, YMSM 187, c.1876, oil on canvas, 215.2 × 108.6 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

(Finette was a famous cancan dancer) while touching upon the nuances of fashion and social status. Moreover, *Finette* stylistically suggests both French and English artistic influences, reflective of Whistler living between Paris and London at this period.

Finette ‘La Bordelaise’ (Joséphine Durwend) was a cancan dancer of Creole origin, possibly from the Caribbean or Réunion Island.<sup>5</sup> Author David Price states that she was part of the *corps de ballet* of the Paris Opéra, performing as danseuse at the bal Bullier and the bal Mabille in Paris; then at the Lyceum Theatre (London) in 1867 and the Alhambra Palace (London) in 1868 as part of a ‘Parisian Carnival Quadrille.’<sup>6</sup> Finette was the first to bring the cancan to an English stage and was famous for her high kicks that knocked the hats from male spectators, indicated by a verse in *Judy* (1868):

On, on, ever on, the delicious FINETTE,  
Midst clapping and shouts of ‘Bravo!’  
Whirled furiously round, till her last pirouette  
Danced off some one’s head at a blow!<sup>7</sup>

Whistler’s print is a bohemian depiction of Finette. She stands beside a window wearing traditional carnival dress: a Domino (a hooded cloak) worn with a mask, and featured in the background is box, filled with papers and a fan.<sup>8</sup> According to art critic Frederick Wedmore (1844–1921), Finette was drawn in her ‘fifth-floor flat on the Boulevard Montmartre,’ and he also observes that ‘perhaps the Dome of the Invalides and the spires of Ste. Clotilde’ are depicted in the background.<sup>9</sup> It is revealing that Whistler chose not to depict Finette in her stage clothes and instead focused on the carnivalesque. Carnival balls and masquerades reached their peak of popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, and Finette was publicly associated with the carnival through dancing at the bal Mabille. Prints depicting actresses and dancers backstage were common, and in this instance, Finette is depicted ‘off-stage’ which evokes the voyeuristic flavour of accessing female celebrities in private.<sup>10</sup> She is shown in a private moment of contemplation before or after stepping out on to her metaphorical stage of the carnival. The mask and fan insinuate the titillation of what is to come, as masquerades provided the intrigue and possibility of ‘chance’ liaisons at carnivals.<sup>11</sup>

In 1892 Whistler nostalgically lamented the loss of the picturesque modernity that lithographer and painter Paul Gavarni (1804–1866) had captured at student balls, stating in the same letter that ‘The Gavarni kind of wonderful people in great hats and amazing trousers were gone – and the Grisettes with or without caps were no longer there.’<sup>12</sup> Gavarni’s lithographs popularised the carnival through his series known as ‘*Masques et Visages*’, with two series of ten

<sup>5</sup> David Price, *Cancon!* (London: Cygnus Arts, 1998), p. 35. According to Price, Finette was referred to as La Bordelaise because she lived part of her life in Bordeaux. *Black Victorians: Black People in British Art 1800–1900*, ed. by Jan Marsh (Hampshire: Manchester Art Gallery and Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery in association with Lund Humphries, 2005), p. 178.

<sup>6</sup> Price (1998), p. 36. See ‘Public Amusements’, *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* (22 March 1868), p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> ‘The Cancon’, *Judy* (8 July 1868), p. 107. *The Era* newspaper also commented ‘she [Finette] kicks the indispensable English swell’s hat off in the neatest manner conceivable.’ See ‘London Music Halls’, *The Era*, issue 1539 (22 March 1868) p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, Galassi & Ribeiro (2003), p. 55. Aileen Ribeiro identified Finette’s dress as a domino. The carnival usually began at Epiphany (6 January) and reached its climax during Shrove-tide.

<sup>9</sup> See Frederick Wedmore, *Whistler’s Etchings: A Study and a Catalogue*, (London: A. W. Thibaudau, St Martin’s Place, 1886), pp. 37–38. It is likely that the topographical nature observed by Wedmore owes to Whistler’s spell at the US Coast and Geodetic Survey, Washington DC (1854), and the prints of Wenceslaus Hollar in the Haden collection.

<sup>10</sup> Tracy C. Davis, ‘The Actress in Victorian Pornography’, *Theatre Journal*, 41, no. 3 (1989), p. 308.

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Olson, *Gavarni: The Carnival Lithographs* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1979), p. 8. Olson notes that carnival finished its celebrations on the three days before Ash Wednesday.

<sup>12</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Beatrice Whistler, [24 January 1892?], G UW 06606.

prints *L'École des Pierrots* (1851–1853) and *La Foire aux Amours* (1852–1853) published in the journal *Paris*, edited by Count de Villedeuil. Whistler would have been thinking of Gavarni while he sketched *Finette*, and during this period he copied Gavarni's dancing pierrots (*Air: Larifla! ... Nos femm' sont cou-cou!* from 'Impressions de ménage').<sup>13</sup> Across the Channel, Whistler's stay in London during the summer of 1859 with his brother-in-law Francis Seymour Haden (1818–1910) may have further influenced the composition of *Finette*. The *British Exhibition of Old Masters* was held at the British Institution in June 1859, and Whistler (writing to artist Henri Fantin-Latour) referred to the exhibition as brimming with 'the Gainsboroughs and our old loves'.<sup>14</sup> It is possible then that the pose for *Finette* may have been suggested by Thomas Gainsborough's *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (1783).<sup>15</sup> The full-length format of *Finette* and Whistler's interest in *Finette*'s dress perhaps indicates some debt to Gainsborough. Moreover, during the autumn/winter of 1859, Whistler made a series of twelve portrait drypoints of his *artiste* friends – musicians, artists, performers and intellectuals. The portraits included sculptors Charles L. Drouet (1836–1908) and Just Bequet (1829–1907), portrayed playing a cello, and Zacharie Astruc (1833–1907), an artist, poet and man of letters associated with the artistic avant-garde. Amongst Haden's portfolio were early states of Anthony Van Dyck's *Iconographia* set, comprised of portraits of artists and art connoisseurs (fifty-two of the portraits were of statesmen, and twelve were of scholars).<sup>16</sup> Early impressions from the set were also on display at *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition* (1857) which Whistler attended.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that Whistler was not only influenced by the idea of an artistic set from Van Dyck, considering *Finette* for inclusion within this set.

In 1868 the British periodical *Fun* furthered the association of *Finette* and the carnival by mentioning the character Robert Macaire (a popular disguise at masked balls), and furthermore, hinted at *Finette*'s dubious reputation:

Messieurs les étudiants,  
 Finette a su vous plaire:  
 Vous aimez le can-can-  
 A bas Robert Macaire!  
 Tour à tour;  
 C'est la mode du jour.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Whistler copied Gavarni's dancing pierrots (*Air: Larifla! ... Nos femm' sont cou-cou!* (from 'Impressions de ménage', lithograph, 1846–1847) on the verso of a drawing of *Fumette*, c.1857, pencil, 21.6 × 15.0 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. See Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours: A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 90 (M. 289v).

<sup>14</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, 29 June 1859, GUW 08050: 'les Gainsborough et nos anciens amours' (translation from online correspondence). *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* was loaned by Earl Spencer. Also see Algernon Graves, *A Century of Loan Exhibitions 1813–1912*, Vol. 1 (London: Chiswick Press, 1913–1915), p. 149.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Gainsborough, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, 1783, oil on canvas, 235.6 × 146.5 cm, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington DC.

<sup>16</sup> Carl Depauw and Ger Luijten, *Anthony Van Dyck as a Printmaker* (Amsterdam: Antwerpen Open in association with the Rijksmuseum, 1999), p. 75.

<sup>17</sup> See Katharine A. Lochnan, *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 104. Lochnan does not reference her source regarding the Manchester Art Treasures objects on display. Consultation of the *Catalogue of the Art Treasures of the United Kingdom Collected at Manchester in 1857* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857), p. 60, mentions that 'line engravings' under Van Dyck's name were exhibited, but does not specify which ones.

<sup>18</sup> 'students, *Finette* knew how to please you, you like the can-can, under Robert Macaire! In turn; it is the fashion of the day.' My translation from 'Little Addresses to Big Names', *Fun*, (1 February 1868), p. 214. Robert Macaire was a charlatan, made famous by the actor Frédérick-Lemaître. Macaire inspired a series by Gavarni's contemporary, Honoré Daumier, and became a 'type' of disguise at masked balls.

Indeed the cancan created a furore in English theatres, despite Finette's change of 'dress' for the English exhibition: 'Her costume was that of a dancer rather than a *danseuse*, and, therefore, much of the objection which an English audience would have to the French dance was removed.'<sup>19</sup> She appeared onstage in knickers, as depicted in a caricature by H. Harral from 1868 which allowed for higher kicks ('*le presentez-armes*').<sup>20</sup> Despite the claim by theatre director John Hollingshead that the 'offensiveness' of the dance had been removed through the change to the costume, Finette's troupe received largely unfavourable reviews.<sup>21</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette* (1868) commented that Finette's performance had 'no redeeming feature of elegance or artistic skill', with *Reynold's Newspaper* (1868) suggesting that 'persons of depraved taste nightly applaud this obscene dance, which the police in Paris have long ago suppressed in the lowest-class balls.'<sup>22</sup> While *The Era* (1868) called Finette an '*artiste*,' the review commented on the grotesque nature of the dance.<sup>23</sup> *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (1868) went one step further, stating that 'her indulging in such freaks as thrusting her tongue out at the audience' only rendered the dance more depraved.<sup>24</sup> *The Mask* was more positive, but added that 'they are only amusing contortionists as long as they submit to control.'<sup>25</sup> Publicity photographs of Finette exploited the eroticism of her costume through the adoption of variant poses from high art, evoking parallels with Manet's *Olympia* and Ingres's *La Grande Odalisque*. *Finette in a volupté pose*, taken 1860s, heightens the sense of the erotic by association of Oriental props as 'the transformative allure of theatrical illusion.' The pointed visibility of underwear as an outer garment was erotic, and the controversy surrounding drawers through the period added to the scandal.<sup>26</sup> Rather than disguising her gender, knickers highlighted her physicality and were close to 'simulated' nudity.<sup>27</sup> Thus it is unsurprising that photographs of Finette (like her publicity shots) were collectable items from erotic magazines.<sup>28</sup>

English objections to Finette can be largely attributed to the ideology of separate spheres. The majority of Victorians viewed models, actresses and dancers as prostitutes, as the actress/dancer worked as a serviceable commodity, and lived a very public 'private' life. As scholar Tracy C. Davis highlights, the Victorian actress/dancer was symbolic of middle class values, often representative of hard work and high culture (if performing as a reputable actress), but careful of her self-sufficiency as a New Woman threat. Paradoxically, her public role, self-sufficiency and sexual desirability defied Victorian feminine ideologies of respectability and thus cast the actress/dancer as a social threat. Additionally, the geographic proximity of prostitutes 'patrolling' theatre districts further blurred the boundaries of feminine respectability for stage performers, and was further exacerbated by 'pornography districts.'<sup>29</sup> The Alhambra, where Finette performed, was situated in Leicester Square; the surrounding streets formed one of the

<sup>19</sup> 'The Lyceum', *The Times* (27 December 1867), p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> H. Harral, 'Caricature of Finette', *The Mask*, 1, no. 40 (February–December 1868). See Tracy C. Davis, *Actresses as Working Women: their social identity in Victorian culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> John Hollingshead, *My Lifetime*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Co, 1895), p. 225.

<sup>22</sup> 'The Ballet', *The Pall Mall Gazette* (27 March 1868), p. 11. 'Public Amusements', *Reynold's Newspaper* (29 March 1868), p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> 'London Music Halls', *The Era* (22 March 1868), p. 6. *The Era* reported that 'Elasticity of limb and a certain grotesque kind of action take its place.'

<sup>24</sup> 'Public Amusements', *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (22 March 1868), p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *The Mask*, 1 (February to December 1868), p. 41.

<sup>26</sup> See Davis (1991), pp. 98, 117. Davis mentions that knickers were of general interest 1860–1870, gradually being worn by 'respectable' women.

<sup>27</sup> See Davis (1989), pp. 298, 313. See MacDonald, Galassi & Ribeiro (2003), p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Disderi & Co., *Finette in a volupté pose*, 1860s, The Kinsey Institute, Bloomington, Indiana.

<sup>29</sup> Davis (1991), pp. 69, 81. Also see Lynda Nead, *Myths of Sexuality: representations of women in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

aforementioned districts. Contemporary attitudes towards Finette have since fuelled speculation regarding Whistler's relationship to her as more than artist and model. Whistler's biographers, the Pennells, called her a '*cocotte*', and more recently Price has called her a '*cocodette*,' inferring that Finette category of *demi-mondaine* (all recognisable Parisian social types, ranked between *grand cocottes* and *grisettes*), indicating a woman of doubtful moral character and social standing.<sup>30</sup> In line with her image as a *cocotte*, Robert Getscher states that Finette translated as 'sly, subtle, cunning.'<sup>31</sup> G. H. Fleming suggested that Finette was a 'liaison' and Getscher similarly implied that Finette was involved with Whistler, posing for Whistler's nude *Venus*, 1859.<sup>32</sup> *Venus* is thought to depict Whistler's mistress, Fumette (real name Eloise or Héloïse) and there is no extant evidence to prove any liaison between Whistler and Finette.<sup>33</sup>

This view of artist as male creator and female model as passive/sexual underlines the prevailing scholarship towards Whistler and his models, though Margaret MacDonald has demonstrated that Whistler's art flourished as a result of the collaborative nature of his female relationships, particularly with regard to his wife, Beatrice Whistler (1857–1896).<sup>34</sup> In this sense, *Finette* demonstrates his lifelong involvement with liberal (often bohemian) characters and his interest in the stage and performance. Despite his interest in aesthetic refinement and the decorative possibilities of full-length portraiture (which would be realised in his later work), Whistler was still following in pursuit of his friend Gustave Courbet (1819–1877) by elevating a traditionally 'low-life' subject.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately Whistler follows in pursuit of Charles Baudelaire's declaration that art should consist of the temporal and eternal; Whistler draws from artistic precedents while utilising a modern subject.<sup>36</sup>

**30** E. R. & J. Pennell, *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1921), p. 91. Price (1998), p. 36. Also see Alison Smith, 'The Academy and the Professional Model in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Britain' in *The Dictionary of Artists' Models*, ed. by Jill Berk Jiminez (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2001), p. 28. Finette is referred to as a 'coquette.' Théodore Duret referred to Finette as 'a creole of light morals' ('Finette, une créole de moeurs légères'), my translation. See Duret, *Histoire de J. Mc N. Whistler et de son Oeuvre* (Paris: H. Floury, 1904), p. 12.

**31** Robert H. Getscher, *The Stamp of Whistler*, (Oberlin College: Allen Memorial Art Museum, 1977), p. 27.

**32** James McNeill Whistler, *Venus*, K.59, II of II, etching and drypoint, black ink on white Japanese paper, 15.1 × 22.7 cm, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, GLAHA 46751.

**33** G. H. Fleming, *James Abbott McNeill Whistler: A Life* (Gloucestershire: The Windrush Press, 1991), p. 83. Fleming states that it was 'surely not coincidental that Whistler's early liaisons [...] were with women from the underclass.' Robert H. Getscher, *James Abbott McNeill Whistler Pastels* (London: John Murray, 1991). Also see Price (1998), p. 36. He states that Finette was the 'client/lover' of Whistler.

**34** April F. Masten, 'Model into Artist: The Changing Face of Art Historical Biography', *Women's Studies*, 21 (1992), pp. 18, 20. Also see, for example, Margaret MacDonald, *Beatrice Whistler: Artist & Designer* (Glasgow: Hunterian Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 33–34.

**35** Thanks to Peter Black for pointing out that Courbet's art was drawn from his personal life, and that it was possible that Whistler was doing something similar.

**36** 'Beauty is made up of an eternal, invariable element, whose quantity it is excessively difficult to determine, and of a relative, circumstantial element, which will be, if you like, whether severally or all at once, the age, its fashions, its morals, its emotions.' See Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', originally published as 'Le peintre de la vie moderne', *Le Figaro* (Paris, 1863), republished in *Art in Theory 1815–1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* ed. by Charles Harrison, Paul Wood and Jason Gaiger (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), p. 494.



**Fig. 4.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* (YMSM 47), 1863–1864, oil on canvas, 91.5 × 61.5 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art (Reproduced with kind permission of the Philadelphia Museum of Art)

Claire McKechnie

## Pots and Paints: Whistler and the *Lange Leizen*\*

This essay will discuss the American-born artist, James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) in relation to his collecting of blue and white Chinese porcelain and the inclusion of this collection in his paintings, specifically looking at *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* (1863–1864, YMSM 47).

Between 1862 and 1879, Whistler was deeply involved with Victorian ‘Chinamania’ and was at the forefront of the fashion for collecting Chinese porcelain. Chinese porcelain had long been imported to the West. However, it was in the mid-nineteenth century that the availability and public popularity of Oriental art and produce reached its highest point. Whistler was part of the artistic avant-garde who admired and collected oriental objects. His collecting habits and those of his immediate circle of collecting peers were influential in the spread of the fashion. Whistler encouraged the collecting endeavours of his acquaintances through friendly rivalry and by illustrating their collections.

Whistler was a fascinating, multi-faceted character: a temperamental artist, a society personality, a boisterous dandy and, not least, an innovative and gifted artist. He was the product of many cultures: an American born to an austere, devout mother; military academy trained; but raised in England and spending his formative years as a young man in Paris. This essay will explore a lesser-known side of the man, Whistler the collector, the connoisseur of delicate and beautiful pieces of blue and white china, who found them beautiful enough to include as focal points in his paintings.

Oriental art was a huge influence on Whistler’s art of the 1860s and 1870s. His oil paintings: *Purple and Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* and *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (1863–1864) show the impact of blue and white porcelain on Whistler both through its appearance in his works and also the influence of its decoration on the composition of his works. Many of his sketches and delicate studies of Oriental pieces of porcelain remain, many in the collection of the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. Whistler also designed interiors with the intention of including displays of blue and white porcelain.

\* This essay is submitted to the Festschrift in honour of Professor Margaret F. MacDonald, a woman and a scholar who has been a source of support and inspiration to me for the years I have had the pleasure of knowing her. I would like to acknowledge and thank Jennifer Vanim of the Philadelphia Museum of Art for her assistance and kind permission to use the image of the Lange Leizen in this essay.

He designed interiors for himself for the White House, and for patrons, W. C. Alexander and F. R. Leyland. Each design is radically different but all serve to complement the blue and white displayed within the finished rooms.

Whistler himself had two separate collections of Oriental objects. The first of his collections was sold after his bankruptcy in 1878.<sup>1</sup> Sadly, this first collection is now largely lost to us although some pieces are traceable where their provenance has been recorded. On regaining some financial security and domestic happiness following his marriage to Beatrice Godwin in 1888, Whistler built up a second collection in the late 1880s and 1890s, now in the Hunterian Art Gallery.

To Whistler, the collection of blue and white and other Chinese *objets d'art* was more than an aesthetic appreciation of the objects as an artist, but also a means to understand the aesthetics of another culture. With this understanding of exotic aesthetics, and by including examples of this in his paintings, Whistler combined Eastern and Western elements in his art which helped formulate his own artistic identity. Throughout his career, Whistler was inspired by different cultures and different eras; from Rembrandt to Velázquez to classical Greece, as well as the Far East. With these influences, Whistler did not seek to copy those examples faithfully but to adapt them into his own style without the 'learning of Tadema', as it was 'not the real Japan he wanted to paint, but his idea of it.'<sup>2</sup> As a man, he was the product of many cultures and as an artist he drew on all these elements but sought more – by looking for inspiration from further afield than he ever managed to travel.

In December 1863 Whistler began his first 'Oriental' painting; *The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks*, which this essay will focus on. He had, in the summer of that year, already begun collecting blue and white porcelain, Oriental art and decorative objects on his visits to Paris, Amsterdam and Rotterdam.<sup>3</sup> Through the period of 1863 to 1879, Whistler painted a handful of 'Oriental inspired' works. These are primarily the genre paintings *The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* (1863–64), *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (1864) and *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen* (1864). However blue and white also was included in *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* (1864), a portrait of Joanna Hiffernan, and *The Blue Girl: Portrait of Miss Elinor Leyland* (destroyed 1879). *Lange Leizen* and *La Princesse* are the most overtly Oriental of Whistler's works and *The Blue Girl* has striking examples of blue and white.

*The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* was the first of Whistler's paintings to draw on Oriental influences. The title is taken from the six decorative Chinese maker's marks which are found on the base of certain specimens of blue and white. Whistler reproduced these symbols on the frame of the painting. They read: Great, Ch'ing, K'ang, Hs'I, Year, Made (Made during the Reign of the Emperor K'ang Hs'I of the Great Ch'ing Dynasty).<sup>4</sup> 'Lange Liezen' is taken from the Dutch for 'Long Elizás'; the tall, willowy female figures often adorning Chinese blue and white porcelain.<sup>5</sup>

The painting is almost a conventional Victorian genre scene, showing a Caucasian woman in a studio, posing for an artist, but Whistler manages to distort this by

1 Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: William Heinemann, 1911), pp. 142–86.

2 Pennell, p. 86.

3 Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 53. Pennell, p. 84.

4 Pennell, p. 86.

5 Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret F. MacDonald, Robin Spencer and Hamish Miles, *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980) p. 25.

surrounding her with Chinese and Japanese ornaments and clothing her in Oriental garb. Her hoop earrings and European features and pose (relaxed and leaning backward on a European wooden chair) and the composition of the piece, a small, self-contained space, are all in contrast with the model's Oriental robe and accessories.<sup>6</sup> The cream silk robe is embroidered with traditional Chinese motifs. There are rich coloured butterflies and pale flowers surrounded by bright leaves.<sup>7</sup> The same kimono is worn by the model in *Caprice in Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen*, where it is tied with a dark pink and gold scarf as an obi or waistband, and also appears in *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*.<sup>8</sup> The lady of the *Lange Leizen* wears the robe incorrectly, it hangs loosely and it seems unfastened which enhances the sense of artifice within the composition. As the Pennells state: 'the lady of the *Lange Leizen* sits on a chair as she never would have sat in the land from which her costume came, and the pots and trays and flowers around her are in a profusion never seen in the houses of Tokio [sic] or Canton.'<sup>9</sup>

There is no attempt to recreate an Oriental scene, but adaptation of a European, maybe even British scene, with exotic embellishments. It seems as if the Chinese pieces are merely there for their decorative patterns. Dorment and MacDonald have succinctly stated: 'he used Japanese accessories to create superficial exoticism in an otherwise conventional Victorian genre scene.'<sup>10</sup> Even the way in which the model holds the vase, as though painting upon it, adds to this superficiality as that is not how blue and white porcelain was decorated.

The figure sits surrounded by, and holding, blue and white pots taken from Whistler's own collection, a fact which can be confirmed from his correspondence.<sup>11</sup> In a letter to Fantin-Latour, Whistler expresses his feelings about the work, as he writes:

It is filled with superb porcelain from my collection, and is good in arrangement and colour – It shows a porcelain dealer, a Chinese woman painting a pot – But it is difficult! and I wipe off so much!<sup>12</sup>

Whistler's mother describes the same work in a letter of February 1864:

[...] he is finishing at his Studio (for when he paints from life, his models generally are hired & he has for the last fortnight had a fair damsel sitting as a Japanese study) a very beautiful picture [...] A girl seated as if intent upon painting a beautiful jar which she rests on her lap, a quiet & easy attitude, she sits beside a shelf which is covered with Chinese Matting a buff color, upon which several pieces of China & a pretty fan are arranged as if for purchasers, [...] by her side is a large jar & all these are fac-similes of those around me in this room.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, in this painting, it is possible to identify one of the pieces depicted as from Whistler's own collection. In the top right of the painting, by the model's head, there is a large pot displayed in front of an even larger plate. This pot can be identified as one now in

<sup>6</sup> *Whistler*, edited by Richard Dorment & Margaret F. MacDonald (London: Tate Publications, 1994), p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> Margaret F. MacDonald, Susan Grace Galassi & Aileen Ribeiro, with Patricia de Montfort, *Whistler, Women and Fashion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 58.

<sup>8</sup> MacDonald, Galassi & Ribeiro, p. 61

<sup>9</sup> Pennell, p. 86

<sup>10</sup> MacDonald & Dorment, p. 85.

<sup>11</sup> Young, MacDonald, Spencer & Miles, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, 4 January – 3 February 1864, GUW 08036.

<sup>13</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James H. Gamble, 10–11 February 1864, GUW 06522.

the Victoria and Albert Museum, which is recorded as previously having been owned by Whistler.<sup>14</sup> The delicate pattern on the lid – a wide band of swirling pattern, and row of dots around the bottom – have been faithfully copied. On the vase, robed Oriental men are painted, talking, in front of trees on the left and a draped curtain to the right. The figures set against the curtained background, the supporting pole of the curtain and the trees on the left with their blossoming leaves are all recognisable in the painting. This verifies that Whistler was using pieces from his own collection in his paintings.

The pot in the lower right of the picture is similarly highly detailed and its identification should be possible. It is not now in Whistler's second collection in the Hunterian collection. The pot may have been sold at Whistler's bankruptcy sale. However, there is no description of a similar pot in the sale catalogue of Whistler's porcelain.<sup>15</sup> This creates something of a mystery; was the pot Whistler's or perhaps Rossetti's or lent by Marks? Perhaps Whistler sold it before his bankruptcy sale. Unfortunately there is no way of knowing unless the pot appears in a collection somewhere with a record of its provenance.

*Lange Leizen* was shown at the 96th Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts, Royal Academy, London, in 1864 where it was well received. One critic wrote:

[...] great force of characterisation and superb colouring in a quaint subject [...] the Chinese lady amusing herself by working [...] This picture is among the finest pieces of colour in the Exhibition – see the beautiful harmonies of the woman's robes.<sup>16</sup>

Of this Whistler writes again to his old friend Fantin-Latour: 'I saw my Chinese woman at the Academy again yesterday – I know that you would like it.'<sup>17</sup> By this we can tell that Whistler considered this painting as 'chinoiserie', inspired by the art of China – and also that he was content with the finished piece. Although Whistler completed only a handful of paintings that included Oriental objects in their composition, his Oriental-inspired paintings form an important part of his oeuvre. They have been described, by Whistler's contemporaries, as 'characterised by dainty charm of colour, subtle and delicate gradations of light, grace and dignity of line, and withal by a distinction of style which defies exact definition.'<sup>18</sup> As the Pennells assert, Whistler endeavoured to 'render a beauty he had discovered which was unknown in Western life.'<sup>19</sup>

From the end of 1863 until 1874, Whistler's fascination with the Orient is evident in his paintings, from *The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* begun in 1863 to the 'Six Projects', begun in 1867. During this period there is a noticeable shift in how the figures in the paintings interact with the Oriental objects with which Whistler surrounds them. In his earlier works, Oriental objects are supplanted into Western compositions of Victorian genre scenes, whereas in the later works, the Oriental pieces are used to counteract the classical Greek influence of the compositions so they did not appear as merely genre paintings<sup>20</sup>.

**14** Charlotte Gere & Lesley Hoskins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2000), p. 47.

**15** *Catalogue of Decorative Porcelain, Cabinet, Paintings and Other Works of Art of J. A. McN. Whistler*, Sotheby's London, 12 February, 1880, in Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and nineteenth-century Japan* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

**16** *Athenaeum* (14 May 1864), p. 682, quoted in Merrill, p. 66.

**17** James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, September 1865, GUW 08037.

**18** Thomas R. Way & George R. Dennis, *The Art of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Gordon Bell and Sons, 1903), p. 32.

**19** Way & Dennis, p. 86.

**20** MacDonald & Dorment, p. 85.

As Merrill has succinctly stated: ‘Particularly in the late-Victorian period [...] the cultural elite aspired to live in the spirit of art.’<sup>21</sup> In Whistler’s paintings of female models situated in interiors, whether elaborately dressed for the purposes of a painting, as in *Lange Leizen*, *La Princesse* and *The Golden Screen*, or in a more normal domestic setting such as *Symphony in White, No. 2: The Little White Girl* or *The Blue Girl*, the spirit of art and the spirit of collecting is embodied in the blue and white porcelain decorating the works. The figures in these paintings all react in different ways to the porcelain that surrounds them, whether ignoring it or absorbed in it. However, in each of these paintings the blue and white porcelain and the Oriental elements add an exotic and exclusive decorative element to the composition.

**21** Merrill, p. 20.



**Fig. 5.1** *A Mender of Porcelain*, watercolour on paper, c.1790, 42 × 35 cm, Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Nick Pearce

## ‘Blue porcelain ... and ... coy maidens’\*

**Some Thoughts on Whistler's *Purple & Rose: The Lange Leizen of the Six Marks***

Whistler's *Lange Leizen of the Six Marks* (fig. 4.1) is a very odd painting. Even accepting Whistler's aversion to Victorian genre painting and his obvious attempt to subvert it, the subject of a woman dressed in Chinese silks, surrounded by Chinese cobalt-blue porcelain, an example of which she is in the act of painting, has perplexed viewers since its first showing at the Royal Academy in 1864. An obvious oddity is the depiction of the sitter painting a piece of porcelain – a previously glazed and fired article which would not readily take any addition of oil paint to its surface. Less fictitious, but still strange is Whistler's depiction of what is obviously a part of the artist's growing collection of Chinese porcelain, silks and Japanese objects (certainly the lacquer tray and screen fan in the background and probably the book on the table to the right) and even Chinese furniture, as the sitter seems to be reclining on a Chinese folding chair.<sup>1</sup> It is as if the painting is a showcase for Whistler's growing enthusiasm for Chinese and Japanese works of art, but especially Chinese blue and white porcelain, unlikely for an artist so hostile to contemporary genre painting. Yet Anna Whistler was explicit in a letter written at the time of the painting of the *Lange Leizen*, that her son was depicting pieces from in his collection – ‘fac-similes’ as she termed them.<sup>2</sup> A report in *The Times* of the painting at the time of its Royal Academy showing was clear in reading the subject literally, the writer criticising Whistler for choosing ‘to combine these oddly chosen materials as no other painter would choose to combine them’.<sup>3</sup> But what was Whistler doing in this painting and why did he choose to

\* Quoted from James McNeill Whistler, ‘Mr. Whistler's “Ten O’Clock”’, in *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, second edition (London: William Heinemann, 1892), pp. 156–57.

<sup>1</sup> Whistler's erstwhile colleague, Mortimer Menpes later had a set of these quite rare chairs in his home at 25 Cadogan Gardens. See this author's: ‘The Chinese folding chair, Mortimer Menpes and the Aesthetic interior’, *Apollo* (March 1999), pp. 45–53.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James H. Gamble, 10–11 February 1864, GUW 06522.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Exhibition of the Royal Academy [Second Article]’, *The Times* (5 May 1864), p. 8.

show a figure seated painting a pot? Was there a prototype for this curious pose? The content and meaning of the painting has been well rehearsed by a number of Whistler specialists.<sup>4</sup> In what follows, I offer some observations as a non-specialist.

In an oft-quoted letter written by Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, the artist gives a matter-of-fact description of his new painting:

C'est rempli de superbes porcelaines tirés de ma collection, et comme arrangement et couleur est bien – Cela représente une marchande de porcelaine, une Chinoise en train de peindre un pot – Mais c'est diff[ic]ile! et je gratte tant!<sup>5</sup>

We know from this that Whistler was representing porcelains from his collection and indeed the jar and cover, seen on the table parallel with the head of the sitter, can be identified, as it entered the collection of George Salting, now in the Victoria & Albert Museum.<sup>6</sup> With friends such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, James Tissot, Louis Huth and Sir Henry Thompson, Whistler collected Chinese and Japanese porcelains with a passion that rivalled an earlier, eighteenth-century generation of collectors. At the tail end of that earlier generation was the writer Charles Lamb (1775–1834). In his essay *Old China*, Lamb speaks of a fascination with the imagery he found on Chinese porcelain:

[...] those lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques that under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective [...] I like to see my old friends – whom distance cannot diminish – figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still – for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, has made to spring up beneath their sandals [...] I love these men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.<sup>7</sup>

Lamb describes an object of beauty and of art that Whistler would have recognised and one that does not rely upon verisimilitude for its effect. In his 'Ten O'Clock' lecture of 1885, Whistler wrote that art was found 'among the opium eaters of Nankin', the potter 'caressing his blue porcelain, and painting his coy maidens, and marking his plates with her six marks of choice [...] He it is who calls her – he who holds her.'<sup>8</sup> Whistler and Lamb before him, was acknowledging an art that was to be judged on its own terms and not as a reflection of anything outside it. Here was an aesthetic as Whistler saw it that could be free

4 See for example: Linda Merrill, 'Whistler and the Lange Lijzen', *Burlington Magazine*, 136 (October 1994), pp. 683–90; the same author's *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (Washington DC and New Haven: Freer Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 53–56; Richard Dorment & Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler* (London: Tate Publications, 1994), entry 22, pp. 86–87.

5 'It is filled with superb porcelain from my collection, and is good in arrangement and colour – It shows a porcelain dealer, a Chinese woman painting a pot – But it is difficult! and I wipe off so much!' (James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, 4 January – 3 February, 1864, GUW 08036).

6 Acc. no. C.836&836a-1910. See Charlotte Gere & Lesley Hoskins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2000), illus. 48, p. 47. George Salting acquired a number of porcelains from Whistler's first collection following the latter's bankruptcy sale in 1879 and which can still be identified.

7 Charles Lamb, 'Old China', in *Charles Lamb: Essays*, edited with an Introduction by Rosalind Vallance and John Hampden (London: The Folio Society 1963), p. 169.

8 Whistler, 'Mr. Whistler's "Ten O'Clock"' (1892), p. 157. During Whistler's time Chinese porcelain was often referred to as Nankin ware in the mistaken belief that it was manufactured in the city of Nanking (Nanjing). Most blue and white was manufactured in the city of Jingdezhen situated further south.

to demonstrate the subtleties of the painted surface, of colour and of design. In the same way, Whistler described *Lange Leizen* as 'good in arrangement and colour'.<sup>9</sup>

What are we to make of the sitter? Although Whistler describes her 'as a porcelain dealer, a Chinese woman painting a pot', she is neither. It is not possible to paint a pot in this way, nor is she Chinese. The sitter is Whistler's then mistress, Jo Hiffenan. Was Whistler evoking what Linda Merrill has observed as 'an allegorical reading, in which the vase represents the creative product and the brush is the artist's attribute'?<sup>10</sup> This is possible. However I would like to suggest that just as Whistler loved blue and white porcelain, so did he Jo Hiffenan. In *Lange Leizen*, might the two come together? Is the elongated figure of the painter a mirror image of the subjects depicted on the vase, emerging from within in a wished-for fantasy on the part of Whistler with the porcelain figure metamorphosing into that of Jo? Her indistinct features lend an ethereal quality to the picture. Just eight years after Whistler painted *Lange Leizen*, the French composer Camille Saint-Saëns and the librettist Louis Gallet completed a one-act opera titled *La Princesse jaune* (The Yellow Princess) on this very theme.<sup>11</sup> The opera presents a young Dutch artist, Kornélis, who fantasises about Japan and the portrait of a Japanese girl, Princess Ming, which hangs on his wall.<sup>12</sup> Bored with his life, Kornélis takes narcotics in the hope of entering Ming's imaginary world: 'Anime-toi, respire!' he calls as he gazes at the portrait in his stupor. His cousin, Léna, who is in love with him, enters the room just after Kornélis has fallen back into a chair in an ecstatic trance. His hallucinations transport him to Japan and at the same moment transform Léna into Ming and the painting on the wall into a conventional Dutch portrait. When Kornélis emerges from his hallucinations he realises that it is Léna whom he really loves. Whilst I am not suggesting that Whistler was in a drug-induced state when he painted *Lange Leizen*, there are parallels here with the idea of the imaginary merging with the human and that Jo Hiffenan becomes Whistler's ideal woman surrounded as she is by the artistic objects he so admired.

The above interpretation does not explain Whistler's reference to the sitter being 'a porcelain dealer'.<sup>13</sup> One explanation has been that Whistler was recalling an excursion to Amsterdam he had just completed where he had visited the shop of the widow, Van der Pflaum, and purchased a large number of porcelains.<sup>14</sup> This would also account for Anna Whistler's reference to the objects in the picture being arranged 'as if for purchasers'.<sup>15</sup> However, it strikes this writer that the position of the sitter and the commercial reference might have been inspired by an image which had been in circulation and which Whistler could have seen, that of *A Mender of Porcelain* (fig. 5.1). Originally a watercolour produced in China in the late eighteenth century as part of the export trade, this particular image was published subsequently in 1800 by George Henry Mason as part of his *Costume of China*, one of a number of illustrated books produced in the wake of the first British Embassy to

<sup>9</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, 4 January – 3 February, 1864, GUW 08036.

<sup>10</sup> Merrill (1998), p. 54.

<sup>11</sup> Camille Saint-Saëns and Louis Gallet, *La Princesse jaune*, op. 30, a comic opera in one act, first produced at the Opéra-Comique on 12 June 1872.

<sup>12</sup> During this period Chinese and Japanese objects and names were conflated. It is doubtful that Whistler would have always been able to distinguish between the two cultures.

<sup>13</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, 4 January – 3 February, 1864, GUW 08036.

<sup>14</sup> Merrill (1998), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Matilda Whistler to James H. Gamble, 10–11 February 1864, GUW 06522.

China in 1793 (fig. 5.2).<sup>16</sup> An itinerant artisan is shown seated on a stool and in the act of drilling a bowl ready for riveting. In the original watercolour, but lost in the engraving for the book, the mender is surrounded by a number of porcelains which he has already completed. Did Whistler see the Mason engraving or a copy of the watercolour? Mason, an officer in the English East India Company, acquired or commissioned the set while he was on leave in Canton [Guangzhou], seemingly from the Pu-Quà workshop, one of the many of artisan painting establishments producing watercolours for western buyers in the port city during the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Paintings like this were available 'off the peg' and produced in their thousands. No watercolour was unique.

I have no evidence that Whistler ever owned either a watercolour of this subject or Mason's book, but the subject in *Lange Leizen* did cause him some difficulty ('I wipe off so much!'). Was the *Marchande* originally a *Marchand*, or even a mender rather than a painter of porcelain? But then such a prosaic subject may have been too much for Whistler; too imitative; smacking too much of the genre subject, perhaps.



**Fig. 5.3** Dadley, *A Mender of Porcelain*, stipple engraving, from George Henry Mason, *The Costume of China* (London: William Miller, 1800), Plate XXVIII

<sup>16</sup> George Henry Mason, *The Costume of China: Illustrated by Sixty Engravings with Explanations in English and French* (London: William Miller, 1800). The book went through a number of editions during the first half of the nineteenth century.

<sup>17</sup> Mason, Preface. For further details concerning the Pu-Quà workshop, Chinese export painting workshop methods and Mason's *Costume of China*, see Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1984), pp. 33–42.





**Fig. 6.1** Crane Fan (recto), c.1895, painted wood, private collection



**Fig. 6.2** Crane Fan (verso), c.1895, painted wood, private collection

Robyne Erica Calvert

## An Artistic Fan in Victorian Society\*

*This Work of Art was formed by a lady of exalted rank (since deceased).<sup>1</sup>*

This rather enigmatic statement relates to one of the more unusual items in the Whistler Archive at the University of Glasgow's Special Collections, a set of glass negatives taken c.1895 of a ladies fan (fig. 6.3). They show a wooden brisé fan (that is, a fan made only of blades, with no mount), with some of its blades hand-painted with small illustrations, and/or signatures. Later, a photograph of one completed side was published in the *Sketch* in 1911; a close inspection reveals that the blades have been autographed and decorated by prominent Victorian artists and musicians, including Whistler himself. The accompanying note includes a comprehensive list of contributors, forty in total, which in the end also included Walter Crane, who decorated the guards and, likely, painted the peacock feathers that span the bottom of the blades. The *Sketch* note states that the fan was 'made by Walter Crane', and though this might be a misrepresentation, this object shall be referred to as the 'Crane Fan' for the purposes of this essay.

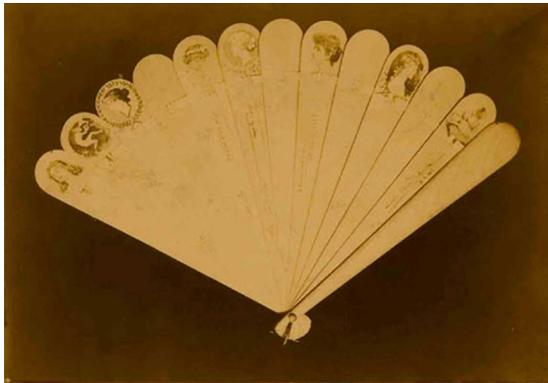
When Margaret F. MacDonald wrote her seminal catalogue raisonné of Whistler's drawings, watercolours and pastels, she included this object and a small sketch for the blade Whistler decorated, which is now in the collection of the Freer Gallery, Washington DC (fig. 6.4).<sup>2</sup> Charles Lang Freer himself made a note on the verso: 'Sketch for a Fan / Given to me by Mr Whistler / August 1899 / CLF.' MacDonald had little information with which to complete this entry: the negatives; the Freer sketch; the note in the February 1911 *Sketch* which also stated that it was owned by Ernest Brown & Phillips, operators of the Leicester Gallery; and the 1910 Sotheby's auction catalogue, which seems to be the first sale of the fan. Outside of the rather puzzling fact that the fan was part of a sale of 'A Magnificent Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents, the Property of a Gentleman', Sotheby's reveals little more than the

\* Special thanks to Steve Banks and Lee Glazer; and of course to Margaret F. MacDonald, who has been perhaps the best advisor one could hope for.

<sup>1</sup> Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge (now Sotheby's), *Catalogue of A Magnificent Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents, the Property of a Gentleman* (sale date Wednesday 4 May 1910), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours: A Catalogue Raisonné*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), no. 1422.

*Sketch* note did: a comprehensive list of contributors, and that rather mysterious statement about its first owner, the ‘lady of exalted rank.’ These limited sources, alongside her considerable knowledge of Whistler’s life and work, allowed MacDonald to make a thoughtful analysis of what at the time seemed to be a lost work; but of course the object was still shrouded in mystery.



**Fig. 6.3** Photograph of a wooden brisé fan, c. 1895 (from original glass negative). University of Glasgow, University Library, Special Collections



**Fig. 6.4** James McNeill Whistler, *Design for a Ladies Fan*, Watercolour and pencil on paper, 17.6 × 11.2 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (F1899.106)

As it turns out, sometime after the 1910 Sotheby’s sale, the fan somehow made its way to America, to a private collection. It was in fact on loan to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for a time in the recent past. But it was not until late 2009 that this enigmatic fan returned to the attention of the larger art world when it came up for auction in New Jersey. The outstanding quality of the piece was again revealed: the vivid colours, incredible attention to detail, and most notably the ability to see the array of contributors – mostly musicians – on the verso. But along with this reintroduction, a mystery has resurfaced: whom did this extraordinary object belong to, and why was it made? The ‘exalted lady’ was obviously someone who moved in prominent artistic circles. Might a careful study of the object and its contributors reveal more?

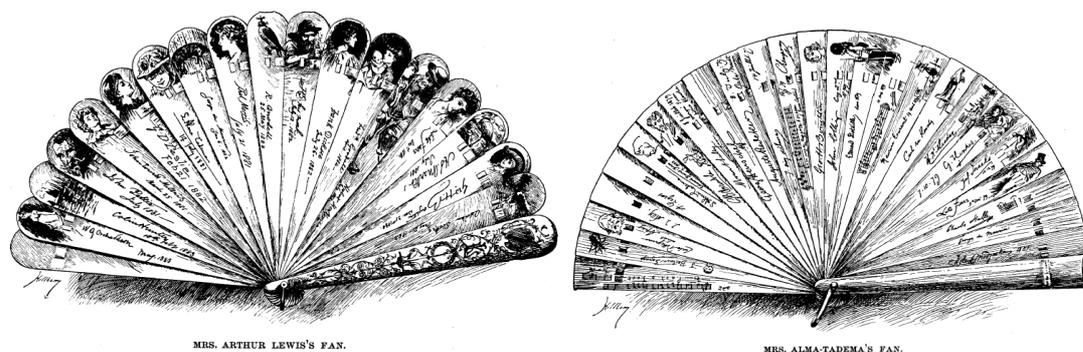
According to the dates on the blades, the Crane fan was made between January and November 1895. The first contributor, in January of that year, was none other than former Royal Academy president Frederic Leighton. He signed his classical portrait medallion simply ‘Fred Leighton’, showing familiarity with its owner. With Leighton at the genesis, surely other notable figures would have little issue with adding their marks to this project; likewise, having Leighton as the first contributor reveals something of the owner’s status as well, for he was notoriously particular, selective even, in his choice of associates. The rest of the blades were signed and decorated by some of the most notable and creative Victorians of the day, all of whom had personal connections to the artistic set and, most certainly, each other:

Slick	Recto	Date	Verso	Verso
1	Walter Crane	n.d. (1895)	Arthur Sullivan	Oct 1895
2	George Boughton	31st March 1895	Charles Santley	n.d. (1895)
3	John Singer Sargent	Sept. 29 1895	Kate Perugini	18th Oct 1895
4	W. Graham Robertson	October 24th 1895	Charles Hallé	8 March 1895
5	Lawrence Alma-Tadema	16 March 1895	André Messager	May. 7. 1895
6	J. M. Whistler	July (1895)	J. D. Linton	Nov 95
7	Laura Alma-Tadema	18.3.95	Alexander MacKenzie	Oct. 16th 1895
8	Frederick Leighton	January 1895	Ignacy Paderewski	Febr. the 7th 1895
9	Marcus Stone	1895	Phillip Burne-Jones	Feb. 1895
10	Edward Burne-Jones	March 1895	Raimundo Madrazo	1895 (prob July)
11	John Everett Millais	May 1st 1895	James Tissot	Juliet 1895
12	W. B. Richmond	Apr 23 1895	George Clairin	1895 (prob July)
13	John Collier	April 5th 1895	Charles Stanford	Oct. 1 1895
14	E. Onslow Ford	Oct. 1895	Lewis Morris	n.d. (1895)
15	C. E. Hallé	Nov 7th 1895	Colin Hunter	n.d. (1895)
16	Feodora Gleichen	n.d. (1895)	Wilma Hallé	8 March 1895
17	Walter Besant / W. E. H. Lecky	Oct 24 1895 / Oct 31st 1895	Edward Lloyd	March 26 1895
18	Frank Dicksee	1895	Joseph Joachim	2.8. Marz. 1895
19	Lord Russell of Killowen	n.d. (1895)	Charles Hubert Parry	n.d. (1895)
20	George DuMaurier	Sep. 1895	Walter Crane	n.d. (1895)

In researching these individuals, a rather interesting web of connections is revealed. For example, there are several professional and personal relations: Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema and his wife Laura completed their spokes a day apart; and we also find the famous tenor Edward Lloyd, who worked with Arthur Sullivan (also present) on several occasions. The composer Sir Charles Edward Hallé and his violinist wife Wilma Hallé autographed theirs with music notations on the same day, while their son, also called Charles Edward Hallé, didn't illustrate and sign his spoke until 7 November. The Hallés were close friends and collaborators with the musicians Joseph Joachim and Ignacy Paderewski. Hallé the younger was an artist as well as the director of the Grosvenor Gallery alongside J. Comyns Carr until a dispute in 1888 with Sir Coutts Lindsay, the Grosvenor founder, had them split to form the New Gallery. A thriving enterprise until 1910, the New Gallery counted amongst its loyal roster of exhibitors several of the fan artists: Crane, Burne-Jones, Alma-Tadema, and Leighton; not to mention others such as Watts and Hunt. Thus it is clear that this enigmatic object is the product of a rich and thriving artistic social network, one in which its owner certainly moved with ease.

However, although the Crane fan is extraordinary and rare, it is not unique. Decorating a lady's fan was not necessarily unheard of amongst this set, and in fact may have been a more common practice than the rarity of extant fans suggest. Fans were, of course, an essential accessory to a fashionable ladies' ensemble. Hand-painted fans were particularly popular items, and autograph fans were something of a trend towards the end of the nineteenth century, owned by many ladies associated with aesthetic circles. These items were clearly popular by 1881, when an item in the comical penny press *Funny Folks* appeared under the header 'Le Follet on the Fly':

‘The new autograph fan is indispensable – a “sign” – *e quâ non*, in fact.’<sup>3</sup> By 1892, *Hearth and Home* had a somewhat more critical view: ‘Everybody has no doubt heard of that terror, the autograph fan, which ladies take to parties and terrify lions with’.<sup>4</sup> However, an article on the history of the fan, written by the novelist Louisa Parr (1848?–1903) for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (August 1889), took a somewhat more intellectual approach for the refined reader of this fashion periodical, and illustrates two such fans owned by notable aesthetic ladies: the aforementioned artist Laura Alma-Tadema and Kate Lewis, *né* Terry, actress and sister of Ellen Terry.<sup>5</sup>



**Fig. 6.5** Illustrations of Kate Lewis’ and Laura Alma-Tadema’s autograph fans, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, August 1889

Lewis’ fan (fig. 6.5), made between 1881–1883 judging from the dates seen on the illustration, was constructed in the popular fashion: artists on one side, and musicians on the other. It includes several contributors to the Crane fan: Millais, Alma-Tadema, Dicksee, DuMaurier, Hunter and Boughton; but also other popular artists of the day, such as G. D. Leslie and Hubert von Herkomer. Parr tells us more about the verso:

The reverse blades are reserved for the autographs of musicians, in several instances accompanied by a few written bars of melodies which have enraptured the world. Clara Schumann, Rubinstein, Joachim, Henschel, Sarasata, Josef Hofmann, Christine Nilsson — what ravishing echoes the bare mention of each name seems to bring to our ears!<sup>6</sup>

Laura Alma-Tadema’s fan (fig. 6.5) was started earlier, in 1879, though some signatures date into the 1880s, for example Edward Burne-Jones who added his mark below that of Lawrence Alma-Tadema’s in 1883. The wood grain in the illustration suggests that this fan was likewise wooden brisé (but with narrower blades), although it is possible that it was ivory.<sup>7</sup> Parr is keen to point out that Mrs Alma-Tadema decided upon a more unconventional arrangement for her fan than the typical artist/musician separation of Lewis’:

In the example shown by Mrs. Alma-Tadema these sign-manuals of talent have not been so separated. The autographs of painters, actors, musicians, men of letters are side by side, or

<sup>3</sup> ‘“Le Follet” on the Fly’, *Funny Folks*, issue 343 (25 June 1881), p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> ‘People, Places, and Things’, *Hearth and Home*, issue 66 (18 August 1892), p. 444.

<sup>5</sup> Louisa Parr, ‘The Fan’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (August 1889), pp. 399–409.

<sup>6</sup> Parr, p. 408.

<sup>7</sup> An ivory autograph fan of similar shape was part of the February 2003 auction of the Forbes Collection of Victorian Pictures and Works of Art at Christies, London.

in some instances, together on one blade. It now remains for some *bel esprit* of artistic taste to start a novel treatment of this happy idea.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, the Crane fan is also arranged in this more organic fashion, a mixture of artists, musicians, men of letters, and even political figures (Lord Russell of Killowen was a judge and education reformer).

Although space does not permit further discussion here, it should be noted that there are other extant examples of similar autograph fans, although perhaps the quality and state of completion do not match the Crane fan: four others were auctioned as part of the Forbes Collection of Victorian Art in 2003; and there is one which was owned by Mrs Linley-Sambourne now in the collection of the Linley-Sambourne house. Interestingly, the Forbes fans came from the collection of the painter Andrew Gow, who Caroline Dakers credits with its compilation in her auction catalogue essay.<sup>9</sup> While fans were of course ladies accessories, they were prized and collected by the aesthetes and often displayed in their studios, as Parr tells us: 'Among the various picturesque objects that go to the decoration of certain studios, one is certain to note the prevalence of the fan.'<sup>10</sup> Thus we are fortunate to have the Sotheby's note that a woman ostensibly formed it, somewhat reducing the size of the haystack our needle is buried in.

It is also interesting to note that many of the contributors to the Crane fan appear on most of the fans as well: the Alma-Tademas, Leighton, Boughton, Millais, du Maurier, Lloyd and Collier are seen repeatedly, to name a few. The arrangement of these fans, in combination with the impressive array of contributors, inspires imaginings of stylish social gatherings where a lady might present her fan for decoration rather more elegantly than the *Hearth and Home* comment suggested. This begs the question: how were these fans formed? Were the blades sent out individually, or were they decorated *in situ*? Obviously the first step was to acquire a blank fan from a fan-maker. It might be a wooden brisé like the ones examined here, but it could also be of ivory, or have mounts of silk, paper or canepin (sheep's leather), which was particularly good for retaining the ink of signatures, much like vellum. The rest is somewhat unclear; however examining the objects reveals some clues that show the more likely scenario was that these fans made the rounds intact.

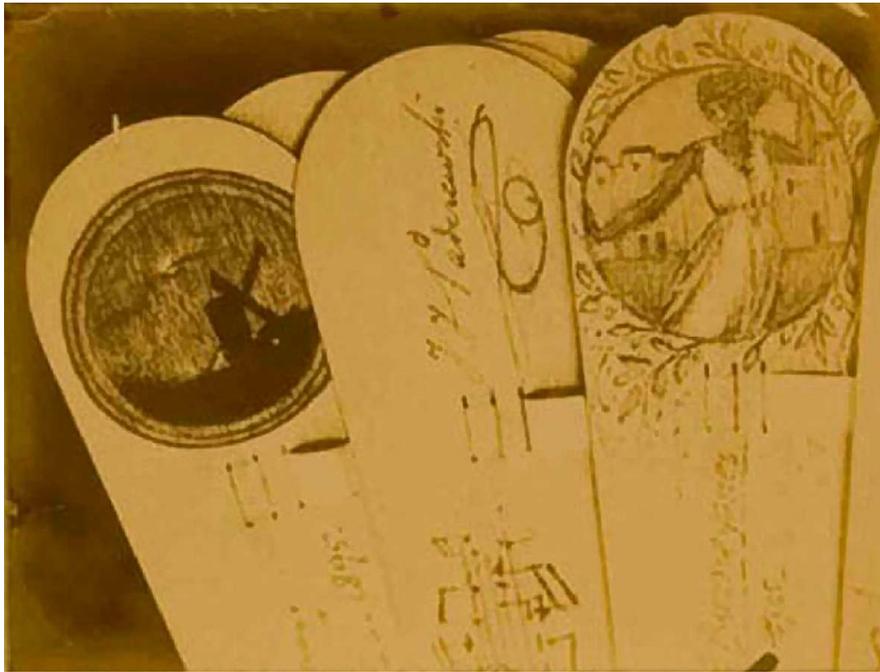
First, some of the decorations span more than one blade. For example, Laura Alma-Tadema's fan depicts a soldier drawn by the French academic and military painter Eduard Detaille (1848–1912), but which also extends to the adjacent blades signed by John Collier (left) and a musician (right) whose signature is indistinguishable in this illustration. In the case of the Crane fan, the peacock feathers were likely applied last, and after the blades were rearranged to the somewhat rhythmic plan of the (mostly) 'artist' side of the fan. We know this was the case by comparing the current configuration to the way it appears in the Whistler negatives. These negatives also support the notion of it being circulated intact, since it was photographed this way at about its halfway point, with its original fastener and ribbon thread.

However, taking these fans apart was a fairly simple matter, and was clearly done before the final feathers were painted. Again, the Whistler photos help us to see this: one image (fig. 6.6) shows the blades of Phillip and Edward Burne-Jones on either side of Paderewski's. In the final configuration, both Paderewski (who shares the other side of his blade with Leighton) and Phillip Burne-Jones' contributions are on the verso.

<sup>8</sup> Parr, p. 408.

<sup>9</sup> Caroline Dakers, 'Clubs, Cliques, and Collaborations: Artistic Friendships in Victorian London', in *Catalogue of the sale: The Forbes Collection of Victorian Art*, (Christies, London: February 2003), p. 178.

<sup>10</sup> Parr, p. 408.



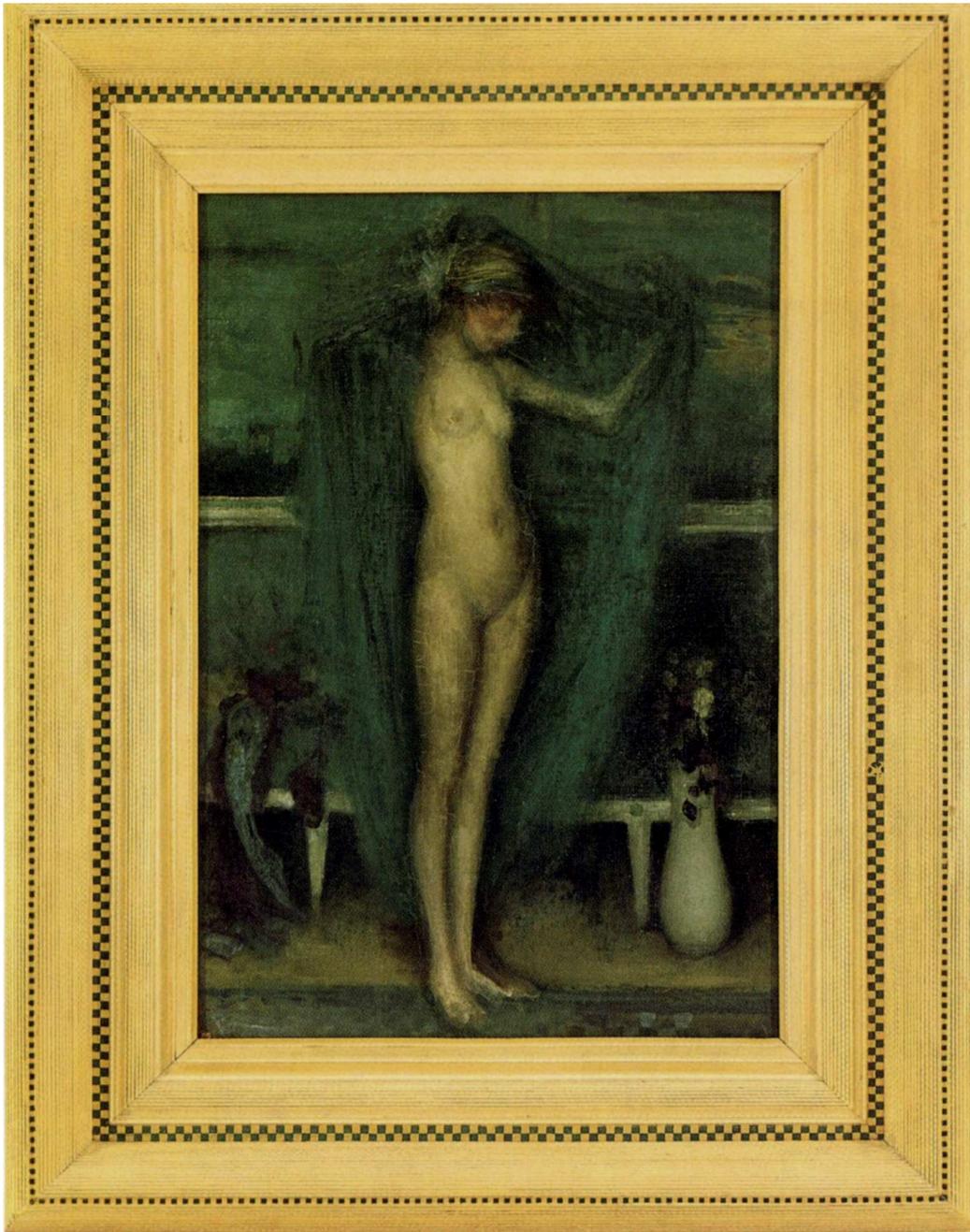
**Fig. 6.6** Detail photograph of a wooden brisé fan showing the blades of Phillip Burne Jones, Ignacy Paderewski, and Edward Burne-Jones, c.1895 (from original glass negative). University of Glasgow Special Collections.

It is also clear from comparing the Whistler photos with the current object that the blades have been carefully arranged to give a sense of rhythm to the final order; perhaps that was Crane's doing when he painted the guards and peacock feather decor. With some exceptions, the recto alternately shows a medallion and a portrait head. It would have been impossible for this to have been a perfect pattern as one blade has only signatures on both sides — the novelist Walter Besant and the historian W. E. H. Lecky on the recto (the only blade face which has two contributors), and the tenor Edward Lloyd on the verso. However, one wonders why Kate Perugini's portrait of a child's head was not front-facing to help maintain this pattern, rather than positioning Sargent's rather loose and muddy peacock feather on the recto. Is there something in the arrangement which also perhaps speaks to the status of the artists and musicians represented, that Sargent, over Perugini, should have a place on the 'front' with Leighton, Whistler, Millais, Burne-Jones, the Alma-Tademas and so forth?

We cannot of course know the answer to this for certain, but what we can observe is that this late configuration, as well as the span of dates, proves that the fan developed organically rather than with a design scheme. It also travelled; while unfortunately not all of the signatures were dated, and vary in specificity, some give the exact date and even location. For example, Paderewski's is signed 'Manchester, Febr. the 7<sup>th</sup> 1895'; while Whistler's is more vaguely marked 'Paris, July.' Many offer full dates, some just month and year, and a few give nothing at all. But the wide span of dates does not necessarily support the theory that the blades were taken apart and decorated separately.

Yet while studying Crane fan and supporting documents carefully reveals something of the creative process behind the object, it brings us no closer to knowing the identity of the exalted lady who formed this magnificent work. Is there, in some archive attached to one of these forty individuals, a magical letter or diary entry which says, "Today I went to the "At Home" of Lady X, painted her fan with a portrait"? Only further time and research may reveal the answer to this mystery. Perhaps, in the meantime, we may be satisfied with examining this object as an important social document, one which reveals the breadth of the web of relations – friendships,

really – that were prevalent in artistic circles in the late nineteenth century; and as evidence to the existence of the enigmatic exalted lady, an intriguing woman who had the foresight – and the connections – to craft such an exquisite object: an artistic fan, for a fan of Victorian art.



**Fig. 7.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl*, 1893–1902, oil on canvas, 50.5 × 74.7 cm, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution

## Framing & Connecting: Whistler, Freer and the *Little Blue Girl*

For many the picture frame is an enigma. Traditional fine art historians do not consider it to be a part of the painting, while decorative art historians do not consider it an independent object to be studied. Yet, the complex relationship that exists between a painting and its frame has interested numerous artists over the centuries, particularly, the American expatriate painter James McNeill Whistler. Throughout his lifetime, Whistler developed and modified his picture frame designs. He was notorious for reframing canvases or significantly altering the surface of his picture frames, sometimes twenty years after their initial creation and often without the owner's approval. As a result, only a small number of frames remain untouched; silently they surround the enclosed image.

One such frame can be seen hanging in the Freer Gallery of Art, in Washington DC. The reeded cushion frame on the painting *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl* (1893–1903, FGA, YMSM 421, fig. 7.1) follows the pattern developed by the London frame maker, Frederick Henry Grau. Whistler altered Grau's standard design, previously described by him as the 'true pattern'<sup>1</sup> and the only one 'worthy' of his work<sup>2</sup>, by painting a decorative basket-weave border and butterfly signature within the frieze of the frame. David Park Curry observed that this pattern is a reflection of what is in the painting. He writes that:

The blue squares alternate with gold in the checker motif that echoes the pattern on the rug underneath the model's feet. In this case, the blue and gold of the frame repeats the blue and gold harmonies of the painting, and Whistler signed only the frame of his carefully integrated pair.<sup>3</sup>

Curry's reading of the painting and frame is accurate. The frieze and the fillet have been adorned with a small checkerboard pattern, which not only reflects the mat shown in the painting, but is also reminiscent of the basket-weave pattern seen on Whistler's frames during the 1870s. Yet, the design seen here differs from those he used previously. The incised pattern on *Harmony in Flesh Colour and Pink: Portrait of Mrs Leyland* (1871, The Frick Collection, YMSM 106) and the painted pattern on *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter* (1872,

<sup>1</sup> James Whistler to Edward Guthrie Kennedy, [13 June 1892], GUW 09685 (NYPL, E. G. Kennedy I/19).

<sup>2</sup> James Whistler to John Gerald Potter, [26/30 March 1892], GUW 01488 (MS Whistler F420B).

<sup>3</sup> David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art* (New York, London: Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1984), p. 159.

Detroit Institute of Art, YMSM 122) are not made up of solid blocks of colour, but neatly arranged lines.

While, Curry's observations are valid, they do not properly interpret Whistler's placement of this decoration. He notes the similarities between the decorative patterns used, but he does not consider why Whistler used this pattern. Is the purpose of this frame simply to extend the canvas or to connect the painting to its environment? Or did Whistler use the frame to convey a deeper meaning? Whistler only employed the basket-weave pattern for a short period of time before returning to the seigaiha-blue-sea-wave pattern. Why then, after nearly twenty years, did he return to this motif and apply it to this particular frame and not to others from this period? It is possible to interpret this pattern as more than a reflection of the mat shown at the model's feet, but as a powerful expression of shared grief that ultimately connects Whistler to his patron, Charles Lang Freer.

The American collector Charles Lang Freer first commissioned this painting, *The Little Blue Girl*, in 1894 but did not receive it until after the artist's death in 1903. The two men first met at the start of Whistler's great reframing campaign of the 1890s. In March 1890, Freer, who was visiting London for the first time, took time from his business affairs to introduce himself to Whistler. Freer had been collecting Whistler prints since the late 1880s. While he had yet to buy a Whistler oil painting, he was amassing a notable collection of canvases from a trio of American painters, namely Thomas Wilmer Dewing, Dwight W. Tryon and Abbott Handerson Thayer. Freer's approach to his art collection was unique and he proved to be the ideal patron for Whistler.

Freer was sympathetic to the artists' desires to display their artwork to its best advantage and he went to great lengths to ensure that this occurred. During his early friendship with Whistler, Freer was in the midst of building and decorating his home on Ferry Avenue in Detroit, Michigan, where he commissioned the tonalist painter Tryon to produce a series of mural paintings to hang in the front hall. Tryon, along with the assistance of fellow Freer favourite Thomas Wilmer Dewing, went on to create interiors and gardens that enhanced and harmonised with the works in Freer's collection. It was during these preparations that Freer wrote to Dewing saying, 'you should always consider that your wishes must control your work, in which you and I have a joint ownership'.<sup>4</sup> Freer believed that he was merely a steward overseeing the safekeeping of the artworks in his collection. This can be seen in his willingness for his home to be decorated in a way that best enhanced and displayed the collected works.

This attitude of stewardship may have led Whistler to confide in Freer in 1899, 'I think I may tell you without the least chance of being misunderstood, that I wish you to have a fine collection of Whistlers!! – perhaps The collection'.<sup>5</sup> Whistler recognized Freer's desire to protect the artistic integrity of his collection and his great efforts to ensure that it was seen in a beautiful way.

Freer's careful approach to Whistler's works can be seen in the preparations taken for the 1904 memorial exhibition at the Copley Hall in Boston. In September 1903, Freer wrote to Rosalind Birnie Philip, Whistler's ward and executrix, saying:

I have been doing a lot of work lately in weeding out unworthy things in my collection, framing others, etc., etc., All of Mr. Whistler's paintings in oil, water colour and pastels are now properly framed and in condition to be properly seen. I have followed Mr. Whistler's

<sup>4</sup> Freer to Dewing, 7 June 1892, FGA Letterpress Book 1.

<sup>5</sup> James Whistler to Charles Lang Freer, [29 July 1899], GUW 03196 (FGA Whistler 40).

practice in framing and all are now of standard form and colour. The result is most beautiful. You must come to America sometime and see the group together. I have a capital workman who makes the frames, does the gilding etc. under my own inspection. He is most capable and sympathetic.<sup>6</sup>

The framer mentioned is James E. Hanna, who began making frames for Freer in the 1880s. A bill, also dated from the 16 September 1903, documents that Freer spent \$320 on '19 new frames for Whistler's pictures'.<sup>7</sup> Yet, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl* remained untouched.

In the book *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art*, David Park Curry commented on this painting, saying:

The somewhat overworked surface is a palimpsest that records multiple changes to the image, some of which were made following the death of Mrs. Whistler [...] But one wonders whether Whistler was ever actually satisfied with the work.<sup>8</sup>

Again, these comments do not provide an accurate interpretation of Whistler's work. If the frame, the painting and the events involving Whistler and Freer are considered, a very different reading of this artwork can be attained.

On 10 May 1896, Whistler's beloved wife, Beatrice died of cancer. Since their meeting in 1890, Mrs Whistler and Freer had grown to be good friends. A popular anecdote has often been told to illustrate this close friendship; it tells of when Mrs Whistler, who was in the early stages of her illness, requested Freer to find the songbird, Shama Merle, during his trip to India in 1895. Freer wrote to Beatrice that he 'constantly searched for the songster, but found him only in museums – stuffed'.<sup>9</sup> He finally discovered a pair in Calcutta and sent them back to the bedridden Beatrix. One bird survived the trip from India to Paris and later witnessed her passing.

Following her death, Whistler consoled himself by working on Freer's painting *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl*. He wrote to Freer on 24 March 1897 of both events and his grief and loss:

Shall I begin by saying to you, my dear Mr Freer, that your little 'Blue & Gold Girl' is doing her very best to look lovely for you? [...] I write to you many letters on your canvas! – and one of these days, you will, by degrees, read them all, as you sit before your picture And in them you will find, I hope, dimly conveyed, my warm feeling of affectionate appreciation for the friendship that has shown itself to me, in my forlorn destruction – as it had done before, in our happiness, to both of us – And in the work, perhaps will you of your refined sympathy and perception, discover the pleasure and interest taken in the perfecting of it, by the other one who, with me, liked you – and delighted in the kind and courteous attention paid, on your travels, to her pretty fancy and expressed wish – She loved the wonderful bird you sent with such happy care from the distant land!<sup>10</sup>

Freer treasured this letter but was grieved by his previous correspondence with Whistler. After Whistler had mailed his letter, but before it had been received, Freer sent a telegram asking, 'can

<sup>6</sup> Freer to Birnie Phillip, 16 September 1903, FGA Archives (Box 10, Folder 3).

<sup>7</sup> James E. Hanna to Freer, 16 September 1903, FGA Archives.

<sup>8</sup> Curry, p. 152.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Lang Freer to Beatrix Whistler, 18 March 1895, GUW 01511 (MS Whistler F443).

<sup>10</sup> James Whistler to Charles Lang Freer, 24 March 1897, GUW 11571 (FGA Whistler 38).

you forward “Blue Girl” and pastel to reach me before April fifteenth and save me twenty five per cent duty?’<sup>11</sup> Upon receiving Whistler’s letter, Freer quickly sent the following reply:

Your letter with its exquisite memories, tenderness and friendship came this morning, and as I read of her sympathetic interest in the ‘Little Blue and Gold Girl’ and realized for her sake, how precious its care and deeply-loving each finishing touch, my heart sank at the thought of having asked you to hurry the picture to me –

Forgive, I pray, those cold words of last week – colder to you, I fear, than the icy waves of the Atlantic through which they were flashed. And be assured, my dear Mr. Whistler, that whenever, in your own good time and way, you are quite ready to complete, and transfer to my keeping, that which she loved, and which all who have seen loves, I shall be rejoiced to receive, and care for as you would have me. And when I am gone, the picture shall rest with its own beautiful kind, so, ‘that in after years, others shall pass that way, and understand.’<sup>12</sup>

The sorrow expressed by Whistler and Freer can be seen when both the frame and its painting are re-examined. Yes, the decorative pattern reflects the pattern in the rug at the model’s feet, but upon reading these letters, it is possible to interpret this pattern as serving a more significant purpose.

Whistler wrote to Freer saying that he did not have the words to express his grief in a letter. Instead, he chose to communicate this ‘forlorn destruction’ in his painting and declared that he had written ‘many letters’ to Freer upon the canvas. Whistler’s grief was further conveyed by the use of the stationery upon which his sentiments are written. A thick black mourning border surrounds the front page of this note.

If this letter is compared to the painting *Harmony in Blue and Gold: the Little Blue Girl* and its surrounding frame, an interesting parallel emerges. Since Whistler likened the canvas to being ‘many letters’, then the decorated border around the frame could be seen as the mourning border present around the written lines of the letter. The painting and frame work together to express his grief, in the same way as the paper and the mourning border. Thus, the black mourning border and the blue and gold checkerboard pattern function as an expression of the artist’s grief.

The frame on *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl* simultaneously serves multiple functions. It is a divide and method of association, because Whistler adapted his standard deep reeded cushion frame as developed by F. H. Grau. It is a link to the environment, since it mirrors the mat in the canvas, and it may also reflect decorative patterns present in Freer’s Detroit home.<sup>13</sup> And it is an extension, in that it tells the story of the artist’s mourning for his departed wife. With his last frame, Whistler has tied together almost every stage of his frame development to create a fitting tribute for his beloved wife. There are elements of the frames he produced from the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. This pairing of painting and frame tells the tale of his love and grief for Beatrix, and it also stands as a testament to the enduring friendship that was shared between the Whistlers and Charles Lang Freer. Because of Freer’s commitment to care for the work, we ‘in after years’ can ‘pass that way, and understand.’<sup>14</sup>

**11** Charles Lang Freer to James Whistler, 31 March 1897, G UW 13817 (FGA Letterpress Book 4).

**12** Charles Lang Freer to James Whistler, [6 April 1897], G UW 01514 (MS Whistler F446).

**13** The stairwell and hallway was decorated with basket-weave patterns.

**14** Charles Lang Freer to James Whistler, [6 April 1897], G UW 01514 (MS Whistler F446).





**Fig. 8.1** James McNeill Whistler, *Salute – Sundown*, 1880, chalk and pastel on brown paper, 20.0 × 26.8 cm, The Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, GLAHA 46083



**Fig. 8.2** James McNeill Whistler, *Sunset, red and gold – Salute*, 1880 and 1893/1898, chalk and pastel on brown paper laid down on card, 20.2 × 30.0 cm, The Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, GLAHA 46084

Erma Hermens

## A Note on Whistler's Venetian Pastels:

### Bright Beauty – Merry Lightness and Daintiness\*

'Every body who has seen them here is very much struck by them and all acknowledge that I have found some thing quite new and entirely different from any views of Venice ever done before –' stated Whistler, in a letter to his son, sent from Venice, May 1880.<sup>1</sup>

These 'new and entirely different' views of Venice concerned Whistler's Venetian pastels, some 80 of them, which indeed beautifully portrayed the old facades, bridges and canals of this most wonderful city. Why did Whistler nominate them as 'new and entirely different'? After all, the main technique used, a black chalk drawing with areas of colour added in pastel, or pure studies in colour were methods he used before, even though that work was more private, and often made as studies and preliminary sketches. His own enthusiasm is expressed in a letter to his colleague Elden: 'I picture to myself the joy I shall have in showing you my pastels – Seriously I think you can form no idea of their bright beauty – their merry lightness and daintiness – I have today looked them all over and am quite in love with them myself – ! This you may smile at and believe to be nothing new – but I wonder what you will say to the drawing in them all – You can't imagine what I have taught myself by all this – I have worked very well – notwithstanding this awful weather – and shall bring, I hope, sixty pastels.'<sup>2</sup>

Understanding his emphasis on their newness requires some insights into his methods and the context of historical and contemporary artistic practice. Therefore let us start with a little history to see whether or not we can connect Whistler's Venetian pastels to tradition or, indeed, innovation, or maybe both.<sup>3</sup> Pastels came into full use in the late seventeenth century. In *The Invention of Pastel Painting* (2007), Thea Burns describes how the quite sudden emergence of

\* This Note on Whistler's pastels is for Margaret, who introduced me to Whistler and Whistler's use of memory drawing, advised me on Effie Deans, and on a lot more of the bright beauty, merry lightness and daintiness in Whistler. And of course there were many cups of coffee, discussions on watercolour expeditions, painting technique, academic life ... all to be continued.

**1** James McNeill Whistler to Charles James Whistler Hanson, 2 May 1880, GUW 01954 (GUL Whistler H55).

**2** James McNeill Whistler to Matthew Robinson Elden, 15/30 April 1880, GUW 12816 (GUL Whistler E61).

**3** For a catalogue raisonné of Whistler's pastels see Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels and Watercolours* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994).

this new artistic practice was ‘aesthetic, grounded in social function and technical response’.<sup>4</sup> Before that time, touches of powdered colours could already be found in works by Leonardo Da Vinci and his pupils Boltraffio and Luini, who were therefore in the literature forever nominated as the first artists to use pastel in the early modern period.<sup>5</sup> They executed their exquisite works in black chalk or metal point on coloured paper with powdered colours added sparsely to add highlights, shadow and nuance. Burns makes a distinction between pastels and natural chalk, concluding that Leonardo’s circle might have used the latter and that the Italian term *pastello*, appearing in sixteenth-century treatises such as Lomazzo’s, is often translated into English and French as pastel, yet simply indicates sticks made from powdered natural colours and additional ingredients.<sup>6</sup> The range of powdered colours, ochres, reds, browns, white and blue tones appearing in fifteenth and sixteenth-century drawings, was limited and Burns makes a plausible case for their full dependence on natural earths, which were often sold as lumps and could easily be shaped or broken into sticks to draw with. Burns therefore defines true pastels as ‘fabricated from powdered pigments combined with a binder, often gum, shaped into sticks and slowly dried’.<sup>7</sup> Only in the second half of the seventeenth century the first sets of purpose-made drawing sticks with a wider range of colours appeared, coinciding with an increasing demand for these materials, both from professionals and amateurs, caused by a market for so-called pastel painting portraits.

Many treatises address the use and manufacture of pastels (e.g. Philippe de La Hire, *Traité de la pratique de la peinture*, 1699–1709, Roger de Piles, *Les premiers elemens de la peinture pratique*, [1684]), all pointing at the importance of the appropriate consistency of the sticks. La Hire: ‘like that of Champagne Chalk, moderately soft’, whereas de Piles advised that ‘Practice must make masters those who wish to make artificial crayons.’<sup>8</sup> These comments on the difficulty of making pastels keep appearing. Robert Dossie wrote in *The Handmaid to the Arts* (1758) that

... there is considerable difficulty and nicety, in the making, to bring them to that due texture or consistence, which admits of their spending freely on the paper, without being so crumbly or brittle as not to bear to have the point to be duly sharpened ...<sup>9</sup>

Obviously manufacturing pastels in an increasing number of colours and hues – e.g. in 1663 Sir Peter Lely’s pastel maker sold 54 colours to Constantijn Huygens – was not straightforward.<sup>10</sup> Pigments needed to be ground very finely with water and some chalk. Depending on the coherence of the pigment particles and thus the possibility to press or roll them into sticks, an extra binder such as gum was added. However, it was a careful balancing act to combine the appropriate proportions to prepare pastels that were homogeneous in both composition and handling characteristics. A huge range of hues could be obtained by mixing pigments, or by adding higher proportions of white chalk to pure colours, before pressing them into a stick,

<sup>4</sup> Thea Burns, *The Invention of Pastel Painting* (London: Archetype Publications, 2007), p. xi. The book’s emphasis is on so-called pastel painting and portraits in particular, yet it is one of the first comprehensive studies of this technique using extensive primary source material and providing a historical overview of its technical developments.

<sup>5</sup> Burns, chapter 1. It should be mentioned that when Burns started her study no agreement on pastel’s origins existed amongst art historians. Burns proposes to use technical art history as a method to create a clearer picture of what pastels are, when and why they were introduced, and how they were used in the context of changes in taste and social and cultural settings.

<sup>6</sup> Burns, p. xix, and chapter 1 on the history of chalk and pastel.

<sup>7</sup> Burns, p. xix. Until the early twentieth century the binder was usually gum, then other binders can be found as well as manufacturing of so-called oil pastels etc.

<sup>8</sup> Burns, p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Dossie, *The Handmaid to the Arts* (London: J. Nourse, 1758), p. 181.

<sup>10</sup> Burns, p. 25.

hence the high number of pastels in a typical set. This was necessary as blending after application would often result in a drab tone. Not much is known about the actual composition of pastels and it is telling that Chaperon wrote in his *Traité de la peinture au pastel* (1788) how eighteenth-century colour merchants kept their methods for the preparation of pastels a secret and that in Paris just two or three people had this knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Once the pastel colours were applied, a softer effect could be obtained by smudging the colour with a stump, or rubbing the powder into the grain of the paper with fingertips etc.; techniques that also worked well for gradual transitions between different hues. The ideal paper needed a specific texture to 'hold' the powdered pigment particles as the binders that were added did not have any other function than making it possible to press the ground pigment(s) into a stick format. For example, Sir Peter Lely worked on a coarse brown paper of the type normally used for blotting, wrapping and packing. As this paper was unsized, its surface was more fibrous and softer and therefore very suitable to hold the powdered pigments, while the brownish colour could be used as a middle tone.<sup>12</sup>

In the eighteenth century however, the so-called pastel-painting was dominant; the typical pastel-painted portrait, made popular by Rosalba Carriera, would have every part of the paper covered, showing great refinement in the transitions in the flesh tones and delicate modelling. The nineteenth century introduced a period of change, invention of new pigments, new developments in the paper industry and the increasing importance of the colourman's role in providing artists and amateurs, including 'pastelists', with materials. Although many French artists used pastels and the technique went through several revivals, Degas is acclaimed as the great innovator responsible for its rejuvenation in the late 1870s and early 1880s: '... arguably the boldest, most persistent, and the least apologetic pastelists of the nineteenth century; perhaps of the entire modern era.'<sup>13</sup> Degas experimented by combining pastel with a wide range of other materials, using an unusual variety of supports. Although seemingly revolutionary in his methods, Degas was familiar with his eighteenth-century predecessors such as Chardin, Quentin de la Tour, Liotard, and also studied the Venetian school and Titian in particular for their sophisticated use of colour and atmosphere. Their typical techniques of oil painting: layering the paint, finishing with transparent glazes, all started on coloured grounds, show correspondences with Degas' use of pastels with fixative used between layers to prevent the powders mixing. He mainly used common tracing paper often glued on cardboard somewhere during the drawing process.<sup>14</sup>

Anne Maheux also points at the Italian artist Giuseppe de Nittis, as an important proponent for the revival of the technique in the 1880s. De Nittis successfully exhibited at the Salon and was invited by Degas to participate in the first Impressionist exhibition in 1874. Although both De Nittis and Degas made fully elaborated and large scale works using pastels, they and others such as Boudin, Monet, Renoir and Morisot, also used the medium for sketches and studies which they submitted to the Impressionist exhibition as well.<sup>15</sup> In the same year Millet's pastels,

<sup>11</sup> Burns, p. 127; P. R. Chaperon, *Traité de la peinture au pastel [...] par M.R. de C.* (Paris: De Fer de Maison Neuve, 1788).

<sup>12</sup> Sized paper would have a smoother surface. In the late eighteenth century other supports are mentioned in the treatises ranging from paper attached to a cloth, paper, vellum and silk attached to wooden strainers, sheets of copper etc. See Burns, p. 36. For this paper however we will stay close to Whistler and focus on paper supports.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Kendall, 'Materials, Methods, and Meanings in Edgar Degas's Late Pastels', in *The Broad Spectrum: Studies in the Materials, Techniques and Conservation of Color on Paper*, ed. by H. K. Stratis & B. Salvesen (London: Archetype Publications, 2002), pp. 23–28 (p. 23).

<sup>14</sup> Kendall, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Anne Maheux, 'An Investigation of the Pastels of Giuseppe De Nittis and the Pastel Revival of the Later Nineteenth Century', in Stratis & Malvesen, pp. 29–34 (p. 30).

executed on coloured papers with a wide ranging colour palette, were exhibited.<sup>16</sup> The first exhibition of De Nittis' works in London took place at the King Street Galleries in 1878 and next to oils it presented scenes of Paris and London demonstrating how pastel was the perfect medium to render atmospheric effects. Both Degas and De Nittis used smudging, also called 'sweetening', a traditional technique to obtain seamless transitions between colours, especially useful for works with a high finish, and very popular in eighteenth-century pastel painting. Degas often started with a monochrome drawing in charcoal or a monotype, while De Nittis blocked in the main areas of colour. Both artists exploited the colour of the support as part of the final result and made use of a novel and varied language of pastel strokes to great effect.

The increasing popularity of pastel may be due to the fact that artists encountered problems with oil paints, their durability and application. Louise Jopling in her *Hints to Students and Amateurs*, Chapter V on Pastel describes just that:

It is an excellent intermediary between black and white and the more difficult and exacting mediums of oil and water colours. It is an easier method as far as the mere colour goes, as it never gets 'tacky', nor does it sink in after the second coating and become 'dead'.<sup>17</sup>

It may indeed be the purity of the pigments, not influenced by darkening oil or yellowing varnish, and with a very low refractive index creating very saturated colour effects, that appealed to artists. The spectrum of colours available was also huge, extended by many newly developed pigments. Jopling describes how the colours were 'chromatically arranged in smaller or larger boxes, containing from about a dozen to seven hundred and fifty'.<sup>18</sup> Having worked with pastels myself, marvelling at the purity of colour and tone, this wide range of ready made pastels must have felt like a cornucopia of colour to choose from and delight in.

Connecting Whistler's pastels to this context of artistic practice (event though by no means comprehensively represented in this short essay), is not straightforward. His many drawings and pastels made before his sojourn in Venice were mainly executed in black chalk with some added colour, and meant as private studies for portraits and figure groups. He did explore cityscapes in several pastels of the Thames that show a use of vibrant colour. He exhibited them in 1874, the same year Monet showed pastels in the Impressionist exhibition. Whistler also exhibited pastels at the Society of French artists were they received a lukewarm reception.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that it is in the Venetian pastels that the idea of 'newness' comes in full swing as Whistler describes to his sister in law Nelly Whistler: '... complete beauties, and something so new in Art that every body's mouth will I feel pretty soon water.'<sup>20</sup> The newness seems to have been a matter of timing as well as technique, and Whistler must have been fully aware of the momentum going for these works. Pastels in their new reinvigorating style made popular by artists such as Degas and De Nittis, were very much in vogue in France and were already exhibited in the 1870s at the Impressionist exhibition. Manet, Monet, Pissarro to name but a few all exploited the medium in both more elaborated compositions as well as sketches. Whistler was of course very much aware of the French pastelists and some were amongst his friends and colleagues. Their works must have been in his mind when he started exploring the medium more fully in Venice.

<sup>16</sup> Maheux, p. 30. The Millet pastels belonged to the Émile Gavet collection and were exhibited and sold.

<sup>17</sup> Louise Jopling, *Hints to Students and Amateurs* (London: George Rowney & Co, 1911 [1st edn 1891 by Chapman and Hall]), p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Jopling, p. 54.

<sup>19</sup> Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2001), p. 34.

<sup>20</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Helen Whistler, [n. d.], (GUL W684).

I would suggest that his use of pastels in the Venetian works can 'technically' be divided in more or less two groups. The first are the detailed drawings of buildings, small canals with bridges and gondolas, facades with shutters, washing etc, beautifully depicted in a black chalk line drawing with touches of colour added to create light, tone and nuance, as he wrote to his mother:

After the wet, the colors upon the walls and their reflections in the canals are more gorgeous than ever – and with sun shining upon the polished marble mingled with rich toned bricks and plaster, this amazing city of palaces becomes really a fairyland – created one would think especially for the painter – The people with their gay gowns and handkerchiefs – and the many tinted buildings for them to lounge against or pose before, seem to exist especially for one's pictures – and to have no other reason for being!<sup>21</sup>

Whistler's technique may be connected to early methods of using a black chalk sketch with strategically applied highlights and touches of pure colour on coloured paper, reminiscent of the old master drawings he surely must have been familiar with. The colour is in this case part of the drawing, creating highlights and shadows, and its selective placement is extremely effective. Jopling must have thought of these pastels when she stated that the 'chief difference between a good or a bad pastel, [is] whether it is or is not well drawn', and, even more applicable: 'A badly-drawn pastel gives one at once the effect of a vulgar "plum-box" advertisement, whilst a well drawn pastel, with its purity of colouring, strikes one as an impress of truth and vitality.'<sup>22</sup> Whistler's use of colour is far removed indeed from the vulgar plum box advertisement. Thomas Way explains how Whistler also differed from the majority of his predecessors: 'They treated it as if it were paint, stumping and blending the pigments and piling on huge quantities upon prepared paper. He following the manner of Watteau, used it always as a drawing.' Antoine Watteau's drawings indeed show a sparse use of colour, and Whistler may have been aware of these works.<sup>23</sup> However, more likely is that Watteau was one of the Old Masters he was familiar with and influenced him, working in what Burns qualified as coloured chalks, and thus with a restricted colour palette. Whistler found his own colour language exploiting all the bright pastel colours that became available in the nineteenth century and used them as Way described 'always as a drawing', applying them 'as in a mosaic or stained glass, mostly flat tint, the pastel between the black lines.'<sup>24</sup>

However, the other group, possibly made in the last months of his sojourn, are the sunsets, where the black chalk drawing if used at all plays a minor role. These are pure explorations of colour and atmosphere, akin to his nocturnes (figs. 8.1, 8.2). Elizabeth Pennell describes how Whistler

always remembered the limitations of the medium and never attempted to paint with his stick of colour, using greater pressure to obtain greater brilliancy and less for his more delicate tones, but keeping his colour pure and fresh, as you can see in the 'foolish sunsets' he sometimes did in Venice, though rarely afterward.<sup>25</sup>

Here Pennell's description of Whistler's technique is very much in line with Way's. Whistler did not use pastels as paint, hardly rubbing it or using stumps, but by applying more or less

<sup>21</sup> James McNeill Whistler to Anna Whistler, March/May 1880, GUW 13502 (Freer Gallery of Art, FGA Whistler 176).

<sup>22</sup> Jopling, p. 54.

<sup>23</sup> MacDonald, 2001, p. 3

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth R. and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 5th rev. edn (London: Heinemann, 1911), p. 278.

<sup>25</sup> Pennell, p. 278.

pressure varying the intensity of the colour. These sunsets are *colore* rather than *disegno*, and close to the pure colour sketches of his French colleagues such as Boudin's beautiful sky studies. According to Henry Woods Whistler 'soon found out the beautiful quality of colour there is here before sunset in the winter.'<sup>26</sup> Millais after visiting the 1881 exhibition at the Fine Arts Society wrote to Whistler how much he enjoyed his Venetian works: 'The gradations, tenderness, & lovely tints of Sunset, & sea quite delighted me.'<sup>27</sup>

Pastels were much less in use within British artistic circles, and Whistler's keenness to exhibit his Venetian pastels is indicative for his premonition of their potential commercial success when the exhibition would be opening at the Fine Arts Society, on 25 January 1881. Whistler states in a letter to his Nelly Whistler, his sister in law:

The pastels you know Nellie I verily believe will be irresistable [sic] to buyers – in them I have found what Elden would call 'the game' – as far as the pocket goes – I assure you the people – painter fellows here, who have seen them are quite startled at their brilliancy ...<sup>28</sup>

Elizabeth Pennell writes how 'Critics and artists, having at that time never studied pastel, were unaware of what had been done in the medium.'<sup>29</sup> Whistler of course was well aware of what had been done and was done, especially in France, and he knew he was presenting something new to a London audience. He wrote to his friend Elden:

And mind you, all this while, it is not merely the 'Views of Venice' or the Streets of Venice, or the 'Canals of Venice' such as you have seen brought back by the foolish sketcher – but great pictures that stare you in the face – complete arrangements and harmonies in color & form that are ready and waiting for the one who can perceive ...<sup>30</sup>

As this note on Whistler's Venetian pastels might have shown, there is a connection with the traditional methods of the Old masters, and with newness, especially in London, of Whistler's use of colour and handling of the medium. But foremost because of all their 'bright beauty – their merry lightness and daintiness', they were wonderful indeed.

**26** Pennell, p. 263.

**27** John Everett Millais to James McNeill Whistler, 17 February 1881, GUW 04078 (GUL W348).

**28** James McNeill Whistler to Helen Euphrosyne Whistler, March 1880, GUW 06689 (GUL W683).

**29** Pennell, p. 279.

**30** See note 2.





**Fig. 9.1** Paint box (nineteenth century), wood and metal, 46.0 × 32.0 cm, The Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, GLAHA 54154. This little box was of the type artists called a 'thumb box'. It forms part of the collection of James McNeill Whistler's artist's material in the Hunterian Art Gallery.



**Fig. 9.2** Paint Box (nineteenth century), wood, 21.0 × 28.0 × 6.0 cm, The Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow, GLAHA 54151. This is one of several paint boxes from the collection of James McNeill Whistler's artist's materials in the Hunterian Art Gallery.

Joyce H. Townsend

## Connecting to Whistler the Painter

Whistler's edited correspondence, by Margaret MacDonald and others, indicates that throughout his life he consistently used friends and assistants to deal with the mundane mechanics of everyday life. His letters on day-to-day topics read as though they were dashed off with little thought. To connect to Whistler in his studio, let us focus on such practicalities as we can find, concerning his painting materials, studio practice and artistic technique. The published sources of this information are so disparate, and so scattered, predominantly in the conservation rather than art historical literature, that I should like to cite them all here, for the benefit of those researchers who need them to inform their work – Margaret MacDonald's intellectual heirs, indeed.

The University of Glasgow is the possessor of a unique collection of nineteenth-century artists' studio materials,<sup>1</sup> bequeathed with the artist's correspondence in 1958 by Rosalind Birnie Philip, his sister-in-law. Within British arts institutions, there is no other collection of comparable size, for this date or earlier,<sup>2</sup> and very few internet-publicised collections of twentieth-century materials either. It has long been displayed in part in the Hunterian Art Gallery. It includes not only several palettes with and without substantial amounts of paint, but also dozens of paint tubes with many legible labels, many bottles of gouache, several watercolour boxes, numerous brushes, other tools such as palette knives for paint application and a mahl stick for steadying the artist's hand as he painted fine detail, small panels with prepared grounds for sketching outdoors, and etching and print-making materials. There are also paint-boxes designed to carry the newly-painted panels as well as containing the painting materials and acting as a convenient working surface, like the one purchased from Blanchet of Paris (fig. 9.1), or the one which holds a palette set for oil painting (fig. 9.2).

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/SummaryResults.fwx?collection=whistler&Searchterm=painting+materials> (accessed 26 July 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Other substantial sources of artists' materials can be found at Tate, London, for J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851). Another is at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, which requested a palette from each newly-elected Academician, in the later nineteenth century. The Turner materials include palettes and a paint box with samples of dry pigment, and they have a solid provenance. So do the Royal Academy palettes, but neither collection has such a broad range of materials as the Glasgow Whistler archive. Virtually no other collections include paint brushes used by a known artist. Other small groups of artists' materials in both public and private collections have a much weaker provenance, and their study has to be approached like an authentication study, armed with prior knowledge of the materials used in paintings by the same artist.

The brushes, which include many over 80 cm long, the longest ever seen by this author for the period, substantiate the accounts of Whistler moving – even dashing back and forth<sup>3</sup> – in his studio, between the best viewing distance for the sitter and the point where he could reach the canvas with a long brush, and apply a perfect, telling touch of colour.<sup>4</sup> It is possible to look at Whistler's earlier individual paintings and envisage the stiffness and length of brush-hairs that must have been used,<sup>5</sup> as well as the width of the flat brushes (about ¼ inch or 6mm) that were used to paint a Nocturne, for example. There is a certain satisfaction in being able to identify the brush that could have made each stroke, in the University's collection. The compact, slotted paint-boxes with prepared panels ready for use match the size of the smaller Chelsea studies, and enable us to see Whistler at work in the streets round his home in our mind's eye, just as his contemporaries did with their own eyes.

Whistler's colours have been analysed and discussed in earlier years, by this writer and by several of her colleagues in conservation, materials history and materials analysis, and the materials used for his oil paintings have been contextualised with those available in the later nineteenth century. One of the pleasures of this collaborative project from the early 1990s was working with Margaret MacDonald who first encouraged me to work on the materials in the Whistler archive, and whose hands often grasp an imaginary paint brush as she stands before one of Whistler's paintings. She has an instant understanding of Whistler's motives as he chose to apply a particular grey/blue shade of paint to create the distant shoreline in a nocturne, or chose an historic paper of the perfect texture and background colour for printing from a plate.<sup>6</sup> She has described Whistler's use of colour and his technique in the widest sense, to audiences of both art historians and conservation professionals.<sup>7</sup> Such enthusiasm for the painting process and for characterising artists' materials is by no means universal, and it has led to greatly increased understanding of Whistler the artist.

Whistler's typical choice of materials would not itself serve as evidence that he painted any given canvas or watercolour, but the materials analysis does present a consistent picture. To summarise from published studies,<sup>8</sup> his grey grounds consist of bone black and lead white (never

3 Walter Sickert, 'Walter Sickert's class: methods of instruction', *Manchester Guardian* (31 November 1930).

4 Elizabeth R. and Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 5th rev. edn (London: Heinemann, 1911), p. 213.

5 Stephen Hackney, 'Colour and tone in Whistler's "Nocturnes" and "Harmonies" 1871–2', *The Burlington Magazine*, 136 (1994), pp. 695–99 (p. 699).

6 Martha Smith, 'Hunting for old paper with James McNeill Whistler', *The Book & Paper Group Annual*, 16 (1997), pp. 89–90.

7 Margaret F. MacDonald, 'What is a Whistler?', *James McNeill Whistler in Context: Essays from the Whistler Centenary Symposium Glasgow, 2003*, edited by Lee Glazer, Margaret F. MacDonald, Linda Merrill and Nigel Thorp, *Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers*, [N.S.] 2, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), pp. 1–18. Unpublished papers from this conference are summarised on <http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/whis2003/conference/programme/> (accessed 26 July 2010) and included: Leslie Carlyle, 'From Pigments to Colours: the Change in Artists' Oil Painting Materials 1840–1900'; Joyce H. Townsend, 'Whistler's Choice of Painting Materials'; Stephen Hackney, 'Whistler's Painting Technique'. See also Margaret F. MacDonald, 'James McNeill Whistler: the color of line', in *The Broad Spectrum*, ed. by Harriet K. Stratis & Britt Salvesen (London: Archetype, 2002), pp. 35–41.

8 John Winter and Elizabeth West Fitzhugh, 'Some technical notes on Whistler's "Peacock Room"', *Studies in Conservation* 30 (1984), pp. 149–54; Jeanne Brouillette, 'Microscopical analysis of Whistler's "Rose et Vert l'Iris: Portrait of Miss Kinsella"', *The Microscope*, 38 (1990), pp. 271–79; Wendy Samet, Joyce Hill Stoner & Richard Wolbers, 'Approaching the cleaning of Whistler's "Peacock Room": Reviewing surface interrelationships in *Harmony in Blue and Gold*', in *Cleaning, Retouching and Coatings*, ed. by John S. Mills and Perry Smith (London: IIC, 1990), pp. 6–12; Joyce Hill Stoner, 'Art historical and technical evaluation of works by three nineteenth century artists: Allston, Whistler and Ryder', in *Appearance, Opinion, Change: Evaluating the Look of Paintings*, ed. by Victoria Todd (London: UKIC, 1990), pp. 36–41; Joyce H. Townsend, 'Whistler's oil painting materials', *The Burlington Magazine*, 136 (1994), pp. 690–95; Hackney (1994); Stephen Hackney, 'Art for Art's sake: the materials and techniques of James McNeill Whistler', in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials and Studio Practice*, ed. by Arie Wallert, Erma Hermens & Marya Peek (Los Angeles: Getty Conservation Institute, 1995), pp. 186–90; Stephen Hackney & Joyce H. Townsend, 'J. A. M. Whistler: Nocturne in Blue and Silver: Cremorne Lights 1872', in *Paint and Purpose: A Study of Technique in British art*, ed. by Stephen

zinc white, which often cracked, and would have spoilt the perfect paint surface he sought). When he used a blue/grey ground for a nocturne he often added Prussian blue to the mix. Prussian blue and lead white figure very largely in his oil paintings, have been found in the Peacock Room (Freer Gallery of Art) and *The Blue Screen* in the Hunterian Art Gallery,<sup>9</sup> and also in his own frame designs with blue patterns on gilding applied directly to the wood, including that for *The Blue Screen* itself. The characteristically low near-infrared reflectance of Prussian blue is responsible for disturbingly poor colour rendering when many Whistler nocturnes are photographed with conventional film, and also with digital photography to a lesser extent. This colour must have been responsible for many rounds of colour proof corrections whenever his works are reproduced in colour – indeed Whistler's nocturnes are often dreaded by museum photographers.

There is often a warm or cool grey underlayer verging on blue beneath the oil paintings up to and including the 1870s, ranging to a warm brown in the later portraits, which greatly modifies the perceived surface colour. The materials analyst can be very surprised to see the actual colour of a tiny paint sample, once it is removed from the painting. Whistler tended to make a narrow and presumably deliberate choice of the yellow and blue pigment he would use for a given work, often only one of each in addition to the Prussian blue, and to mix them into every shade he used on the canvas, along with bone black, to give a harmonious tonal range. His yellow pigments were either cadmium, chrome or strontium yellows, intensely-coloured materials that were only used unmixed for the most dazzlingly bright areas of the composition, such as fireworks. Reds are often painted in blood red vermilion, or a subtly selected choice of earth pigments in red, yellow and brown tones. It is known from descriptions by his contemporaries that he set up a palette of fresh paint for a given canvas, and used it over several days' work, making it possible to keep to the same narrow selection of colours.<sup>10</sup>

One key part of Whistler's *oeuvre* remains much less studied in terms of materials than the oils and watercolours: the pastels.<sup>11</sup> The materials have only been investigated when they occur in Whistler collections outside the University of Glasgow.<sup>12</sup> Pastel as an artistic medium has been remarkably little subjected to technical and historical analysis, in fact, though the single-word description can cover a wealth of paint formulations, and embody many conscious artistic choices.<sup>13</sup>

The transcription and annotation of Whistler's correspondence – a labour of many years – has led to further insights into his studio practice,<sup>14</sup> published by Margaret MacDonald and her

Hackney, Rica Jones & Joyce H. Townsend (London: Tate Publishing, 1999), pp. 86–89; Stephen Hackney & Joyce H. Townsend, 'J. A. M. Whistler: Nocturne in Blue-Green 1871', in *Paint and Purpose* (1999), pp. 152–57.

<sup>9</sup> See the display caption for the 2010–2011 exhibition at the Hunterian Art Gallery, 'Whistler and the Thames', by Erma Hermens & Joyce Townsend.

<sup>10</sup> Hackney (1994).

<sup>11</sup> There are none in this author's institution, which has always prevented the author from pursuing this area of materials research.

<sup>12</sup> Marjorie Shelley, 'American pastels of the late nineteenth & early twentieth centuries: materials and techniques', in *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), pp. 33–45. Scott Gerson, 'An Analysis of Whistler's Pastel Materials', unpublished research project, Queen's University, Art Conservation Program (Kingston, Ontario, 2000), see pp. 35–36, 49.

<sup>13</sup> Marjorie Shelley, 'An aesthetic overview of the pastel palette 1500–1900', in *The Broad Spectrum*, ed. by Harriet K. Stratis & Britt Salvesen (London: Archetype, 2002), pp. 2–11; Thea Burns, *The Invention of Pastel Painting* (London: Archetype, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> See GUW; Erma Hermens and Margaret F. MacDonald, 'The Whistler correspondence as a source of information on Whistler's studio practice', in *Art of the Past: Sources and Reconstructions*, ed. by Mark Clarke, Joyce H. Townsend, and Ad Stijnman (London: Archetype, 2005), pp. 78–81; Erma Hermens & Margaret F. MacDonald, 'En Plein Soleil. Whistler,

colleagues. Indeed, the whole transcription project has fed into much further research on nineteenth-century British artists' materials carried out at Tate,<sup>15</sup> because it has always been possible to exchange ideas about Whistler's practice with her, and to offer suggestions as to what type of information would be of particular benefit for other studies, if it could be extracted from the correspondence during its editing.

What can the correspondence tell us now about his relationships with suppliers of artists' materials, restoration services, and the like? We know where some of these materials came from by reading the labels on the tubes and bottles of paint. The early biography by the Pennells added to this list of English and French suppliers.<sup>16</sup> The materials in the Hunterian Art Gallery include quite a number of colourman's labels: Cornelissen, Newman, Roberson, Winsor & Newton, in London; Blanchet, Bourgeois Ainé, Boutillier, Cherrier, Excelsior, Foinet-Lefebvre, Lechertier Barbe, Lemercier, Sennelier, all based in Paris; and Schoenfeld of Dusseldorf. Some of the continental labels are overlain by those of English suppliers, but it is nonetheless a lengthier list than exists for Whistler's contemporaries. A search of the letters does not reveal correspondence with all of these suppliers, and most of what can be found relates to Whistler's bankruptcy, and consists of references to creditors such as Winsor and Newton, made by solicitors. Also at the time of his bankruptcy Whistler seems to have bought cheaper materials from decorators' suppliers such as Freemans of Battersea, London,<sup>17</sup> and he used a blue-green one from this supplier for the *Peacock* Room a few years later.<sup>18</sup> This was eminently practical in his straightened circumstances, yet it is almost the only evidence we have of a first-rate artist doing so at this date. The autocratic artist may not always have preserved his – possibly terse – orders to colourman any more than he preserved household bills. The correspondence gives us one more supplier's name, Hardy Alan of Paris.<sup>19</sup>

The correspondence also identifies one of Whistler's restorers, Stephen Richards,<sup>20</sup> – and it is unusual for such correspondence to be preserved. Such information is valuable to conservators who are trying to assess the extent to which past restoration may have altered the present appearance of a painting.<sup>21</sup> In fact, many of the technical studies noted earlier came to a similar conclusion: that perceived darkening to the point of illegibility in many of Whistler's later portraits is due to an unusual amount of yellowing in the paint medium. His predilection for having paintings lined, as indicated in the correspondence, ensured that this darkening happened early in the life cycle of his paintings. It is also irrevocable, in contrast to the yellowing of varnish, which can – and has been – mitigated by its careful removal from the nocturnes of

nature and memory', in *Sources and Serendipity*, ed. by Erma Hermens and Joyce H. Townsend (London: Archetype, 2008), pp. 112–18.

**15** Joyce H. Townsend, 'Painting techniques and materials of Turner and other British artists 1775–1875', in *Historical Painting Techniques, Materials and Studio Practice* (1995), pp. 176–86; Joyce H. Townsend, Leslie Carlyle, Narayan Khandekar & Sally Woodcock, 'Later nineteenth century pigments: evidence for adulterants and substitutions', *The Conservator*, 19 (1995), pp. 65–78; Joyce H. Townsend, 'Thermomicroscopy applied to painting materials from the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *Thermochimica Acta*, 365 (2000), pp. 79–84; Joyce H. Townsend, 'The materials used by British oil painters throughout the nineteenth century', *Reviews in Conservation*, 3 (2002), pp. 46–55.

**16** Pennell, p. 115.

**17** Pennell, p. 122.

**18** Winter & Fitzhugh (1984).

**19** Hermens & MacDonald (2005).

**20** Hermens & MacDonald (2005).

**21** Joyce Hill Stoner, 'Whistler's view of the restoration and display of his paintings', *Studies in Conservation*, 42 (1997), pp. 107–14; <http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-british-picture-restorers/british-picture-restorers-1630-1950-r.php> (accessed 6 September 2010).

the 1870s, which are less prone to paint medium darkening than the more medium-rich portraits.

Were Whistler alive today, he would be the very first to agree that the 'knowledge of a lifetime' transcends the seemingly simple decision of which colours to use, or which support. It does nonetheless take the knowledge of an artist's lifetime to understand just why a given brushstroke should be placed exactly where it now lies, and much practice to ensure it occupies its rightful place – and Margaret MacDonald has such knowledge and understanding, just as he did.



**Fig. 10.1** Elliot & Fry, *Henry James*, c.1890, photograph, 16 × 10.2 cm, reproduced as frontispiece of *The International Library of Famous Literature*, ed. by Richard Garnett, 20 vols (London: The Standard, 1899), vol. 14



**Fig. 10.2** James McNeill Whistler, *La Mairie, Loches*, K.382, first state, 1888, etching, 21.9 × 13 cm, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Prints and Photographs Division, FP – XIX – W576, no. 382.

Ailsa Boyd

## ‘Something vibrates back’: Whistler and Henry James

This essay will examine an exchange of gifts between Whistler and the novelist Henry James (1843–1916) (fig. 10.1), and how these items, an etching and a novel, provide sites for the exchange of ideas. I will also discuss James’s exhibition reviews for American journals, which chart his changing reaction to Whistler’s work as he came to know the artist personally and developed his own interaction with modern art. Whistler and James were both expatriate Americans who had been brought up travelling Europe – Whistler had spent some years of his childhood in St Petersburg and started his artistic education in Paris; James’s restless father took his family on educational trips across Europe. Whistler settled in London in 1859, and James, nine years younger, moved to London in 1876. The next year, in his review of the first Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, James stated, ‘I will not speak of Mr. Whistler’s ‘Nocturnes in Black and Gold’ [...] because I frankly confess they do not amuse me. [...] to be interesting it seems to me that a picture should have some relation to life as well as to painting.’<sup>1</sup> They met properly in 1878 and by the beginning of the 1880s they had many friends in common, including Henrietta Reubell, W. E. Henley, Theodore Child, J. S. Sargent, William Rothenstein, Jonathan Sturgis, and shared a publisher, Heinemann, and publishing agent, Osgood. James introduced Whistler to Comte Robert de Montesquiou-Fezensac in 1885, and organised a visit to the Peacock Room.<sup>2</sup> Lady Wolseley helped James buy Georgian antiques for Lamb House in Rye, and Whistler etched a portrait of her husband. Both men were called ‘Master’: James as the ‘architect of the modern novel’,<sup>3</sup> and Whistler, more often in French as ‘Mon cher Maître’,<sup>4</sup> indicating the veneration in which they were held by their peers.

In April 1878, after a Sunday breakfast at Whistler’s home at 2 Lindsey Row, James called him ‘a queer little Londonized Southerner [who] paints abominably. But his breakfasts are easy and pleasant, and he has tomatoes and buckwheat cakes’.<sup>5</sup> In print, James described his paintings as ‘pleasant things to have about, so long as one regards them as simple objects – as incidents of

<sup>1</sup> Henry James, ‘The Picture Season in London’, *Galaxy*, 24 (1877). In Henry James and Peter Rawlings, *Henry James: Essays on Art and Drama* (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> Leon Edel, *Henry James Vol. 3: The Middle Years, 1884–1894*, 5 vols (London: Hart-Davis, 1963), vol. 3, pp. 87–90.

<sup>3</sup> Leon Edel, *Henry James Vol. 5: The Master, 1901–1916*, 5 vols (London: Hart-Davis, 1972), vol. 5, p. xiii.

<sup>4</sup> For example, G UW 4100, G UW 609, G UW 04587.

<sup>5</sup> Henry James and Leon Edel, *Henry James Letters Vol. 2: 1875–1883*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Belnap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 167–68.

furniture or decoration.<sup>6</sup> In an article about the Whistler v. Ruskin trial, James declared that: ‘Unfortunately, Mr. Whistler’s productions are so very eccentric and imperfect (I speak here of his paintings only; his etchings are quite another affair, and altogether admirable)’, that the jury must have had a ‘terrible puzzle’ to make their decision.<sup>7</sup>

In 1882, he still found him ‘extremely peculiar; he is supposed to be the buffoon of the Grosvenor, the laughing-stock of the critics.’ His paintings were ‘exceedingly unequal’, for the portrait of his mother, recently exhibited in New York,<sup>8</sup> ‘is so noble and admirable a picture, such a masterpiece of tone, of feeling, of the power to render life, that the fruits of his brush offered to the public more lately have seemed in comparison very crude.’<sup>9</sup> James disparaged Whistler for his ‘Impressionist’ manner, with its ‘latent dangers’,<sup>10</sup> that is, insubstantiality and creating pictures it is ‘hard to feel strongly about’. Whilst indicating Whistler’s divine inspiration he also makes it sound like flatulence: ‘Mr. Whistler is a votary of “tone;” his manner of painting is to breathe upon the canvas. It is not too much to say that he has, to a certain point, the creative afflatus.’<sup>11</sup> Rawlings has examined how James’s early art criticism contains ‘a good deal of rhetorical posturing and self-regarding precocity’;<sup>12</sup> by the 1880s, his attitude had shifted, which can be seen in his appraisal of John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) in 1887:

[...] the highest result is achieved when to this element of quick perception a certain faculty of lingering reflection is added. [...] the artist sees deep into his subject, undergoes it, absorbs it, discovers in it new things that were not on the surface’.<sup>13</sup>

There is not space here to discuss in detail James’s complicated interactions with Impressionism and Aestheticism, which underly his relationship with Whistler’s work, and are developed both in his novels and criticism.<sup>14</sup> From the 1890s, James was oriented ‘towards postponement, or deferral, rather than representation, and towards intention, the imaginary, and creative processes, at the expense of execution, the real’.<sup>15</sup> James was becoming more concerned with what is beneath the surface, formal values and abstract treatment, rather than the subject, for a work of art ‘is a living thing, all one and continuous’.<sup>16</sup> On seeing *Arrangement in Black, No. 3: Sir Henry Irving as Philip II of Spain* at the Grafton Galleries in 1897, James declared: ‘To turn from his picture to the rest of the show [...] is to drop from the world of distinction, of perception, of beauty and mystery and perpetuity, into – well a very ordinary place.’<sup>17</sup>

In the online *Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler*, there are five letters between James and Whistler. Just one of them will demonstrate the web of social and professional interaction

6 Henry James, ‘[The London Exhibitions – the Grosvenor Gallery]’, *Nation*, 26 (1878). In James and Rawlings, 1996, p. 278.

7 Henry James, ‘[The Whistler–Ruskin Libel Suit]’, *Nation*, 27 (1878).

8 *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter’s Mother* (1871), YMSM 101. It had been exhibited at the Loan Collection of Paintings, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1881.

9 Henry James, ‘London Pictures and London Plays’, *Atlantic Monthly*, 50 (1882). In James and Rawlings, 1996, pp. 347–48.

10 Henry James, ‘John S. Sargent’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 75 (1887). In Rawlings, p. 427.

11 James, ‘London Pictures and London Plays’ (1882). In James and Rawlings, 1996, pp. 347–48.

12 *Henry James: Essays on Art and Drama*, ed. by Peter Rawlings (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), p. 1.

13 James, ‘John S. Sargent’ (1887). In Rawlings, p. 427.

14 See Sara Stambaugh, ‘The Aesthetic Movement and the Portrait of a Lady’, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 30 (1975–1976). Daniel Hannah, ‘Henry James, Impressionism, and Publicity’, *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 61, no. 2 (2007). Michèle Mendelsohn, *Henry James, Oscar Wilde and Aesthetic Culture* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007).

15 Peter Rawlings, ‘Introduction: Henry James and the Kodak Factor’, in *Henry James: Essays on Art and Drama*, ed. by Peter Rawlings (Aldershot: Scolar, 1996), pp. 10–11.

16 Henry James, ‘The Art of Fiction’, *Longman’s Magazine*, 4 (1884).

17 Henry James, ‘[London]’, *Harper’s Weekly*, 41 (1897). In Rawlings, pp. 512–13.

that joined the two men. On 29 September 1891, James sent complimentary tickets to his recently opened play, *The American*, to Whistler and his wife Beatrix (1857–1896). He tells them that on presenting the enclosed tickets at the box office, 'you will be instantly & obsequiously conducted to the two best stalls in the house'.<sup>18</sup> It had opened just three days before, a social success, if a dubious artistic one, and was to continue for 70 performances, to mixed reviews.<sup>19</sup> Whistler knew two of the actresses, Elizabeth Robins (1865–1952) and Kate Bateman (1842–1917). The contract between James and the theatre company had been negotiated by Charles Wolcott Balestier (1861–1891), an enterprising novelist and literary agent. He had also been involved in the publication of Whistler's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890) with his partner, William Heinemann (1863–1920). Heinemann had produced a small acting edition of *The American* for the cast and author, and hoped to publish the successful play. The two publishers were guests at James's home at 34 De Vere Gardens (where the sitting room was decorated in Whistlerian blues and yellows<sup>20</sup>) for a small supper after the first night performance, with some of the cast and the author's brother, the psychologist William James (1842–1910). Sadly, Balestier died of typhoid in Dresden on 6 December that year, not only a personal loss to James, but a blow to his theatrical career. Whistler gladly received a copy of Balestier's posthumously published novel *The Average Woman* (1892) sent by Heinemann. He published eleven books by James, including *A Little Tour in France* (1900) and *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897). Heinemann was to remain a close friend of Whistler, working with him on the publication of lithographs and Beatrix's book illustrations, and taking him in for a while after her death.

In February 1889, Whistler sent James the gift of an etching, *Mairie, Loches*.<sup>21</sup> This was one of the 'Renaissance set' he had made while on honeymoon in France in August 1888. James replied: 'I take your present of the beautiful etching of the dear old house at the dear old Loches as a most benevolent & graceful act'.<sup>22</sup> James wrote about Loches in *A Little Tour in France*, which was published serially in the *Atlantic* 1883–1884, then in book form in September 1884, by Osgood & Co.<sup>23</sup> It is possible that Whistler knew *A Little Tour in France*, as he did read the *Atlantic Monthly*, for example, asking Charles Hanson to send him a particular issue when he was on honeymoon in Loches in October 1888.<sup>24</sup> But James certainly knew that the etching resulted from the Whistlers' honeymoon, during which Beatrix also etched.<sup>25</sup> He writes:

It is a charming thing with a charming association, or, rather, with many more than one: since I hold it directly from your cunning & liberal hand, with the soft participation, too, as I fondly fancy, of Mrs. Whistler's sympathy.<sup>26</sup>

**18** Henry James to Whistler, 29 September [1891], G UW 02402 (GUL J23).

**19** See Edel, 1963, pp. 235–37.

**20** Edel, 1963, p. 97.

**21** Whistler to Henry James, [17 February 1889], G UW 10934 (Houghton Library, Harvard University, BMS A 1094 (489)). The etching is Kennedy 382.I (fig. 10.2).

**22** Henry James to Whistler, 18 February [1889], G UW 02403 (GUL J24).

**23** J. R. Osgood (1836–1892), in his later capacity as agent for Harper and Brothers, would be in contact with Whistler in 1887 about the publication of the *Ten O'Clock* lecture in America.

**24** G UW 08014.

**25** For example, Beatrix Whistler, *View from the Château Walls, Loches* (1888), Hunterian Art Gallery, GLAHA 45151. This is related to Whistler's etching of the same view, *From Agnes Sorel's Walk* (1888), GLAHA 46639. For a digital image of this etching: <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/DetailedResults.fwx?collection=whistler&reqMethod=Search&Searchterm=45151>

**26** G UW 02403.

Originally, Whistler wanted to give James ‘Tristan’s House’ (*Hangman’s House, Tours*)<sup>27</sup> but it had not yet been printed. The alternative name refers to the house of Tristan l’Hermite in Walter Scott’s *Quentin Durward* (1823), described by James in *A Little Tour of France* as ‘the hangman-in-ordinary to the great king Louis XI’.<sup>28</sup> James was disappointed to find that it was not actually Tristan’s house, it was ‘an exceedingly picturesque old façade, to which you pick your way through a narrow and tortuous street’. He continues:

An elegant Gothic doorway is let into the rusty-red brickwork, and strange little beasts crouch at the angles of the windows, which are surmounted by a tall graduated gable, pierced with a small orifice, where the large surface of brick, lifted out of the shadow of the street, looks yellow and faded. The whole thing is disfigured and decayed; but it is a capital subject for a sketch in colours. Only I must wish the sketcher better luck – or a better temper – than my own. If he rings the bell to be admitted to see the court, which I believe is more sketchable still, let him have patience to wait till the bell is answered. He can do the outside while they are coming.<sup>29</sup>

This extraordinary doorway fills the etching plate, Whistler indicating scale by two children sitting on the doorstep, undisturbed by the occupants of the house, just as James was ignored. Weeds poke through the stones adding to the general decay. Doors and openings were a common motif for Whistler, as was the aura of decayed grandeur, which he explored in oils, pastels and particularly etching. James could have been describing a Whistler etching. This may explain Whistler’s particular wish to give him *Hangman’s House*. In the absence of a pulled print,<sup>30</sup> Whistler sent his view of the town hall (fig. 10.2), seen at the end of a winding street, the black openings of a door and window beneath a balcony and small-paned window. The full extent of the buildings are only indicated with the briefest of marks, and the ornate dormer window at the top gives no indication of the height of the roof. There are a few people in the foreground, women and children, carrying bundles, the only modern intervention a streetlamp projecting from the building on the left. This winding street certainly gives the impression of the ‘labyrinth of antiquities’,<sup>31</sup> as James describes:

The little streets of Loches wander crookedly down the hill, and are full of charming pictorial ‘bits’: an old town gate, passing under a medieval tower, which is ornamented by Gothic windows and the empty niches of statues; a meagre but delicate hôtel de ville, of the Renaissance, nestling close beside it; a curious chancellerie of the middle of the sixteenth century, with mythological figures and a Latin inscription on the front – both of these latter buildings being rather unexpected features of the huddled and precipitous little town.<sup>32</sup>

In 1900, printmaker and Whistler’s biographer Joseph Pennell (1860–1926) would illustrate the reissue of *A Little Tour in France* for Heinemann.<sup>33</sup> He chose to illustrate Loches with a typical tourist view of the Old Town Gate, or Porte Picois. This medieval gate, with portcullis

**27** Kennedy 376.II. For a digital image of this etching, British Library 1968,0210.2: [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search\\_the\\_collection\\_database/search\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectid=1361480&partid=1&IdNum=1968%2c0210.2&orig=%2fsearch%2fsearch\\_the\\_collection\\_database%2fmuseum\\_no\\_\\_provenance\\_search.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/search_the_collection_database/search_object_details.aspx?objectid=1361480&partid=1&IdNum=1968%2c0210.2&orig=%2fsearch%2fsearch_the_collection_database%2fmuseum_no__provenance_search.aspx)

**28** Henry James, *A Little Tour in France* (London: Home & Van Thal, 1949), p. 17.

**29** James, 1949, p. 18.

**30** It is not known whether Whistler sent *Hangman’s House* later.

**31** James, 1949, p. 65.

**32** James, 1949, p. 68. Whistler also etched the *Chancellerie*, Kennedy 383.

**33** He would go on to illustrate James’s *English Hours* (1905) and *Italian Hours* (1909) published by Heinemann.

and battlements, stands beside the Hôtel de ville (1535–1543). It is possible that the Mairie of K.382 is another aspect of the same building, the town hall, as today, the building houses both the municipal services and Mayor's offices. Whistler's view of the *Hôtel de ville, Loches*,<sup>34</sup> which of course Pennell knew well, is from further away and higher up, showing the cobbled street in front of the gate filled with people and market stalls. The vibrant modern life of the town goes on beneath the Renaissance buildings.

James became a regular visitor to 110 Rue du Bac in the 1890s, describing to Isabella Stewart Gardner on 1 May 1893: 'I went to tea yesterday with the Whistlers in their queer little garden-house off the rue du Bac, where the only furniture is the paint on the walls and the smile on the lady's broad face'.<sup>35</sup> His novel *The Ambassadors* (1903) uses his impressions to describe the house and garden of the sculptor Gloriani, based on Whistler. His familiarity with the garden stretched back to his visits to Madame Mohl (1790–1883) in 1876, former doyenne of a Paris *salon*, from whose house he could look down into the same garden and the adjoining seminary.<sup>36</sup>

In 1897, James gave Whistler a signed copy of his new novel, *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897). This comic novel describes the lengths Mrs Gereth goes to save her spoils, the carefully chosen antiques in her home of Poynton Park, from her unappreciative son. After his marriage, she secretly steals her collection. In his letter of thanks for the 'beautiful book' Whistler pleads to intercede on behalf of Mrs Gereth, just as enthusiastic readers of 'the French Master' Balzac appealed for their favourite characters: 'I would have begged for the dear old lady who had only robbed, and hid a bit, and burgled in the glorious cause of Old Blue!'<sup>37</sup> This refers to blue and white china, of which Whistler had been an enthusiastic collector since his 'Chinomania' of the 1860s.<sup>38</sup> He recognises a fellow Aesthete in Mrs Gereth, aligning himself with her morally suspect commodity fetishism:<sup>39</sup> 'the Painter's sweet morality alone would be dull to all effort of either vice or virtue in his joy at the exquisite finish of it all!' James was delighted 'to have pleased you, to have touched you', for 'the arts are one, and with the artist the artist communicates. [...] You know, [...] how dreadfully few are such [good words]'.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, in his essay, 'The Art of Fiction', he wrote that writer and painter are 'brother[s] of the brush'. He emphasises their common artistic strivings and perhaps a shared lack of suitable appreciation: 'You have done too much of the exquisite not to have earned more despair than anything else; but don't doubt that something vibrates back when that Exquisite takes the form of recognition of a not utterly indelicate brother.' In the same year, he described Whistler's work as 'one of the finest of all distillations of the artistic intelligence'.<sup>41</sup>

I have not yet been able to ascertain what became of the etching after James's death, when his whole estate was left to his sister-in-law Alice James, and Lamb House and its contents to his nephew Henry James junior. The contents of Lamb House were sold in May 1949, before the house was presented to the National Trust. Whistler's own copies of *What Maisie Knew* (a short

**34** Kennedy 384. For a digital image of this etching, at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, acc. no. P.89-1959: [http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/whistler/opac/cataloguedetail.html?&\\_function\\_=xslt&search=object\\_number=P.89-1959](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/whistler/opac/cataloguedetail.html?&_function_=xslt&search=object_number=P.89-1959)

**35** Philip Horne, *Henry James: A Life in Letters* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p. 265.

**36** Edel, 1963, p. 275.

**37** Whistler to Henry James, [22 February 1897], GUW 02405 (GUL J26).

**38** See Linda Merrill, *The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 60–62.

**39** For a detailed discussion of taste, morals and interior decoration in the novel and James's own homes, see Ailsa Boyd, 'A Home of Their Own: Representations of Women in Interiors in the Art, Design and Literature of the Late Nineteenth Century' (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2002), pp. 180–222.

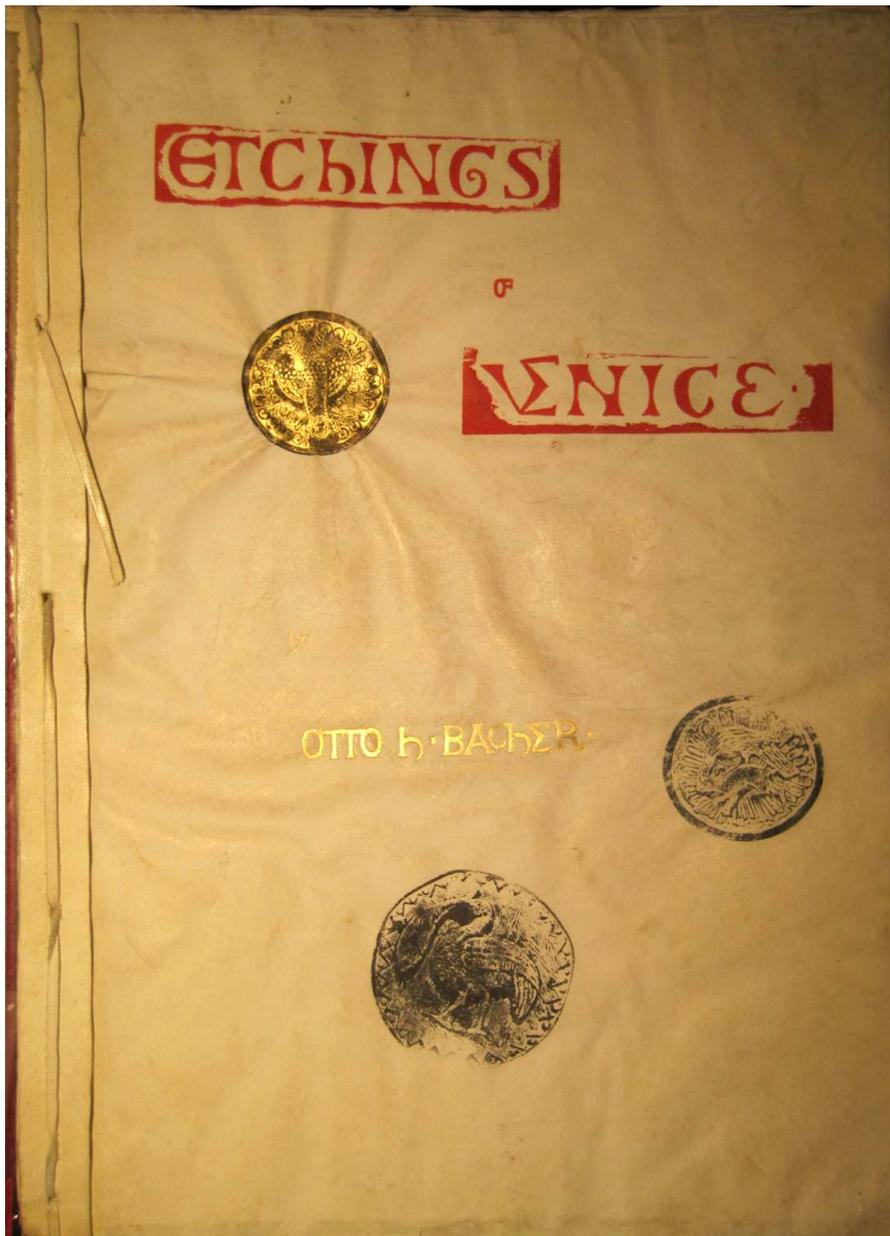
**40** Henry James to Whistler, 25 February 1897, GUW 02404 (GUL J25).

**41** James, '[London]' (1897).

novel first serialised in the *New Review* in 1897) and *The Soft Side* (a collection of short stories written 1899–1900) are in Glasgow University Library, along with 189 other books from his library, but not *The Spoils of Poynton*.<sup>42</sup> Unlike Whistler, who although never returning to America did not renounce his citizenship, James became a British citizen in 1915, due to his disgust at America not entering World War I. Just a few months later, however, he died at his home at Carlyle Mansions, Cheyne Walk, the same street in which Whistler had lived from 1863, and painted his first views of the Thames.

<sup>42</sup> Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (London: Heinemann, 1898), Sp Coll Whistler 69; *The Soft Side* (London: Methuen, 1900), Sp Coll Whistler 68, Glasgow University Library.





**Fig. 11.1** Otto Bacher was inspired by Whistler's Venetian etchings to make a 'Venice Set' of his own in 1882. The twelve etchings, bound in a volume in an edition of twenty-one, was offered for sale in Europe for 300 French francs and in the United States for sixty-five dollars. The books are hand-bound in vellum, with designs derived from Venetian motifs stamped on the covers—no two alike. Each etching, printed on old Venetian paper, is protected by a thin cover sheet, which bears the etching's title with an illuminated initial letter. (Private collection, Chicago.)

Meg Hausberg

## Whistler Etchings: The Bacher Connection

Otto Henry Bacher – American painter, etcher and illustrator – is well known for his written record of time spent with James McNeill Whistler in Venice in 1880. Bacher's book, *With Whistler in Venice*, was published in September 1908, based upon two articles written for the *Century Magazine* in 1906 and 1907.<sup>1</sup> Bacher illustrated the book with etchings and lithographs by Whistler, many from his own collection, and supplemented the anecdotes reprised from his earlier articles with detailed commentary on Whistler's etching technique. Otto Bacher has been quoted widely during the century since the book's publication because he provided a firsthand account of an important moment in Whistler's career – the period when the masterful Venice etchings and pastels were conceived and developed.<sup>2</sup> The history of Whistler etchings from Bacher's collection is less well known. Bacher used some of them to illustrate *With Whistler in Venice*, and a number of the Venice etchings he owned have found permanent homes in print rooms in the United States and Europe. The early proofs he acquired in Venice provide particularly important evidence about Whistler's creative process.

Bacher, who was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1856 and died in Bronxville, New York, in 1909, had close associations with other artists throughout his adult life. As one of the 'Duveneck Boys,' he studied with Frank Duveneck in Munich, Florence and Venice from 1879 to 1881, along with other aspiring American artists such as Robert Frederick Blum, Harper Pennington, Theodore M. Wendel and John White Alexander.<sup>3</sup> During the summer of 1880, Duveneck took his students to Venice, where Whistler happened to be in residence, preparing a set of etchings commissioned by the Fine Art Society in London. In the years after his studies with Duveneck, Bacher enrolled at the Académie Julian and later worked with Carolus-Duran in Paris. He travelled to Germany and Italy, meeting and lodging with other American artists such as Robert Blum and S. L. Wenban.<sup>4</sup> Bacher returned to the United States permanently at the end of 1886 and settled in New York City the following spring, in close proximity to his friend Blum and

<sup>1</sup> Otto H. Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice* (New York: The Century Co., 1908); 'With Whistler in Venice,' *Century Magazine* (December 1906); 'Stories of Whistler,' *Century Magazine* (May 1907).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night, Whistler in Venice* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), where there are sixteen indexed references to Bacher's account of Whistler in Venice.

<sup>3</sup> For other Duveneck boys in Venice in 1880, see MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night* (note 2), p. 26; GUW 11621, notes 11 and 12; and William W. Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher* (Madison, Wisconsin: Education Industries, Inc., 1981), p. 260.

<sup>4</sup> See Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher* (note 3), pp. 118–53.

other working artists. Ten years later he relocated to suburban Bronxville, where his family moved into a combined house and studio in Lawrence Park, a neighborhood designed for artists and writers.<sup>5</sup> However, among all his associations in the arts, it is clear that the months spent with Whistler made for vivid memories and superb storytelling. As Bacher explained in the preface to *With Whistler in Venice*:

The Venetian period in the life of James McNeill Whistler is, perhaps, the least familiar to his friends, yet a very important one in his career. It was my good fortune to know him intimately during the greater part of it. To me, it was a pleasant and helpful relationship which existed between us. After his death, I received many requests to write of this period from friends who knew of my acquaintance with him. This book is an answer to these solicitations and, if no other purpose be served, I trust that it will prove a source of enjoyment and help to those who wish to know the great modern master of art.<sup>6</sup>

Bacher responded to and capitalized on the desire for information and tales about Whistler, which remained strong in the years following the latter's death in 1903.<sup>7</sup> In *With Whistler in Venice*, Bacher portrays his subject through the eyes of the enthusiastic acolyte he was in 1880. He describes Whistler's actions uncritically and proudly details the assistance he provided the older artist – from applying the ground on his etching plates, to searching for paper, to supplying etching inks.<sup>8</sup> While the vignettes Bacher creates in *With Whistler in Venice* have great charm and appeal, his firsthand descriptions of Whistler's etching methods are more informative. He explains, for example, how Whistler transferred so many elements of the composition of *The Traghetto, No. 1*, to a fresh copper plate in order to create *The Traghetto, No. 2*. Whistler abandoned the first version of the subject after spoiling that plate. According to Bacher, Whistler inked the etched lines on the damaged plate with white paint and then transferred those outlines onto another copper plate, which was covered with a dark etching ground. The white lines allowed Whistler to reproduce parts of the composition he wished to retain, by drawing over them with an etching needle. He referred to a proof taken from the first *Traghetto* as he worked, apparently taking days to recreate the image.<sup>9</sup> *With Whistler in Venice* includes other information that helps explain the artist's printmaking methods and details some of the unorthodox techniques used to etch the Venice plates. Bacher relates that Whistler employed dental tools, in place of conventional etching needles, to produce particularly fine lines and that he etched some lines into the copper by brushing acid on the plates with a feather.<sup>10</sup>

Bacher's book about Whistler and Venice includes forty-six illustrations. These comprise reproductions of etchings, lithographs and one drawing by Whistler; etchings and photographs by Bacher; a lithograph and photographs by others; and, in the first edition of *With Whistler in*

**5** For information about Bacher in Bronxville, see Meg Hausberg, 'With Whistler in Venice, Recollections of Bronxville Artist Otto H. Bacher,' *The Bronxville Journal*, 3, pp. 49–71. Other artists in Lawrence Park included William H. Howe, Lorenzo Hatch, Will and Mary Fairchild MacMonnies Low, William Smedley and Herman Schladermundt.

**6** Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice* (note 1), p. vii.

**7** On 6 June 1907, Bacher signed a 'memorandum of agreement' with the Century Company for a book entitled *With Whistler in Venice*. The agreement stipulated payment of \$600 on delivery of a manuscript of '25,000 or more words [...] including the two articles which have already appeared in the *Century Magazine*', to be illustrated with 'reproductions of etchings, drawings, lithographs, photographs and original autograph letters by Mr. Whistler' and a royalty of ten percent of the retail price for all copies sold. See Andrew, *Otto H. Bacher* (note 3), p. 283.

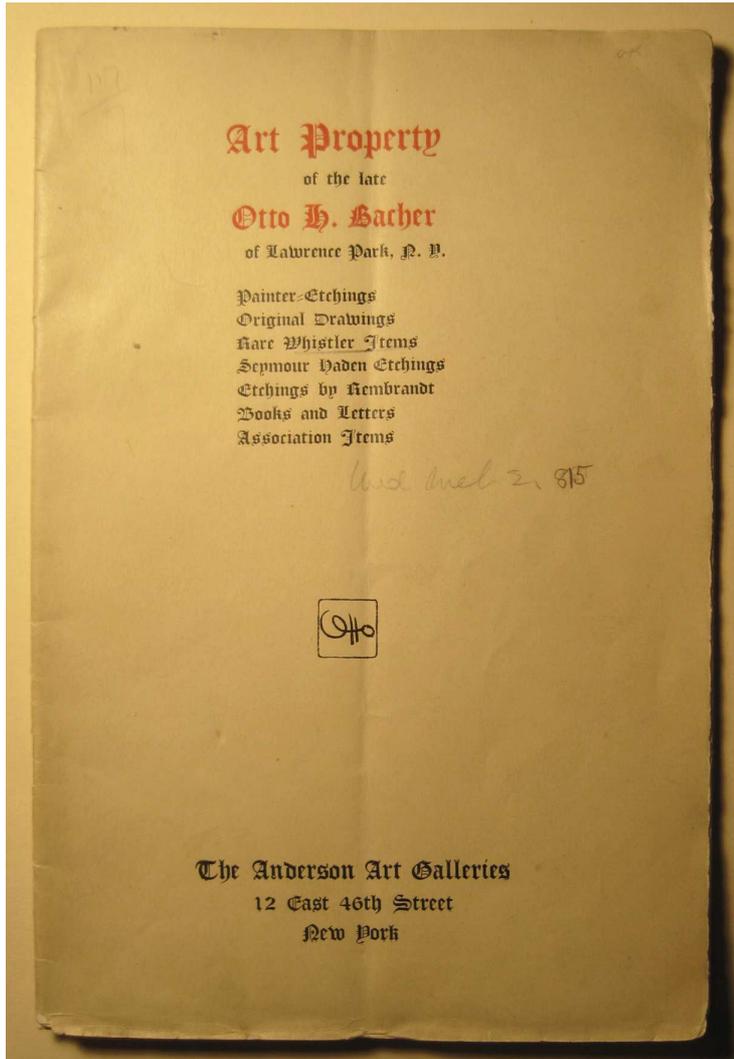
**8** Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice* (note 1), pp. 93, 114, 122–29.

**9** *Ibid.*, pp. 169–84.

**10** *Ibid.*, pp. 94, 100.

*Venice*, facsimiles of three letters from Whistler to Bacher.<sup>11</sup> Most Whistler etchings are illustrated in both an early and a later state,<sup>12</sup> offering the reader insight into the development of those plates. Photographic illustrations picture two of Whistler's etching tools, an example of old Venetian paper used for etchings in Venice, sites along the canals, as well as a portrait of Whistler taken by Bacher in London. The illustrations amplify information presented in the text, allowing readers to more fully understand Whistler's approach to printmaking in Venice.

All but one of the twenty-four Whistler etchings reproduced in Bacher's book were created in Venice.<sup>13</sup> Many belonged to the author, and some later appeared in the auction catalogue, 'Art Property of the late Otto H. Bacher of Lawrence Park, N. Y.' at the Anderson Art Galleries in New York City (fig. 11.2).



**Fig. 11.2** Front cover of the Anderson Art Galleries catalogue for the sale of Otto H. Bacher's art collection, in New York City on 2 March 1910. (Private collection, Chicago).

- 11** Rosalind Birnie Philip, Whistler's sister-in-law and executrix, objected to the publication of Whistler's letters in the *With Whistler in Venice*. As a result, the Century Company printed a second edition without them, and explained the change in a publisher's note, opposite the list of illustrations. Otto Bacher, *With Whistler in Venice*, 2nd edn (1909), p. vii.
- 12** A state in printmaking may be defined as follows: 'Often an artist will work on a composition to a certain point, and stop to print an impression of it. This single stage in the evolution of this image is called a state. Each time the composition is changed a new *state* of the print is created. These changes can range from the addition of a plate signature to drastic alterations in the composition' ([http://www.ifpda.org/content/collecting\\_prints/glossary#state](http://www.ifpda.org/content/collecting_prints/glossary#state)).
- 13** The one etching (*Billingsgate*, K.47) and three Whistler lithographs (*Nocturne*, *Limehouse* and *Early Morning*) illustrated in the book depict scenes along the Thames in London.

The sale, which took place on 2 March 1910, six months after Bacher's death, included 184 items from his collection.<sup>14</sup> There were forty-eight etchings and two watercolours by Bacher among the lots, along with etchings by Frank Duveneck, works on paper by Bacher's friends Blum, Wenban and Wendel, and a selection of artwork by a variety of other artists, including Heinrich Aldegrever, Rembrandt, Jules Bastien-Lepage, August Delâtre, Sir Francis Seymour Haden and Whistler. In addition to etchings, lithographs and one pencil drawing by Whistler, the sale included Whistleriana – ten books and pamphlets related to the artist, the three letters from Whistler to Bacher included in the first edition of *With Whistler in Venice*, the photograph of Whistler by Bacher reproduced in the book, and a photograph of 'Whistler's Mother,' inscribed 'Arrangement in grey & Black. Portrait of the painter's mother. [sic] To Otto Bacher. Whistler.' and further signed with a butterfly.<sup>15</sup> The list of auction lots was headed by the notice, 'N. B. – Each item stamped with Mr. Bacher's red Japanese monogram,' referring to his collector's mark, composed of the name 'Otto' within a square borderline (L.2002). This was stamped prominently on the recto of each work, often within the image.

The Whistler etchings and lithographs from Bacher's collection were the most significant lots in the sale. Among the ten etchings offered, there were three London subjects – *Thames Warehouses*, *Black Lion Wharf*, and *Billingsgate*; one portrait – *Finette*; and six Venice etchings. The four lithographs included three lithotints of the Thames and one figure subject. The impression of *Billingsgate* in the auction had been reproduced in *With Whistler in Venice*, as had all of the Venice etchings and the three lithotints. Thanks to pencil notations on one copy of the sale catalogue,<sup>16</sup> we know the hammer prices of all the Whistler prints. And, through the efforts of Glasgow University's Whistler Etchings Catalogue Raisonné Project, we know the current locations of four of the etchings from the Bacher sale at Anderson Art Galleries in 1910 as well as several other early states of Whistler Venice etchings that Bacher sold directly in 1904.<sup>17</sup> The auction prices of the etchings and their current disposition is as follows:

- Thames Warehouses*, sold for \$51, whereabouts unknown
- Black Lion Wharf*, sold for \$70, whereabouts unknown
- Billingsgate*, sold for \$39, whereabouts unknown
- Finette*, sold for \$75, whereabouts unknown
- The Traghetto, No. 1*, sold for \$220, Art Institute of Chicago (1937.5960)
- The Traghetto, No. 2*, sold for \$130, Harvard Art Museums / Fogg Museum (M12099)
- The Mast*, sold for \$80, Art Institute of Chicago (1927.5964)
- San Biagio*, sold for \$95, whereabouts unknown
- Ponte del Piovan*, sold for \$55, whereabouts unknown
- The Garden*, sold for \$95, Art Institute of Chicago (1927.5971)<sup>18</sup>

**14** There was also one Whistler pastel listed as 'The property of a gentleman, included in the sale by permission of Mr. Bacher's executors. *Souvenir of the Gaiety: "The Grasshopper"*, The Anderson Art Galleries, *Art Property of the late Otto H. Bacher of Lawrence Park, N.Y.* (New York: The Anderson Art Galleries, 1910), lot 167, p. 23. The pastel sold for \$70 according to an annotated copy of the catalogue in a private collection, Chicago.

**15** Anderson Art Galleries, *Art Property of the late Otto H. Bacher*, lots 155–65, pp. 21–22; the photograph of 'Whistler's Mother,' lot 165, p. 22, sold for \$31.

**16** The annotations are in an unknown hand (possible initials F.A.H. or F.W.H.).

**17** The Whistler Etchings Project database includes partial information from a number of far-flung collections, so it is likely that other Whistler etchings once owned by Bacher are listed, but, as of 2010, without provenance information that would identify Bacher as a former owner.

**18** The Anderson Art Galleries sale included the three Whistler lithographs reproduced in *With Whistler in Venice*; *Nocturne* sold for \$85; *Limehouse*, sold for \$52; *Early Morning*, sold for \$50. A fourth lithograph in the sale, *Draped Figure: Standing*, sold for \$80. The current whereabouts of the lithographs are not known, although – apart from checking the

Another Whistler etching from Bacher's collection, reproduced in *With Whistler in Venice* but not included in the 1909 auction, has made its way into a museum collection, *The Doorway* (Art Institute of Chicago, 1927.5958). In 1904, before publication of his articles and book on Whistler, Bacher sold six Venice etchings to Charles Lang Freer, and they are now in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC. All were early impressions, printed in Venice.<sup>19</sup>

One further Whistler Venice etching, which was once owned by Bacher, has found a home in a European print room. *Gondola Under a Bridge*, now in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris, was given by American expatriate Atherton Curtis in 1943. Edward G. Kennedy described and illustrated five other etchings from Bacher's collection in the catalogue raisonné of Whistler's etchings published in 1910.<sup>20</sup> Those impressions have yet to be located.

Bacher owned so many early proofs of the Venetian etchings that he clearly gathered the prints during his association with Whistler in Venice,<sup>21</sup> while assisting with printing or otherwise spending time with the older artist. The fact that all impressions collected by Bacher that have been located are unsigned further indicates that they were working proofs and that Whistler did not ascribe particular value to them; he apparently had neither thoughts of selling them at the time nor a desire to retain them for reference or sale at a later date. As relatively few trial proofs of Whistler etchings exist, Bacher's early impressions are important artifacts, showing the straightforwardness with which the artist began most Venice plates as well as his willingness to devote the time necessary to develop them through a series of states. By reproducing varied states of so many etchings, Bacher literally illustrated Whistler's approach to creating the Venice plates in *With Whistler in Venice*. By preserving so many early impressions, which likely would have been lost or destroyed,<sup>22</sup> Bacher ensured that Whistler's first thoughts and experiments may be observed firsthand by visitors to a variety of print study rooms. Furthermore, when the new catalogue of Whistler etchings prepared under the direction of Prof. Margaret F. MacDonald goes online in 2011, digital images of those key early impressions, once owned by Otto Bacher, will be available to an even wider group of students, scholars, Whistler devotees and 'surfers' on the web.

entries and index in Nesta R. Spink, Harriet K. Stratis and Martha Tedeschi, *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler* (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 1998) – a thorough search was not conducted.

**19** Bacher sold Freer *Nocturne* (1904.17), *Traghetto, No. 1* (1904.19), *San Giorgio* (1904.18), *The Steamboat, Venice* (1904.21), *Venice* (1904.294) and *Venetian Water Carrier* (1904.20)

**20** Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler* (New York: The Grolier Club of The City of New York, 1910); the five owned by Bacher were proofs of *Traghetto, No. 1*, *The Mast*, *San Biagio*, *San Giorgio*, and *Ponte del Piovan*.

**21** Most Bacher impressions – either located, reproduced in *With Whistler in Venice* or listed in the Kennedy catalogue – were either very early states or impressions in black ink, which generally identifies proofs printed in Venice.

**22** There are very few working proofs in the Whistler Etchings Project database. In addition to Bacher, T. R. Way and Samuel Avery retrieved or purchased trial proofs from Whistler, and some impressions that passed through their hands may be found at the Freer Gallery of Art and the Prints Division at the New York Public Library.



Fig. 12.1 H. M., "The Last of the Mohicans" Realised in London',  
*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 7 May 1887, p. 301.

Joanna Meacock

## The General and the Colonel; or Scalping the Hostiles\*

Whistler's four etchings of the 1887 Wild West Show at Earl's Court in London are not among the artist's most memorable works and are often overlooked. They are not grand aesthetic statements but rather quick on-the-spot sketches, small in scale – the largest plate, *Wild West, Buffalo Bill* (K.313), measuring 12.7 × 17.7 cm – and modest in scope, with little later reworking.<sup>1</sup> However, significantly, they are Whistler's only mature etchings in which he chose an American theme, excluding the two *Anacapa Island* plates (K.1, App. I), and possible plate of Delaware River, which were very different in intention, deriving from Whistler's time as a cadet mapmaker in the US Coast Survey office.<sup>2</sup> Whistler maintained a deep-rooted connection with his homeland; he was known to accentuate his American drawl at opportune times, he had a liking for the heat, American cakes and cocktails, and was celebrated for his American-style breakfasts.<sup>3</sup> He was very proud of his younger brother William who had joined the Confederate Army in the American Civil War as an assistant surgeon. It is not difficult to understand why he might have been attracted to the Wild West Show's pageant of American frontier life, with its sense of patriotism in performance, particularly in the 1880s when Whistler was feeling rather misunderstood in Britain, ill-treated by the press and exploited by art collectors.

The Wild West Show was part of the American Exhibition, a trade fair set up on derelict railway land in the area of Earl's Court, West Brompton and Kensington from April to October 1887. It included a diorama of New York harbour with a scale model of the Statue of Liberty by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, a miniature switch-back railway and roller toboggans.<sup>4</sup> There was an exhibition of American art, at which, unsurprisingly, there were no Whistlers represented, Whistler's aesthetic ideals differing somewhat from his countrymen, although *The Morning Post* commented, 'There is a good deal to remind one of our own Whistler in Mr. W. T. Dannat's *Portrait of Mrs. H.*'<sup>5</sup> The Wild West Show

\* For you Margaret, with much love and thanks.

1 See <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/DetailedResults.fwx?collection=art&SearchTerm=46918&reqMethod=Link>.

2 Elizabeth Robins & Joseph Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 2 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1909), vol. 1, p. 46.

3 Pennell, vol. 2, pp. 23, 175, 181, 293.

4 'The American Exhibition', *The Times* (27 April 1887), p. 6.

5 'The American Exhibition', *The Morning Post* (6 July 1887), p. 2.

arena, which was a third of a mile in circumference, was constructed on a triangular piece of waste ground between two railway lines, with room for the troupe to set up camp with the necessary corrals, stables, tents and tepees. A bridge connected them to the main exhibition area. The Wild West Show opened on 9 May, with daily performances scheduled at 3pm and 8.30pm, accompanied by the Grenadier Guards Band conducted by Dan Godfrey. A variety of tickets were available enabling a true cross-section of society to attend: amphitheatre 1s., grand circle 2s., reserved stalls 5s., private boxes for 4 persons 25s. and boxes for 6 persons 35s. The covered grandstand held 20,000 people with room for another 10,000 standing.<sup>6</sup>

And the crowds came. The fame of Colonel William F. Cody, alias Buffalo Bill, as a pony-express rider, buffalo hunter, frontiersman, guide, Indian fighter and ‘Chief of Scouts’ of the US Army had spread. He had most famously joined the Fifth Cavalry under Major E. A. Carr and apparently killed the Cheyenne Chief, Yellow Hair, in hand to hand combat in July 1876 in battle at Warbonnet Creek, Wyoming (all very dubious), after which Cody ‘scientifically scalped’ him. Cody, who commissioned a stage play based on the event, *The Red Right Hand, or First Scalp for Custer* (1876), retold the tale with great gusto in his autobiography in 1879 in which he was illustrated swinging the chief’s ‘top-knot’ high in the air.<sup>7</sup> The British papers loved to reel out a list of Cody’s military honours, particularly his connection with celebrated figures such as General George Armstrong Custer.<sup>8</sup> One of the publicity posters Cody and the general manager of the show Major John M. Burke designed for London in 1887 showed Cody surrounded by famous US army officers ‘Under Whom Buffalo Bill Has Served’, with testimonials, including a notable one by Lieutenant General Phil H. Sheridan, which described Cody as a ‘cool, brave man of unimpeachable integrity’.<sup>9</sup> The desired assumption was that Cody himself was a high-ranking officer, although the ‘Colonel’ appellation was self-awarded.

Cody’s past and personage were much romanticised. *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* eulogised:

[...] a man of magnificent presence and physique, ignorant of the meaning of fear or fatigue; his life is a history of hair-breadth escapes, and deeds of daring, generosity, and self-sacrifice, which compare very favourably with the chivalric actions of romance, and he has been not inappropriately designated the ‘Bayard of the Plains.’<sup>10</sup>

His fictional self was augmented as the hero of Ned Buntline’s dime novels from 1869 and as the lead in highly fictionalised stage dramas of his life, including *The Scout of the Plains* (Chicago, 1873–1874) and *The Knight of the Plains, or Buffalo Bill’s Best Trail* (New Haven, CN, 1878–1879). Cody was arguably the first true American celebrity, in a modern sense, with his image recognised world over, as *The Morning Post* declared on 5 May 1887: ‘The magnificent appearance of Buffalo Bill and the almost legendary stories

6 Advertisements, *Pall Mall Gazette* (28 April 1887), p. 13. ‘The American Exhibition’, *The Morning Post* (9 May 1887), p. 2.

7 William Cody, *The Life of Hon. William F. Cody, known as Buffalo Bill, the famous hunter, scout and guide. An autobiography* (Hartford, CN: F. E. Bliss, 1879), pp. 343–45, 360. Louis S. Warren, *Buffalo Bill’s America: William Cody and the Wild West Show* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), pp. 118–19. For a humorous take on the adulation and self-promotion of Cody see ‘some Still Wilder Reminiscences (By a Modest Autobiographer)’, *Punch* (18 June 1887), p. 300.

8 For example Philip, ‘Our London Letter’, *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (May 1887), p. 289.

9 Warren (note 7), p. 291.

10 ‘The American Exhibition’, *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (7 May 1887), pp. 295–98.

of his valour, have made him one of the most popular personages in contemporary American history.<sup>11</sup>

Would Cody have appealed to Whistler on account of his supposed military honours? Whistler's grandfather Major John Whistler had served as a British soldier under John Burgoyne at the Battle of Saratoga, later joining the US Army. His father George Washington Whistler had excelled as a West Point cadet. Whistler's letters are full of references to famous generals in the American Army and to his own time at West Point, despite the fact that he had been discharged.<sup>12</sup> Whistler, who famously declared: 'If silicon had been a gas, I should have been a major general', referring to his failure in chemistry at the military academy, may have been 'tickled' if he'd read Cody's 1879 autobiography to find a possible relative featured, the 'Colonel' carrying out some 'important dispatches from General Sheridan' for a General Whistler.<sup>13</sup> Later in life, in his letters to his sister-in-law Rosalind Birnie Philips, Whistler humorously awarded himself this position of military command, signing himself 'the General'.<sup>14</sup>

In a review in *The Era*, Cody was hailed as an US military hero but also likened to the imposing dignity of the Native American.<sup>15</sup> Cody's infamous scalping of Yellow Hair, whilst regarded as somewhat distasteful, also fascinated the London public (fig. 12.1). Cody kept the scalp, hunting knife and Yellow Hair's headdress on display in his tent when in London and the scalping was re-enacted as part of the Wild West performance.<sup>16</sup> So prominent was this rather gruesome aspect in the public's mind that the show was popularly nicknamed the 'Scalperies'.<sup>17</sup> *The Daily News* wrote excitedly of the Earl's Court performance: 'The painted and half-naked Indian warriors do not actually destroy their victims, but they carry the action with marvellous effect up to the very scalping point.'<sup>18</sup> *Punch* published a cartoon of Native American chiefs visiting a wig and toupee maker in London, headed 'The Pantry'.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps unexpectedly, considering some of the rather unpalatable Southern racial views that Whistler adopted and the Wild West Show's general confirmation of white moral and physical supremacy, Whistler, like Cody, seemed to identify with the Native American, particularly with regard to his skills as a warrior and to the practice of scalping. He wrote to Samuel Wreford Paddon on 22 March 1882: 'When I returned from Venice, having comparatively time and money, I devoted myself with the pertinacity of the Redskin to the scalping of Howell'.<sup>20</sup> Whistler serially adopted scalping as a metaphor in his private and public correspondence from around 1878; it became a feature that was frequently remarked

**11** 'The American Exhibition', *The Morning Post* (5 May 1887), p. 6.

**12** For example, see reference to James Wolf Ripley (1795–1870), Brigadier General in charge of ordnance in the Union army from 1861–1863, in Whistler to Samuel Wreford Paddon, 22 March 1882, GUW 08103 (LC.PWC 2/20/1).

**13** Cody (note 7), p. 356. Whistler owned the first volume of Alexander Brown's *The Genesis of the United States; a narrative of the movement in England, 1605–1616, which resulted in the plantation of North America by Englishmen*, 2 vols (London: William Heinemann, 1890). He was 'tickled' to find a Francis Whistler listed in 'the original grant of land in Virginia – by Royal Charter – in the year 1609' (Whistler to Deborah Delano Haden, [18/23 May 1896], GUW 13490 (FGA Whistler 22)).

**14** For example, see Whistler to Rosalind Birnie Philip, [25 November 1896], GUW 04684 (GUL P324).

**15** 'The "Wild West" Show', *The Era* (18 September 1886), p. 10.

**16** "Buffalo Bill's" Show', *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (23 April 1887), p. 262. Alan Gallop, *Buffalo Bill's British Wild West* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), p. 94.

**17** Gallop (note 16), p. 59.

**18** 'The American Exhibition', *Daily News* (9 May 1887), p. 3.

**19** 'Buffalo Bill's Indians Visit the Butler's Pantry [...]', *Punch* (30 April 1887), p. 216.

**20** Whistler to Samuel Wreford Paddon, 22 March 1882, GUW 08103 (LC.PWC 2/20/1).

upon and associated with the artist. There is a draft of an article by the *Pall Mall Gazette* journalist Charles Morley dating from January 1887, which self-consciously adopts Whistler's own metaphor, writing that 'Mr. Whistler has been on the war path again' and 'has hung up another scalp' in his 'Chelsea wigwam'.<sup>21</sup> In 1894 Harper Pennington drew an ink sketch of Whistler as a Native American warrior with tomahawk and scalp, a man's body at his feet.<sup>22</sup> It is possible that Whistler's attraction to the scalping metaphor was inspired by tales of Buffalo Bill's adventures. Although Cody's memoir was not published until 1879, Whistler may well have heard about *The Red Right Hand, or First Scalp for Custer* in the British press. *The Era* told its London audiences in June 1877 that Buffalo Bill's new drama had 'drawn crowded houses' in San Francisco.<sup>23</sup>

And it must have seemed like such an appropriate metaphor in 1878, a year marked by the Ruskin v. Whistler trial, which had been initiated by a charge from Ruskin of 'Cockney impudence' and an accusation of artistic violence, the critic decrying Whistler for 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face', in a pamphlet which interestingly began as a call to war to the Christian 'soldiers' of St George's Guild.<sup>24</sup> Whistler's whole aesthetic credibility was brutally attacked, and it is not incredible to see his subsequent virtual scalplings of critics, or indeed anyone who crossed his path, as a violent retaliation showing his firmly American (not Cockney) outrage, and demonstrating that he was no foppish coward or 'coxcomb'. Whistler's list of scalps were largely from members of the art establishment, for example, art critic and theatre manager Joseph Comyns Carr in December 1878 / January 1879; art dealer and entrepreneur Charles Augustus Howell in 1882; advocate and art critic Henry ('Arry') Quilter in 1883; Slade Professor of Fine Arts at Cambridge and Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum, Sidney Colvin, in 1886; journalist and art critic Theodore Child in 1886/1887; painter William Stott of Oldham in 1889; journalist Augustus Martin Moore in 1891; and art collector William Eden in 1896 – although others, notably Benjamin Ebenezer Nightingale, the builder of the White House, and prime enemy and Whistler plagiarist, Oscar Wilde, were scalped too, in 1878 and 1889/90 respectively.<sup>25</sup>

Whistler, although only a metaphorical scalper, shared many similarities with Buffalo Bill, no less their shared obsession with public appearance and self-image.<sup>26</sup> Both knew how to exploit the camera and were very aware of their own iconography. Promotional photographs from his 1887 London tour show Cody's long black hair, Van Dyke beard, fringed buckskins and rifle, features more widely recognised than Whistler's white quiff, monocle and cane. A great deal of publicity preceded the arrival of Cody on the *State of Nebraska* in Gravesend on 14 April 1887 with its other Wild West passengers, including over 100 cowboys and 97 Sioux, Cheyenne, Kyowa, Pawnee and Arapaho men, women and children. Celebrities included female sharp shooters Annie Oakley and Lillian Smith; Buck Taylor, 'King of the Cowboys'; Johnnie Baker, the 'Cowboy Kid'; 'squaw man' John Nelson with Sioux wife and children; Chief Red Shirt; Little Bull; and Black Elk.<sup>27</sup> There

<sup>21</sup> Charles Morley, [6 January 1887], G UW 04380 (GUL P19).

<sup>22</sup> Harper Pennington to Whistler, 14 June 1894, G UW 04614 (GUL P254).

<sup>23</sup> 'Amusements in California', *The Era* (17 June 1877), p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> John Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera* (June 1877), letter 79; republished in 4 vols (Philadelphia: Reuvec, Wattle & Walsh, 1891), vol. 4, pp. 63, 73.

<sup>25</sup> See *Whistler Correspondence* (G UW 00543, 08103, 08154, 11401, 02464, 03525, 09584, 13489, 01502, 04684, 01748, 07126, 11715).

<sup>26</sup> 'The "Wild West" Show', *The Era* (18 September 1886), p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> 'The "Wild West Show"', *The Times* (15 April 1887), p. 10. Gallop (note 16), pp. 39–41.

were interviews and advertisements, all carefully managed by Nate Salisbury and Burke, who arrived ahead of the troupe. Henry Irving, who Whistler had painted and etched as Philip II of Spain in 1876–1877 (YMSM.187; K.170–171) and admired ‘both as artist and man’, had seen the Wild West Show at Staten Island, New York, in September 1886 while he was appearing in *The Bells* on Broadway.<sup>28</sup> He had been ecstatic in his enthusiasm and had declared: ‘The excitement is immense, and I venture to predict that when it comes to London it will take the town by storm’.<sup>29</sup> Irving’s endorsement, as well as praises from other famous figures such as Mark Twain, added to the sense of anticipation in London in 1886 and 1887.<sup>30</sup> The *Pall Mall Gazette* declared, ‘Mr. Irving, the tragedian, and Mr. Partington, the bill-poster, have each contributed to make Mr. Cody, alias “Buffalo Bill,” the most talked about man in London.’<sup>31</sup>

The Prince of Wales, an incorrigible socialite, was also ‘a useful advertising medium’. The Wild West Show received huge promotion and exposure from the large numbers of European royalty who were in London for the Jubilee celebrations and visited the performance. Apparently on one night four kings (Austria, Denmark, Saxony and Greece), in addition to the Prince of Wales, rode in the Deadwood stage coach driven by Buffalo Bill; Cody famously quipped, ‘four kings and the Prince of Wales makes a royal flush, such as no man ever held before.’<sup>32</sup> Queen Victoria herself made a rare appearance out of mourning on 11 May 1887 to see the spectacle, ‘accompanied by Prince and Princess Henry of Battenberg, the Duchess of Athol, General Ponsonby, Sir John Cowell, Lord Lathorn, and other officers of the Royal household’.<sup>33</sup> The Queen’s supposed bowing to the American flag was much reported in press. Prime Minister William Gladstone’s visit on 28 April 1887 also brought a great deal of publicity, particularly his conversations with the Sioux Chief Red Shirt.<sup>34</sup> Further press had come the week previous from a Wild West visit, on the invitation of Irving, to the Lyceum Theatre on 21 April 1887 to see *Faust*: the Native Americans were described as attending in ‘full war paint’; Buck Taylor shared the royal box with Red Shirt; and afterwards all were called on stage by Irving.<sup>35</sup> Through Irving, Cody was introduced to the elite of London society at dinner parties and clubs, and became ‘head hunted’ as the season’s most fashionable party guest.<sup>36</sup> *The Era* described members of the show as likely to become ‘as popular as society actresses’.<sup>37</sup>

It is very likely that Whistler met Cody, and possibly other members of the show, through his friendship with Irving. All three were documented as attending Henry F. Gillig’s 4<sup>th</sup> July celebration at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1887. *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* reported that the ‘eccentric Whistler had the moral courage to sport

**28** Whistler to Edward Pinches, [1/3 July 1883?], GUW 04987 (GUL P627).

**29** ‘The “Wild West” Show’, *The Era* (18 September 1886), p. 10.

**30** Mark Twain to Cody, September 1884 – letter repeatedly reprinted in Wild West publicity campaigns and newspaper reports; Warren (note 7), pp. 294–95.

**31** ‘The American Exhibition and Wild West Show’, *Pall Mall Gazette* (10 May 1887), p. 11.

**32** William F. Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats by Buffalo Bill* (Philadelphia, PA: Standard Publishing Company, 1889), pp. 742–43. Warren (note 7), p. 284.

**33** ‘The Queen at the Wild West Show’, *Daily News* (12 May 1887), p. 3. Queen Victoria wasn’t to go back to the theatre until the 1890s, although she did visit a circus from the Paris Hippodrome in March 1887 (Warren, p. 286).

**34** ‘Mr. Gladstone at the American Exhibition’, *The Times* (29 April 1887), p. 10. *The Times* (6 May 1887), p. 5. ‘Royal Visit to the “Wild West”’, *The Morning Post* (6 May 1887), p. 5.

**35** ‘To-Day’, *Daily News* (20 April 1887), p. 2. ‘Theatrical Gossip’, *The Era* (23 April 1887), p. 8.

**36** Warren, pp. 309–10. Cartoons of Cody and Irving together in *Illustrated Bits* (26 March 1887), p. 7; (21 May 1887), p. 3; (28 May 1887), p. 4. Warren (note 7), p. 310.

**37** ‘The Wild West Show’, *The Era* (23 April 1887), p. 13.

white trousers as well as white waistcoat at Gillig's gay Fourth of July Reception.<sup>38</sup> Cody was caricatured with Stetson, riding boots, cigar and whip standing beside a Native American with feather headdress and three demure young society ladies with fans. The event was attended by Queen Victoria, who, not only Cody, but also Whistler had been courting in his capacity as President of the Society of British Artists; on 20 June 1887 he sent her an elaborately illustrated address, beautifully bound in yellow Moroccan leather, in an attempt to gain a Royal charter for the society. However, the 4 July event was also attended by an organisation that ironically foregrounded a very different aspect of Whistler's promoted self, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts that currently had a delegation in London.<sup>39</sup> Whistler was embarrassed by his Massachusetts origins, and laid claims to Baltimore as his birthplace, identifying with the American South in the Civil War.<sup>40</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> July event was described as a 'private "Wild West" show', and indeed there may well have been some personal conflict played out behind Whistler's carefully fabricated facade.

There is no record as to whether Whistler attended the 4<sup>th</sup> July breakfast at the Wild West camp that morning, an event to which many London-based Americans were invited and were encouraged to stay for the afternoon's performance.<sup>41</sup> Whistler's correspondence makes no mention of which performance(s) he saw, or in fact of any details of his attendance or opinions regarding the event, but his depictions of the Wild West Show must be seen in the context of his other etchings marking Queen Victoria's Jubilee celebrations: his depictions of Windsor Castle (K.329–330), Chelsea (K.331), Westminster Abbey (K.316) and the Naval Review at Spithead (K.317–328). Indeed, despite the romantic figure cut by Cody, Whistler chose not to focus on the man, as he had in previous etchings of artists, musicians and actors, such as Irving, but rather on the spectacle as a whole. Whistler, usually the singular, quiet, invisible flaneur, observing the passing scene, was part of an excitable ecstatic audience while the Wild West etchings were executed, experiencing the full thrill of war whoops and buffalo stampedes. In *Abbey Jubilee* (K.316), Whistler focused in on the tiers of people crammed in to see Queen Victoria, cutting out peripheral detail, giving a vertigo-inducing feeling of intensity and excitement. However, in *Wild West* (K.314) empty space in the foreground distances us from action.<sup>42</sup> Although in *Wild West*, *Buffalo Bill* (K.313) and *Bucking Horse* (K.315) Whistler used a couple of figures in the immediate foreground – two finely dressed ladies in hats; and a man in a bowler hat and woman in hat with feathers, wearing a dress with an elaborate bustle – to ground the scene, the rest of the crowd in the grandstand is cursorily suggested by the etching needle, and there is a lot of foreground empty space.<sup>43</sup>

**38** Codlin, The Showman, 'Our Fourth of July Celebrations', *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (9 July 1887), p. 29.

**39** Rev. Brooke Herford, *The Two Hundred and Forty-Ninth Annual Record of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts, 1886–1887* (Boston: Alfred Mudge & Son, 1887), p. 113.

**40** Whistler talked of the 'taint of Lowell' (Whistler to Deborah Delano Haden, [18/23 May 1896], G UW 13490 (FGA Whistler 22).

**41** Gallop (note 16), pp. 113–14.

**42** See <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/DetailedResults.fwx?collection=art&SearchTerm=46917&reqMethod=Link>.

**43** See <http://www.huntsearch.gla.ac.uk/cgi-bin/foxweb/huntsearch/DetailedResults.fwx?collection=art&SearchTerm=46919&reqMethod=Link>.

No. 1354—Vol. 59 **THE PENNY** MAY 14, 1887  
**ILLUSTRATED PAPER**  
 AND ILLUSTRATED TIMES  
REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL POST-OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER.



"BUFFALO BILL'S" INDIAN FIGHT AT THE LONDON AMERICAN EXHIBITION.  
[SEE "PHILIP'S" LONDON LETTER.]

**Fig. 12.2** "Buffalo Bill's" Indian Fight at the London American Exhibition',  
*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 14 May 1887, front page

Newspaper reports frequently evoked the visual appeal of the American Exhibition, and particularly the Wild West Show, for the artist. The New York correspondent of *The Era* described the 'wild beauty' of the show 'especially at night when lit by the electric lights'.<sup>44</sup> *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* declared: 'It is wonderful to think of this picturesque and fairy-like park and buildings, created with magical quickness on a piece of waste land. And what will it be to see it at night, illuminated by lights equal to half a million candles!'<sup>45</sup> But this was no Cremorne for Whistler. He did not choose to concentrate on the pleasure gardens or fashionable crowds. Neither did he decide to depict the most obvious aspects of the Wild West Show such as the much celebrated fights between cowboys and Native Americans, including 'Attack on Emigrant Train by Indians and Defence by Frontiersmen', 'Attack on Deadwood Stage Coach by Indians' and 'Attack on a Settler's Cabin by Hostile Indians', scenes dramatically described and illustrated in the

<sup>44</sup> 'The "Wild West" Show', *The Era* (18 September 1886), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> 'The American Exhibition', *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (7 May 1887), pp. 295–98.

pages of the popular press (fig. 12.2). Nor did he portray the entertaining ‘Virginia Reel on Horseback’, or the picturesque ‘Phases of Indian Life: Camps, Attack, Dances (Scalp, War and other)’. Despite the title of *Wild West, Buffalo Bill* (K.313), neither did Whistler focus in on the person of Buffalo Bill whose grace on horseback was upheld by the press as an equestrian ideal for the artist; he was ‘the complete restoration of the Centaur’ according to *The Era*. However, Whistler was drawn to ‘the bucking ponies, that were almost impossible to sit’ that impressed Queen Victoria and Gladstone so much.<sup>46</sup> *The Pall Mall Gazette* wrote admiringly of ‘the rearing, trembling creatures seated on whose back “Buffalo Bill” and other famous shots perform their marvellous feats, or whom the reckless cowboys mount regardless of kicking and plunging.’<sup>47</sup> And yet in *Bucking Horse*, the wild mustang that gives the etching its name, possibly the celebrated Dynamite or Happy Jack, who nearly killed one of the Mexican vaqueros, Antonio Esquivel, is almost incidental among the groups of figures in the open space of the arena.<sup>48</sup> The seated figures in the audience, the distant action and empty spaces in Whistler’s etchings of the Wild West arena give an overall suggestion of stillness and calm.

However, at the same time, in a few deft strokes Whistler managed to capture the essence of the scene, for example, the arch of the bucking horse’s back, head down, tail between his legs as he attempts to throw his rider, and two cowboys racing in on horses depicted without legs, effectively suggesting speed and a flurry of dust. In *Wild West, Buffalo Bill* one gets the sense of the horse’s wariness, with legs apart, ready to flee, as it is approached by two cowboys, carefully delineated with their boots, gun belts and hats; Cody in front, identifiable by his moustache and with the paunch of an older man, holds his hand out in a placatory gesture. In *Wild West* (K.314) a few strokes cleverly suggest the swish of a horse’s tail and a mounted figure with a lasso at his side that approaches a group of three loose horses.



**Fig. 12.3** ‘The Wild West Show at West Brompton: The Company Forming in Line’, *The Graphic*, 4 June 1887, p. 585

<sup>46</sup> Queen Victoria’s journal, quoted in Gallop (note 16), p. 101. ‘The American Exhibition’, *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (7 May 1887), pp. 295–98.

<sup>47</sup> “‘Buffalo Bill’ from the Wild West’, *The Pall Mall Gazette* (12 October 1886), p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> “‘Buffalo Bill’s’ Show’, *Daily News* (15 September 1886), p. 5.

The show was as much about costume and appearance, with the dramatic war paint and colourful beaded costumes of the Sioux and Cheyenne men and women, as the impressive rifle shooting and lassoing of steers, but Whistler was apparently not interested in such theatricality (fig. 12.3). Native Americans were depicted at a distance, with feathers, spears and smocks suggested but not defined. For Whistler the focus was equally on the machinery of the event, the curve of the grandstand punctuated by vertical posts and diagonal supports, the timber grid-like platform of the orator Frank Richmond (who welcomed the audience, introduced performers and gave running commentary on proceedings) and the sweep of the painted background scenery. Although, by no means one of Whistler's decorative etchings, one still gets the sense of pattern and placement, with the groups of cowboys, Native Americans and horses carefully balanced for overall effect.

Realism and patriotism were spoken of frequently in the press with regard to the Wild West Show. The *Daily News* declared: 'Buffalo Bill's "Wild West" is simply a section of the otherwise inaccessible life of an American savage frontier'.<sup>49</sup> There is a sense of realism in Whistler's etchings, but not in the presentation of the dramatic events and narration, but rather in showing the performance for what it was, a stage set with a backdrop. In *Wild West, Buffalo Bill* he depicted 'the prosaic chimney-pots of West Brompton' appearing above the 'painted background representing wild mountains and crags', a strange juxtaposition commented on in certain press reviews.<sup>50</sup> Whistler remained dispassionate, with no attempt to involve himself in the drama, visually reminding his audience that art 'should stand alone, and appeal to the artistic sense of eye or ear, without confounding this with emotions entirely foreign to it, as devotion, pity, love, patriotism, and the like'.<sup>51</sup> His decision to depict *The Black Eagle* (K.312), one of the c.200 animals that accompanied the show, could be seen as patriotic, but the proud bird with its spectacular crest was no traditional American eagle, having more in common with African varieties of crested eagle. Whistler as always enjoyed confounding the public in what they wanted from the spectacle. The placement of his butterfly signature in the centre of the arena can be seen as a playful gesture; in *Bucking Horse* the signature is closest to the kicking animal. This small group of etchings can be seen as 'aesthetic scalps', confounding the British public and press with regard to subject matter, spectacle and patriotism.

*The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* saw the aim of the Wild West Show as conciliatory, 'to cement the natural alliance that ought to exist between Britain and the United States. Blood is thicker than water. We are kith and kin'.<sup>52</sup> Whistler's etchings of the Wild West, which were informally part of his Jubilee series, and yet with their unique American subject matter, do seem to bring together the British and American aspects of his character. The etchings certainly seemed to foreground the 'natural alliance' between Whistler and Cody, who were joined in nationality and bloody scalps, as well as a concern for personal appearance, self-promotion and self-invention. It is often debated why Whistler did not cross 'the water' and travel to his native country, making a world tour of his artistic celebrity in a manner akin to Cody. Theodore Child goaded him as to his long postponed American trip: 'I have a suspicion that it is only the damaged state of his own

<sup>49</sup> "Buffalo Bill's" Show', *Daily News* (15 September 1886), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> 'The Queen at the Wild West Show', *Daily News* (12 May 1887), p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> Whistler, 'The Red Rag', 'Celebrities at Home. No. XCII. Mr Whistler at Cheyne-Walk', *The World* (22 May 1878), pp. 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Codlin, "'The Last of the Mohicans" Realised in London', *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times* (7 May 1887), p. 301.

'scalp' which causes him to adjourn so long, if not indefinitely, his promised evangelising trip to America.<sup>53</sup> Possibly Whistler did not want to compete with the tours of enemy chiefs, namely Francis Seymour Haden and Oscar Wilde, and to face the potential hostility and ritual scalplings of American critics. America was a frontier Whistler was in no hurry to cross.<sup>54</sup> His Wild West etchings demonstrate an inclination to remain in the audience where the savages and scalplings could all be safely and aesthetically assessed.



**Fig. 12.4** E. J. W., 'Our Turn Next', *Punch*, 4 June 1887, p. 269.

**53** Theodore Child to Henry Labouchère, [15 December 1886], GUW 13183 (published in *Truth*, 20 January 1887).

**54** For summation of possible reasons see Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr, 'Whistler and America', in *James McNeill Whistler*, ed. by Richard Dorment & Margaret MacDonald (London: Tate, 1994), pp. 35–36.





**Fig. 13.1** James McNeill Whistler, *The Storm*, drypoint, 1861, illustration from Kennedy's catalogue of Whistler's etchings, British Museum, London



**Fig. 13.2** James McNeill Whistler: *Whistler with the White Lock*, drypoint, c. 1878, from Kennedy's catalogue of Whistler's etchings, New York Public Library, S. P. Avery Collection



**Fig. 13.3** James McNeill Whistler: *Whistler with the White Lock*, drypoint, c. 1878, from a private collection, present whereabouts unknown

Grischka Petri

## Wunderlich's Whistler Etchings\*

Excerpts from *Accounts of the Trade in Prints*

Two etchings by James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) form this article's point of departure: *The Storm* (K.81, fig. 13.1) and *Whistler with the White Lock* (K.172, fig. 13.2 and fig. 13.3).<sup>1</sup> Parts of their recently uncovered printing history are a good example of the research approach based on the analysis of galleries' commercial records, namely stock books.

Galleries and commerce as art historical subject

Dealers' memoirs have for a long time been a popular source of art historical anecdotes,<sup>2</sup> but more recently, galleries and their histories have come into the focus of art history, ranging from general studies on art dealing<sup>3</sup> over the subject of dealers and galleries in particular countries<sup>4</sup> to case studies of individual firms and dealers.<sup>5</sup> As a special approach, the research on stock numbers and related commercial data is gradually becoming more popular.<sup>6</sup> Economists such as David Galenson have advocated quantitative approaches for use in art history.<sup>7</sup> Particular enterprises have been the subject of dedicated studies and exhibitions, the best known perhaps La Maison Goupil: an exhibition in Bordeaux and

\* For Margaret, for all she is. I am grateful to the Terra Foundation for their travel grant, which allowed me to study diverse art galleries' archives in New York.

1 K. numbers indicate the catalogue number of Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler* (New York: Grolier Club, 1910).

2 For example the memoirs of Ambroise Vollard, *Ambroise Vollard. Souvenirs d'un marchand de tableaux* (Paris: A. Michel, 1937).

3 For example Hans Peter Thurn, *Der Kunsthändler: Wandlungen eines Berufes* (Munich: Hirmer, 1994).

4 For example Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

5 For example Jan Frederik Heijbroek and Ester Wouthuysen, *Portret van een kunsthandel: de firma Van Wisselingh en zijn compagnons, 1838–heden* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1999).

6 See Thomas M. Bayer and John Page, 'Arthur Tooth: A London Art Dealer in the Spotlight, 1870–71', *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, 9 (Spring 2010), <<http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring10/arthur-tooth>>

7 David W. Galenson, *Painting outside the Lines: Patterns of Creativity in Modern Art* (Cambridge, MS & London: Harvard University Press, 2001).

New York has traced the history and publishing strategies of the Goupil Galleries,<sup>8</sup> and the firm's stock books have been published online by the Getty Institute.<sup>9</sup>

Stock books are a particular sort of source. They provide increasingly relevant data in our times when questions of provenance have become more important from the legal point of view. In addition, they give insights in the primary market for art where prices of works of art sold at auctions only provide information on the secondary market, possible sources being annotated catalogues, art journals or newspaper articles. Olav Velthuis has pointed out essential differences of the working mechanisms of the primary and secondary art markets.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, dealers' stock books enable us to reconstruct historical price levels, not only comparing an artist's prices over longer periods but also comparing different artists' prices. For example, New York dealers Knoedler's stock books reveal that Rembrandt van Rijn's *The Windmill* (1641, B., Holl. 233; H. 179) was priced at \$525 in 1913, when an impression of Whistler's *Nocturne Palaces* (K.202) cost the amateur \$1500.<sup>11</sup> However, in many cases the stock books are not very accessible in releasing their information, and their contents have to be interpreted correctly.<sup>12</sup> In many instances, information about prices and buyers in galleries' stock books are coded, often substituting figures with letters with a password, or coding buyers' names with figures, for example references to a separate book list of transactions.

Fortunately, several stock books of Whistler's dealers have survived. The list of the more important galleries includes P. & D. Colnaghi, and Th. Agnew & Sons, at the time both well established London galleries, and M. Knoedler and H. Wunderlich & Co. in New York City.<sup>13</sup> Hermann Wunderlich (1839–1892) had founded his gallery in 1874. Edward G. Kennedy (1849–1932) became its co-manager in 1885, soon handling all dealings with Whistler and his paintings, drawings and prints. Several of the firm's stock books are preserved in the Archives of American Art, Washington, DC.<sup>14</sup> The stock book for 1889 contains an entry reading:

A. W. Thibaudeau part of bill May 2nd per			
1	Whistler J. Mc. N.	The Storm	£8.-/-
1	dto. d.	Whistler's Portr.	£8.-/-

Alphonse W. Thibaudeau (c.1840–c.1892) was one of the more glamorous art dealers of his time.<sup>15</sup> After modest beginnings around 1873/1874, he became quickly known among the amateurs. Because of his good connections in aristocratic circles, he soon found himself

**8** *Gérôme & Goupil: Art and Enterprise* (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 2000).

**9** [http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting\\_research/provenance\\_index/goupil\\_cie/index.html](http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/provenance_index/goupil_cie/index.html).

**10** See Olav Velthuis, *Talking Prices: Symbolic Meanings of Prices on the Market for Contemporary Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 91–96.

**11** Knoedler & Co., stock book for 1912.

**12** See for example John House, 'The New Monet Catalogue', *Burlington Magazine*, 120 (1978), pp. 678–81 (p. 679).

**13** On M. Knoedler's gallery see Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures. A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 25–27, 35–38, 54–55; on Knoedler's dealings in the 1870s, mostly in reproductive prints under a special agreement with Goupil's, see DeCourcy E. McIntosh, 'New York's Favorite Pictures in the 1870s', *The Magazine Antiques* (April 2004), pp. 114–23.

**14** The H. Wunderlich & Co. / Kennedy & Co. stock books at the AAA cover the years 1879–1915, with gaps.

**15** A proper biography of Thibaudeau, who often is misspelt as 'Thibaudeau', 'Thibaudau' or 'Thibeaudau', is still missing. The best source of information remains Frits Lugt, *Les marques de collections de dessins & d'estampes* (Amsterdam: Vereenigde Drukkerijen, 1921), now expanded and revised online at [www.marquesdecollections.com](http://www.marquesdecollections.com), no. L.2473.

in the position to broker important transactions involving master pieces like Raphael's *Three Graces*.<sup>16</sup> Thibaudeau also became an expert in his contemporary painter-etchers from the Etching Revival, publishing a catalogue raisonné of Legros' etchings, and assisting Wedmore in the compilation of his Whistler catalogue. He had his London offices at 18 Green Street, behind the National Gallery, before he fled to the United States in 1889, as rumours had it, because of gambling debts. Only a few months before leaving the country, he sold the two copper plates for *The Storm* and *Whistler with the White Lock* to H. Wunderlich & Co., as the entry in the stock book reveals.

Two etchings: Whistler with the White Lock and The Storm

1. *The Storm* was etched in 1861. It is dated below Whistler's signature in the lower right of the print. According to a note by Whistler on an impression in the New York Public Library,<sup>17</sup> the man on the left can be identified as the artist Matthew White Ridley (1837–1888), holding his hat, walking against the wind and rain near the banks of the Thames, which can be seen in the background. *The Storm* belongs to a line of etchings drawn while Whistler was spending summer holidays at Sunbury in rainy June, 1861, with Edwin Edwards, Ruth Edwards and friends. Ridley had been one of Whistler's fellow students in Paris in 1856–1857.<sup>18</sup>

Whistler seems to have given a few selected impressions of *The Storm* to friends and family such as Auguste Delâtre and a first state unrecorded by Kennedy to Seymour Haden.<sup>19</sup> A handful more impressions, which remain untraced, were sold before 1879.<sup>20</sup> In that year, it became part of the album of cancelled etchings and drypoints, published by the Fine Art Society.<sup>21</sup> Impressions from this edition are on ivory laid paper, occasionally watermarked 'van Gelder' in script letters or the *fleur de lys* (the 'Strasbourg Lily').<sup>22</sup>

2. The self-portrait with the white lock is more difficult to date. Frederick Wedmore dated it to 1879 in his catalogue of Whistler's etchings,<sup>23</sup> but it was probably made earlier, possibly in 1876 or 1877. Only one impression is signed by Whistler: the one he gave to

**16** Musée Condé, Chantilly.

**17** Acc. no. MEZAP, Samuel P. Avery Collection; see also the entry for *The Storm* in Howard A. Mansfield, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Etchings and Dry-Points of James Abbott McNeill Whistler* (Chicago: Caxton Club, 1909), no. 83.

**18** Katherine A. Lochnan, *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 128–32. Another etching from this suite is *Encamping* (K.82).

**19** Delâtre's print (inscribed 'A mon ami Delâtre // Whistler') was later acquired by Philippe Burty (L.2071) and later, in 1876, sold at Sotheby's, where it was purchased by Alphonse W. Thibaudeau, who immediately sold it to the British Museum (1876-11-11-588). Haden's impression was sold in 1898 by H. Wunderlich & Co., New York, to Charles L. Freer (today in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, 1898.323).

**20** One impression was bought in 1875 for 3 guineas by W. C. Alexander (see Whistler to W. C. Alexander, [March/April 1875?], British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, 1958-2-8-29, GUW 07573), another by Alfred A. Chapman in 1878 for 5 guineas (Whistler to Alfred A. Chapman, 9 August 1878, Library of Congress, Pennell-Whistler Collection, PWC 1/15/4, GUW 07966). Charles A. Howell sold two impressions to Jane Nosedá, printseller at the Strand, in 1877 for an unknown price (Whistler to Charles A. Howell, [16/21 November 1877], GUL Special Collections, Whistler NB 4/9–11, GUW 12740).

**21** These albums of cancelled etchings contain 42, 57 or, in the scarcer variety, 76 etchings; see Ruth E. Fine, *Drawing Near: Whistler Etchings from the Zelman Collection* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1984), p. 41, and M[ary] Lee Wiehl, *A Cultivated Taste: Whistler and American Print Collectors* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan University, 1983), p. 30 (no. 59). Ten of the albums containing 57 etchings were sold by Sotheby's at the Thibaudeau sale on 13 December 1889 and bought mostly by print dealers and publishers.

**22** For example the impressions from the albums in the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow (GLAHA 49987) or the Baltimore Museum of Art (1996.48.11689).

**23** Wedmore, no. 142; Lochnan (1984), p. 280 (no. 173), follows Wedmore.

Samuel P. Avery, today in the New York Public Library.<sup>24</sup> Like *The Storm*, *Whistler with the White Lock* was included in the album of cancelled etchings and drypoints published in 1879 by the Fine Art Society, printed on the same paper as *The Storm*.

The Wunderlich & Co. edition of the etchings

At some time between the printing of the album of cancelled etchings and 1888, Thibaudeau must have acquired the copper plates of *The Storm* and *Whistler with the White Lock*. As soon as they entered the stock of H. Wunderlich & Co., the New York dealers started issuing their own edition of the two Whistler prints. The same stock book recording the acquisition of the plates lists them under the headline 'Our own publications', with 15 impressions of 'The Storm' and 16 of 'Port. of himself'.<sup>25</sup> They were priced at \$20 and \$15. The stock book for 1892 informs us that there were 12 impressions left of 'The Storm' and 13 of the 'Portrait of himself'.

The H. Wunderlich & Co. editions of the two cancelled etchings do not seem to have been marketed as cancelled prints. The dense bundles of drypoint lines in *The Storm* make it difficult to discern the rather faint cancellation lines running in a different direction even in the published album. The plate may have been worked to make these lines even more unobtrusive. The cancellation lines on *Whistler with the White Lock* have also been manipulated. However, the face is weaker on the impressions from the restored plate. In the reprint edition from the restored plates, both prints were, at least in part, printed on bluish and greenish paper. There exists one impression of *The Storm* on blue paper,<sup>26</sup> and several impressions of *Whistler with the White Lock* on pale blue<sup>27</sup> and on pale green (or maybe discoloured blue) paper.<sup>28</sup> These laid papers often bear watermarks such as a postal horn.

To add to the confusion, H. Wunderlich & Co. also seem to have printed parts of their own editions on Japanese paper. This was not an unusual practice, as the stock books reveal. Their editions usually came printed on different papers. When the early impression of *The Storm* on Japanese paper from Seymour Haden's collection came to H. Wunderlich & Co. in 1889, it might well have been an inspiration to pull some impressions on this kind of paper from the restored plate, too. In 1891, Kennedy sold two impressions of 'their' Whistlers to Charles L. Freer. They were both printed on Japanese paper, apparently for the occasion.<sup>29</sup> Another impression of *The Storm* on Japanese paper, today at the Yale Center for British Art, came from the collection of John Caldwell, Pittsburgh.<sup>30</sup>

**24** Acc. no. MEZAP. Samuel P. Avery met Whistler on a regular basis on his annual tours to Europe. Whistler could have given Avery the impression of the self-portrait on 16 June 1876, when Avery and his wife saw Whistler and 'got etchings signed &c', or on 13 June 1877, when Avery had tea with Whistler and gave him a Japanese walking stick. Between 1–3 June 1878, Avery saw Whistler several times and visited the newly built White House; on 7 August 1878, they had breakfast together. In 1879, Avery and Whistler met on 15, 27 and 28 June. See the entries for these dates in *The Diaries, 1871–1882, of Samuel P. Avery, Art Dealer*, edited by Madeleine Fidell Beaufort, Herbert L. Kleinfield & Jeanne K. Welcher (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

**25** H. Wunderlich & Co. stock book for 1889, p. 182.

**26** Fine, *Drawing Near*, p. 41.

**27** For example in the Kupferstichkabinett Berlin (acc. no. 45-1911) and the Library of Congress, Washington, DC (FP-XIX-W576, no. 172).

**28** For example in the University of Michigan Museum of Art, Ann Arbor (1954/1.369).

**29** *The Storm*, Freer Gallery of Art (1891.8) and *Whistler with the White Lock*, Freer Gallery of Art (1891.15). Another impression of *Whistler with the White Lock* on Japanese paper is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (19.821.097). It was once part of the collection of Bryan Lathrop.

**30** L.2005-120.12.

## Marketing the etchings: the purchasers

Who else bought Wunderlich's Whistlers? For the compilation of his catalogue raisonné, Kennedy noted the owners of individual impressions of Whistler etchings in a ledger, unfortunately not always legibly.<sup>31</sup> Kennedy kept adding information about sales of particular impressions. For *The Storm*, his ledger lists 41 owners and purchasers. The British Museum, Bryan Lathrop (1844–1916) and Julian Alden Weir (1852–1919) are listed as existent collectors, most likely of the still uncanceled etching. Several dealers, galleries and auctioneers bought impressions from the Wunderlich edition: the Anderson Galleries at Park Avenue and 59th Street purchased three prints in 1912, 1914 and 1915 for between \$13 and \$15 minus discounts; the American Art Association, an auction house formed in 1883, bought one impression; Obach in London acquired an impression for £2 in 1906; Louis Katz Art Galleries, on 103 West 74th St, bought their impression in 1910 for \$18; and Moulton & Ricketts, art dealers in Chicago, Milwaukee and New York, bought an impression for \$24 minus the 25% trade discount, before going bankrupt in 1914.

To mention just a few from the list of more or less illustrious private collectors of *The Storm*: Henry Harper Benedict (1844–1935) bought his impression in 1906 for \$75, John Caldwell (1839 or 1838–1909), board chairman for the Carnegie Art Galleries, was an early adopter in 1888 for \$24 minus 10%, Walter Steuben Carter (1833–1904) paid \$100 in 1903, Countess Gladys Vanderbilt Széchenyi (1886–1965) only \$75 in 1920, and one impression was bought by one of the Whittemores.

The corresponding list of purchasers of *Whistler with the White Lock* shows some similarities. From the total of 28 prints recorded in the ledger, the Anderson Galleries bought five impressions for prices ranging from \$11 to \$15 (minus trade discounts) between 1908 and 1915; the American Art Association purchased their print in 1914; 'And.'[erson Galleries?] bought an impression in 1919 'to Meder', possibly L. Meder from the Berlin auctioneers Amsler & Ruthardt, and also Frederick Keppel and Louis Katz belonged to the dealers trading in Wunderlich's Whistler etching. Again, Bryan Lathrop was listed as existing owner, and again Benedict and Caldwell were among the buying collectors as well as Walter Stanton Brewster (1872–1954) and Albert Eugene Gallatin (1881–1952). The standard price for the print was \$12.

The overlaps indicate certain distribution patterns – at least for the two 'Wunderlich Whistlers'. A complete survey of the data will give a more detailed and precise picture. H. Wunderlich & Co. had their regular customers, who also prominently figure in Kennedy's catalogue as owners of specimen impressions of the states, such as Henry Harper Benedict. About a third of the prints were sold to the trade. Some impressions can be traced further or from the other end. The Old Print Shop, New York, sold an impression of 'Whistler – Portrait of himself' in 1904 for \$10 to 'Miss Hays', from New York City.<sup>32</sup> This could be Lydia S. Hays, who later gave etchings to the New York Public Library, albeit not including a *Whistler with the White Lock*. Likely the most expensive impression of *Whistler with the White Lock* was the one sold by Knoedler & Co. in cooperation with Colnaghi's to

<sup>31</sup> Private collection, Colby, MS.

<sup>32</sup> Day Book for 1904, The Old Print Shop, New York.

Margaret Watson Parker (1867–1936), Detroit, in 1913 for \$750.<sup>33</sup> Clearly Margaret Parker was overpaying for the Wunderlich & Co. print.

What Kennedy knew: business ethics and scholarly standards

Marketing so-called ‘re-strikes’ and impressions from retouched cancelled copper plates seems to have been a common practice. The stock books of Knoedler & Co. note a *Drouet* (K.55) ‘from restored destroyed state’, sold in 1912 for \$40.<sup>34</sup> Copper plates were a tradable commodity. The plates of Whistler’s Thames Set were acquired by Alexander Ionides in 1869 or 1870, who had them steel-faced, and the set was published by Ellis & Green in 1871. Later the plates went to the Fine Art Society and to Frederick Keppel, a New York print dealer. Keppel had the steel removed from the plates and issued another edition of ‘belles épreuves’ of the Thames Set before cancelling the plates.<sup>35</sup> He also printed new impressions of *Annie Seated* (K.30). It was rather Whistler’s care for the originality of his prints and his self-understanding as a painter-etcher that digressed from the standards of the trade.

It is noticeable that Kennedy does not give any indication about the Wunderlich & Co. edition in his catalogue of Whistler’s etchings. For *The Storm*, he notes: ‘Only four impressions are known before the cancellation of the plate.’ He lists Howard Mansfield and the British Museum as two of the owners.<sup>36</sup> In his catalogue, Mansfield lists as owners, ‘Buckingham, Freer, and Mansfield Collections.’<sup>37</sup> Wedmore described *The Storm* as a ‘scarce dry-point’ in his catalogue, only referring to impressions from the uncanceled plate, and did not change this information in the second edition of the catalogue (1899). The four impressions from the uncanceled plate noted in Kennedy’s catalogue – some of which differ slightly and will have to be described as different states in the forthcoming online catalogue raisonné of Whistler’s etchings – can thus be identified as follows: (1) the first state from Haden’s collection in the Freer Gallery, (2) Mansfield’s print now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, (3) the impression in the British Museum, and (4) the impression from the collection of Clarence L. Buckingham (1854–1913), Chicago, which the Art Institute of Chicago acquired in 1938.<sup>38</sup> In his personal copy of his own catalogue,<sup>39</sup> Kennedy kept a list of the etchings with the number of known impressions. Here, he had crossed out the ‘4’ and written a ‘6’ next to *The Storm*, possibly learning of those impressions that Whistler or Howell sold around 1878/79,<sup>40</sup> but any additional impressions from the uncanceled plate have not yet been located.<sup>41</sup>

In Kennedy’s personal copy of his own catalogue, the information for *Whistler with the White Lock* is ambivalent, indicating 8 impressions of a first state, and six of a second and

**33** Knoedler & Co., stock book, inv. no. 10908. This impression is today in the collections of the University of Michigan Museum of Art, see note 28.

**34** Inv. no. 6843.

**35** Keppel gave a set of this edition of the Thames Set to the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

**36** For the British Museum impression see note 19; Mansfield’s impression is today in the National Gallery, Washington, DC (1949.5.537).

**37** Mansfield, no. 83.

**38** 1938.1936.

**39** Private collection, New York City.

**40** See above, note 20.

**41** In Sigrid Achenbach, *Whistler–Haden und die Blüte der Graphik in England* (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1985), p. 49 (no. 37), the impression in the Kupferstichkabinett Berlin is confusingly described as being both from the uncanceled and canceled plate.

third state each, but all entries crossed out again. The entry in his published catalogue remains silent about impressions from the uncanceled plate. However, he must have known of the etching from Avery's collection in the New York Public Library, as it serves as the illustration of the etching in his catalogue (fig. 13.2). One does not need to be a Whistler connoisseur of Margaret MacDonald's calibre to note the difference between the illustrated print on the one hand and those known from the album of cancelled etchings and Wunderlich's edition (fig. 13.3) on the other. On the impressions from the cancelled plate, Whistler looks like coming from an appointment for a nose job with a very bad plastic surgeon. The artist has literally been defaced.<sup>42</sup>

## Conclusion

Kennedy has obscured important facts about the two etchings in his catalogue of Whistler's etched work. He must have kept his knowledge of the 'special edition' a secret. Mansfield did not publish any information about the new prints from the cancelled plates, and neither did Wedmore in the expanded edition of his catalogue – it is more likely that they were ignorant of the Wunderlich edition than part of a conspiracy. The re-publication of *Whistler with the White Lock* and *The Storm* seems to have been such a clandestine enterprise that the cataloguer who helped publishing the new editions did not even make a note of this in his personal ledgers. However, a proper catalogue raisonné should explain this sort of facts and 'grey' editions, and Kennedy does warn the connoisseur in other instances, for example when describing the final state of *The Model Resting* as an attempt, 'apparently, to restore the [cancelled] plate.'<sup>43</sup> He also states very clearly for the *Drouet*:

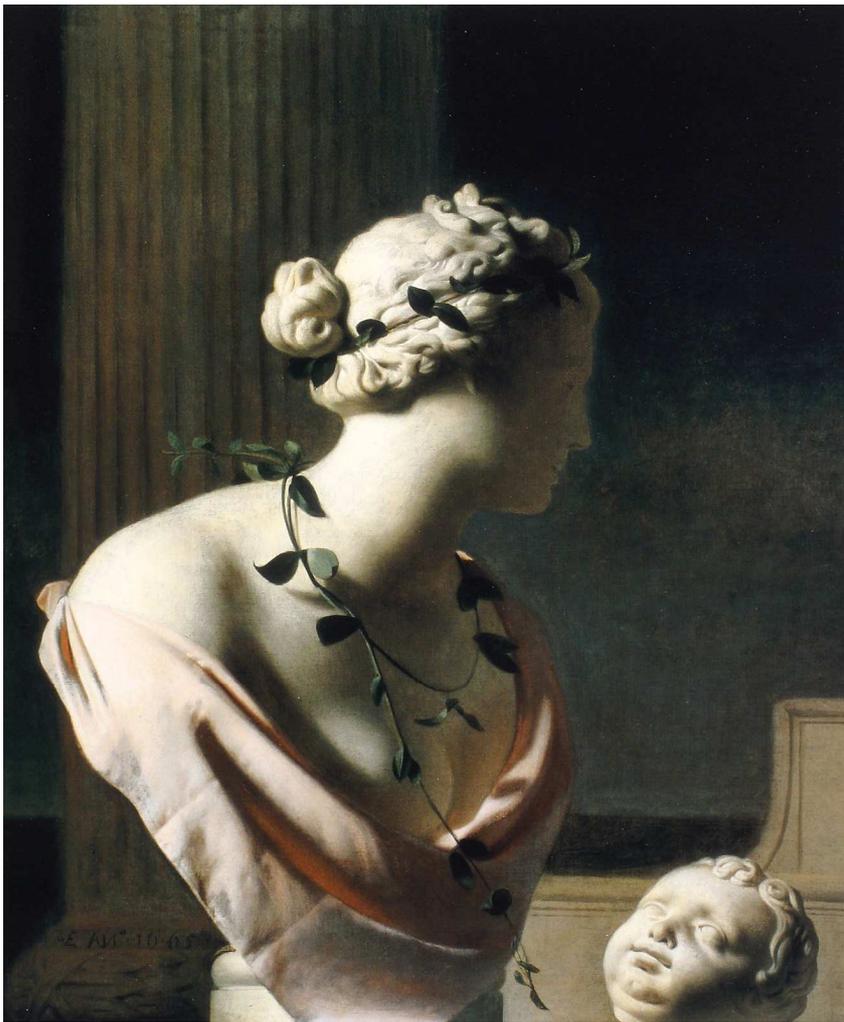
The plate was among those cancelled by Whistler in 1879. It finally fell into the hands of some who had the lines of cancellation, which were light, erased, and the original lines drawn together again. Impressions from the plate in this state are deceptive, but can be detected upon close comparison with an early print. They may be recognized by a slight mark on the nose.<sup>44</sup>

A similar warning or explanation would have been welcome and appropriate for the two Wunderlich Whistlers. The cancellation lines in *The Storm* can easily be mistaken for lines depicting the rainfall. The cancellation lines in *Whistler with the White Lock* have partly been burnished out, to the disadvantage of the etched image, but to the commercial advantage of art galleries ever since. At a recent sale in New York, both etchings were advertised as scarce, and *The Storm* was sold at just under £3,000, while *Whistler with the White Lock* fetched about £5,400.

<sup>42</sup> An auction house recently described the print in the following terms: 'on his face is perhaps a hint of the weariness brought on by the troubles of the Ruskin libel trial.'

<sup>43</sup> Kennedy, no. 100.

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy, no. 55.



**Fig. 14.1** Caesar van Everdingen, *Trompe-l'œil with a bust of Venus*, 1665, oil on canvas, 74 × 60.8 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague

Genevieve Warwick

## Ode to Art and Beauty

John Ruskin's infamous critique of Whistler's *Nocturne in Black and Gold* described the painter as 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'. In the High Court trial that ensued Whistler countered by defending his work as 'an artistic arrangement'. Indeed, the court proceedings turned around these competing definitions of art, and of artistic labour. Ruskin accused Whistler of an act of artistic impudence in tossing off the work in a matter of two days; Whistler argued that the painting represented a lifetime's study of art and art making.<sup>1</sup> It is surely apposite to recollect Whistler's words on this issue in a celebration of Margaret MacDonald's own lifetime study of his art and letters.

It is no less apt to recall Whistler's 'art for art's sake' in examining a painting from my own period of study, seventeenth-century Europe. The painting in question depicts a bust of Venus by the classicising Dutch artist, Caesar van Everdingen (fig. 14.1). My own acquaintance with the painting springs from a 2009 exhibition of *Sculpture in Painting* at the Henry Moore Institute, for which I was asked to write a catalogue entry on this piece.<sup>2</sup> As I worked through the curatorial files on the painting at the Mauritshuis it emerged that it had been restored in 1992 by a group of Dutch conservators including our colleague and joint editor of this volume, Erma Hermens.<sup>3</sup> While the painting is securely dated 1665 in the bottom left corner, yet it is a work that defies easy historical categorisation: without the date it might easily have accrued attributions into the early twentieth century. Its theme is the beauty of art, but it is also a reflection on the nature of artistic labour. For all these reasons it is fitting to offer it for further reflection here.

\*

Let us begin with a description: a bust of Venus stands on a stone ledge before a fluted column. Beside her lies the fragment of a Cupid head, unmounted and tilted on its back so that the child's sculptural eyes look blankly up towards his mythologised mother. Venus instead sits on a circular pedestal, her stone colouring foiled by a cloth of dusky salmon

<sup>1</sup> James MArcone Whistler, *Whistler v. Ruskin – Art & Art Critics* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1878).

<sup>2</sup> Caesar van Everdingen, 'Trompe-l'oeil with a bust of Venus', catalogue entry, *Sculpture in Painting*, ed. by Penelope Curtis, exh. cat. (Leeds: Henry Moore Institute, 2009), pp. 117–19.

<sup>3</sup> My thanks to the curator who made this possible for me, Quentin Buvelot. Thanks also to Robert Wenley and Tico Seifert for their advice on all things Dutch.

that runs under the crest of her shoulder to fall in soft folds beneath her breasts. A trail of myrtle, evergreen and so an emblem of love, encircles her neck and twines through her sculpted hair.<sup>4</sup> Fresh cut, its verdant tendrils seem to animate her stony form, to suggest that the colours of paint may revive the sculptures of antiquity.

This graceful, painted Venus looks into the depths of the painting to recollect the manifold histories of her namesake, the ancient goddess of love and beauty.<sup>5</sup> Her gaze into the distance may be read as a metaphor for the temporal journey her form represents. Light falls across her creamy neck from behind, casting her face in suffused veils of shadow to emblematised her view onto the past. Like to the astrologers' 'transit of Venus' that charted the planet's course through the heavens, this painted goddess recalls the long 'crossed history' of her representation: in word, sculpture and paint. It has always been recognised that her form and pose are those of the starred 'Medici Venus', an antique sculpture of the goddess known throughout the Renaissance that counted among the finest possessions of the great Medici collections.<sup>6</sup> Housed at the Villa Medici in Rome until 1677 it formed part of a Renaissance constellation of collected antiquities that successive generations of aspiring artists studied. Her pose and gesture circulated across Europe in a proliferation of drawings, prints, models and plaster casts taken after her form. Upon her move to join the Medici collections in Florence this Venus became a centrepiece for the Uffizi Palace's famed 'Tribuna', that octagonal room which served to showcase the choicest pieces of the gallery's riches, antique sculptures alongside Renaissance paintings.<sup>7</sup> As commemorated in Zoffany's 1772 painting of connoisseurs visiting the Uffizi 'Tribuna' (Royal Collection, Windsor), the 'Medici Venus' came to stand among the most celebrated of High Renaissance paintings of that goddess, Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. Doubtless in Rome, too, her form was echoed in and among an array of Venuses in myriad manifestations.<sup>8</sup> She was among the most prolific of antiquities, spawning a plethora of imitations and adaptations in Renaissance painting as well as a multitude of copies in marble, as garden ornaments, as plaster casts and as decorative bronze miniatures. Early modern princely collections typically juxtaposed antique statuary with Renaissance painting to display the tenets of a comparison between 'ancients' and 'moderns' of which Venus was a common motif. Everdingen's painting of her sculpted bust thus touches on this illustrious history of Venus on display, of Venus mirrored and compared: ancient / modern, painted / carved.

4 From the extant literature on the painting see Rieke van Leeuwen, 'Venus en Adonis Herenigd', *Tableau*, 15 (1992/1993), pp. 94–101; and the catalogue entry in *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Rotterdam: Nai Publishers), cat. no. 39, pp. 216–18. On the artist see Paul Huys Janssen, *Caesar van Everdingen*, trans. by Diane L. Webb (Doornspijk: Davaco, 2002), cat. no. 28, pp. 85–86 on this painting.

5 On the artistic representation of Venus see Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus: nudité, rêve, cruauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999); *Manifestations of Venus: Art and Sexuality*, ed. by Caroline Arscott & Katie Scott (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), *Venus: Bilder einer Göttin*, ed. by Claudia Denk, exh. cat. (Munich: Alte Pinakothek, 2001); Ekkehard Mai, *Venus: Vergeten Mythe. Voorstellingen van een godin van Cranach tot Cézanne*, exh. cat. Antwerp (Ghent: Snoek, 2001).

6 On the Medici Venus see Guido Mansuelli, *Galleria degli Uffizi: Le Sculture*, 2 vols (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato, 1956–1961), vol. 1, pp. 69–74. On early modern interest in the collection of antiquities see Francis Haskell & Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique: The Lure of Classical Sculpture, 1500–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), and the catalogue entry on the Medici Venus, no. 88, pp. 325–28. From the vast literature on the relationship of the Renaissance with the classical heritage see especially the classic essay by Erwin Panofsky, 'Renaissance and Renascence', *Kenyon Review*, 6 (1944), pp. 201–36; and Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

7 See the discussion of the Tribuna in Haskell & Penny, pp. 53–61.

8 The 1598 inventory of the Villa lists an array of Venuses, F. Boyer, 'Un inventaire inédit des antique de la Villa Médicis (1598)', *Revue Archéologique*, 30 (1929), nos 32, 111, 308, 261–67.

While definitive evidence of the intended setting for Everdingen's *Venus* eludes us yet archival sources and provenance history suggest it was displayed in the artist's own home and studio in Alkmaar. The work is listed in an inventory of Everdingen's property in 1678.<sup>9</sup> If it remained in the artist's possession for thirteen years after its completion it was unlikely to have been destined for a patron. In fact, our piece is one of a pair, its counterpart a painting of a bust of the Greek youth Adonis with whom Venus fell in love.<sup>10</sup> Described in the inventory as 'two pieces in grey', both paintings depict their illusion of sculpture as mirror images, facing each other.<sup>11</sup> If Venus looks away, Adonis seems to gaze across at her. He too bears emblematic foliage in his hair, a victor's crown of laurel, which produced an earlier identification of the bust as an Augustus. The evergreen laurel may also make reference to the Apolline crown of poets, suggesting the immortality of poetry under the aegis of Venus, for love unrequited was the poet's perennial theme. Before Adonis lies a hunting horn, the sign of his mythological history as a huntsman. Like Venus, the cut of the bust is veiled by a drapery, here in a tawny yellow. He too sits on a ledge, and behind both figures runs a parapet that rises to one side. This shared painted architecture between the two canvases suggests a continuum with the actual architecture of the room, likely a frame, within which these works were inserted.

Everdingen enjoyed an ongoing collaboration with the architect Jacob van Campen, for whom he executed paintings to be inset within larger decorative and architectural ensembles. These included overmantles, and the subjects were typically Italianate perspectives or architectural *trompe-l'oeils*, illusionistic renderings designed to confuse the threshold of the painting's fictive architecture with that of its architectural surround, to thrust pictorial space into that of the viewer. The means of rendering often included decorative *grisailles* executed in modulations of grey to imitate the colouring of stone in architecture and its sculptural ornament.<sup>12</sup> The visual evidence suggests that our works, too, were painted to be inset within the architectural ornamentation of a wall, perhaps on either side and above a mantle, door or window frame with which the painted parapets might correspond. If the drapery and the leaves give colour to the work yet the bust and the architectural background are rendered in grey tones, hence their designation as *graaue – grisaille* – in Everdingen's inventory. Illusionistically we view the ledge on which the busts sit from slightly below, suggesting they were intended to be placed above eye level. Both busts as well as the ledge on which they stand project forward beyond the bounds of the picture plane in the tradition of *trompe l'oeil* – paintings that deceive the eye. We can see the tip of Venus's drapery extend outward beyond the edge of the ledge to suggest yet a further projection of space, the puckering of its hem rippling the hang of the fabric across the stone. Equally, Adonis's horn juts out beyond the ledge, its green silk ribbon falling down below. Both are pictorial manifestos of the artist's skill in illusion, the 'force' of mimetic art that can make 'present' that which is not. Semantically Adonis's horn occupies the same 'space of meaning' as the Cupid head within the image of Venus. If the hunting horn is an emblem of Adonis's male prowess the love child Cupid speaks to Venus's archaic powers as a goddess of fertility, fitting ornament to her femininity. Together, the couple

<sup>9</sup> Published by Janssen, *Caesar van Everdingen* (see note 4).

<sup>10</sup> On the painting of Adonis see Leeuwen, 'Venus en Adonis Herenigd' (note 4); Hans Franssen, *Michaelis Collection* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997), cat. no. 20, pp. 102–103; Janssen, cat. no. 28, pp. 85–86.

<sup>11</sup> Janssen, pp. 180–88, published the inventory. Our painting is identified with item 10, 180–1, 'twee stuks, Venus en Adonis graau'.

<sup>12</sup> See the discussion in Leeuwen, 'Venus en Adonis Herenigd' (note 4).

represent beauty. If Venus was the ancient goddess of desire and fertility, beauty was her mantle, her attribute. And her young lover Adonis was no less celebrated for his transcendent if mortal pulchritude. As part of a decorative ensemble within the artist's home and studio the pair may be said to emblematised the beauty of art. In their knowing engagement with the play of visual deception – the semblance of sculpture in paint, the fiction of volume on a flat surface – these *trompe-l'oeils* are 'self-aware images' that reflect on their status as art.<sup>13</sup>

Everdingen's chalky choice of palette with which to render the two busts is signal. It suggests not the translucent whiteness of marble but the milkier matte tones of white clay or limestone plaster. Artists' studios typically owned a selection of plaster casts (as well as prints and drawings) after the most cited antiquities, of which the Medici Venus was ubiquitous. These were commonly stored on ledges set into the walls, like bookshelves, as Everdingen's paintings imitate. This was also the case in connoisseurial collections as in Zoffany's rendition of the 'Tribuna', where the casts served the purposes of a nascent comparative art history. Within the studio these casts and models after antiquities were used both as models in the conception of new works of art, and as a means of training for students and apprentices to develop their visual judgement through drawing after these acknowledged pieces. Paintings, prints and drawings of such studio activity often depict the act of drawing after a cast placed on a ledge before an arched opening, as with Everdingen's painted busts. We see this in images such as Pieter van der Werff's *Drawing lesson after the Medici Venus* of 1715 (Rijksmuseum); or P. F. Alberti's early seventeenth-century *Academy of Painters*.<sup>14</sup> Equally, *trompe-l'oeil* images of the studio wall formed a common genre in early modern Northern art – shelves cluttered with bottles, palettes and brushes; or letter racks with drawings and pencils designed to 'trick' the viewing eye into confusing the illusion of painting with its surroundings, the messy workshop debris of its making. Artists such as Rubens decorated their studios with *trompe-l'oeil* images to proclaim the status of their art as a fiction, illusions to rival those stories of the ancient painters that Pliny had told.<sup>15</sup> If our paintings were intended for Everdingen's studio, then the busts would have projected illusionistically into the artist's working space. If they took their place alongside actual shelves or ledges housing a cluster of plaster casts we may imagine their illusion doubled through the assembled mirroring of fictive and material objects. Indeed Everdingen may likely have used a plaster cast after the *Medici Venus*, and generic classical male heads such as that of his painted Adonis, and his cupid, as his models for these works. If they were grouped in proximity visiting patrons as well as students could have made ready comparison between the casts as references to their antique sources, and Everdingen's translation of their sculptural forms into paint. Sculpture into painting, ancient into modern, the works are consummate declarations of Everdingen's art. They thematise the

**13** On *trompe-l'oeil* see especially Louis Marin, 'Représentation et simulacre', in *De la représentation*, ed. by Daniel Arasse & Louis Marin (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), pp. 303–12; and Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight Into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. by Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). With specific reference to the Netherlands see Celeste Brusati, *Artifice and Illusion: The Art and Writing of Samuel van Hoogstraten* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

**14** On the collection of plaster casts in the seventeenth-century Dutch artist's studio see Frits Scholten, 'The Larson Workshop: Reproducing Sculpture in Seventeenth-Century Holland', *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Nicholas Penny & Eike D. Schmidt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 291–300.

**15** See Elizabeth McGrath, 'The Painted Decoration of Rubens's House', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 41 (1978), pp. 245–77. See also Jeffrey Muller, *Rubens: The Artist as Collector* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). On artists' houses more broadly see *Case d'artisti dal Rinascimento a oggi*, ed. by Eduard Hüttinger (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1992).

means of their making, bringing the world of the studio populated by plaster casts into the mirror of painting's illusion. Together they embody the ideal forms of classical beauty and so of Everdingen's position as a Dutch 'classicist' engaged with the visual languages of antiquity. It is their intention to refer the viewer beyond the specificities of their particular manifestation to a history of art structured by the canons of antiquity. As archetypes of beauty, Venus and Adonis speak to the ideals of this classicism.

Beyond the evocation of plaster Everdingen's paintings make visible the materiality of the artist's workshop in other ways.<sup>16</sup> Indeed every object within them is rendered with an insistent attention to their 'objecthood', the material specificities of haptic 'touch' to evoke a visceral reading of their surfaces. In Venus's pink scarf we see the creases of the fabric where it was previously folded before being deployed as a workshop prop, the details of the hem and the stitching. This same pink-coloured textile can be found in his other works, for example the shawl for the woman in Everdingen's allegory of *Winter* (Rijksmuseum); while Adonis's hunting horn also appears in *Portrait of a Girl as a Huntress* (Antwerp). The pictorial evidence suggests these were veritable workshop props. If we imagine these paintings as decorations for the studio we may further conceive of such props – casts, cloths, horns and foliage – as visibly adjacent. Their concurrence would have amplified the view of the studio as a 'landscape of object-things', and solicited ready comparison between the material and the fictive realm, as with the painted parapet and the decorative architecture of the wall. The comparison was surely intended to engender wonder at Everdingen's skill in rendering a forceful illusion of the world of objects and sculpture through the application of coloured pigment to a flat canvas surface. Paradoxically, their insistent materiality calls attention to the physical means of the painting's fabrication in productive tension with their powers of witness to the transformative skill of artistic illusion. These paintings pictorialise the mimetic training of the 'classicising' artist yet nurtured by a Dutch art of describing. Through them we view the artist at work, 'dressing up' a plaster cast taken from the canons of antique art to be used as a model for a painting. In this sense *Venus* seems to show us the intermediary moment, between the draping of a cast as a studio prop, and its transformation into a figure within a painted narrative as in Everdingen's *Winter*. This sense of 'in between', of an image that hovers at the edge of *techne* and illusion, is heightened by the use of *grisaille*, for this was commonly a preparatory medium in the form of the oil sketch, and was a recognised training practice within art academies as a means to establish tonal relationships without the distraction of colour.<sup>17</sup> Everdingen uses this fabricated 'space' between the workshop and the image, this pictorial view onto a history of its own making, to display the doubled nature of his art as one of translation. Through the colours of paint, the mollient softness of its oil base, he can, Pygmalion-like, seem to make sculpture 'come to life'; at the same time the reference to antique marble and the corpse-like colouring of a *grisaille* suggest the still(ed) life of ancient stones. The painting is poised between the Pygmalion effect, and that of Medusa; as it petrifies, yet it intimates a quickening too.

**16** On the early modern studio see especially Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise: the Studio and the Market* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and her *The Vexations of Art: Velazquez and Others* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); and *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Michael Cole & Mary Pardo (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

**17** On relationships between colour and its absence in early modern art theory see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La couleur éloquente* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989).

In the great comparison or *paragone* between painting and sculpture debated across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Leonardo da Vinci defined illusion as both the measure and the end of art. The scientist and astronomer Galileo Galilei also addressed the *paragone* to argue that art lay in the ‘gap’ between its material means, and its power of illusion.<sup>18</sup> If this debate famously engaged artists to contribute in writing, they also attended to it repeatedly in their works of art. Leonardo, champion of painting, defined his art as like to a mirror. Through his mimetic skill the painter could render all the forms, textures and colours of the world.<sup>19</sup> Thus the two-dimensional canvas could, through art, magically project the illusion of space, volume, depth and projection, as well as the myriad textures of a world of surfaces. Gian Lorenzo Bernini instead championed the cause of sculpture to argue, through his works, that sculpture's art lay in the fiction of ‘colouring’ through the colourless medium of white stone.<sup>20</sup> He worked the skin of his marble to render a surface relief able to orchestrate the play of light across the form into a *chiaroscuro* like that of painting. To represent sculpture within painting was therefore to lay claim to a ‘doubled’ art: that of the mirror's spectre of volume and touch; and the sculptor's illusion of colour through modulations of light and shade alone. It is with this dualism of sculpture in painting that Everdingen's *Venus* engages.

Critics commenting on our painting have noted a purposeful ambiguity of illusion in the painterly rendering of her skin:

[...] while the busts are painted as *trompe-l'oeil* in grisaille imitating marble (*grauwtjes*), blood appears to be coursing somewhere beneath the stone surface. The subtle ambiguity of art seemingly coming to life is enhanced by the use of the coloured drape and laurel wreath and, in the *Venus*, the myrtle vines in natural colour.<sup>21</sup>

If the colouring of the figures is without colour, a creamy impasto over a bluish-gray ground out of which shadows are forged, yet like Bernini's marbled *chiaroscuro* it seems also to feign the illusion of ‘life’. Light and shade intermingle to convey the semblance of softness, of ductile flesh, doubled onto the *grisaille*'s fiction of stone. The gentle lights that convey the curve of her breast also intimate its yielding flesh. This pervasive tenderness of diffused lights and shadows forged through a melting *impasto*, coupled with the flowing lines of her contours and the absence of busy colour, slow the eye into the stillness of statues. Yet the illusion of a lissom body suggests not stone but skin. The dappled play of light across her form seems transient, hinting at the possibility of movement – we see the shadow of the myrtle leaf across the top of her falling drapery. The scumble of coloured shadows in this flesh-pink cloth – reds and blues with ivory lights – enlivens the surface of the bust that it surrounds. Its saturated hue and optical materiality conjoin this rendition of sculpture from the past with the present-day world of things. The myrtle that rings her hair

**18** On Galileo's contribution to the *paragone* debate see Erwin Panofsky, *Galileo as a Critic of the Arts* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1954).

**19** On Leonardo and the *paragone* see Claire Farago, *Leonardo da Vinci's 'Paragone'. A critical interpretation with a critical edition of the text in Codex Urbanitas* (Leiden: Brill, 1991). On the metaphor of painting as a mirror see Daniel Arasse, ‘Les miroirs de la peinture’, *L'Imitation: Aliénation ou source de liberté?, Rencontres de l'École du Louvre* (Paris: Documentation française, 1984), pp. 63–88. For a discussion of relationships between painting and sculpture in early modern European art theory see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *La tache aveugle: Essai sur les relations de la peinture et de la sculpture à l'âge moderne* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003).

**20** On Bernini and the *paragone* see most recently Steven Ostrow, ‘Bernini e il paragone’, *Bernini pittore*, ed. by Tomaso Montanari, exh. cat. Rome (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2007).

**21** Fransen, p. 103.

and neck keeps the undulations of a trailing plant still green, as if uncut from its vine. It both suggests and denies its lifelikeness, in keeping with the 'living' *grisaille*.

Adonis's apolline laurel, the crown of poets, makes reference to a further realm of paragone that compared painting to poetry. Derived from Horace's simile of *ut pictura poesis* – as in poetry so in painting – this 'coming together' of words and images was central to a Renaissance theory of art, and to its structuring of a nascent art history.<sup>22</sup> The mythopoetic traditions of the ancients, the literary loves of the gods, were coupled with their antique artistic embodiments in sculpture and in paint. This synaesthesia of words, objects and images latent in the cultural memory of artists and viewers heightened and intensified each new manifestation within its historical series. Like reflecting mirrors new works might be said to embody within them the echoes and reverberations of the history of that form's representation. To render Venus was to re-collect her past. Thus each successive Venus was infused, imbued with, the verses of the classical poets, the ancient sculptor's forms. If Everdingen's Venus recalls directly the history of her antique renditions in sculpture, and specifically the unfolding representations of the Medici Venus, this history of objects is always interposed with those of a classical mythopoetics. Those who viewed Everdingen's work saw it through shared memories of this legacy from the past, its affective force strengthened by its own history of imitation. If Adonis and Cupid, like the viewer, look upon the goddess, Venus looks away. The suffused lighting of the painted atmosphere suggests a poetic nostalgia for lost Arcadias: mythology's 'golden age' of unhindered pleasure and so the realm of Venus; and of her own fleeting love for Adonis whom she would lose to the bloodied dangers of the hunt. Possessed of a dreamlike interiority she apparently reflects upon herself. Her gaze through the antique architectural frame into the darkening depths of the picture seems to look back on the illustrious history of her own representation as the touchstone of beauty, love and art.

<sup>22</sup> The classic statement is Rensselaer W. Lee, 'Ut pictura poesis: The Humanist Theory of Painting', *Art Bulletin*, 22 (1940), pp. 197–269.



**Fig. 15.1** Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Gertrud Loew / Gertha Felsőványi*, 1902, oil on canvas, 150 × 45.5 cm, private collection.

Sabine Wieber

## London – Vienna\*

Whistler's death on 17 July 1903 did not go unnoticed in Vienna and indeed prompted the city's premier art critic Ludwig Hevesi to publish two substantial essays on the artist.<sup>1</sup> In both pieces, Hevesi lauded Whistler as one of the greatest painters of his time and credited him with the uncompromising advancement of 'painterly painting,'<sup>2</sup> a mode of representation that favoured atmosphere and mood over clinical naturalism:

Er war der größte Maler unserer Zeit, jedenfalls der malerischste Maler. Unumschränkter Selbstherr im Reiche der Stimmungen, deren Unterlage nicht mehr die Körper sind, sondern ihre bloße Farbe. Eine ätherische Welt, wo der Schatten Schlemihls seinen Körper verloren hat, und dennoch eine Welt der Wirklichkeit, weil sie eine der wirklichen Seiten der Welt zeigt, ihre unmittelbarste Seite sogar, den farbigen Schein, der direkt in den Sehnerv einströmt.<sup>3</sup>

Although Whistler's death sent shock waves through artistic communities around the world, Hevesi's celebration of the American-born, London-based artist comes as a bit of a surprise considering that Whistler only exhibited in Vienna on two occasions. He first submitted two lithographs to the Secession's inaugural exhibition in 1898 and then sent one painting to the sixteenth Secession exhibition in early 1903 which was entirely dedicated to the international development of Impressionism.<sup>4</sup> Despite this lack of a physical presence in Vienna, Whistler made a strong artistic impact on progressive Viennese artists who kept abreast with international developments through the pages of *The Studio* and *The Art Journal* (both readily available in Vienna). In addition, local newspapers such as *Die Wiener Presse* regularly reported on important

\* For Margaret MacDonald.

**1** Ludwig Hevesi, 'Whistler,' 28 August 1903 and 'Whistler nach seinem Tode,' 1904 both reprinted in L. Hevesi, *Altkunst – Neukunst: Wien 1894–1908* (Vienna: Verlagsbuchhandlung Carl Konegen, 1909); reprint (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1986), pp. 477–82, 482–89.

**2** Although inseparably linked to Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915), the notion of the painterly already entered German art and architectural historical discourse in the mid-nineteenth century. See for example Ludwig Treschlik, 'Das Malerische in der Architektur,' in *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* (1877).

**3** Treschlik, p. 477.

**4** XVI Secession Exhibition, 'Entwicklung des Impressionismus in der Malerei und Plastik,' 17 January – end of February 1903.

exhibitions at London's key venues such as, for example, the Grosvenor Gallery. As a result, Whistler was certainly no stranger to 'Vienna 1900.'

A more careful look at Hevesi's mobilisation of a very specific critical language to describe Whistler and his artistic practice allows us to detect some fascinating parallels, or connections, between Whistler and one of Vienna's most prominent artists to date, Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). In many ways, Hevesi cleverly employed Whistler's obituary to articulate a clear position vis-à-vis Klimt. Although Hevesi stopped short of casting Whistler into the role of Klimt's artistic father figure, his elucidation of some of Whistler's key portraits such as the artist's iconic 1871 ode to his mother in *Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1* (YMSM 101) or his portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell painted in 1882–1884 (*Arrangement in Black: La Dame au brodequin jaune*, YMSM 242), draw on some of the same rhetoric Hevesi had earlier employed in various published defences of Klimt. For example, Hevesi celebrated Whistler as a genius whose portraits strove towards a higher truth rooted in the soul.<sup>5</sup> Here, one detects echoes of Hevesi's and Hermann Bahr's first critical reception of Klimt's 'painterly' portrait of the young Sonja Knips in 1898, which facilitated as the artist's irrevocable break with historicist convention and unmediated naturalism. In this painting, for example, the airy effects of the sitter's clothing, conveyed through Klimt's employ off delicately nuanced colours, played a key role in suggesting his sitter's youthful vulnerability. Klimt's undeniable connection to Whistler's portraiture can thus be found, at least according to Hevesi, in their shared interest in capturing the ethereal, the poetic and the emotional qualities of their sitters:

Und so malt er [Whistler] den Menschen in seiner Vergänglichkeit, als den ewig Verwehenden und Vergehenden, von dem nichts zurückbleibt, als ein farbiger Schein, und auch der nur für Augen, die solche zarte Visionen noch unterscheiden können.<sup>6</sup>

Klimt's determined quest to arrest the fugitive (in a Baudelairean sense) on his canvases signals a vexing disjuncture between Hevesi's rhetoric and Klimt's material practices – a paradox that continues to fascinate art historians working on the Vienna Secession and European Symbolism to this day.

But let us now temporarily depart from Hevesi's evocative 'Nachruf' and briefly explore one of Klimt's society portraits to see how and why a critic such as Hevesi might have been interested in linking the two artists in the first place.<sup>7</sup> In 1902, Klimt painted the young Gertrud 'Gerta' Loew (fig. 15.1),<sup>8</sup> by which point in time he was reaching the end of his so-called impressionistic phase that began with Klimt's portrait of Sonja Knips in 1898 and concluded with his portrait of Hermine Gallia in 1903/1904. When Gertrud sat for Klimt's portrait she was nineteen years old and about to get married to her first husband, the entrepreneur Dr Johann Arthur 'Hans' Eisler (von Terramare) in 1903.<sup>9</sup> Gertrud's father, Anton Loew, was an ardent supporter of the Vienna Secession and presumably commissioned Klimt after he had seen his portraits of Sonja Knips and Serena Lederer displayed in the Secession exhibitions of 1898 and 1901 respectively. Anton Loew was the second-generation owner of Vienna's oldest and most renowned private sanatorium, the Sanatorium Loew, where Klimt himself had convalesced and where most

<sup>5</sup> Hevesi, 'Whistler,' p. 478.

<sup>6</sup> Hevesi, 'Whistler,' p. 481.

<sup>7</sup> *Klimt und die Frauen*, ed. by Gebert Frodl & Tobias Natter (Cologne: DuMont, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Klimt's sitter was later known by her second-married name Felsöványi, which explains the art historical identification of the portrait as *Gertrud Loew / Gertha Felsöványi*.

<sup>9</sup> Eisler came from a prominent entrepreneurial family in the Habsburg Empire and his grandfather had founded the Empire's first canning factory.

famously, Gustav Mahler died in 1911.<sup>10</sup> Klimt's portrait of the young Gertrud dressed in a delicate Reformkleid formed part of a series of portraits of highly fashionable Viennese society ladies from the city's liberal, and often but not exclusively Jewish, money-nobility. Klimt's *Gertrud Loew* was first exhibited in the Secessions 'Klimt Kollektive' of 1903, an early 'retrospective' of Klimt's works to date. Hevesi described Klimt's portrait of Gertrud Loew in this exhibition as follows:

Man sehe das nervig pointierte Wesen der vor einigen Jahren gemalten Dame in Schwarz und als Gegensatz das blutjunge weiße Fräulein [Loew] von heuer, rein hingehaucht, mit den vier blaßlila Seidenbandstreifen längs des duftigen, knittrigen Kleides. Jeder Streifen schlingelt sich im schillernden Fall des Stoffes anders und wieder anders; ein Zufall, in dem der feinste malerische Plan liegt.<sup>11</sup>

Hevesi's evocative description of Klimt's portrait of Gertrud Loew recalls the language he employed to talk about Whistler's aforementioned portraits of his mother and Lady Archibald Campbell.<sup>12</sup> Hevesi's poetic reading of Klimt's work endeavoured to convey the ethereality and fragility of Klimt's sitter through delicately placed paint strokes drawn from a carefully chosen palette of subtle shades of whites, greys and blues. In his emotionally charged representation of Gertrud Loew, Klimt succeeded in capturing what Hevesi advanced as characteristic of Whistler's portraits, namely 'das Vibrieren von etwas Unstäten, sehr Nervösem, Zinkerndem und Flackerndem, wie Kerzenflamme am Tage, in freier Luft'<sup>13</sup>, dissolving the material into the atmospheric and the fugitive. In this way, Klimt's early society portraits, his 'ins Feinere und Feinste verschwebenden Damengestalten' were seen to be indebted to Whistler's 'pièces fugitives'.<sup>14</sup>

As my essay on some of the interesting connections between London and Vienna originally postulated by Hevesi draws to a close, another albeit much more technical link between the two artists' portraiture practices should be pointed out. Namely, the physical format of Klimt's Loew portrait, which positioned his sitter into a very tight and elongated picture space measuring 150 × 45.5 cm. Even more so than in Whistler's typically long and narrow canvases, Klimt pushed Gertrud Loew right to the foreground of his pictorial space which made for a rather disturbingly intimate relationship between spectator and subject. Keeping in mind the enervated state of the sitter, this physical proximity between viewer and viewed makes it easy to imagine how Gertrud Loew's nervous energy could easily vibrate into the viewer's space.<sup>15</sup> Klimt had previously employed such elongated canvases, but really pushed this strategy to its limits in his portrayal of the young heiress to Vienna's famous sanatorium.<sup>16</sup> But let me close this short excursion from Glasgow via London to Vienna by mentioning a final connection between

<sup>10</sup> Frodl & Natter, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> L. Hevesi, 'Zur Klimt Ausstellung,' in *Acht Jahre Sezession: März 1897 – Juni 1905* (Vienna: Verlagsbuchhandlung Carl Konegen, 1906); reprint (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1984), pp. 451–52.

<sup>12</sup> 'The restricted, planar space and the monochromatic colour scheme suggest the influence of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, whose portrait of his mother has been claimed as a major influence on Klimt's oil portraits of the late 1890s, and certainly had an impact on his drawings as well.' Alice Strobl, *Gustav Klimt: Die Zeichnungen, 1878–1903* (Salzburg: Galerie Welz, 1980), p. 123.

<sup>13</sup> Hevesi, 'Whistler,' p. 481.

<sup>14</sup> Hevesi, 'Whistler,' pp. 481–82.

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, access to the painting is not possible at this point in time due to its problematic provenance history. Gertrud Felsövényi had to leave her extensive art collection behind when she had to flee Vienna in 1938. She died in California in 1961 without ever having seen any of the works formerly in her family's possession.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Gertrud Loew / Felsövényi inherited her father's sanatorium upon his death in 1907. For more of a family history and (highly problematic) provenance history of Klimt's portrait see Sophie Lillie, *Was einmal war: Handbuch der enteigneten Kunstsammlungen Wiens* (Vienna: Czernin, 2003), pp. 356–59.

Whistler and Klimt that must be situated within the contemporary reception of the two artists in their respective milieus. Both Whistler and Klimt experienced their share of antagonism from fellow artists (Whistler–Ruskin) and fellow critics (Klimt–University Painting controversy) which led Hevesi to observe that ‘Diese Londoner Whistlerhetze, der die Pariser Manethetze vorangegangen war und der die Wiener Klimthetze nachfolgt, ist echtetes neunzehntes Jahrhundert.’<sup>17</sup> But it is for this very reason that the nineteenth century makes for such lively and fascinating art historical study!

<sup>17</sup> Hevesi, ‘Whistler nach seinem Tode,’ pp. 482–83.





**Fig. 16.1** Viktor Stretti, *The entry of President Masaryk into Václavské náměstí (Wenceslas Square), Dec 1918*, charcoal drawing, signed and dated

Robert Gibbs

## A Whistlerian in Prague: Viktor Stretti and Joseph Pennell\*

In the heady days of December 1918, the Great War behind them and a new future before them, the excited citizens of Prague poured into the Wenceslas Namesti to acclaim the founding of the new state of Československo (Czechoslovakia), the Slav-speaking states detached from the Habsburg Empire and, for the first time in their history, joined in a new, rather short-lived country. On 21 December the provisional and future president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, returned from years of exile and lobbying the leading politicians of the world with a triumphal entry through the leading public space of the capital. Among them, or rather from a window high above, the Czech painter and print-maker Viktor Stretti feverishly sketched the crowds below. On one of his first drafts he noted at the top of the page ‘this was drawn on a leaf of the sketchbook from Joseph Pennell’ (fig. 16.1).<sup>1</sup>

This endearing personal note records a close association with Whistler’s first major biographer, who was also in his own right a fine descriptive artist in command of many of Whistler’s personal artistic achievements.

‘Viktor Stretti (1878–1957) was a well known Czech etcher and lithographer,’ runs the briefest of entries in Wikipedia; Stretti does not appear in Grove online at all, though the *ArtBohemia* website gives a much fuller account of his career, including his association with the painters T. F. Simon and H. Boettinger. Yet Stretti was indeed a notable figure in the artistic circles of Prague in earlier twentieth-century Prague, a painter as much as a printmaker, as several photographs and drawings of him in the company of other prominent artists of his generation attest. Most fascinating among these is perhaps the caricature by Hugo Boettinger showing him as a tall Whistlerian figure preening himself before a cheval mirror.<sup>2</sup> His height and slender curving figure more than fit the role, but his tight cropped hair and disconcertingly narrow moustache suggest a more urbane and direct personality strikingly represented in a mature self-portrait.<sup>3</sup> These qualities were to stand him in good stead as he lived through not only the pain of the 1914–1918 war but the rapidly changing art scene at the heart of Central Europe.

\* Dedicated to Margaret in celebration of a long friendship and collaboration as colleagues, and to Olga Pujmanová for introducing me to Viktor Stretti’s work as well as many other acts of friendship over many years.

1 ‘kresleno na škerzbók [?] od Jos. Pennella’.

2 [www.tfsimon.com/new\\_kar23.jpg](http://www.tfsimon.com/new_kar23.jpg).

3 Private collection, Prague.

Stretti had grown up among a generation that looked to Paris for a new living art, a 'Style of Youth', even if Czech designers and architects generally looked to the imperial capital, the Vienna of Otto Wagner. Mucha is, of course, the best known of the Czech 'Art Nouveau' painters, but a substantial number of other artists went there and learned a freer descriptive style to portray the bustling streets, changing fashions and romantically decaying streets of the new and old quarters of Prague. Stretti's early paintings, of his wife and others, depict the romantic and mysteriously lost profiles of the ideal wife and beloved, their large hats, sensuously tailored waists and flowing hair, but increasingly his art focused on the landscape, or rather the townscape that the Impressionists had placed at the centre of the new vision. But of course, this was not, never had been, a purely French creation, even if the detached observer's standpoint was. The emotive illustrations to Dickens, and perhaps Doré, had darkened the comfortable view of the flâneur, and that most brilliant of second-passport holders, James McNeill Whistler, had managed to combine the insouciance of the Impressionists with the blunter visual tones and something of the veiled threat of the English, illustrators and PRB fashionistas alike.

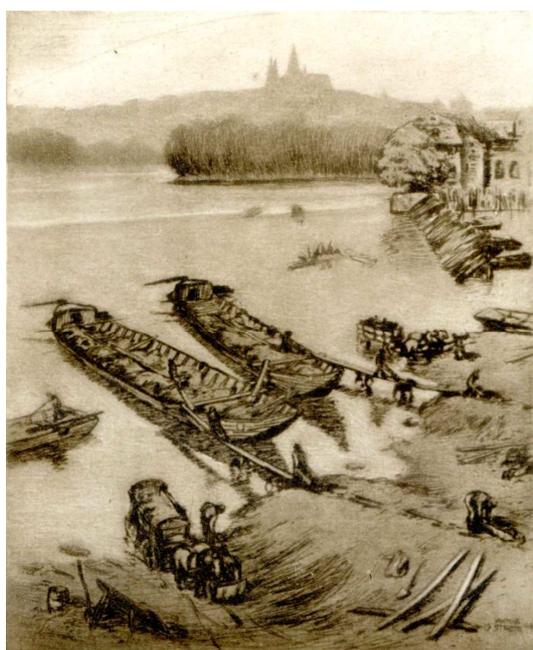


**Fig. 16.2** Viktor Stretti, *Joseph Pennell in his London studio*, lithograph

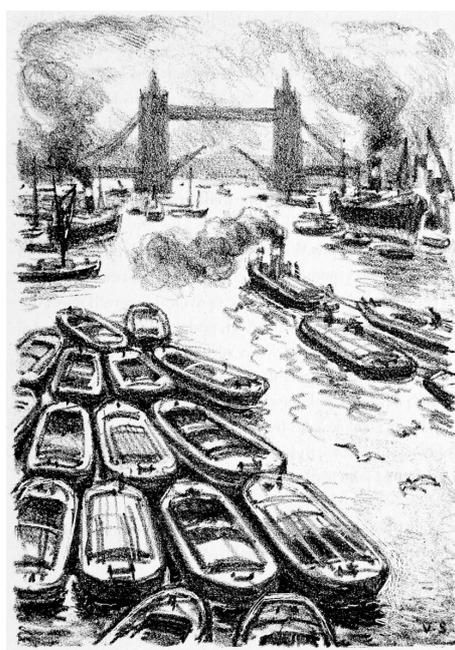
Stretti clearly knew and deeply admired Whistler's art, its simplicity and detachment from the optical complexities of Impressionist light and colour theory, his mysteriously simplified expressions of the London landscape. There are early beach scenes that echo some of Whistler's oil sketches in blue and pink. Even more, given his own clearly expressed involvement with the graphic arts, he was drawn to Whistler's graphic work. Stretti's preference, generally was for the softer touch of the lithograph, and even his etchings tend to a broader line and contrasts of broad tones. In this he was perhaps

encouraged by Pennell's own interest in the medium. While his interest in atmospheric light and shade draws on the master and his follower, Stretti was increasingly identified with the depiction of historic Prague enlivened but much less transformed than London or Paris by the industrial age, a record that includes numerous oils in the Prague collections as well as his prints. In his study of the 1918 celebration the tonal interests of Whistler and especially Pennell are reflected in rays of sunlight bursting into the piazza in front of the National Museum faded by the haze. It was developed into at least two further compositions, a coloured pastel and a lithograph, in which these qualities are gradually stiffened, in favour of a sharper definition of the narrative, in particular the roadway dividing the crowd.<sup>4</sup>

In 1913 Stretti went to enjoy the artistic riches of Paris and London, Diaghilev's Ballet Russe with Nijinsky and the designs of Bakst, their exotic brightness reflected in some of Stretti's later paintings, concerts conducted by Nikisch and Toscanini, and an entrée into the circle of the publisher, Fisher Unwin, and his niece Blanche, a close relative of Bernard Shaw. In 1932 he published a short memoir devoted to the high point of this visit, an encounter with Pennell which became a close albeit brief friendship.<sup>5</sup> It includes a front-view portrait mask on the title page and a view of Pennell wiping down a lithography stone, a subject he worked up into a separate lithograph as well (fig. 16.2).



**Fig. 16.3** Viktor Stretti, *Barges on the Vltava in Prague*, etching, signed and dated '1904[?]'



**Fig. 16.4** Viktor Stretti, *London towards Tower Bridge*, lithograph

But it is also a celebration of the sights of London, with a view of Westminster across Hungerford Bridge, reminiscent, of course, of Monet, and a high view of the Thames to Tower Bridge with an expressive heap of barges seen from on high (fig. 16.4) that suggests Whistler's love of quasi-abstract geometry. Barges have a similar role in one of Stretti's earlier etchings of Prague across the Vltava to the castle hill (fig. 16.3). The slim volume

<sup>4</sup> For the pastel, signed and dated 'Viktor Stretti 21.12.1918': <http://eakuce.antiques-auctions.eu/en/archiv/big/title/16/0/20/1/> and for the lithograph, similarly inscribed: ArtBohemia: [www.artbohemia.cz/Stretti-viktor](http://www.artbohemia.cz/Stretti-viktor).

<sup>5</sup> V. Stretti, *Joseph Pennell*, Praha, Vytiskla Průmyslova Tiskarna, 1932.

has a plain grey card cover and label: its simplicity and concern for materials, along with the wide spacing of its pages, suggest that Stretti was very conscious of Whistler's own habit of publishing personal volumes and of their elegantly minimalist presentation. A sailing barge at the end of the text contrasts with the steaming tugs of the Tower Bridge scene, while the publishing details are concluded with a hansom cab casting its shadow across the page as if caught in actual sunlight.

Within a few pages Stretti has moved away from the notional subject of his memoir to a wider view of the city, and in his text he hints at the strains that accompanied the enthusiasm of his encounter as he notes the American's love of things Greek and suspicion of the Slav nations. One senses the tensions building up across Europe around the suppression of the Slav peoples by the competing Habsburg, Turkish and Russian empires. Stretti hoped Pennell would come to Prague, but he didn't. He returned to America, while Stretti's hostess Miss Blanche went to Canada. Stretti, of course, did return to Prague, and one imagines that his explicit choice of a leaf of a sketchbook of Pennell's for the celebration of his own nation's liberation was an artistic tribute as well as a momento of their slightly fraught discussions of European affairs.



Patricia de Montfort

## Whistler in the Twentieth Century

In April 1892, Whistler's landmark retrospective exhibition 'Nocturnes, Marines & Chevalet Pieces', confirmed his status as a living artistic master. His works were entering public collections – his portrait of Thomas Carlyle was acquired by the City of Glasgow in 1891 and soon afterwards, the French government acquired his celebrated portrait of his mother for the Musée du Luxembourg, then the French national gallery of living artists. With these successes (tempered by irritation with the artistic profiteering of his early British patrons), Whistler recruited dealers to inflate the market for his work and sought new patrons overseas. In the newspaper world, he was a leading celebrity, his bitter, witty public persona known to audiences world-wide, thanks to international newspaper syndication and the publication of his collected writings *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.<sup>1</sup> Crucial to the survival of his critical reputation (as Whistler was well aware) was encouraging the archival treatment of his work. As he wrote to his patron, the American railroad man Charles Lang Freer in 1899: 'I think I may tell you without the least chance of being misunderstood, that I wish you to have a fine collection of Whistlers!! – perhaps The collection'.<sup>2</sup>

A cloud of biographers and cataloguers was also gathering: his life and work were being recorded and classified through the work of print cataloguers<sup>3</sup> and his indefatigable biographers the Pennells who, he complained, were 'bent on making an "Old Master"' of him before his time.<sup>4</sup> Their carping 1908 memorial<sup>5</sup> imposes on him an aura of pre-ordained greatness that conformed to their narrative of his artistic 'struggle' and 'neglect' in England (reflecting a nineteenth-century tradition of spiritual biography). Others followed, from those written by former associates like Mortimer Menpes and Thomas R. Way<sup>6</sup> to hack productions of the type Whistler liked to term 'Eminent Popular Painters.'<sup>7</sup> The

1 First published by W. Heinemann in 1890. The situation was further amplified by the attempts of American journalist Sheridan Ford to publish his own version of it.

2 Whistler to Freer [29 July 1899], GUW 03196 (Freer–Sackler Gallery, FGA Whistler 40).

3 As in works by Thomas R. Way (*Mr. Whistler's Lithographs*, London: Bell & Sons, 1896), E. G. Kennedy (*The Etched Work of Whistler*, New York: Grolier Club, 1910) and others.

4 E. R. Pennell, *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1921), p. 198.

5 J. & E. R. Pennell, *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Heinemann, 1908).

6 E.g. Mortimer Menpes, *Whistler as I Knew Him* (London: Black, 1904).

7 Whistler to E. & J. Pennell, 21 February [1894], GUW 07785 (LCPC, Box 272).

Pennells continued their canonisation over the next three decades with over thirty related articles and books – with titles like ‘The Triumph of Whistler’ (1912) and ‘Whistler as I Knew Him’ (1934).

To this group we could add a third: Whistler’s vivid presence in the close-knit world of London society in the late nineteenth century meant that he features with almost monotonous regularity in the memoirs of leading personalities of the period such as Ellen Terry (1908) and Lillie Langtry (1925).<sup>8</sup> With this outpouring (and reprints of *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*), Whistler’s acerbic public persona, known in his lifetime largely through the newspapers, was preserved in a permanent form. Meanwhile, his art, preserved in galleries and notable by its low-toned reticence, competed with the collective memory of his shrill lifetime presence.

So what happened later, when Whistler’s art had been ‘archived’ by museums, when it seemed no longer ‘modern’ or ‘radical’? Would his art live beyond his personality? Did Whistler’s art, as he put it, still ‘have much to do’ in the twentieth century?

The first problem was that the backdrop had changed to one neither conducive to Whistler’s personality nor his art. ‘I fear his delightful art will diminish,’ wrote the American critic Frank Jewett Mather in 1927: ‘He had the magnificent background of Victorian London and the Royal Academy. His exotic brilliance too easily dominated such a scene.’ Whistler’s art was required to find a new place against a different, more austere background of the 1920s and 1930s that lacked easy luxuriance of *fin de siècle* British society. It is true that by the 1930s Whistler’s pictures fitted better, as one observer put it, ‘on the walls of the modern house than in the homes of 40 or 50 years ago, when rooms contained heavy hangings, a great deal of furniture and china.’<sup>9</sup> The harmonious environment that Whistler had fought for to hang his pictures became a cultural norm; in a sense his pictures had arrived in their age.

But the pictures themselves were still out of step. For James Laver in the 1930s:

[Whistler] was too personal and too sophisticated. The neo-primitives of the modern studios, the admirers of the Negro art, the ‘strong’ painters of today can have little use for an artist whose canvases were the epitome of all that is refined, civilised and reticent.

A preoccupation with pure colour and expressive paint handling united recent generations of artists from Van Gogh to Piet Mondrian. After 1912, Mondrian’s highly formalised geometrical arrangements and emphasis on horizontal and vertical grids seemed far removed from Whistler’s restrained, low-toned effects. Picasso, de Vlaminck and others – Emil Nolde, Ernst Kirchner – were fired by the art of Africa and the Pacific. Modern art retained its obsession with reductiveness yet was fascinated by what was interpreted as the exoticism, spontaneity and colour of certain other cultures. It is worth noting the claim of a former employee of the New York firm Keppel’s (who had long handled Whistler’s etchings) that the business closed in the early thirties because the demand for black and white prints had collapsed and Keppel’s ‘wouldn’t handle the modern colored things.’<sup>10</sup>

**8** Ellen Terry, *The Story of My Life* (London: Hutchinson, 1908); Lillie Langtry, *The Days I Knew* (London: Hutchinson, 1925).

**9** Duchess of Atholl quoted in October 1935 at the opening exhibition of the Whistler collection at Glasgow University (Glasgow University Library, chronological Whistler Press Cuttings books).

**10** Harry Katz, quoted in Elisabeth Stevens, ‘The Rise, Fall and Rise of the Whistler Print Market,’ *Art News* (November 1972), n.p.

Also questioned was whether the essential tenets of Whistler's reductionist aesthetic – that he promoted so vigorously and personally, would stand up as historical distance grew. An early critic<sup>11</sup> admitted that 'The chief [...] cause for which Whistler contended in his talk, in his pamphlets and lectures is now reckoned a gained cause.' But Jerome Mellquist, while asserting that Whistler 'served as a bridge from Europe to America' quotes the artist Boardman Robinson as saying that when he studied in Paris early in the twentieth century, his fellow American students were already 'trying to break away from the Whistler influence.'<sup>12</sup>

Alongside this, the first substantial critical attacks began. It worried artists and critics that Whistler had tried so hard to stand aloof from the social and moral preoccupations of society that he succeeded too well. 'Whistler stood for that impossible thing, a cosmopolitan art',<sup>13</sup> argued Charles Marriott in 1920:

[...] it is art divorced from life and depending entirely upon culture<sup>14</sup> [...] Lacking the imagination, or perhaps the courage, to translate the facts of nature boldly into terms of his medium, he waited for or invented conditions in which the facts would not be too obvious and made them decorative by arrangements that were entirely lacking in the logic of design.<sup>15</sup>

The German critic Julius Meier Graefe hurled the same accusation of wanton isolation at Whistler (whilst at the same time bracketing him with a French artist, Henri Fantin Latour):

Both stand aloof from the great artistic achievements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the one deliberately, the other involuntarily. Neither was a creator in the true sense, both transformed inherited materials, and the results of their activity were not indispensable to modern art development.

This theme – Whistler's over-detachment from society continues elsewhere. Here is Roger Fry:

The gulf which separates him from men like Degas, Monet and Renoir, is immense. [...] they are all interested in life, ironically, scientifically, or lyrically as their temperaments incline. [...] But Whistler stands alone untouched by the imitations of life, protesting that beauty exists apart, that the work of man's hands is fairer than all that nature can show. He is a monument to the power of the artist's creed in its narrowest interpretations.<sup>16</sup>

So Whistler is a kind of artistic absolutist – heroic – but in an era that still counted on canons of art historical genius and stylistic categorisation – a nihilistic figure – without legacy.

Identity and national school, then, were central to the arguments about Whistler's reputation in the twentieth century. American-born, Paris-trained and London-based for much of his career, Whistler declined to associate himself with any national school. It was

<sup>11</sup> Anon., 'Histoire de J. McN. Whistler et de son Oeuvre,' *Edinburgh Review*, 201, no. 412 (April 1905), p. 445.

<sup>12</sup> Jerome Mellquist, *The Emergence of an American Art* (New York: Scribner, 1942), p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Marriott, *Modern Movements in Painting* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1920), p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> Marriott, p. 81.

<sup>15</sup> Marriott, p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Roger Fry, 'Watts and Whistler,' *Quarterly Review* (April 1905), p. 614.

difficult to categorise Whistler according to traditions of art historical connoisseurship and tempting to claim ownership of him. In the 1930s, seeking to frame a distinctly American art historical narrative, Eugene Neuhaus declared, '[Whistler's] belonging to us today is not merely admitted but proudly insisted upon by all Americans' in the same breath as his claim that '[Whistler] looked upon his mission in life as more importance to art than any special country, school or doctrine.'<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Julius Meier Graefe claimed that Whistler was 'fundamentally an unfrocked PreRaphaelite' and thus an English artist rather than a French or American one: 'The hundred skins in which nature and his own dexterity in disguises enveloped him conceal a perfectly English core.'

But by the 1940s, others were arguing that Whistler had left a wider legacy if not a school. J. W. Lane's view that Whistler had 'found English painting anaemic, frigid, timid, and anecdotic and gave it an aesthetic foundation [...] it has kept ever since' hints at his rehabilitation.<sup>18</sup> To this writer, in the grim depths of the Second World War, Whistler's art seemed to represent sanity:

He gives us the feeling that life, though [...] a long pull upstream, can nevertheless be viewed steadily and whole [...] to the banal, which affronts the modern eye and ear in the vulgarities of press and radio, Whistler opposes the well-thought out, the planned, the sensitive approach.<sup>19</sup>

Subtlety and aesthetic attitude seemed to speak to the modern world and matter more than national identity or school.

Post-war, Whistler's reputation reflected new preoccupations. The conciliatory and unitary mood of the body politic seemed to correspond with the austerity and harmonic emphasis of Whistler's art. In addition, the state's role in artistic production increased (indeed the Arts Council was one of the earliest institutions of the welfare state)<sup>20</sup>. This worried some. In his essay, 'Art After the War,' Kenneth Clark feared that a greater role for the state in 'public' art would mean that artists would lack freedom to experiment. He quotes Whistler's famous polemic: 'Art is a "whimsical goddess, and a capricious, her strong sense of joy tolerates no dullness"', to claim him as a free-spirited capitalistic agent of art.<sup>21</sup>

Others claimed a role for Whistler as a proto-modernist, especially in Britain. New forms of art had emerged – Abstract Expressionist and Minimalist painters especially – that sought early modernist origins: 'Today, partly because of Whistler's warfare, abstract painters are not obliged to defend themselves.'<sup>22</sup> This sense of gratitude remained through the 1950s and 1960s: 'By his mastery of the art of simplification he exorcised the demon of irrelevant detail that had haunted British art for so long', wrote Eric Newton in late 1960 of the first major show of Whistler's work in London for some fifty years.<sup>23</sup> However, questions around his artistic legacy and the sustainability of his reputation remained unresolved. It was easier to dwell on the well-preserved personality and *bons mots* and, because his art often defies categorisation, to confuse elusiveness with shallowness. Basil Taylor pointed towards the problem in the 1960s: 'If one had to find a simple answer to

<sup>17</sup> E. Neuhaus, *The History and Ideals of American Art* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 187–88.

<sup>18</sup> James W. Lane, *Whistler* (New York: Crown, 1942), p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Lane, p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> Founded 1946.

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Clark, 'Art After the War,' *World Review* (1940) (chronological Whistler Press Cuttings).

<sup>22</sup> A. E. Gallatin 'The Gentle Art of Showing Whistler,' *Art News*, 46, no. 3 (May 1947), p. 18 (chronological Whistler Press Cuttings).

<sup>23</sup> Eric Newton, 'Butterfly and Prophet,' *Guardian* (1 Sept 1960) (chronological Whistler Press Cuttings).

why he has not had a sustained reputation I think it might be that his work does not altogether present a single positive and firm identity. The character of his art is elusive and fragile as its physical and substance.<sup>24</sup>

Whistler's ambivalence about his artistic and national identity (amplified by subsequent critics) and his constant questioning as an artist means that his reputation will always be under scrutiny. In this sense, he is neither fully Victorian nor modern. Identity and reputation are perhaps two separate things – one can practice multiple identities but if one wants a certain reputation, it is better that the world only knows a single artistic identity. It may have been Whistler's mistake to wear his reputation so publicly in his lifetime, subjecting it to constant analysis. Indeed it is notable that in the 1990s Whistler's work was charged with the same deficiencies as in the 1890s – lack of emotional engagement with the subject or with life (as Fry charged), of painterly substance, excessive stylistic eclecticism. It perhaps has taken a refocus of attention on documenting his art and life from the mid 1970s to begin a process of re-evaluation that continues today.

What has emerged has been an attempt to give Whistler's art back its sense of place and subject matter (which he himself often denied it) and to suggest that Whistler could create his own synthesis of French Realism and British Romanticism without belonging to either camp. New historicist approaches to studying Whistler have located his art more acutely in its socio-economic context. More recently, the publication of his correspondence has allowed his private voice to be heard more clearly above an unceasing Whistler mythology. Previous notions of linear cultural and technological progress have long since been questioned and we are more content today with the idea of locating Whistler's art at what Charles Hall, writing in 1994, calls the 'hinge of artistic transformation.'<sup>25</sup> The ethereality of Whistler's work that so appealed to early twentieth-century audiences that, to quote Ezra Pound, 'heightened our apprehension of life',<sup>26</sup> may find fresh appeal to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience seeking alternative forms of spiritual intensity. Perhaps Whistler's final triumph was to transcend the boundaries between 'Victorian' and 'Modern' defying the categories, obsessions and cultural agendas of each age since.

<sup>24</sup> Basil Taylor, t.s. extract from 'Comment' (9 September 1960), BBC Third programme (chronological Whistler Press Cuttings).

<sup>25</sup> Charles Hall, 'Whistler's Bother,' *Art Review* (September 1994) (chronological Whistler Press Cuttings).

<sup>26</sup> *Letters of Ezra Pound 1907–1941*, ed. by D. D. Paige (London: Faber&Faber, 1951), p. 44.



# Bibliography of Margaret F. MacDonald

## Books

- Margaret F. MacDonald (ed.), *Whistler's Mother's Cook Book* (London: Elek, 1979) [new edition, Petaluma: Pomegranate, 1995].
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler. Drawings, Pastels and Watercolours* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice* (Aldershot, Berkeley and Los Angeles: Lund Humphries and University of California Press, 2001).
- Margaret F. MacDonald (ed.), *Whistler's Mother: An American Icon* (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2003).

## Books, collaborative

- Andrew McLaren Young, Margaret F. MacDonald, Robin Spencer, with Hamish Miles, *The Paintings of James McNeill Whistler*, 2 vols. (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Jan F. Heijbroek, *Whistler and Holland* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1997) [Dutch edition *Whistler en Holland*].
- Margaret F. MacDonald, Susan Grace Galassi, Aileen Ribeiro with Patricia de Montfort, *Whistler, Women and Fashion* (New York, London and New Haven, The Frick Collection and Yale University Press, 2003).

## On-Line Publications

- Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp (eds.), *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855–1903*, (Glasgow: Centre for Whistler Studies, University of Glasgow, 2003–2008), [www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence).

## Exhibition Catalogues

- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler in Venice: Etchings, Drypoint and Pastels*, exh. cat. Department of Fine Art, University of Glasgow (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1971).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler and Mallarmé*, exh. cat. Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1973).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler: The Graphic Work. Amsterdam, Liverpool, London, Venice – an Exhibition*, exh. cat. Agnew & Sons, London; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; City Art Gallery, Glasgow (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1976).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Sun Pictures and Other Historic Photographs*, exh. cat. Glasgow University Library (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1983).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler Pastels and Related Works in the Hunterian Art Gallery*, exh. cat. Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow (Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery, 1984).

- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Notes, Harmonies, Nocturnes*, exh. cat. M. Knoedler and Co. (New York: Knoedler, 1984).
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Richard Dorment, *James McNeill Whistler*, exh. cat. Tate Gallery, London; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art (London: Tate Gallery, 1994) [American edition New York: Abrams, 1994; French edition Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1995].
- Margaret F. MacDonald, *Beatrice Whistler: Artist & Designer*, exh. cat. Hunterian Art Gallery (Glasgow: Hunterian Art Gallery, 1997).
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Ramon Escrivá, *Whistler and Music: Venezia*, exh. cat. Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia (Valencia: IVAM, 2005).
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Galina Andreeva, *Whistler and Russia*, exh. cat. Tretyakov Gallery, (Moscow: Scanrus, 2006) [Russian edition *Уистлер и Россия*].

Articles, catalogue essays and published conference papers

- Margaret F. MacInnes (ed.), 'Edith Shaw: Four Years with Whistler', *Apollo* 89 (1968), pp. 198–201.
- Margaret F. MacInnes, 'Whistler's last years: Spring 1901 – Algiers and Corsica', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 73 (1969), pp. 323–342.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler : The Painting of The "Mother"', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 85 (1975), pp. 73–88.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler and the Fine Art Society', *FAS 100*, exh. cat. The Fine Art Society, London (London: FAS, 1976).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler's Designs for a Catalogue of Blue and White Nankin Porcelain', *The Connoisseur* 198 (1978), pp. 290–295.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'The Selling of Whistler's Mother', *American Society of the Legion of Honor Magazine*, 49 (1978), pp. 97–120.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Whistler – Search for a European Reputation', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 41 (1978), pp. 148–159.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Rodin: The Whistler Monument', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 92 (1978), pp. 221–232.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Rodin and the University of Glasgow', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 45 (1982), pp. 78–81.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Whistler, Rodin, and The "International"', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 103 (1984), pp. 115–123.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler and his Followers', *The Print in England 1790–1930: A Private Collection*, exh. cat. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (Cambridge: Fitzwilliam Museum 1985), pp. 96–101.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Letters from the Whistler Collection (University of Glasgow): Correspondence with French Painters', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 108 (1986), pp. 201–214.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Lines on a lagoon', *The Whistler Papers*, edited by Liana de Girolami Cheney and Paul Marks (Lowell, MA: P&G Co., 1986), pp. 1–16.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'British Artists at the Accademia Del Nudo in Rome', *Leids kunsthistorisch jaarboek* 5/6 (1987), pp. 77–94.

- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Maud Franklin', *James McNeill Whistler: A Re-examination*, edited by Ruth E. Fine = *Studies in the History of Art* 19 (1987), pp. 13–26.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'Correspondence Duret – Whistler.', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 110 (1987), pp. 150–164.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler's Lithographs', *Print Quarterly* 5 (1988), pp. 20–55.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler a Londra: Non solo dandy', *Art et Dossier* 96 (1994), pp. 10–14.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler for President', *James McNeill Whistler*, exh. cat. Tate Gallery, London; Musée d'Orsay, Paris; Washington, DC, National Gallery of Art (London: Tate Gallery, 1994), pp. 49–55.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler on Exhibition', *The Magazine Antiques* 147 (1995), pp. 864–873.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'James McNeill Whistler', *Addison Gallery of American Art: 65 Years: A Selective Catalogue*, (Andover, MA: Addison Gallery, 1996), pp. 490–2.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler as Artist, Master and Friend', *Whistler and Sickert*, exh. cat. Sala de exposiciones de la Fundación 'la Caixa' and Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao (Barcelona: Fundació 'la Caixa', 1998), pp. 19–32.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'The Beach at Selsea Bill', *Highlights of the Collection*, coll. cat., New Britain Museum of American Art, CT, edited by Laurene Buckley (Munich: Prestel, 1999), pp. 170–171.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'J. McN. Whistler and Oriental Art', *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History* 6 (2001), pp. 61–68.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler's View of Venice', *James McNeill Whistler. The Venetian Etchings*, exh. cat. Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (London: Art Partnerships International, 2001).
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'James McNeill Whistler: the Color of Line', *The Broad Spectrum: Studies in the Materials, Techniques and Conservation of Color on Paper*, edited by Harriet Stratis and Britt Salvesen (London: Archetype, 2002), pp. 35–41.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Palaces in the Night', *The Whistler Review*, no. 2 (2003), edited by Nigel Thorp and Martha Tedeschi, pp. 20–55.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Introduction' and 'The Painting of Whistler's "Mother"' in *Whistler's Mother: An American Icon*, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2003), pp. 9–11, 29–63.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Joy Newton, 'The Selling of Whistler's "Mother"', in *Whistler's Mother: An American Icon*, edited by Margaret F. MacDonald (Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2003), pp. 65–80.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Erma Hermens, 'The Whistler correspondence as a source of information on Whistler's studio practice', in *Art of the Past: Sources and Reconstructions*, edited by Mark Clarke, Joyce H. Townsend, and Ad Stijnman (London: Archetype, 2005), pp. 78–81.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'A Rediscovered Whistler: "Violet and Blue: Among the Rollers"', *The Burlington Magazine* 149 (2007), pp. 261–262.

- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler in Venice', *Venice: From Canaletto and Turner to Monet*, exh. cat. Fondation Beyeler, Basel (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), pp. 91–119. [in the German edition 'Paläste in der Nacht: James McNeill Whistler in Venedig', pp. 91–119].
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'What is a Whistler?', *James McNeill Whistler in Context: Essays from the Whistler Centenary Symposium Glasgow, 2003*, edited by Lee Glazer, Margaret F. MacDonald, Linda Merrill and Nigel Thorp = *Freer Gallery of Art Occasional Papers*, [N.S.] 2, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2008), pp. 1–18.
- Margaret F. MacDonald and Erma Hermens, 'En Plein Soleil. Whistler, nature and memory' in *Sources and Serendipity: Testimonies of Artists' Practice; Proceedings of the Third Symposium of the Art Technological Source Research Working Group*, edited by Erma Hermens (London: Archtype, 2009), pp. 112–118.

#### Dictionary Essays

- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'James McNeill Whistler', in *Dictionary of Art*, edited by Jane Turner, 34 vols. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), vol. 33, pp. 137–145 [online edition, updated 1999, at <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T091375>].
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Louise Jopling', in *Dictionary of Women Artists*, edited by Delia Gaze, 2 vols. (London and Chicago, Fitzroy Dearborn: 1997), vol. 2, pp. 753–6.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Maud Franklin'; 'Connie Gilchrist'; 'Rose, Hetty and Lilian Pettigrew', in *Dictionary of Artists Models*, edited by J. Jiminez (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2002), pp. 221–4, 198–200, 422–6.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Beatrice Philip (Mrs Godwin, Mrs Whistler)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

#### Reviews

- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Roger Fenton: Photographer of the 1850s' (exhibition, Hayward Gallery), *Scottish Photography Bulletin*, (1/1988), pp. 22–6.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'D. M. N. Teach, Shoal and Sheaf: Orkney's Pictorial Heritage' (book review), *Scottish Photography Bulletin* (2/1989), pp. 32–4.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Photography 1900 – The Edinburgh Symposium', *Scottish Photography Bulletin*, (2/1992), pp. 27–9.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'James A. McN. Whistler's Pastels', *Drawing* 15, no. 3 (1993), pp. 64–65.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'Whistler's Mother', *RA Magazine*, Summer 2003.
- Margaret F. MacDonald, 'The Whistler Centenary: In Memoriam James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)', *The Art Book* 11, no. 2 (2004), pp. 28–30.



