

# Palaces in the Night

## The urban landscape in Whistler's prints

This exhibition forms the second 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). This second part focuses on the cityscapes for which the artist is most famous as a printmaker. All the exhibits are original prints by Whistler except where stated. An online exhibition of the complete collection is available on the Fitzwilliam Museum website.

### London



Whistler took up etching seriously on a visit to London in the spring of 1858. After returning to London from Paris in May 1859, he took lodgings in Wapping and explored the area of warehouses and wharves along the Thames east of the City. Many of his Thames etchings evoke the setting and riverside characters that were to become familiar to readers of Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, published in 1864-5. Much of the architecture and character of the sites quickly changed with the demolition and rebuilding that took place in connection with the construction of the embankments. When a selection of the prints was published as *A Series of Sixteen Etchings of Scenes on the Thames and Other Subjects* (known as the 'Thames Set') in 1871, the prints were recognised as a valuable record of an already vanishing London.

Whistler's realist approach to his Thames views answered Charles Baudelaire's call for artists to find inspiration in modern cities, as the critic recognised when they were exhibited in Paris in 1862, admiring how Whistler represented the banks of the Thames:

'wonderful tangles of rigging, yardarms and rope, a hotchpotch of fog, furnaces and corkscrews of smoke: the profound and intricate poetry of a vast capital.'<sup>1</sup>

In Whistler's later Thames etchings linear description of detail gave way to evocation of the atmosphere resulting from increasing pollution and smog. He turned to the more tonal medium of litho to find a printed equivalent of his painted 'Nocturnes' before finding equivalent tonal effects in the printing of his etchings. This was to come to a head in the tonal impressionism that he achieved with the printing of his Venice etchings, but in the

meantime the smoggy Thames could serve as an appetiser for Venice, as he himself implied:

'the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil, and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become campanile, and the warehouses are palaces in the night...'<sup>2</sup>

### Venice



Following Whistler's bankruptcy in May 1879, the Fine Art Society commissioned him to go to Venice and return by December with a set of twelve prints. In the event his inspiration ran away with him and he did not return until November of 1880, bringing back many more plates. Twelve were selected for publication as *Venice, a Series of Twelve Etchings* (known as the 'First Venice Set') and were exhibited at the Fine Art Society in December 1880. A second, larger exhibition was held in 1883, including the etchings later published in 1886 by Dowdeswells' as *A Set of Twenty-Six Etchings* (known as the 'Second Venice Set').

With the help of his assistants Mortimer Menpes and Walter Sickert, Whistler printed the edition of the Second Set by July 1887, but the printing of the First Set was still not complete at Whistler's death in 1903. This was due to Whistler's complex 'artistic' printing, described by the printer Thomas R. Way:

'it was little short of marvellous to see how he graduated and softened the ink with the palm of his hand.'

### Brussels and Amsterdam



Whistler's later etching style was developed on the streets surrounding his home in Chelsea in the 1880s, when he drew a series of studies of shop fronts and houses on small plates used like sketchbook pages. The quick staccato marks were developed into a more complex and ambitious pictorial approach in Brussels in 1887 and on his honeymoon to the Loire in 1888.

Whistler's culminating achievement as an etcher was the series made in Amsterdam in 1889, which closes this exhibition. As ever, the view of a city viewed across water inspired him to new heights. Introducing his Amsterdam plates to the critic of the Pall Mall Gazette the following March, Whistler looked back on

# The Fitzwilliam Museum

his career as an etcher of city views with the following words:

I divide myself into three periods... First you see me at work on the Thames. Now, there you see the crude and hard detail of the beginner. So far, so good. There, you see, all is sacrificed to exactitude of outline. Presently, and almost unconsciously, I begin to criticise myself, and to feel the craving of the artist for form and colour. The result was the second stage, which my enemies call inchoate, and I call Impressionism. The third stage I have shown you. In that I have endeavoured to combine stages one and two. You have the elaboration of the first stage, and the quality of the second.<sup>2</sup>

#### NOTES

1. Baudelaire's call to arms for artist of modern cities came in 'On the heroism of modern life', the final section of his Salon review of 1846. See also Lochnan 2004, pp.18ff. and 116.
2. From *Mr Whistler's Ten O'Clock* lecture given 1885, published London 1888.
2. 'Mr Whistler's New Etchings: A Chat with the Master', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 March 1890, quoted in Lochnan 1984, p.254.

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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.

##### 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.

##### LITHOTINT

Lithotint is a form of lithography, which is based on the natural repulsion of water and oil. The artist draws directly on a lithographic stone (traditionally limestone) with a wash of greasy ink or 'tusche'. (Whistler's printers sometimes provided him with a stone already prepared with a rectangular area of half-tint before he applied the washes; he would then scrape away the highlights). The stone is then 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.

#### OPENBITE

Especially at the time of his Venetian etchings, Whistler applied acid selectively with a feather, sometimes to the open surface of the plate, thus roughening the metal so that it would trap ink to print as tone.

#### 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 '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 (this term is used here to distinguish them from more recent 'old' paper that Whistler recycled as printing paper). 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'. Around 1880 Whistler started to trim the margins of his etchings to the plate mark, leaving only a tab for his butterfly signature.

#### PRINT RUN

Whistler's print runs were increasingly limited by his abhorrence of the idea of 'prints for the people'. He expected his prints to appeal to the same exclusive clientele as his drawings, and his printing methods and materials only suited relatively small print runs. Printing the Venetian etchings was so time-consuming that the editions of some of the prints remained incomplete at the artist's death over twenty years after the Fine Art Society commissioned them.

#### PROOF

Whistler used the word *proof* to describe a fine hand-printed impression. It is used here in its more usual sense for an impression outside a formal edition.

#### ROULETTE

A spiked wheel used to roughen the surface of a plate, typically in mezzotint, but used by Whistler to make dotted shading in certain of his Venetian etchings, notably where he also intended to leave ink on the surface of the plate to print as tone (see no. 19).

#### 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.

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## Collectors and donors

#### GUY JOHN FENTON KNOWLES (1879-1959)

The major donor of the Fitzwilliam's Whistler collection, 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. Guy's mother Loyse Knowles showed a group of her Whistler drawings to Charles Freer in 1903, possibly at Whistler's instigation.

#### ELIZABETH, LADY LEWIS (1844-1931)

Elizabeth Lewis was 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'.

#### KATHERINE LEWIS (1878-1961)

Katie Lewis was the daughter of Elizabeth and George Lewis. She was painted as a child by Burne-Jones, and in later life her circle of friends included Osbert Sitwell, Max Beerbohm and Bernard Berenson. She once boasted that she had been 'kissed by the most distinguished men of [my] time, beginning with Burne-Jones and Oscar Wilde'.

KATHARINE ANNE RICHES (1868-1950)

Granddaughter of the artist John Linnell. Early in 1894 she married the sculptor Thomas Nelson MacLean (1845-94), who had been an ally and collector of Whistler (including a print given to him by the artist's mother in 1872, see no. 4). MacLean died only a few months after their marriage. In 1909 Katharine married Thomas Henry Riches (1865-1935), and between them they made major donations to the Fitzwilliam, including notable groups of Japanese prints and works by William Blake (some of which Katharine had inherited through the Linnell family). The group of prints that Katharine gave in 1923 included ten Whistlers and two by Théodore Roussel, most of which may have come from her first husband's collection: the pair by Roussel bear dedications from the artist to MacLean (nos. 32 and 33), and three of the Whistlers have inscriptions by Maclean (including nos. 4 and 5).

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 Fantin-Latour, Whistler and Legros. Some came from the collection of Ruth and Edwin Edwards, who were hosts to these artists in England. Others were inherited from his father, the surgeon Sir Henry Thompson (1820-1904), who had taken drawing lessons from Legros and was one of Fantin-Latour's principal patrons in England; his collection of Chinese porcelain was illustrated by Whistler.

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## 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.
- GLA archive** Margaret F. MacDonald, Patricia de Montfort and Nigel Thorp, *The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler, 1855-1903*, online edition, University of Glasgow:  
[www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence](http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/correspondence)
- Hausberg** Catalogue numbers for prints by Roussel in Margaret D. Hausberg, *The Prints of Théodore Roussel*, New York 1991.
- Heawood** Catalogue numbers for watermarks in Edward Heawood, *Watermarks mainly of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, Hilversum 1950.
- Kennedy** Numbers in Edward G. Kennedy, *The Etched Work of Whistler*, New York 1910, reprinted San Francisco 1978.

All measurements are in millimetres, height preceding width.

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

## CATALOGUE

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Research into the family of Katharine Riches was contributed by Andrew Bowker.

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## 1 to 2 The French Set

### 1 The Unsafe Tenement

from 'The French Set'

Etching (158 x 226) printed on 'antique' laid paper (248 x 377), 1858

Kennedy 17 III

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1921 (P.2094-R)

Nos. 1 and 2 were made in Alsace during the outward journey of Whistler's trip to the Rhine in 1858. This print shows the influence of the prints of the Barbizon artist Charles Jacque, which also featured dilapidated half-timbered farmhouses. Jacque in turn was influenced by seventeenth-century Dutch etchings.

The title page and 12 plates of 'The French Set' were printed by the leading printer Auguste Delâtre on *chine collé* paper and issued in Paris in an edition of 20 in 1858. The first London edition of 50 was issued a few weeks later. The plates were bought in 1860 by the London Serjeant-at-law Ralph Thomas and reissued and exhibited the following year. This impression was printed separately on a fly-leaf torn from an old book.

### 2 Street at Saverne

from 'The French Set'

Etching and drypoint (108 x 158) printed on Japanese paper (327 x 236), 1858

Kennedy 19 IV

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.274-1954)

Etched on the trip to the Rhine in 1858, this print was based on a graphite-and-watercolour drawing made in Saverne in Alsace, and annotated *Place St Thomas*.

This is one of a group of impressions of early plates in the Fitzwilliam on thick Japanese paper, which were probably printed together at the same date. One of the other plates (no 9) is dated 1861, so the group was not printed before that date, when the 'French Set' was reprinted by Delâtre for Thomas. The varied wiping of the plate to create pools of shadow and highlight is typical of Delâtre's 'artistic printing'. Impressions were also printed on blue paper.

## 3 to 17 The Thames

### 3 Old Westminster Bridge

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching (75 x 204) printed on old (probably early 19th-century) laid paper (190 x 314), 1859

Kennedy 39 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.79-1959)

Probably Whistler's earliest etching of the Thames, made soon after his move from Paris on 6 May 1859. Like other early Thames etchings it was originally printed in small numbers for private circulation, probably on the press in his brother-in-law Seymour Haden's house in Sloane Street. Only later was it published as one of the sixteen etchings of 'The Thames Set' in 1871.

The newly built Houses of Parliament dominate the skyline with the tower of Big Ben still scaffolded (the clock chimed for the first time on 31 May 1859). Old Westminster Bridge was soon to be demolished and the river embanked. Two years later, Whistler made an etching showing construction of the new bridge.

### 4 Limehouse

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching and drypoint (126 x 201) printed on laid paper (267 x 360), 1859

Kennedy 40 II

Given by Mrs T.H. Riches 1923 (P.2089-R)

Whistler took lodgings in a pub at Wapping from August to October 1859, and made a group of eight etchings. This view of Broadway Wharf is the most easterly of the early Thames etchings, with the Old Harbour Master's House on the right (the name partly visible at the top). The view is reversed, with the wood sheds of West India Docks in the distance.

This impression is inscribed on the back: '*Proof printed by J. Whistler / Given to me by Mrs Whistler – (his Mother) / 1872. T. N. MacLean.*' The sculptor Thomas Nelson MacLean (1845-1894) exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1870 and in the 1880s became an ally of Whistler. He married the donor shortly before his death (see p. 4 above).

### 5 Eagle Wharf

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching (135 x 212) printed on handmade wove paper (138 x 215), 1859

Kennedy 41

Given by Mrs T.H. Riches 1923 (P.2090-R)

One of several etchings that Whistler made of wharves along Wapping High Street, often with one of the local workers or inhabitants prominently depicted in the foreground. The name of the firm Tyzack, Whiteley, & Co. is visible on the building on the left (Whistler often referred to this plate by the title 'Tyzack Whiteley'). The firm was listed in the 1859 London Directory as 'patent windlass, chain cable and anchor makers' at 266-7 Wapping High Street; at 268 was 'William Brown, sail maker & ship chandler'.

This print is inscribed on the back by T. N. MacLean (see no. 4): '*Proof printed by J. Whistler, Given by him to a friend from whom I received it – 1873 – T.N.M.*' (see p. 4 and no. 4, above).

### 6 Billingsgate

Etching and drypoint (152 x 227) printed on machine-made wove paper (155 x 231), 1859

Kennedy 47 IV/V

Given by Mrs T.H. Riches 1923 P.2080-R.

This etching shows a view further west than the other views of wharves and docks made in 1859 (nos. 4 and 5). The site is the old fish market of Billingsgate, with London Bridge and the tower of Southwark Cathedral in the background on the right. Whistler was probably sitting on the Custom House Stairs to etch it (Charles Haden, Seymour's brother, worked at the Customs House).

This rare impression appears to show an undescribed state of the plate, printed after some of the figures and masts on the left had been burnished away, but before some of the redrawing of the figures and sails. No. 7 is a later state.

### 7 Billingsgate

Etching and drypoint (153 x 227) printed on Japanese paper (188 x 264), 1859

Kennedy 47 VIII

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.2081-R)

This plate was not published as part of The Thames Set. This is one of the impressions of the final state printed on Japanese paper before the plate was published in *The Portfolio* in January 1878. Whistler was persuaded to let *The Portfolio* publish this plate by Ernest Brown, who was later to introduce Whistler to the Fine Art Society, resulting in a series of publications culminating in the first Venice set (see nos. 17-20).

### 8 Little Wapping

Etching and drypoint (125 x 102) printed on Dutch 'antique' laid paper (210 x 159) with fragment of a watermark of Dutch lion with sword and darts inside belt (probably 18th-century), 1861

Kennedy 73 II

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.283-1954)

In 1860 Whistler spent extended periods working in Rotherhithe, producing views from the balcony of the Angel Inn by Cherry Garden Pier looking across the river to Wapping. He returned again in early 1861 and made additional etchings (nos. 8-12) for inclusion in his first one-man exhibition of etchings in April 1861 at the New Bond Street gallery set up by Serjeant-at-law Ralph Thomas and run by his son Edmund.

This view is taken from the balcony of the Angel looking North-West, but unlike the larger etching from the previous year it does not show figures on the balcony in the foreground and the distant view on the left stops just short of showing the dome of St Paul's Cathedral.

## 9 Vauxhall Bridge

Etching (69 x 115) printed on Japanese paper (236 x 326), 1861

Kennedy 70 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.80-1959)

Among the Thames etchings made in early 1861 several show the old bridges spanning the river. Whistler is more interested in the pictorial potential of the foreground shipping and the stormy mood of the sky than in the detail of the bridge.

This is one of a group of early etchings in the Fitzwilliam (see no. 2) that were apparently printed at the same time on similar Japanese paper, and have remained together ever since. As this plate is dated 1861, the entire group was not printed before that date, when Delâtre was doing the printing for Thomas's exhibition. Another impression of this plate printed on lighter-weight Japanese paper was given by G. J. F. Knowles in 1921 (P.2077-R).

## 10 Millbank

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching (101 x 125) printed on laid paper (223 x 335), 1861

Kennedy 71 III

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.282-1954)

The artist stood with his back to the huge Millbank Penitentiary, now the site of Tate Britain, with the dark silhouette of Lambeth Palace in the far distance.

This plate was made as an announcement card for the exhibition of Whistler's etchings newly published by Serjeant Thomas in April 1861. This is a later state with additional lines in the sky and the word 'London' added to the address. A note in the margin shows that Whistler sent this impression to the writer William Ernest Henley (1845-1902), who shared Whistler's love of the Thames and was one of the first to publish an appreciation of his work. He devoted a poem to Whistler's *Nocturnes of the Thames* in his book *Rhymes and Rhythms*, 1889-92.

## 11 The Little Pool

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching and drypoint (103 x 226) printed on old Dutch laid paper (127 x 151) with watermark of bee-hive with initials *DEDB* [De Erven D. Blauw] (Heawood 56, c.1822), 1861

Kennedy 74 VIII

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.284-1954)

Like no. 10 this print was made as an announcement card for Whistler's 1861 exhibition at the gallery run by Edmund Thomas, although it is not certain whether both prints were used. This is the final state of the print as published in the 'Thames Set' in 1871; the previous state had the same two lines of lettering that appear in no. 10. It was made in March, just before the exhibition opened, and probably shows Whistler at work on a pier overlooking the Pool of London (the stretch of river between London Bridge and Rotherhithe) with Serjeant Ralph Thomas and his son Ralph (the author of the first catalogue of Whistler's etchings in 1874). Whistler had etched a different view of 'The Pool' two years earlier.

## 12 Early Morning, Battersea

from 'The Thames Set'

Etching and drypoint (113 x 151) printed on 'antique' French laid paper (150 x 195) with fragment of unidentified watermark, 1861

Kennedy 75

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.2079-R)

Of all the early Thames etchings, this is the one that most anticipates the later poetic nocturnes among the Thames and the Venetian etchings of the late 1870s (see nos. 14, 18-20). It is one of the earliest glimpses in Whistler's work of the smog-ridden factory chimneys of Battersea that became one of his favourite subjects after his move to Lindsey Row, Chelsea, in 1866. The creation here of the atmosphere of dawn using hatched lines, led in his later work to experiments with pools of printed tone to create haze and fog.

This impression was printed on an old flyleaf, with red edging and stitching marks at the bottom.

## 13 The Two Ships

Etching and drypoint (203 x 133) printed on old Dutch laid paper (360 x 232) with watermark *D & C BLAUW* (early 19th-century), 1875

Kennedy 148 III

Given by G. J. F. Knowles 1954 (P.286-1954)

In the mid 1870s Whistler returned to making etchings of the Thames after a period of visiting the family of his patron F. R. Leyland, at Speke Hall near Liverpool. These sometimes lacked the concision of his earlier Thames views, and in this case there is no compensating evocation of atmosphere. This is partly due to the coarse printing. The plate had passed into the hands of Charles Augustus Howell, who helped Whistler during his gathering financial crisis in the late 1870s. Howell sold it to Dowdeswells', who in turn announced its publication in a numbered edition of 30 in January 1880, while Whistler was away in Venice (the plate was then destroyed). This impression is numbered in graphite *No. 23*.

## 14 Nocturne: The River at Battersea

Lithotint (172 x 264) printed on machine-made wove paper (279 x 400), 1878

Chigago 8 I

Bequeathed by Campbell Dodgson 1949 (P.438-1949)

One of five lithotints of the Thames made in 1878, this was drawn from memory at the offices of the printer Thomas Way. The view across the Thames from Whistler's house in Lindsey Row, Chelsea, had featured in his work for almost twenty years. Prominent are the steeple of St Mary's Church and the smokestacks and clock tower of Morgan Crucible Company, notorious for emissions that contributed to 'the almost perpetual obscuration of the prospect, the blurring of distant objects, and the complete veiling on nine days out of ten of everything beyond two miles.'

This proof on white paper was printed before the sides of the image were masked to tidy the irregular edge of washes. The published state was printed on blue paper, increasing the sense of smog.

### 15 “The Adam and Eve”, Old Chelsea

Etching (173 x 301) printed on Japanese paper (245 x 353), 1879

Kennedy 175 II

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 (P.2092-R)

This waterfront tavern had already been demolished to make way for the Chelsea embankment. Whistler based details of his print on a photograph by James Hedderly (c.1815-1885) taken around 1865. Whistler's pupil Walter Greaves, son of a neighbouring Chelsea boatman who helped Whistler explore the river, also made an etching of this subject. Whistler's print was published by Messrs Hogarth and Son in early 1879.

The print conforms to Whistler's description of his transitional style, as recorded by his first biographers, Elizabeth Robins and Joseph Pennell: ‘instead of drawing the panes of a window in firm outline... he suggested them by drawing the shadows and the reflected light with short crisp strokes and scarcely any outline at all.’

### 16 “The Adam and Eve”, Old Chelsea

Etching (175 x 302) printed on old laid paper (311 x 445) with watermark 1814/2, 1879

Kennedy 175 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.81-1959)

This is exactly the same state as no. 15, but printed on European paper that was probably a flyleaf from an old book (the watermark is 1814). It is inscribed ‘à mon ami P. G. Hamerton. / J. McNeill Whistler’ (presumably a record of Whistler's inscription on an earlier mount, as it is not in the artist's handwriting). Whistler often crossed swords in print with the art critic Philip Gilbert Hamerton, but he had agreed that his etching of *Billingsgate* (no. 7) could be published in Hamerton's journal *The Portfolio* in January 1878 and in the new edition of Hamerton's influential book, *Etching and Etchers*, published in 1880.

### 17 Fulham

Etching (133 x 207) printed on heavy handmade wove paper (271 x 540), 1879

Kennedy 182 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.82-1959)

This is one of three etchings of the old Fulham (or Putney) toll bridge that Whistler etched in 1879. The wooden structure had to be constantly repaired and in 1879 was scheduled for replacement by the present stone bridge (constructed 1882-6).

All three of Whistler's prints were published by the Fine Art Society, this one on 28 January 1879, with Whistler providing twenty signed proofs and Frederick Goulding printing the rest of the edition. This proof lacks the blindstamp of the Printsellers' Association used on the published edition. Whistler hoped to stave off bankruptcy with these publications, but failed, and was declared bankrupt in May.

These views of the old Putney Bridge and an etching of the Battersea Bridge were the last prints that Whistler made before the Fine Art Society commissioned him to go to Venice (see nos. 18-20).

## 18 to 20 Venice

### 18 The Beggars

from ‘The First Venice Set’

Etching and drypoint (305 x 208) printed on ‘antique’ laid paper trimmed by the artist (308 x 211 excluding tab with signature) with watermark of Strasbourg Lily with pendant letters lvg; (Chicago watermark 289), 1879-80.

Kennedy 194 VII

Bought with the help of the Art Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund 2008 (P.3-2008)

In July 1879 the Fine Art Society commissioned Whistler to go to Venice and return by December with a set of etched plates. Whistler set off in September but did not return until November of 1880, having etched many more plates than he took with him. Twelve were selected for publication as ‘The First Venice Set’ (*Venice, a Series of Twelve Etchings*) and exhibited in December 1880.

This plate is larger than those that Whistler brought with him from London; it was made on a plate ordered from a Venetian craftsman. The view shows a passageway leading from the enclosed Corte de la Carozze to the brightly lit Campo Santa Margarita in Dorsoduro. The figures were altered after Whistler's return to London, with the help of a separate drawing, and with the printer Thomas Way serving as a model. The remarkable depiction of light around the dark figure of the boatman on the right of the passageway became less prominent in later state changes made during the protracted process of printing the edition, which, as in the case of no. 19, remained incomplete at Whistler's death.

The Fine Art Society had no written agreement with Whistler, but was to pay him 10 shillings for each print of the edition of 100. In 1881 Whistler printed 28 of *The Beggars* and 26 of *The Doorway* (no. 19). For the rest of the decade he printed an average per annum of 3 to 4 impressions of *The Beggars* and 6 to 7 impressions of *The Doorway*. By 1889 he had printed 55 of *The Beggars* and 77 of *The Doorway*. By 1901 he had printed 76 of *The Beggars* and 84 of *The Doorway*. By his death he had printed 78 of *The Beggars* and 84 of *The Doorway*, although he had apparently completed printing all of the other prints in the set (statistics from correspondence in GLA archive; there is no record of the number of impressions of each state). The printing was completed by the printer Frederick Goulding for Whistler's executrix, his sister-in-law Birnie Phillips, in 1903, and the plates were cancelled and given to the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow.

### 19 The Doorway

from ‘The First Venice Set’

Etching, roulette and drypoint (294 x 200) printed on ‘antique’ laid paper trimmed by the artist (298 x 206 excluding tab with signature), 1879-80

Kennedy 188 VI

Bought with the help of the Art Fund and the MLA/V&A Purchase Grant Fund 2008 (P.2-2008)

Etched on one of the largest plates that Whistler took with him from London, this view of the Palazzo

Gussoni was drawn from a boat on the Rio de la Fava, east of the Rialto. A chair-repairer's stock of chairs hangs above the interior. In successive states the artist changed the figure leaning over the water. In this rich impression of the penultimate state, he used inks of two different consistencies and colours to distinguish pictorial elements. Apart from a few etched marks and dotted striations made with a spiked roulette, the reflection in the canal is achieved entirely by Whistler manipulating the ink on the surface of the plate at the printing stage, making each impression unique. The printing was influenced by contemporary interest in 'monotype', in which an artist brushed ink directly onto a blank printing plate. Whistler would have known the monotypes of Vicomte Lodovic Lepic, and one of Whistler's companions in Venice, Otto Bacher, was also keen on making monotypes at this time.

## 20 Long Lagoon

from 'The Second Venice Set'

Etching (152 x 225) printed on Dutch(?) laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1880  
Kennedy 203 I

Bequeathed by Katherine Elizabeth Lewis 1961 (P.141-1961)

Etched on one of the middle-sized plates that Whistler brought with him from London, this print was exhibited in 1883 but not published until 1886 when Dowdeswells' issued the twenty-six etchings known as 'The Second Venice Set'. One of the most expansive of the Venetian views, it looks west across the Lagoon to the Giudecca, with the dome of the Redentore church, seen probably from around the Public Gardens, or from a nearby boat. This rare impression was cleanly printed before Whistler etched his monogram; later impressions were typically printed in browner ink, with lavish tonal wiping effects. As in nos. 18 and 19, the graphite inscription confirms that Whistler printed it himself.

A fragment survives of the original mount inscribed in ink by Whistler *To Mrs George Lewis*, and signed with his butterfly. The recipient, Elizabeth Lewis (who also owned no. 30), passed the print and mount to her daughter Katherine, who bequeathed them to the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1961. Unfortunately at some point the mount was separated from the print and cut down.

When first exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1883, the print was displayed in a white frame in Whistler's famous 'Arrangement in White and Yellow'.

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## 21 to 23 London

### 21 The Barber's Shop

Etching (165 x 239) printed on Dutch 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature) with the fragment of countermark HC H [HC Hoising] (H. Voorn, *De papiermolens in de provincie Zuid-Holland*, 1973, p.216), c.1887  
Kennedy 271

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.84-1959)

After working on his Venice etchings, Whistler looked for subjects in the streets of Chelsea, where he lived at a series of addresses until leaving for Paris in 1892. Nos. 21-23 are typical of Whistler's London etchings of the 1880s: small in scale, describing light and shade with an economy of line, and sketched as though the plate was a sketchbook page. Many show shop fronts and facades, with figures silhouetted in doorways and arches, recalling the figure subjects among Whistler's Venice etchings.

### 22 Rag-Shop, Milman's Row

Etching (150 x 226) printed on Dutch(?) 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature) with unidentified fragment of a watermark, c.1887  
Kennedy 272 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.83-1959)

One of the etchings of shops and street scenes in Chelsea made in the 1880s. Milman's Row (now Milman's Street) led from the King's Road to the river, just along from Whistler's former house in Lindsey Row. Some of Whistler's earliest figure etchings of 1858 had been of people involved in the rag trade, but the emphasis here is much more on the picturesque possibilities of the setting (see also no. 23). Whistler's early titles for this print probably included 'The Steps, Milman's Row'. He also made a drawing, a lithograph and two smaller etchings of the same subject, one of the latter featuring the adjacent furniture shop in more detail. Each was observed independently from life, and evidently sketched on the spot.

### 23 Clothes-Exchange, Houndsditch, No. 1

Etching (160 x 241) printed on Dutch 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature) with countermark of a crown over GR, c.1887  
Kennedy 287 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.85-1959)

In addition to exploring the picturesque possibilities of Chelsea, Whistler ventured further afield to the used clothing district around Houndsditch in the East End of London. He referred to the group of prints made in the East End at this time as his 'East London Set', although they were never formally published as such. This is one of two plates showing buildings in which old garments were bought and sold, probably made at Phil's Buildings, where hundreds of dealers gathered every afternoon in search of cast-off clothes to sell.

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## 24 Belgium

### 24 Grand'Place, Brussels

Etching (220 x 142) printed on Dutch(?) 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1887  
Kennedy 362

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.86-1959)

In August 1887 Whistler travelled to Belgium and Holland with his brother and sister-in-law. He took with him prepared plates and made nineteen etchings,



thirteen of them in Brussels in September. As in the London etchings of this period (nos. 21-23), he mainly chose subjects away from tourist sites, but he was attracted by the celebrated Grand'Place, with its seventeenth-century Guild Houses. Rather than emphasise the monumentality of the recently restored House of the Dukes of Brabant (named after a series of busts along the front), Whistler evoked the decorative play of light and shade over its facade.

In February 1888 he supplied proofs of the Brussels etchings for Dowdeswells' to sell.

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## 25 to 28 The Honeymoon Tour to the Loire

### 25 Courtyard, Rue P. L. Courier, Tours

Etching (147 x 79) printed on Dutch(?) 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1888

Kennedy 368

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.87-1959)

After marrying Beatrice Godwin on 11 August 1888, Whistler set off on his honeymoon to the chateaux of the Loire and the towns of Touraine, taking with him 34 prepared plates. In most of the etchings that he made during the trip, he avoided the obvious tourist sites, and concentrated on picturesque settings rather than figures, much as he had done in Venice, London and Brussels. This is one of six etchings that he made in Tours. The relatively anonymous courtyard, enlivened by an interesting architectural feature, is typical of the subjects Whistler favoured on this trip.

### 26 Mairie, Loches

Etching (218 x 130) printed on Dutch(?) 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1888

Kennedy 382 III

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.88-1959)

On his honeymoon tour to the Loire and Touraine in the autumn of 1888, Whistler made his largest group of etchings at Loches, with a total of eleven plates. Although the etchings were never published as a set, he generally referred to the etchings of this tour as his 'Renaissance lot' because of the details of French Renaissance architecture that caught his eye. The subjects were generally portrayed as though glimpsed down backstreets and alleys, conjuring the sense of a traveller discovering a new town, or an artist discovering the picturesque away from standard tourist views. Relatively few impressions were printed, the first of them sent to the Fine Art Society on 27 March 1889. The views of Loches proved the most popular.

### 27 Hôtel de Ville, Loches

Etching (270 x 166) printed on Dutch 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature) with countermark H K, 1888

Kennedy 384

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.89-1959)

One of the better known landmarks of Renaissance architecture among the plates made on Whistler's honeymoon tour of the Touraine. The edifice housing the Hôtel de Ville was built in 1535-43 beside a medieval gate (Porte de Picois). A few years earlier Henry James wrote in his book, *A Little Tour in France* (1884): 'The little streets of Loches wander crookedly down the hill, and are full of charming pictorial "bits": an old town-gate, passing under a mediaeval tower, which is ornamented by Gothic windows and the empty niches of statues; a meagre but delicate *hotel de ville*, of the Renaissance, nestling close beside it.'

### 28 Clock-Tower, Amboise

Etching (176 x 125) printed on Dutch(?) 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1888

Kennedy 394

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.90-1959)

Another of the more well-known landmarks of Renaissance architecture among the plates etched on Whistler's honeymoon tour of the Loire. Even here, Whistler dwelt on the more commonplace buildings in the foreground rather than the clock-tower. The other plate he made in Amboise showed the famous chateau of François I, but again relegated to the distance.

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## 29 to 30 Amsterdam

### 29 Balcony, Amsterdam

Etching and drypoint (173 x 170) printed on Dutch 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature) with Pro Patria watermark, 1889

Kennedy 405 II

Bequeathed by G. J. F. Knowles 1959 (P.91-1959)

Whistler arrived with his wife Beatrice in Amsterdam in late August 1889 with the intention of making a series of prints. He spent over two months exploring the city's waterways and made a series of 12 etchings from the low vantage point of a boat. This is one of two views of store fronts on Oudezijds Achterburgwal, then known as Rottenest, forming part of the back of no. 48 Zeedijk (the view became popular with other artists, such as D. Y. Cameron, who etched it in 1892). The depiction of hanging laundry repeats a theme of Whistler's recent London etchings (see nos. 22-3).

This is the second state of the plate, printed before the addition of the extra shading seen in no. 30.

### 30 Balcony, Amsterdam

Etching and drypoint (271 x 170) printed on 'antique' laid paper trimmed by the artist to the platemark (with tab for signature), 1889

Kennedy 405 III

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

This impression of the final state of the plate shows shading added since no. 29 was printed (Whistler probably printed only about 12 proofs of this print). It is shown here on its original mount (the right edge has

been restored) with the manuscript dedication *To Mrs George* signed with Whistler's butterfly. The recipient, Elizabeth Lewis (1844-1931), was wife of the lawyer George Lewis, and their house was frequented by artists and writers such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James Edward Burne Jones and Whistler (see also no. 20).

The frames of nos. 29 and 30 are based on the frame of a Whistler etching from the Lewis collection in the Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow.

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## 21 to 33 Pupils and followers

### 31 Walter Sickert 1860-1942

#### 'The Little Lagoon' after Whistler

Etching and drypoint (101 x 69), two impressions, c.1884  
Bromberg 47

Bequeathed by J. W. Freshfield 1955 (P.122-1955/P.123-1955)

Sickert entered Whistler's studio in 1882, and with his fellow pupil Mortimer Menpes he helped to print Whistler's Venetian etchings. These two impressions of a copy after Whistler's etching, *The Little Lagoon* from the 'First Venice Set', show Sickert using the printing effects that Whistler taught him. Different lighting effects are created by varying the areas of ink left on the surface of the plate when wiping it prior to printing. One example (P.122-1955) is printed on machine made wove paper (114 x 82), while the other (P.123-1955) is printed on 'antique' Dutch laid paper (112 x 77), which Whistler preferred for its colour.

### 32 Théodore Roussel 1847-1926

#### Cheyne Walk, Chelsea

Etching (134 x 190) printed on 'antique' Dutch(?) laid paper (170 x 208) with unidentified fragment of countermark with initials, c.1888-9

Hausberg 27

Given by Mrs T. H. Riches 1923 (P.1989-R)

The French artist Roussel settled in Chelsea before 1885 when he became a follower of Whistler (out of respect he always went bareheaded in Whistler's presence). Roussel's first original etchings featured local streets and shops in the manner of Whistler's prints of the 1880s (nos. 21-23). This view shows (in reverse) the corner of Beaufort Street and Cheyne Walk. To the right of the bay-fronted house is Lindsey House, where Whistler lived between 1866 and 1878. This is one of two prints in the Fitzwilliam dedicated by Roussel to Thomas Nelson MacLean, the sculptor whose Whistler prints also came to the Museum via his widow (see no. 33, and the note about Katharine Riches on page 4).

### 33 Théodore Roussel 1847-1926

#### The Street, Chelsea Embankment

Etching (148 x 209) on Dutch 'antique' laid paper (195 x 273) with Pro Patria watermark, c.1888-9

Hausberg 26

Given by Mrs T.H. Riches 1923 (P.1990-R)

Very much in the spirit of Whistler's studies of Chelsea shop fronts in the 1880s (nos. 19-20), this view shows the row between Danvers and Beaufort streets, which was demolished in 1889 in connection with the construction of the new Battersea Bridge.

The paper (with Pro Patria watermark) used for this impression is the same type as collected and used by Whistler around this date to print no. 29.

This impression is also dedicated to Thomas Nelson MacLean (see no. 32).

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## Booklets

### 34 Etchings & Dry Points. Venice Second Series

London 1883, 1st & 4th editions

Given by Sir Herbert Thompson 1920 and Harold Hulme Brindley 1918

For the text of this catalogue to the second exhibition of his Venetian prints at the Fine Art Society in 1883, Whistler culled quotes from previous criticism of his work, adding his own marginal glosses to hold his critics up to ridicule. He described the installation as an 'Arrangement in White and Yellow... Sparkling and dainty—and all so sharp—White walls of different whites, with painted mouldings—not gilded!—yellow velvet curtains—pale yellow matting—yellow sofas and little chairs—lovely little table yellow—own design—with yellow pot and Tiger Lily!... etchings in their exquisite white frames—with their little butterflies—large white butterfly on yellow curtains and yellow butterfly on white wall—and [a] servant in yellow livery' to hand out this catalogue. He gave his allies yellow butterflies 'to wear defiantly with the brave and beautiful on the great day'.

Whistler's 'Arrangement' was in its turn ridiculed by others, for example in the wood-engraving after George du Maurier (1834-1896) pasted into Harold Brindley's copy of this catalogue. In 1894 Du Maurier published *Trilby: A Novel*, in *Harper's Monthly*, a story of bohemian life in Paris involving the character of Joe Sibley, the 'Idle Apprentice', who was based on Whistler. This became a cause of a public quarrel between the two former friends, and as a result a new edition was brought out with the references to Whistler toned down.

