

The Gentle Art

Friends and strangers in Whistler's prints

This exhibition is the first of a two-part survey of the Fitzwilliam's collection of etchings, drypoints and lithographs by the American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903).

Part 1 (until 13 January 2008) focuses on prints featuring people. Mostly early works from the late 1850s and 60s, they include etchings of intimates in Bohemian Paris, anonymous figures sketched on travels through Europe, and domestic scenes of friends and family in London.

Part 2, *Palaces in the Night: The urban landscape in Whistler's prints*, will open in autumn 2008.

The French Set



Whistler took up etching seriously in London in the spring of 1858. After returning to Paris he made numerous prints in the city and on a journey to the river Rhine. In October 1858 a number of trial proofs were printed on the press of the leading Parisian printer Auguste Delâtre, from which Whistler selected twelve (plus title-page) to be published as *Twelve Etchings after Nature*. They include domestic and genre scenes, studies of friends or their children, and glimpses of shadowy figures in backstreets, alleyways and anonymous interiors. Whistler referred to the series as his 'French Set', although not all the subjects are French. Choice of subjects and treatment reflected Whistler's awareness of modern realist trends in French art. The 'French Set' was his first significant statement as an artist, predating his earliest painting submitted to the Paris Salon. The eleven prints displayed here (nos. 1 to 11) are not from the original publication; most were probably printed by Delâtre for the London Serjeant-at-law Ralph Thomas, after he had purchased the plates in 1860.

Friends & Enemies



Whistler's relationships with a number of friends are highlighted in this exhibition. Typically these soured as Whistler was quickly angered and irritated. When he turned his invective on former friends his butterfly monogram acquired a barbed tail to match the sting of his wit, as immortalised in his collection of letters and pamphlets, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

Many of Whistler's early subjects were drawn from

the family of his half-sister Deborah and her husband, the surgeon, etcher and collector Seymour Haden, who became an influential figure in the revival of etching in England (nos. 11 to 21). Haden and Whistler were also close to French artists, such as Alphonse Legros and Henri Fantin-Latour, whose visits to London at this time usually centred on the Hadens' house in Sloane Street, or the house of their mutual friends, Edwin and Ruth Edwards at Sunbury (nos. 24 to 26).

The relationship between Whistler and Haden quickly deteriorated. Whistler grew jealous of the public success of Haden's landscape prints, while Haden was outraged by Whistler's lifestyle (living openly with his new mistress). After a furious row in January 1864 Haden forbade his wife from visiting her brother. In 1867, during a fight in a Paris café, Whistler pushed Haden through a plate glass window.

Whistler's most public argument led to the famous court case with the art critic John Ruskin in 1878, provoking Whistler to issue the first of a series of pamphlets taking his critics, or 'enemies', to task. Alongside these barbed pamphlets is proof of Whistler's generosity, particularly in the form of inscribed dedications on the mounts of prints. Where they survive, these inscriptions attest to a warmth and affection that did not always survive in life.

Lithographs



The exhibition closes with a group of lithographs made in the 1890s featuring Whistler's wife Beatrice and her sister 'Bunnie' (nos. 36 to 38).

Whistler took up lithography in 1878 with the encouragement of the London printer Thomas Way, and prompted by revived interest in the medium among French painters like Corot, Degas and Fantin-Latour. At first he drew directly onto lithographic printing stones, but he soon followed the example of his French colleagues by working on transfer paper, from which the image was transferred onto the stone. This gave the same freedom as making a drawing, and transfer paper could be carried around in the form of sketchbooks.

After a gap of eight years Whistler resumed making lithographs in 1887. At first he used a coarse-grained transfer paper (*papier viennois*) that imposed its texture on the drawing. It was only in 1891 when Fantin-Latour introduced him to the smooth, fine-grained

The Fitzwilliam Museum

papier végétal that he felt he was able to transmit the delicacy of his drawings without trace of mechanical interference. With careful hand-printing on choice paper he created prints that, he said, 'look like the most delicate drawings out of a museum'.¹ They were printed with large borders around the figures so that the images seem to float. The sense of refinement and suggestion appealed to the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, who became friends with Whistler at this time. The aesthetic reflected Whistler's vision of the artist distilling elements of beauty from Nature:

'the artist is born to pick, and choose, and group with science, these elements, that the result may be beautiful—as the musician gathers his notes, and forms his chords, until he brings forth from chaos glorious harmony.'²

NOTES

1. Letter from Whistler to Edward Kennedy, 22 September 1894, quoted in Stratis and Tedeschi, vol. II, p.255.
2. From *Mr Whistler's Ten O'Clock* lecture given 1885, published London 1888.

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Glossary of techniques and materials

BURR

The filing of metal thrown up by drypoint, trapping a rich deposit of ink around the edges of a line.

DRYPOINT

A sharp point used to scratch directly into the copper without using an etching ground or acid. Copper displaced from the scratched line is thrown up to either side in a rough *burr*. When the plate is inked the burr traps rich deposits of ink, which then print as soft velvety areas along the line. Very few impressions can be printed before the burr wears away. Whistler's appreciation of the particular quality of drypoint is quoted under no. 22, below.

ETCHING

A thin copper plate is coated with an acid-resistant ground. The artist draws with an etching needle, which easily scrapes through the ground to leave lines of exposed copper. The plate is then immersed or covered in acid, which bites (corrodes) into the copper where it has been exposed. If the artist wants some lines deeper than others so that they will print more heavily, these lines can be exposed for a second time to the acid whilst protecting the other lines with some kind of acid-resistant varnish. When the ground has been cleaned off, the plate is ready for intaglio printing in a heavy roller press, which indents the paper creating a plate mark. To make alterations, the surface of the copper is scraped down and then the scraped area beaten from the back to bring the surface of the copper up to match the rest of the plate. The surface is then burnished before etching new lines.

IMPRESSION

A single pull printed from a plate or stone.

LITHOGRAPHY

Lithography is based on the natural repulsion of water and oil. The artist draws directly on a lithographic stone (traditionally limestone) with greasy pen or chalk, or, alternatively, draws on transfer paper from which the image is transferred to the stone. The stone is washed with water and printing ink is applied with a roller. This oily ink affixes to the drawn lines, but is resisted by the damp parts of the stone. The image is then printed on a sheet of paper. Because no pressure is applied at the edges of the stone, there is no 'plate mark'. Lithography is capable of much longer print runs because it does not suffer the surface deterioration that occurs with intaglio printing. Whistler's print runs were limited not by the condition of the stone or plate but by his abhorrence of the idea of 'prints for the people'. He expected prints to appeal to the same exclusive clientele as his drawings, and his preferred printing methods on rare paper only suited a small print run. But he did agree that certain lithographs could be transferred to multiple stones and printed in large numbers for periodicals (see no. 38).

PAPER

Whistler often used a variety of papers of different sizes, even for a run of impressions of the same print. He favoured Japanese paper or old European paper. A variety of Japanese papers of beautiful quality were being imported into Europe, and those used for Whistler's prints included thin, silky papers, as well as the thicker vellum-like papers (called *torinoko*), both made from *gampi* fibre. The published edition of the 'French Set' was printed on *chine collé*, whereby a very thin oriental paper was laid onto a heavier European paper before printing. Whistler and his assistants (in Menpes' words) 'ransacked the slums and alleys of Paris, Antwerp, Amsterdam, Brussels and London' in search of old European paper for printing the best 'proofs', bringing back fly-leaves from books or sometimes a precious haul bought from a paper merchant. Most of these papers were 'antique' laid papers: that is, papers made by hand before 1800 on old-fashioned moulds. Whistler's favourite was an 'exquisite' eighteenth-century Dutch paper of 'an indescribable tint of gold'. He did not mind if the paper was already foxed or stained before printing, as he pointed out to the lithographic printer Thomas Way: 'I don't know what you mean by finding the paper dreadfully stained – I like it'. Whistler preferred his lithographs printed high on the sheet with a generous margin around the image (see also the quote under no. 15 below). This was in line with his practice from around 1880 of trimming the margins of his etchings to the plate mark, leaving only a tab for his butterfly signature. The sheet was then floated in a mount. The trimming was partly an aesthetic choice but also a way of criticising and frustrating the value placed on large margins by collectors of etchings.

PROOF

Whistler used the word *proof* to describe a fine hand-printed impression. The word is used in this exhibition in its more usual sense to describe an impression outside of a formal published edition.

STATE

The condition and appearance of the plate or stone when an impression is printed. If alterations are subsequently made to the plate or stone, any further impressions would represent a different or later state.

SURFACE TONE

After ink has been forced into the lines of an etching plate, the surface is wiped clean with a cloth, or with the side of the hand, to remove excess ink. Auguste Delâtre, who printed Whistler's 'French Set', was especially renowned and skilled at creating effects by the way he wiped a plate. From the time that he printed his Venetian etchings in the 1880s, Whistler himself varied the effects of light, weather and mood between individual impressions by leaving films of ink on the surface of the plate, which printed as tone. Perhaps not since Rembrandt had a printmaker gone to such trouble to make each impression an independent work of art.

CATALOGUE

Collectors and donors

GUY JOHN FENTON KNOWLES (1879-1959)

The major donor of the Fitzwilliam's Whistlers, including a group of drawings. Some of these he inherited from his parents. His father Charles Julius Knowles knew Legros (who gave him drawings by Ingres) and Rodin; as a boy Guy was allowed to play with clay in Rodin's studio. His mother Loyse Knowles showed a group of her Whistler drawings to Charles Freer in 1903, possibly at Whistler's instigation.

ELIZABETH, LADY LEWIS

See nos. 32 and 33.

KATHARINE ANNE RICHES (1868-1950)

Granddaughter of the artist John Linnell. In 1894 she married the sculptor Thomas Nelson MacLean, who had been an ally and collector of Whistler; he died a few months later. In 1909 she married Thomas Henry Riches (1865-1935). They they made major donations to the Fitzwilliam. The prints that Katharine gave in 1923 included 10 Whistlers and 2 by Roussels, most of them probably from MacLean's collection.

SIR HERBERT THOMPSON (1859-1944)

A lawyer who turned to medicine before becoming an eminent Egyptologist (he founded a chair of Egyptology at Cambridge University). His wide-ranging gift included ceramics and works by Edwards, Fantin-Latour, Whistler and Legros. Some came from the collection of Ruth and Edwin Edwards (see no. 26), while others were collected by his father, the surgeon Sir Henry Thompson (1820-1904), who took drawing lessons from Legros and was one of Fantin-Latour's principal patrons in England; his collection of Chinese porcelain was illustrated by Whistler.

Conventions and abbreviations

- Chicago** Catalogue number for lithographs (or watermarks) in Harriet K. Stratis and Martha Tedeschi (eds.), *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler*, 2 volumes, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago 1998
- Kennedy** Catalogue numbers for etchings & drypoints in Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler*, New York 1910, reprinted San Francisco 1978
- MacDonald** Catalogue numbers for drawings corresponding to wood-engravings in Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels and Watercolours, A Catalogue Raisonné*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1995
- Wedmore** Catalogue numbers for etchings & drypoints in Frederick Wedmore, *Whistler's Etchings, a study and catalogue*, London 1886.

All the exhibits are original prints by Whistler except where stated.

All measurements in millimetres, height before width.

I to II The French Set

1 Title

from 'The French Set'

Etching (111 x 145) printed on wove paper (130 x 162), 1858
Kennedy 25

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.276-1954)

The Paris edition of the 'French Set' was issued in an edition of 20 in early November 1858 on *chine collé* paper. The London edition of 50 sets was issued a few weeks later with this title plate printed on the large dark-blue paper wrapper containing the other twelve sheets. This impression was printed separately.

The image was based on a drawing of Whistler's room-mate and travelling companion Ernest Delannoy sketching in the streets of Cologne. In the etching Whistler made it look more like a self-portrait. The dedicatee, Seymour Haden, witnessed some of the printing of the set, and Whistler used his address when publishing the London edition.

2 Fumette

from 'The French Set'

Etching (163 x 109) printed on Japanese paper (328 x 233),
1858

Kennedy 13 IV

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.273-1954)

Nos. 2 – 6 were made in Paris in the summer of 1858 before Whistler's trip to the Rhine. 'Fumette' was the nickname of the seamstress Héloïse, a *grisette* (a fun-loving Bohemian working girl from the Latin Quarter) who was Whistler's mistress for two years. She posed for several drawings and etchings in 1859 (see no. 23).

This is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam (including nos. 4, 6, 9 and 12), which were apparently printed at the same time on similar Japanese paper, and have remained together ever since. One of the plates is dated 1861, so the group was probably not printed until that date, when the 'French Set' was reprinted by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas.

3 In Full Sun

En Plein soleil

from 'The French Set'

Etching (100 x 132) printed on machine-made wove paper
(255 x 334), 1858

Kennedy 15 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.78-1959)

Made in Paris in the summer of 1858 before Whistler's trip to the Rhine. The identity of the woman with the parasol is not known, but she was presumably no stranger to Whistler. His first biographers (E. R. and J. Pennell, 1911) tell of at least one trip to the country with friends of both sexes, during which Whistler painted a female companion. The feeling of sunshine and fresh air is in line with the growing tradition of *plein air* (open air) painting in France; in the same year, the young Claude Monet was encouraged to paint out of doors by the painter Eugène Boudin.

4 The Tinker

La Rétameuse

from 'The French Set'

Etching (112 x 90) printed on Japanese paper (391 x 227),
1858

Kennedy 14 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.271-1954)

Made in Paris in the summer of 1858 before Whistler's trip to the Rhine. This tinker, a mender of pots and pans, is typical of the subjects of working women from the lowest levels of society that were popular among realist artists in France. The straight-forward, unidealised treatment matches the choice of subject.

This is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam, which were probably not printed until 1861, when the plates of the 'French Set' were reprinted by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas (see no. 2).

5 Mother Gerard

La Mère Gérard

from 'The French Set'

Etching printed on wove paper (122 x 83, trimmed inside
platemark), 1858

Kennedy 11 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1921 (P.2073-R)

6 Mother Gerard

La Mère Gérard

from 'The French Set'

Etching (128 x 90) printed on Japanese paper (326 x 235),
1858

Kennedy 11 IV

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.272-1954)

Made in Paris in the summer of 1858 before Whistler's trip to the Rhine. This woman from a bourgeois background had fallen on hard times and sold flowers at the door of the *bal Bullier*, a popular dancehall on the Avenue de l'Observatoire (Whistler also etched one of the dancers from the *bal Bullier*). Whistler is supposed to have once invited her on a day out to the country with friends. She was also the subject of one of Whistler's first two paintings submitted to the Paris Salon in the following year.

No. 5 is a trial proof printed from the plate with the clothing and shading not yet finished. By the time no. 6 was printed, Whistler had altered the cape and the garment in the left hand, and added extra shading. The address of the printer Auguste Delâtre has also been added. This is the final state as published.

No. 6 is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam, which were probably not printed until 1861, when the plates of the 'French Set' were reprinted by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas (see no. 2).

7 The Old Rag Gatherer

La Vieille aux loques

from 'The French Set'

Etching (208 x 148) printed on Japanese paper (329 x 235),
1858

Kennedy 21 II

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2085-R)

Nos. 7 & 8 were made after Whistler's return to Paris from the Rhine, and drawn on the plates from life. The subject of a woman sorting rags had appeared previously in etchings by the Barbizon artists Jean-François Millet and Charles Jacque.

This impression is printed on paper that was probably prepared with an overall tone of ink before printing the plate (it may have been printed at the same time as no. 10, which has a similar effect). This darkens the margins and the overall tonality of the print, reducing the contrast between shadow and highlight. The effect is similar to printing on coloured paper, which was also tried for some subjects in the set.

8 The Rag Gatherers

Etching and drypoint (153 x 89) printed on old wove paper (262 x 170), 1858/61

Kennedy 23 V

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2086-R)

Not included as part of the published 'French Set', but drawn on the plate direct from life at the same time as no. 7. Originally the room was empty of figures, and Whistler called the plate *Quartier Mouffetard* after the district in the Latin Quarter. It was only in 1861 that he added the figures, reportedly at the suggestion of Serjeant Ralph Thomas, who had bought the plates of the 'French Set' and had them printed at the same time as Whistler's early Thames etchings in 1861. This impression is printed on a fly-leaf torn from an old book. It bears the inscription in graphite *18/2/62*, which may have been the date of printing or purchase (no. 17 has the same inscription).

9 The Mustard Seller

La Marchande de moutarde

from 'The French Set'

Etching (158 x 89) printed on Japanese paper (307 x 196), 1858

Kennedy 22 III

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1921 (P.2074-R)

The plates for nos. 9 & 10 were made after Whistler's return to Paris from the Rhine, but the subjects were based on earlier drawings, in this case a study drawn in Cologne and annotated 'Marchand de Potions'. *La Marchande de Moutarde* was one of two etchings by Whistler accepted for exhibition at the Paris Salon in 1859, even though the two paintings he submitted that year were refused.

This is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam, which were probably not printed until 1861, when the plates of the 'French Set' were reprinted by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas (see no. 2).

10 The Kitchen

from 'The French Set'

Etching (227 x 157) printed on Japanese paper (280 x 210), 1858

Kennedy 24 II

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2078-R)

Based on a watercolour made at Lutzelbourg in Alsace, on the way to the Rhine, but etched after Whistler's return to Paris.

Like no. 7, this impression is printed on paper which was probably prepared with an overall tone of ink before printing the plate (the paper is more yellow than that used for no. 7). It is inscribed in graphite *Fine proof from Thomas*, suggesting that it was one of the impressions printed by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas after he had bought the plates of the 'French Set' in 1860. It is printed with a sumptuous amount of surface tone left on the plate to create shadows, a hallmark of Delâtre's printing methods. The name 'Thomas' may alternatively refer to one of Thomas's sons: Edmund, whom his father set up as a dealer in the gallery where he planned the one-man exhibition of Whistler's prints in 1861; or Ralph (junior), a solicitor who wrote the first catalogue of Whistler's etchings in 1874. The inscription appears to be in the hand of Thomas Nelson MacLean, the sculptor whose prints came to the Fitzwilliam in a gift from his widow (see the note on Katharine Riches on p. 3).

11 Annie

from 'The French Set'

Etching (118 x 80) printed on Japanese paper (391 x 227), 1857-8

Kennedy 10 V

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2071-R)

One of the earliest etchings included in the 'French Set', featuring Whistler's nine-year old niece, the daughter of his half-sister Deborah and her husband, the surgeon, etcher and collector Seymour Haden (1818-1910).

It was actually Haden who sketched the few lines outlining the lower legs on the plate as he did not approve of the way Whistler had finished the figure at the knees. After he fell out with Haden, Whistler annotated an impression of this print: 'Legs not by me, but a fatuous addition by a general practitioner.'

12 to 33 Friends and family

12 Seymour, seated

Etching (136 x 98) printed on Japanese paper (304 x 195), 1857-8

Kennedy 29 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 in exchange for an impression given in 1921 (P.2075-R)

Like no. 11, this was among the earliest etchings that Whistler made whilst staying with the family of his half-sister Deborah and her husband Seymour Haden. Whistler's nephew Seymour was about seven years old at the time.

This is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam (including nos. 2, 4, 6 and 9), which were probably printed at the same time on similar Japanese paper, and have remained together ever since. One of the other plates is dated 1861, giving the earliest possible printing date for the whole

group; this was a time when the 'French Set' and other plates by Whistler were being printed in London by Delâtre for Serjeant Ralph Thomas.

13 The Wine Glass

Etching (83 x 55) printed on 'antique' laid paper (216 x 153) with watermark of unidentified shield, 1858

Kennedy 27 II

Bought from the Print Duplicates Fund 1941 (P.51-1941)

Made shortly after Whistler's return to London on completing the 'French set'. He and Haden spent two months working closely together at the latter's house in Sloane Street, where Haden had installed an etching press. Haden also made an etching of a wine glass, and another of the cup and saucer that appears in no. 14. Whistler's friend Henri Fantin-Latour made his own painted study of a cup and saucer a few years later during a visit to his friends and patrons Edwin and Ruth Edwards, in 1864 (collection of The Fitzwilliam Museum, no. 1016).

This impression is printed on a fly-leaf taken from a sixteenth-century book.

14 Reading by Lamplight

Etching and drypoint (161 x 119) printed on Japanese paper (326 x 234), 1858

Kennedy 32 II

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2072-R)

Evidently observed from life, this print shows Whistler's half-sister (and Haden's wife) Deborah. Haden also made an etching of this scene at the same time, although his composition was in landscape rather than portrait format, and he subsequently added the figure of Annie, copied from Whistler's separate etching (no. 15). Like many of the etchings that Whistler and Haden made together, the use of chiaroscuro and shading recalls Rembrandt; Whistler would have been increasingly familiar with Rembrandt's etchings from his opportunity to view Haden's fine collection at this time.

15 Annie, seated

Etching (131 x 97) printed on old laid paper (255 x 195) with watermark 1814, 1858

Kennedy 30 II

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2088-R)

Another study of Whistler's niece Annie (see no. 11).

This impression is mounted to show the full extent of the paper. The uneven edges are typical of the scraps of old paper that Whistler collected for printing. He later explained to the printer of his lithographs, Thomas Way: 'when the sheet has a cut edge and a rough one, I would always put the straight cut edge at the top' (compare no. 17).

16 The Music Room

Etching (145 x 217) printed on 'antique' laid paper (186 x 310) with watermark of the English Royal Arms within a band with crown above (see E. J. Labarre, *Dictionary and Encyclopaedia of Paper and Paper-making*, London and Toronto 1952, fig.172), 1858

Kennedy 33 II

Given by Harold J. L. Wright 1923 (P.2095-R)

As in no. 14, Deborah Haden is reading by lamplight, but this time she is joined by her husband Seymour (left) and his medical partner James Reeves Traer. The setting is the music room at the Hadens' house in Sloane Street. Using the press installed at the top of the house, Whistler printed proofs on a wide variety of papers, leaving a varied amount of ink on the surface of the plate. This impression is printed on the sort of Dutch 'antique' laid paper that Whistler preferred (with Japanese paper) for its golden tone and quality.

The Hadens' music room was also the subject of one of Whistler's first two paintings submitted to the Paris Salon in the following year, but with Deborah and Annie at the piano.

17 Reading in Bed

Etching (120 x 80) printed on 'antique' laid paper (200 x 120), 1858

Kennedy 28 II

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.2087-R)

A study of Whistler's half-sister, Deborah Haden, made shortly after Whistler's return to London having completed the 'French set'.

This impression is printed on a fly-leaf torn out of an old book. It bears the inscription in graphite 18/2/62, which may have been the date of printing or purchase. No. 8 has the same date inscription, so it is possible that no. 17 was also printed for Serjeant Ralph Thomas by Delâtre after Thomas had acquired the plates of the 'French Set' in 1861.

18 Seymour standing under a Tree

Etching (135 x 97) printed on thin Japanese paper (235 x 241), 1859

Kennedy 31 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.277-1954)

After seeing two of the 'French Set' etchings exhibited at the Paris Salon, Whistler returned to London in May 1859 in time to see two of the etchings exhibited at the Royal Academy. Over the summer he worked with Haden again, and this print of Whistler's nephew was made on a trip to Kensington Gardens with etching plates in hand. Haden etched his own view of the park at the same time, and collaborated with Whistler on another. Whistler followed no. 18 with a number of other views in and around the leafier parts of London, often with one of his artist friends or relatives in view (see nos. 19 – 21, 24 & 25).

19 Landscape with the Horse

Etching and drypoint (126 x 203) printed on Japanese paper (244 x 334), 1859

Kennedy 36 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.278-1954)

One of several etchings of figures in a rural landscape (including no. 20) made during the visit of Henri Fantin-Latour to stay with Whistler at the Hadens' in the summer of 1859. The figure in the foreground is probably young Seymour. Earlier in the

spring in Paris Whistler had formed the *Société des Trois* (Society of Three) with Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros. They shared an admiration for older French artists such as Gustave Courbet and Camille Corot. Traces of the influence of Corot and Legros are evident in this second state in which Whistler added the scribbled draughtsmanship of the trees and the troubled sky (as well as the second horse). The labourers erecting telegraph poles reinforce Whistler's own realist rather than idyllic approach to landscape.

20 Nursemaid and Child

Etching (98 x 132) printed on 'antique' laid paper (165 x 208) with fragment of unidentified watermark, 1859
Kennedy 37 I
Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.279-1954)

21 Nursemaid and Child

Etching (97 x 133) printed on thin Japanese paper (240 x 334), 1859
Kennedy 37 II
Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1921 (P.2076-R)

This plate was etched around the same time as no. 19, and shows Deborah Haden sitting in a park near Holloway with one of her younger children.

After printing the plate in its first state (no. 20), Whistler changed the profile of Deborah's nose and altered her hair. The impression of the second state (no. 21) was printed on Japanese paper, whilst the first state (no. 20) was printed on European 'antique' laid paper using a browner coloured ink.

22 Drouet

Drypoint (226 x 152) printed on 'antique' laid paper (276 x 197), 1859
Kennedy 55 II
Given by John Charrington 1933 (P.2096-R)

It was not until Whistler returned to Paris in October 1859 that he drew complete subjects in drypoint for the first time. He wrote: 'The tiny thread of metal ploughed out of the line by the point as it runs along, clings to its edge through its whole length, and produces, in the proof, a soft velvety effect most painter-like and beautiful—and precious too, for this raised edge soon falls off the plate, from the continuous wiping in printing' (see also no. 29).

Most of Whistler's early drypoints were portraits of artists and friends. He knew the sculptor Charles L. Drouet (1836-1908) from his student days in Paris, and they remained close friends. Drouet said this plate was finished in two sittings, totalling five hours.

23 A Venus

Etching (152 x 225) printed on 'antique' laid paper (179 x 261), 1859
Kennedy 59 II
Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.281-1954)

This Venus is closer in spirit to the realistic fleshy nudes of Rembrandt (particularly his etching *Jupiter and Antiope*) than it is to the idealism of the traditional classical nude, or the more sensational sensuality of Courbet's painted nudes that had been exhibited

recently in Paris.

The model was Whistler's mistress 'Fumette', a *grisette* from the Latin Quarter in Paris (see no. 2). She knew the verses of the Romantic poet Alfred de Musset by heart and would recite them to Whistler. She was reportedly passionately attached to Whistler and once tore up his drawings in a jealous rage.

This impression is printed on the Dutch 'antique' laid paper that Whistler favoured.

24 The Punt

Etching and drypoint (121 x 165) printed on *chine collé* on wove paper (227 x 324), 1861
Kennedy 85 III
Reitlinger Bequest 1950 (received 1991) (P.1502-1991)

At the January 1861 meeting of the Junior Etching Club, Whistler agreed to contribute two plates to a collection of etchings to be published by Day & Son. When the publication appeared in 1862 with the title *Passages from Modern English Poets*, it included nos. 24 and 25, retitled *River Scene* and *The Angler*.

This plate was probably made on the same etching trip along the Thames as no. 25.

25 The Thames (Sketching No. 1)

Etching and drypoint (120 x 167) printed on *chine collé* on wove paper (257 x 371), 1861
Kennedy 86 III
Reitlinger Bequest 1950 (received 1991) (P.1501-1991)

In the summer of 1861 Whistler made several etchings and drypoints on trips along the Thames, during visits to the home of Edwin Edwards and his wife Ruth at Sunbury near Hampton Court. This print was made in August 1861 when Edwards, Whistler, Fantin-Latour and Haden made an etching trip along the Thames. Edwards etched no. 26 on the same occasion, using the same sized plate.

An impression of this print before letters (Kennedy 86 II) is also in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum (P.285-1954), but is not included in this exhibition (it is slightly marred by double printing).

26 Edwin Edwards 1823-1879

Molesey Lock (Whistler on the gate)

Etching (121 x 166) printed on Japanese paper (188 x 263), 1861
Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.934-R)

Edwards was a lawyer who later turned to art and music. He went to drawing classes and through a fellow student was introduced to Whistler, Legros, Fantin-Latour and Haden. Legros taught him how to etch in the winter of 1860-61 and he installed a press at his house in Sunbury, where his wife Ruth became skilled at printing. During the 1860s and 70s their home was a meeting place for French and British painters and etchers. This print was made when Edwards, Whistler, Fantin-Latour and Haden made an etching trip along the Thames in August 1861. Whistler etched no. 25 on the same occasion.

27 Kenneth and Lena Graeme

Wood engraving (152 x 113) by the Dalziel Brothers (Edward (1817-1905) and Thomas (1823-1906)) from Whistler's drawings on wood, published in *Good Words*, 1862, printed on machine-made wove paper, cut from the journal (163 x 124).

MacDonald 300

Reitlinger Bequest 1950 (received 1991) (P.1503-1991)

28 Joanna Douglas

Wood engraving (153 x 114) by the Dalziel Brothers (Edward (1817-1905) and Thomas (1823-1906)) from Whistler's drawings on wood, published in *Good Words*, 1862, printed on machine-made wove paper, cut from the journal (165 x 128).

MacDonald 301

Reitlinger Bequest 1950 (received 1991) (P.1504-1991)

These illustrations are similar in spirit to those designed by the Pre-Raphaelites and their circle. They illustrate *The Trial Sermon*, by 'M.C.', in which Kenneth Graeme, a divinity student, decided to base his graduation sermon on an old sermon in a book that his sister Lena was reading, but rather than lose his fiancée, Joanna Douglas, he abandoned his plan and the chance of immediate graduation. The model for Joanna was Joanna Hiffernan, a red-haired Irish woman who had been Whistler's mistress since 1861. She was his model in several other prints (see no. 29).

29 Weary

Drypoint (197 x 132) printed on thin Japanese paper (345 x 235), 1863

Kennedy 92 between I and II

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.2091-R)

The model was Whistler's agent and mistress Joanna Hiffernan (see no. 28), who is here depicted rather in the manner of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's drawings of his mistress Fanny Cornforth, which were made around the time that he and Whistler became friends in 1862. There was a tradition associating *Weary* with Rossetti's poem about a prostitute called Jenny:

'Why, Jenny, as I watch you there
For all your wealth of golden hair
Your silk ungirdled and unlaced'

This fine and rare impression was printed in a state before the signature was added but with some of the work seen in the usual 'second' state. Whistler liked to print this plate on this very thin, silky Japanese paper.

30 Mortimer Menpes 1855-1938

Studies of James McNeill Whistler

Drypoint (187 x 140) printed on 'old' wove paper (280 x 235), c.1886

Bought from the University Purchase Fund, 1999 (P.29-1999)

The Australian Menpes met Whistler in November 1880 after the latter's return to London from Venice, and he offered to help with the printing of Whistler's Venetian etchings. Whistler took him on as assistant, and frequently sent him on hunts for bits of old paper, such as the paper this drypoint is printed on. Although they fell out in 1888, Menpes was one of the few

mourners at Whistler's funeral. He made several drypoints of Whistler. At the top is also a sketch of one of Menpes' children (see no. 31).

31 The Menpes Children

Etching (68 x 100) c.1886, printed on laid paper as the frontispiece to Mortimer Menpes, *Whistler as I knew him*, London 1904, no. 398 of 500 copies (rebound)

Kennedy 261

Reitlinger Bequest 1950 (received 1991)

Whistler was a frequent visitor both professionally and socially to the house of Mortimer and Rosa Menpes in Fulham. Menpes had set up a printing room there so that Whistler's Venetian etchings could be printed. Whistler was godfather to the youngest of the Menpes' daughters, born in 1884 and christened Dorothy Whistler in his honour. She sits on the right of this plate, with her brother standing in front of her and her sister seated on the left. The figure behind the chair is probably a second sketch of one of the sisters, although Frederick Wedmore in his catalogue of the prints says that it not one of the Menpes children (see Wedmore, no. 212). Dorothy was also the subject of a painting made at this time. This etching has been associated with a group of similar prints of children made at Gray's Inn Fields, with the proposal that they date from July 1887 when a masque was performed there (Martin Hopkinson, 'Whistler at Gray's Inn', *Print Quarterly* 19, 2002, pp. 376-82). Probably only a few proofs were printed during Whistler's lifetime.

This book, dedicated to Dorothy, remains an important source of information on Whistler's methods of biting, inking and printing. Another copy (numbered 13 and still in its original binding) is also in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Marlay Bequest 1912).

32 Balcony, Amsterdam

Etching and drypoint printed on 'antique' laid paper (271 x 170, cut to platemark with tab below for butterfly monogram) with watermark of foolscap with seven-pointed collar (seventeenth-century), 1889

Kennedy 405 III

Given by Elizabeth, Lady Lewis 1919 (P.2070-R)

Shown on its original mount with Whistler's manuscript dedication (the missing right-hand edge of the mount has been reconstructed to show the original format). The inscription To Mrs George is signed with Whistler's butterfly. The recipient was Elizabeth Lewis (1844-1931), wife of the lawyer George Lewis, who represented many artists and writers, including Whistler and Oscar Wilde. Elizabeth was one of the leading hostesses of the day and their house in Portland Place was frequented by artists and writers such as Whistler, Wilde, Henry James and Edward Burne Jones, who painted Elizabeth's portrait. Whistler always addressed her affectionately as 'Mrs George', even after her husband's knighthood in 1893, by which time she signed her letters to him 'Betty'.

33 Photographic recreation of the etching *Long Lagoon* on its original mount

The mount is inscribed in ink by Whistler *To Mrs George Lewis* and signed with his butterfly.

The recipient, Elizabeth Lewis (see no. 32) passed the print and mount to her daughter Katherine Lewis, who bequeathed them to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1961 (P.141-1961). Unfortunately the mount had become separated from the print and cut down from its original size. This photo-recreation is printed somewhat smaller than actual size (the original etching measures 152 x 225; it will be displayed in the second part of this exhibition in autumn 2008).

Katie Lewis, born in 1878, became a prominent figure in artistic society, starting at the age of four when Edward Burne-Jones painted her portrait. In later life her circle of friends included Osbert Sitwell, Max Beerbohm and Bernard Berenson, and she boasted that she had been 'kissed by the most distinguished men of [my] time, beginning with Burne-Jones and Oscar Wilde'.

34 to 38 Lithographs

34 Draped figure, standing

Transfer lithograph printed on thick Japanese paper (300 x 213), 1891

Chicago 46 I

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.288-1954)

In the late 1880s and 90s Whistler made numerous pastel drawings and lithographs of dancers and figures draped in transparent fabric. He was partly inspired by Greek 'Tanagra' figurines, which his friends were collecting around 1890.

Whistler made seven colour lithographs in Paris with the printer Henry Belfond in 1891-3. This image was developed as a colour print using first three and then up to six additional stones, but impressions like this were printed using only the main stone (keystone); missing elements (such as the feet) were added in the colour stones or in later states of the keystone.

Nos. 34 & 35 were drawn on the smoother transfer paper known as *papier vegetal*, which Fantin-Latour showed to Whistler in 1891. It imposed less of its own texture than the *papier viennois* that he used previously.

35 Nude model, standing

Transfer lithograph printed on thick Japanese paper (315 x 258), c.1891

Chicago 48

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.94-1959)

One of a group of six lithographs of draped figures probably drawn in late October or early November 1891 when Whistler spent a week working on colour lithographs with the Parisian printer Belfond. Like no. 34, Whistler may have intended to develop this image as a colour print, but only a few proofs exist and they are all printed from one stone, most of them on the Japanese paper that Belfond preferred for proofing.

Especially in the 1890s Whistler preferred teenage girls as models for thinly draped nudes. In his *Ten O'Clock* lecture (no. 41) he described the ancient

Greek inspiration of 'the measured rhyme of lovely limb and draperies flowing in unison', a theme shared by the Symbolist poet Mallarmé and his circle.

36 The Winged Hat

Transfer lithograph printed on thin Japanese paper (277 x 202), 1890

Chicago 34 II

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.2093-R)

After his marriage to Beatrice Godwin in August 1888, Whistler made a number of lithographs of her immediate family, especially her assured and elegant sister Ethel Birnie Philip, whom he nicknamed 'Bunnie'. Nos. 36 & 37 show Bunnie wearing a fashionable plumed hat. They were drawn in early autumn 1890 and preceded Whistler's more formal, painted portraits of her.

This proof was hand-printed, but the image was also machine-printed in a large edition published in October 1890 in the new witty and reactionary periodical, *The Whirlwind: A Lively and Eccentric Newspaper*, after being transferred to new stones. It was the first of Whistler's lithographs to be printed in *The Whirlwind* under the heading *Mr Whistler's 'Songs on Stone'*, with the editorial comment: 'We publish today the first of this series of Lithographs that comes to us from Chelsea. The Master, in bestowing upon us these priceless pearls, was of the opinion that they would find their way inevitably to their usual audience! Still – for the sake of "The Rare Few" – we persevere'. Whistler sent several copies of the magazine to the poet Mallarmé, asking him to distribute them in Paris. Mallarmé admired the draughtsmanship of *The Winged Hat* as 'biting and elegant, of supreme charm' (see Stratis and Tedeschi 1998, vol. I, p.146, vol. II, p.104).

Also in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum but not exhibited here is a machine-printed impression of this print on the paper used for the edition that appeared in *The Whirlwind* (P.92-1959).

37 Suede Gloves

Gants de Suède

Transfer lithograph printed on 'antique' laid paper (330 x 208) with watermark of crowned GR (Chicago watermark 93), 1890

Chicago 35

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.93-1959)

One of a pair of studies (with no. 36) showing Whistler's sister-in-law, Ethel 'Bunnie' Philips, in fashionable attire. Ethel's sister Beatrice Whistler referred to this print as 'Le Mosquetaire' (a name for the sort of glove worn by a musketeer).

This delicate impression was hand-printed on the eighteenth-century paper that Whistler loved to use for printing. His approval is marked by the addition of his butterfly in graphite (pencil), in addition to the butterfly that was printed as part of the lithograph. A separate edition was machine-printed in large numbers on modern machine-made paper to appear in the journal *The Studio* in April 1894.

38 The Red Dress

La Robe Rouge

Transfer lithograph printed on machine-made laid paper (274 x 210), 1894
Chicago 107 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.95-1959)

A number of late lithographs feature Whistler's wife Beatrice, or her sister Birnie, in the interior or garden of the house in Rue du Bac, Paris, where the Whistlers moved in 1892. This is one of two portraits of Beatrice drawn on a single evening, 22 September 1894. She was already suffering from the cancer that killed her in May 1896, leaving Whistler devastated.

The embossed blind stamp indicates that this is one of the impressions published in November 1895 in *The Studio*. The original stone was printed onto transfer paper and transferred (with corrections) onto other stones to sustain the machine-printing of this large edition. The effect is crude compared to no. 37.

39 to 42 Making enemies

39 *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*

London 1890

Middleton Wake Bequest 1915

Dedicated to 'the rare Few, who, early in Life, have rid Themselves of the Friendship of the Many', this celebrated collection of his letters and pamphlets was Whistler's own concerted attack on those he felt had crossed or criticized him unfairly. By 1890 this amounted to a sizeable proportion of the art world in London and beyond, including many whom he had formerly called friends.

Included here, decorated with a miscellany of Whistler's stinging butterflies, are the account of his famous lawsuit against Ruskin, letters lampooning his brother-in-law Seymour Haden and the Society of Painter-Etchers, the crop of ridiculed criticism that makes up the catalogue to his Venetian etching exhibition, and numerous other quips and barbs.

40 *Whistler v. Ruskin: Art & Art Critics*

London 1878, third edition

Given by H. H. Brindley 1918

This, the first of a series of pamphlets issued by Whistler in brown-paper covers, was Whistler's response to the celebrated libel case in which he sued the influential writer John Ruskin for damages (loss of

earnings). Ruskin in his *Fors Clavigera* (1877) had attacked one of Whistler's 'Nocturne' paintings, writing that he 'never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'.

When the case came to court in 1878, Whistler replied that he asked the price not for two days' work but 'for the knowledge of a lifetime'. He was awarded damages of one farthing (the smallest coin current at the time). In this essay, Whistler argues that men of letters should desist from art criticism for which they are ill qualified.

41 *Mr Whistler's "Ten O'Clock"*

London 1888

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920

This is the text of a lecture given by Whistler in London, Cambridge and Oxford in 1885. It sets out his view of art and aesthetic creed, but also lampoons 'literary' art critics, pedantic museum curators, and educators who seek to dumb-down art.

This text brought Whistler to the attention of the Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé, and their friendship was cemented at a lunch arranged by Claude Monet in January 1888. Mallarmé sympathised with Whistler's vision of art expressed in the text, and he translated it into French for publication in *La Revue indépendante* in May 1888, saying that he was 'happy to have the opportunity to put my name below yours'. In November 1890 the two collaborated by publishing a poem alongside a lithograph in *The Whirlwind*.

42 *Etchings & Dry Points. Venice Second Series. Mr Whistler and his critics*

London 1883, first and second editions

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (first and second editions) and H. H. Brindley 1918 (second edition)

This pamphlet formed the catalogue to the exhibition of Whistler's second series of Venetian etchings at the Fine Arts Society, London, in 1883. For the occasion the room was decorated in pale yellow and white, Whistler made little yellow butterflies for his friends and supporters 'to wear defiantly with the brave and beautiful on the great day', and the catalogue was handed out by a man dressed in yellow livery. For the text, Whistler collected and juxtaposed criticism of his work over the years, adding his own marginal glosses, so as to hold the critics up to ridicule.

See also no. 33 above.

