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PATRONAGE, POWER, AND AESTHETIC TASTE:
THE MARKETING OF JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER'S ART AND LEGACY

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Patronage, Power, and Aesthetic Taste:

The Marketing of James McNeill Whistler's Art and Legacy

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This dissertation focuses on aspects of the work and reputation of James McNeill Whistler. I argue that by striving to control the dissemination of his artistic vision Whistler was able to reach an unprecedented vast international audience. Nationalism, as it appeared under various guises in art throughout the nineteenth century, here is understood as the driving force in the growth of a global art community, which began in the late eighteenth century, when the ideology of nation-states began to shape cultural production. I am particularly interested in how Whistler dissolved this notion of a national project. To accomplish this goal I will track modalities, or pathways of cultural transmission, by exploring different ways Whistler connected with international artist peer groups, implemented exhibition strategies, and communicated to his patrons when producing and selling his prints and drawings that depict the body.

Throughout his career Whistler experimented with ways to capitalize on the new networks of communications, developed by the emerging progressive journals and art galleries, ultimately establishing a significant impact on the agency an artist retains when forming his or her reputation in the twentieth century. Within the international art market,

Whistler revolutionized the role of the artist by experimenting with marketing devices. Managing the propagation of his work and aesthetic values through targeting groups of patrons, strategic exhibition programs, and establishing a network to support his work within specific art markets allowed the artist to secure his legacy with the canon of the history of art. Broader implications of my study offer new insights to the emerging art markets in the long nineteenth century begging the re-consideration of Whistler's oeuvre based in a single country, arena, or media. Connecting the early success of Whistler's *Thames Set* etchings, the *Venice Pastels* exhibition at the Fine Art Society in London, and finally the late lithographs and pastel drawings, to the artist's devoted practice of drawing the figure emphasizes the importance of these works of art to understand how Whistler created an aesthetic dialogue with his audiences.

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century's exhaustively connected global economy and cultural communities, art plays a key role in communicating ideas while transcending (or exploiting) national stereotypes and political boundaries.¹ By focusing on aspects of the work and reputation of James McNeill Whistler, I will propose that by striving to control the dissemination of his artistic vision Whistler reached a vast international audience. Nationalism, as it appeared under various guises in art throughout the nineteenth century (in World's Fairs, revival styles, literature, and visual arts), here is understood as the driving force in the growth of a global art community, which began in the late eighteenth century, when the ideology of nation-states began to shape cultural production. I am particularly interested in how Whistler dissolved this notion of a national project. To accomplish this goal I will track modalities, or pathways of cultural transmission, by exploring different ways Whistler connected with international artist peer groups, implemented exhibition strategies, and communicated to his patrons when producing and selling his paintings, prints, and drawings. Art historical scholarship has focused on a dealer-critic system that developed in Paris and London as a mutual dependence between the art market and the press. Throughout his career Whistler experimented with ways to capitalize on the new networks of communications, developed by the emerging

¹ For recent discussion, Leah Dickerman. *Inventing abstraction 1910-1925 : How a radical idea changed Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2012), Elaine O'Brien, Evelyn Nicodemus, Melissa Chiu, and Benjamin Genocchioeds. *Modern Art in Africa, Asia and Latin America: An Introduction to Global Modernisms* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011)

progressive journals and art galleries, ultimately establishing a significant impact on the agency an artist retains when forming his or her reputation in the twentieth century.

By targeting specific patrons, planning strategic exhibition programs, and establishing a network of supporters for his work in London, Paris, and New York Whistler successfully infiltrated the international market to increase the value and impact of his work. He worked closely with a range of dealers, gallery owners, and patrons to bypass the existing systems of commerce. Recent scholarship has discussed the financial and quantitative data that details Whistler's involvement in the art market.² I am interested in the intellectual and economic project of how he disseminated his aesthetic beliefs and will argue that Whistler was the quintessential cosmopolitan artist—one who, in the words of Kobena Mercer, exists “‘everywhere and nowhere,’ with little or no loyalty to the nation-state.”³ He rejected the repressive jury systems of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and the Royal Academy that promoted an institutionalized national or official art program to exert a more pointed influence on his audiences. As a case study, the series of successful and failed exhibitions Whistler produced—fully integrating his prints,

² See Charlotte Gould, Sophie Mesplède (eds.) *Marketing Art in the British Isles, 1700 to the Present: A Cultural History* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), Grischka Petri, *Arrangement in Business: The Art Market and the Career of James McNeill Whistler* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2011) and Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (eds.), *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011)

³ Kobena Mercer, *Cosmopolitan Modernisms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 10. Mercer uses multicultural and postcolonial lenses in order to reconsider the historical and stylistic circumstance of modernism and its legacies. Unlike its predecessors, however, it explicitly foregrounds themes of displacement in an effort to open its field of inquiry to subjects, movements, and geographies often excluded from traditional studies. In the Introduction the terms émigré and immigrant are positioned to be based on one's subjective position or in whose view one comes or goes. Mercer uses alternative, non-spatial forms of exile to suggest future areas of research. He wants to “re-examine the break-up of modernism as a historical moment of crisis in which certain outcomes gained precedence over others.”, 148.

paintings, and drawings—offered a new manner of viewing and consuming works of art to international audiences. The British Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and French Impressionist artists designed exhibitions and sold works of art within the art market; however, the extent to which Whistler orchestrated, produced, and managed the marketing of his work and legacy could not be matched.

In my close analysis of the prints and drawings I will diverge from many of biographical accounts of Whistler's career to create a better understanding of how the artist actively engaged with his audiences. Published accounts of Whistler's artistic beliefs remain full of contradictions and throughout the artist's correspondence there are no candid passages where he states clearly his definition of beauty or a devotion to the female subject. By synthesizing archival, exhibition records, correspondence, and studying the works of art (in collaboration with conservators), the significance of the figure for the artist can be reconciled.

Within the nineteenth-century international art market, Whistler revolutionized the role of the professional artist by experimenting with marketing devices. Managing the dissemination of his work and aesthetic values through targeting groups of patrons, strategic exhibition programs, and establishing a network to support his work within specific art markets allowed the artist to secure his legacy with the canon of the history of art. Broader implications of my study offer new insights to the emerging art markets in the long nineteenth century begging the re-consideration of Whistler's oeuvre based in a single country, arena, or media. Connecting the early success of Whistler's *Thames Set* etchings, the *Venice Pastels* exhibition at the Fine Art Society in London, and finally the late lithographs and pastel drawings, to the artist's practice of drawing the figure

emphasizes the importance of these works of art to understand how Whistler created an aesthetic dialogue with his audiences.

A Cosmopolitan American Artist

Born in the United States, living in Saint Petersburg Russia as a child, and growing up to split his adult life between Paris and London, Whistler led a peripatetic lifestyle that exposed him to several cultural environments. Nineteenth-century critics and twentieth-century biographies cast him as an outsider and lone expatriate at odds with the European and British artistic establishments.⁴ Recent scholars have emphasized how his artistic ideas were shaped by his experiences in both France and Britain.⁵ Shifting from a descriptive account of parallel evolutions within separate nation-states to analyzing the interlocking currents of exchange as they relate to Whistler, my research spans the artist's career. Reestablishing Whistler's connections to the United States can offer new insights into the strategic alliances the artist forged with printers, dealers, critics, and collectors to develop an international network from which he ran publicity and sale campaigns. I have studied personal correspondence, accounts from the artist and his major patrons, critical

⁴ Many authors have published biographies about James McNeill Whistler, most notably: Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell (1908), James Laver (1930), Hesketh Pearson (1952), Stanley Weintraub (1974), G.H. Fleming (1978, 1991), Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval (1995) and Daniel E Sutherland (2014). Joseph and Elizabeth Pennell's biography remains one of the most valuable documents containing accounts of Whistler's life from his contemporaries. Whistler privileged the Pennells' project by providing material that he kept from other writers. After the artist's death and a long legal exchange with the estate *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* was published in Philadelphia in 1908.

⁵ See, Katharine Lochnan, *Turner, Whistler, Monet* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004), Anna Gruetzner Robins, *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), Margaret MacDonald and Patricia de Montfront, *An American in London: Whistler and the Thames* (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2013).

reviews from popular nineteenth-century journals, and more prominently, visual analysis of the works of art exhibited and sold, to investigate how Whistler presented his doctrine on art within the emerging global art markets.

The identification of Whistler's nationality or relation to the United States remained a topic of great public interest throughout his life. Beginning in the 1860s he traversed the French and British art markets, published contradictory statements of his place of birth under oath in the High Court of Justice in London, and even exhibited in International Expositions under both the United States and British sections.⁶ Through calculated marketing Whistler was also able to spread his work and reputation through the United States market with never having to travel across the Atlantic. I am interested in how throughout his life Whistler identified himself as an American in myriad ways, though his works never reflected the national characteristics that most American artists readily accepted. In the mid-nineteenth century the United States was caught in an especially strong movement of artistic nationalism. A series of articles, entitled *Letters on Landscape Painting*, published in 1855 by painter Asher B. Durand, resonates with what John McCoubrey has argued to be the national theory of art.⁷ As one of America's foremost landscape painters Durand encouraged artists to work from nature, to achieve

⁶ University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter 07921.

⁷ John W. McCoubrey, *American Art 1700-1960: Sources and Documents*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1965) 110-115. McCoubrey introduces the passage, "These epistolary articles by the landscape painter Asher B. Durand (1796-1886) appeared in the *Crayon*, an influential vehicle published in America for American and English writing on art. Durand's moralism is not unlike that of Emerson, Bryant, or Cole, but he stresses here that technical proficiency required to record the particularities of nature. Although such an attitude was not limited to Americans, it was encouraged by the fact that in America nature remained so convincingly unspoiled that painters could find abundant opportunity for that fusion of realism and religious idealism which Durand describes." See also, John W. McCoubrey, *American Tradition in Painting: New Edition*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

“first impressions of beauty and sublimity, unmingled with the superstitions of Art.”

Through true observation and drawing with ‘scrupulous fidelity’ he argued that the artist could paint the American wilderness “imbedded with that undefinable quality recognized as sentiment.” To accomplish this goal Durand insisted American artists must stay in the United States in search of material and not to travel abroad.

Aware of the debates concerning the future of art in America, Whistler left for Paris in 1855 to pursue a career as a professional artist, not knowing that he would never return to the country of his birth. Throughout his career Whistler remained committed to his belief that art should be judged solely on the artist’s painterly and artistic merit rather than on a work’s moral message or the nationality of its creator. Notwithstanding this belief or reputation, Whistler held a strong national allegiance to the United States. It is imperative to make the distinction, as Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr was the first to argue that, Whistler’s *Americanness* was not an artistic *Americanness*.⁸ Whistler chose to be identified as an American artist while his identity as an American countryman was generally modified by the amount of time he spent across the Atlantic. At the age of sixty, in a series of journal entries believed to be notes for an unpublished manuscript, Whistler expressed frustration with critics speculating about his nationality:

To begin with I am not an Englishman—The journalists of London have so often, and so nosily, and with such lifting of the chin, declared that their great comfort satisfaction.. derived.. was theirs in the fact this, that it may be well to hasten and acknowledge that before it be the contrary be necessarily accepted as the fact... In many papers to the press I have been born in Russia—in France—in America—and, of late .. even in England—... No—the time has gone by when a man shall be born, without being consulted - That though when, one of these days

⁸ Nicolai Cikovsky, Jr., “Whistler and America”, Richard Dorment and Margaret F. MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler*. (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1995) 32.

I return to my native land, I shall expect to be born in every town in the United States, - and meanwhile I have chosen Boston.⁹

Whistler continues in the passage to suggest the breath of his legacy (suggesting that in admiration after his death each city in the country will claim to be the place of his birth) and to defy the idea of the disillusioned artist cynical of his native land. The artist's first biographers, Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, accepted uncritically what Whistler told them about his ancestry—at one point he claimed a member of his family was an ancestor of the First Family of Virginia—and today there remains a long list of published anecdotes tangled within the facts of Whistler's American lineage.¹⁰ I will discuss how Whistler manipulated his national identity in the international press and within his exhibitions in the 1880s to navigate independently within British, French, European, and American art circles.

To articulate how he translated his vision of beauty to such a vast range of audiences and collectors it is essential to examine the full scope of his work within a multifaceted context, which included a group of key American patrons. Identifying as an American artist allowed Whistler to navigate the socioeconomic class structures abroad while applying economic theories and rhetoric to the art market. Within this study I will examine the concept of shared agency, suggesting that a complex network of collaboration was at work to establish Whistler's legacy, in lieu of the strictly

⁹ University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter 06829- Noted to the file: "These notes were made by JW, possibly to form a memoir or autobiographical note. They are written on large sheets of paper. The envelope is large and was used to store the pages; the writing on the envelope is not in JW's hand." Letter 07434 1899/1900 to the editor of the Lowell Book.

¹⁰ Pennell, Joseph. *The Life of James McNeill Whistler* (London: J.B. Lippincott: 1908) 2-5.

independent actions of a single heroic artist. Thomas Winans, a close friend of the Whistler family, was the first patron to purchase works from and offer support to the young artist. The connections Whistler made through Winans with American dealers George A. Lucas and Samuel Avery were the foundation of a network he established to sell his works in the United States in the 1880s. And most notably, Whistler enjoyed a close friendship with American patron Charles Lang Freer from 1890 until his death in 1903. During this time both men discovered new dimensions of displaying and appreciating works of art, establishing visual experiences where the design or aesthetic surfaces of works became as important as the subjects they depicted. Freer established the Freer Gallery of Art in 1906 as part of the Smithsonian Institution, ultimately assuring a place for Whistler's aesthetic project on the national mall in Washington D.C and within the canon of the history of art.

Patronage and Power

Whistler's prominence within the canon of American art was solidified at the time of his death in 1903 by the fact that the majority of his works of art were held within private collections and public institutions in the United States. Art historical textbooks, such as Charles Chaffin's *American Painting: The Evolution of Painting in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (1907), also presented Whistler as an American master within the canon. However, Whistler's works of art did not fit neatly into a category or movement, as Chaffin explains, "it was neither possible nor necessary. The finest quality of his art was personal to himself, an emanation of genius, not transferable: the principles that he adapted were diversely used by others; his tenets too simple and universal to

found or need a school for their propagation. He did better than attract a few followers and imitators; he influenced the whole world of art.” Chaffin further commented, “with Whistler, we may do well to enter at times into the tranquil half-light of the soul, and ponder upon the things of the Spirit.”¹¹ Writing at the same period Elizabeth Luther Cary, Christian Brinton, and Sadakichi Hartman also assessed Whistler’s works as symbolic and spiritual.¹² Though these accounts are posthumous, I believe they remain relevant as a way to provide some insight into the richness of meaning his work possessed in the nineteenth century for American collectors and scholars. When Whistler exhibited his pastel drawings in London and Paris he was ridiculed, or even worse, not discussed at all. Popular among his American patrons, including Louisine and Henry Havemeyer, Isabella Stewart Gardner, and Charles Lang Freer, in the United States Whistler’s pastel drawings of anonymous nude or scantily clad female models received a prominent space next to the artist’s paintings in the Memorial Exhibition of 1904.¹³ I am interested in how Whistler’s paintings, prints, and drawings, in particular the nude pastel drawings, circulated within the international art markets and captured the imagination of elite collectors and connoisseurs.

¹¹ Charles Chaffin, *American Painting: The Evolution of Painting in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1907) 303.

¹² Elizabeth Luther Cary, *The Works of James McNeill Whistler* (London: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1907), 39, Christian Brinton, *Modern Artists* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1908), 101, 107, and Sadakichi Hartmann, *The Whistler Book: A Monograph of Life and Position in Art of James McNeill Whistler* (Boston: L.C. Page & Co., 1910), 79. See also, Lenora Moffa, *The painting of James McNeill Whistler, 1859-1877: A Technique of Mutability*, Ph. D, Dissertation (Emory University, 1991). Moffa discusses similar period reviews that describe a metaphorical and metaphysical content of Whistler’s painting. By placing the comments within the context of nineteenth-century aesthetic thought Moffa argues Whistler’s painting technique was informed by his knowledge of the poetry and art theory of Charles Baudelaire.

¹³ Linda Merrill, *After Whistler The Artist and His Influence on American Painting*, Atlanta: High Museum of Art, 2004) 86-95.

By 1894 the largest number of Whistler's collectors were American. Charles Lang Freer met the artist in 1890 and established a unique role that oscillated between patron, promoter, and student of the artist. Believing in shared harmonies between works of art produced in different periods and cultures Freer, along with Louisine and Henry Havemeyer, were model late-nineteenth century art connoisseurs. The Havemeyers were also active collectors and the breadth of their holdings—ranging from French Impressionist paintings to Japanese tea jars—reflected their optimism about the unifying the power of aesthetic taste. Henry Havemeyer leveraged his family's sugar refining firm, Havemeyers & Elder, into a position of dominance, and amassed a fortune as head of the American Sugar Trust.¹⁴ Known for his aggressive business practices, Havemeyer also applied his ambition to art collecting and assembled one of the largest encyclopedic art collections in the United States. Before marrying Henry, Louisine Waldron Elder began to collect works by Edgar Degas, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro in Paris. Louisine first met Whistler when visiting his studio in London. Appreciating Whistler's use of color within his pastel drawings Louisine purchased five framed pastels originally exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1880.¹⁵

Together the Havemeyers' and Charles Lang Freer's influence ultimately transformed Whistler's reputation in the United States by securing his work within the most prestigious American collections. Freer did not hold the social stature or level of wealth when compared to the Havemeyers and their collection methods, however, Freer's

¹⁴ James Livingston, *Origins of the Federal Reserve System: Money, Class, and Corporate Capitalism, 1890-1913*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986) Livingston emphasizes the social, rather than narrowly economic or financial, origins and how corporate 'elites' set the terms for the national debate over monetary reform.

¹⁵ Louisine W. Havemeyer, *Sixteen to Sixty: Memoir of a Collector* (New York, 1961), 206-210.

collection has been acclaimed since its formation and offers a unique case study. Freer's collecting strategies and legacy are one of the most tangible today. As an accountant he kept a record of each sale—insisting that the seller or dealer provide a complete provenance of every object. All invoices, notes, diaries, correspondence, and valuations are preserved in the Freer Gallery of Art Archives at the Smithsonian Institution. Freer was involved with every stage during the formation of the Freer Gallery of Art; from designing the building's layout, hiring Charles Platt to complete its construction, and negotiating with Congress while insisting that his collection stay intact.

Privileging Aesthetic Taste

Many scholars have discussed Whistler's use of color in his oil paintings as the primary vehicle for expression but considerably less attention has been paid to the use and meaning of color in his drawings. In the 1860s and 1870s, Whistler's *Nocturne* paintings asserted a new artistic doctrine that established a harmonious design based on the interrelationship of color and line, dictating a primary role for color.¹⁶ Inspired by the River Thames and the natural light illuminating the surface of the water at dawn and dusk, Whistler originally referred to these paintings as "Moonlights" until his British patron Frederick Leyland suggested the title *Nocturne*, the title given to musical compositions inspired by the night. The new title was derived from Leyland's personal love of music and Whistler's desire to remove an interpretive narrative from his painting (music is the most abstract art form). After hours of studying a variety of scenes on the

¹⁶ Based on the written commentaries of contemporary critics, scholar Carrie J. Haslett concluded that the terms used to describe Whistler's color theory were essentially in place by 1878. Carrie Haslett, *Discussing the Ineffable: Color in the Paintings of James McNeill Whistler* (Ph. D. dissertation, Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr College, 1999).

river, Whistler would return to his studio to recreate the River Thames' shadowy mist by overlapping thin layers of paint. The dark, damp mist that engulfed London was transformed into a magical haze on the surface of the canvases.

When first exhibited in London and Paris, the dominance of color in the landscapes baffled audiences and forced critics to appreciate Whistler's work in a new way, rejecting the traditional Royal Academy standards that privileged an artist's development of line drawing over color. Robert Goldwater argues that within Whistler's *Nocturne* paintings, the artist established an aesthetic code that transcends naturalistic accuracy in favor of an expression that illuminates the artist's state of interior feeling.¹⁷ As one of the first scholars to link the *Nocturne* paintings to the symbolist movement, Goldwater discusses how Whistler's paintings from the 1880s should be appreciated among symbolist artists and writers who reacted against the realist and impressionist description of the world of phenomena in favor of inner exploration and subjective expression. Acknowledging these affinities as a type of artistic exchange, I am interested in how Whistler's interaction with the symbolists in the 1890s paralleled an increased production of pastel drawings depicting nude or draped models.

In Whistler's long and productive career—which began and ended with celebrated periods of landscape painting and portraiture—his dedication to the imagery of the anonymous female figure may seem idiosyncratic. Even today, his seemingly abrupt abandonment of the large *Nocturne* style landscape paintings in the 1880s that yielded

¹⁷ Goldwater, Robert. *Symbolism*. London: Harper and Row, 1979, p. 143. When discussing Whistler Goldwater mentions William Butler Yeats. See also, William Butler Yeats, "A Symbolic Artist and the Coming of Symbolic Art," *The Dome*, December 1898, 34. Yeats explains, "If you liberate [art] from storytelling and portraiture... [it will] become a symbol of an infinite emotion, a perfected emotion, a part of Divine Essence."

such popular images can be difficult to understand; to art critics and collectors at the time, it was downright shocking when he continued to assign the same title to his smaller paintings and works on paper. The 1884 *'Notes-Harmonies-Nocturnes'* exhibition at the Dowdeswell Gallery in London was a pivotal moment in the artist's career. I argue that Whistler presented a number of works depicting women in a range of media to articulate his artistic vision and ideals of beauty. He experimented with the physical effects of painting the walls with a pure, potent flesh-toned color to stretch the exhibition experience into the realm of the psychological. The gallery developed into a space to present and merchandise his aesthetic theory that art should be judged by the harmony of color and line created within the composition. I believe that Whistler's elective shift away from marketing his recognizable paintings of the River Thames (at one time a stamp of his identity) toward studies of the female form is actually a sign of this key value underlying Whistler's artistic practice. This shift reveals the integrity and independence with which he pursued his career, challenging contemporary trends by presenting his seemingly radical artistic theories and persuading his audience, as well as, the market to follow.

Based on my research, I also argue that the themes that dominate Whistler's late lithographs and pastels, especially the works completed in collaboration with his wife Beatrix Whistler between 1888 and 1894 in Paris, have strong ties to the symbolist poets. Whistler's affinity towards Stéphane Mallarmé, or "mon Mallarmé" as Whistler called him, and their epistolary exchange of letters, essays, and prints attests to the intimate

friendship that bound them.¹⁸ The subtlest form to which Mallarmé subscribed in his poetry involved exploring the essential reality that lies beneath surface meaning and trying to express the timelessness and universal significance of that reality. Similar to the *Nocturne* painting the interrelationship of color and line are balanced within the composition of self-absorbed and isolated female figures that dominate Whistler's drawing practice and painting in the 1890s. The pastel drawings offered his audience a new way of viewing art. The textured surfaces of the delicate pastel elicit a reaction for the viewer by translating a novel language of calligraphic strokes and distinct markings—ultimately unifying beauty and the female form—to establish a unique aesthetic dialogue with his key patrons.

The Marketing of James McNeill Whistler's Art and Legacy

In the first chapter I discuss Whistler's early art education and the patronage that supported him in establishing a prominent reputation and lucrative career as a professional artist in London. This period is crucial, as he learned the reality of sustaining oneself as a professional artist: he would be obligated to earn a living selling his own

¹⁸ University of Glasgow, Whistler Correspondence Letter 03962. This connection is revealed in Whistler's words to Mallarmé after the death of his wife, Beatrix.

"I am finally alone- alone as must have been Edgar Poe, to whom you found that I bear a certain resemblance - But leaving you, seems to me like saying Farewell to another me! - alone in your Art as I am in mine - and as I shook hands with you tonight, I felt the need to tell you how much I feel drawn towards you - how sensitive I am to all the intimations that you have shared with me." Originally quoted: "Je suis enfin toujours seul - seul comme a du l'être Edgar Poe, à qui vous m'avez trouvé d'une certaine ressemblance - Mais en vous quittant, il me semble dire Adieu à un autre moi! - seul dans votre Art comme je le suis dans le mien - et en vous serrant le main ce soir, j'ai éprouvé le besoin de vous dire combien je me sens attiré vers vous - combien je suis sensible à toutes les intimités de pensée que vous m'avez temoigné." See also, Daniel E. Sutherland, *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 268-270; Heather Williams. *Mallarmé's Ideas in Language*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004).

work—which included developing connections within a larger international network of patrons, dealers, and artistic societies. In an effort to garner the attention of the Royal Academy and key patrons in the 1860s Whistler depicted the men and women within the London cityscape during a period of tremendous change. As a United States Military Academy-educated engineer and draftsman, Whistler had specialized knowledge that informed his depiction of the infrastructure of the colonial Port of London and the hierarchy of men that supported the epic enter of the British Empire. By translating his own experiences, he was able to create compositions that engaged audiences’ imaginations.

The *Thames Set* etchings engaged middle-class art patrons because of Whistler’s skillful rendering of the elaborate matrix of the Docklands and compelling depictions of anonymous workers with the Port of London. Lacking a delineated narrative, the *Thames Set* etchings allowed the viewer to project a range of feelings about their own social identities against Whistler’s portraits of workingmen from the hidden lower-class Docklands community. Closely analyzing the *Thames Set*—as well as the positive reception of the etchings in England and the United States—it is possible to examine how Whistler began to develop a market for his work. I argue that the carefully constructed compositions appealed specifically to patrons tied to the shipping industry, establishing a network that launched Whistler’s career through the exhibition and sale of the etchings.

In the second chapter, I discuss how Whistler attracted the attention of wealthy patrons through his elaborate gallery installations and showmanship, thereby securing the cultural value of his work. Working with the Fine Art Society in London, Whistler solidified a signature design scheme to sell his work by exploiting the elements of theater

within art installations.¹⁹ I argue that the presentations of his work served to focus his defiant campaign to reform the role of the artist within the international art market. Each installation offered the artist the opportunity to merge a bourgeois ideology of luxury with a performance that engaged with social processes to create a rise in the value of his work. Using the terms defined by Anne Helmreich as *symbolic capital* (a designated space to socialize with prestige) and *cultural capital* (the opportunity to acquire and perform acts of elite connoisseurship), I examine how Whistler's unconventional exhibition practices bring to light the convergence of art criticism and commerce.²⁰

During the 1880s, commercial art galleries offered Whistler a new venue to market his work and to experiment with methods of interior design. Whistler's experimental design of the *Venice Pastels* exhibition in 1881 was one of his most successful attempts to merge the arts—coordinating the delicate surfaces of the pastels, with the colored fabrics that covered the walls, and the delicate frames, he invented new methods of creating a psychological and fleeting experience within a public gallery in order to publicize his work. Reviews of his *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition in 1883 suggest guests felt threatened by the overwhelming glare of the gas light against the white walls, which created a haze-suffused atmosphere—as if they might be overwhelmed by ether rising in the room. In a letter to his brother Whistler claims the 1883 *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition was a success because it aroused

¹⁹See David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces*. (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2004)

²⁰Anne Helmreich “Traversing Objects: The London Art Market at the Turn of the Twentieth Century”, p. 135, in Fletcher, Pamela and Anne Helmreich, eds. *The Rise of the Modern Art Market, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

conflicting emotions of "envy, hatred, malice, joy, and surprise" suggesting that the artist's objective was to insight a strong reaction from his audience.²¹

In the third chapter, I posit that Whistler conceived and implemented innovative international marketing devices to reach new audiences through his exhibition programs. With particular emphasis on the period 1884 through 1889 I focus on how Whistler's ambition drew his attention to the New York art world. I understand the *Arrangement in Flesh Color and Gray: Notes-Harmonies-Nocturnes* exhibition at the Dowdeswell Gallery in 1884 as a prototype for a new framework to showcase his most recent work, allowing for further consideration of how Whistler presented his intellectual theories of art to new audiences. A close analysis of the works he included within the 1884 and 1889 exhibitions, which shared the same title *Notes-Harmonies-Nocturnes*, poses new questions about their didactic function in articulating a specific theory of art. Within the published exhibition catalogs and the 'Ten O'clock Lecture', performed by Whistler for the first time on February 20, 1885 and later published in English and French, he asserted that the principal aim of art should be to create beauty through a coherent design.

In the fourth chapter, I will discuss how Whistler's full attention became devoted to the art markets outside of London in the 1890s. After almost a decade of sending his pictures to exhibitions throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States he began to receive honors and awards. By establishing a network of writers, critics, dealers, and patrons Whistler developed communities in both Paris and the United States that were receptive to his work. To illustrate the independent spirit with which he pursued his

²¹Glasgow University, Correspondence Database Letter 11026 James McNeill Whistler to William McNeill Whistler, February 18/25, 1863, New York Public Library MS Division 49 MI55 A of AA.

career it is imperative to critically examine Whistler's dedication to imagery of the anonymous female figure within his lithographs and pastel drawings. I argue that the drawings can offer insights into how he pushed the boundaries of aesthetic appreciation. Working in the studio between 1888 through 1894 alongside his wife Betarix, Whistler produced drawings that offered a new dimension to his drawing technique. While causing controversy in London, the French symbolist writers, most notably Stéphane Mallarmé, embraced Whistler's pastel drawings of nude studio models. The technically complex pastel drawings attracted a new audience for Whistler's work, particularly connoisseurs who could appreciate beauty with a delicately tuned aesthetic sensibility.

In the fifth and final chapter, I examine this partnership and collaboration that established a complex network to secure Whistler's legacy in the United States. The pastel drawings remain a key element of how Whistler's color harmonies were first exhibited to American artists and collectors. I argue that the late nude pastel drawings were also a major component to the dialogue between patron and artist during the last years of the artist's life. Freer cultivated his artistic sensibility by studying works of art, traveling, and avidly reading romantic and aesthetic poetry. The American industrialist developed a philosophy of life around the practice of exercising an aesthetic discretion within his home to adjust to his stressful environment at work. Whistler had a profound effect on Freer. After meeting Whistler in 1890 Freer began to experiment with new ways of displaying his collection and identifying aesthetic connections between the works. As both an aesthete and businessman Freer supported the of Whistler's artistic vision for future generations.

Chapter 1:

Early Training and Patronage

The patterns of patronage that supported Whistler within the nineteenth-century London art market remain crucial to his establishment of an international reputation. Between 1859 and 1864 Whistler produced and exhibited a group of etchings and paintings depicting the River Thames as a site of industry. During a new era of improved transportation systems and global networking, all areas of society were changing, including the art market. As first argued by Robin Spencer industry and commerce were as integral to Whistler's professional artistic career as they were to the careers of the British ship owners, merchants, and bankers who praised and purchased his works of art.¹ The growth of the manufacturing industry in Britain created a new middle class; with the influx of capital, conditions were ripe to expand the existing art audience to include those who sought inclusion in the upper tiers of society. To approach Whistler's oeuvre in a new light it is necessary to examine how the etchings, published as *Sixteen Etchings of Scenes on the Thames and Other Subjects* and known as the *Thames Set*, can be placed within the framework of London's expanding nineteenth-century economy.

¹ Robin Spencer, "Whistler's early relations with Britain and the significance of industry and commerce for his art" *The Burlington Magazine*, Part I and II, vol. 136, (1994).

Fidelity to the United States

Living abroad, the Whistler family established traditions that had a lasting impact on the artist's understanding of international social networks and assimilating into a foreign cultural while preserving one's own identity. I am interested in how his family legacy and education influenced his allegiance to the United States. Drawing was a dominant component to the young boy's education and I argue remained a practice that allowed him to engage with the world around him and his personal triumphs and tragedies throughout his life. At the age of eight Whistler and his family moved to Russia when his father, Major George Washington Whistler, was appointed as the consulting engineer of the Russian Railroad under Nicholas I to build a railroad between Saint Petersburg and Moscow. The Whistlers formed a close expatriate American diplomatic circle—including the American ambassador, Major Whistler's fellow engineers, and other professional men associated with the railroad—through entertaining and upholding American cultural traditions while abroad.² Soon after the Whistlers settled in Saint Petersburg, Major Whistler hired Russian army officer Alexander Koritsky to nurture his son's artistic talents and enrolled him in drawing classes at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts. Sketchbooks and journals from this period reveal young James' early interest in William Hogarth's engravings of London, along with drawings he made of everyday life in

² Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler's Mother's Cook Book*. (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1979)

Russia, including peasants, soldiers, and policeman who captured his attention as he observed the new culture of a foreign city.³

The Whistler family's stay in Saint Petersburg ended abruptly after Major Whistler's death in 1849; Mrs. Whistler then moved her family to Pomfret, Connecticut, where James and his brother William were enrolled in the Christ Church School. The young artist excelled at mapmaking. Surviving examples of assignments from geography class between 1849 and 1851, *Map of the New England States* (fig., 1) and *The Western Hemisphere* (fig., 2), reveal enormous skill. Both were drawn with a fine pen in brown, black, and colored inks with great delicacy and attention to detail.⁴ In *New England States*, the major ports on the Eastern seaboard are indicated and fine lines outline major waterways between New Jersey and Maine; Brooklyn and West Point are marked along the Hudson River. *Map of the Western Hemisphere* clearly articulates the country borders, with radiating lines outlining the coasts and mountainous terrain of the landscape. Both compositions are organized and balanced to convey as much information about the areas as possible. Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell devote a section of Whistler's biography to the praise and envy his drawings received while he was at the Christ Church School.⁵ Whistler himself was proud of the work and offered *New England States* to his aunt, Kate Palmer, and *Map of the Western Hemisphere* to family friend and first patron Thomas de Kay Winans.

³ Andreeva Galina and Margaret F. MacDonald, *Whistler and Russia*, (Moscow: Treatyakov Gallery, 2006) 58-60.

⁴ MacDonald, Margaret, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, And Watercolours A Catalogue Raisonné*. London: Yale University Press, 1995, p. 14, 23.

⁵ Pennell, *Life of James McNeill Whistler*, J.B. Lippincott, 1908, Volume 1, p. 28.

Following in his father's and half-brother George's footsteps, James Whistler received one of twelve appointments offered by President Millard Fillmore in 1851 to enter the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point. There, under the instruction of Robert Walter Weir, the young artist continued to receive praise for his drawing. New systems of training cadets, with education methods utilized by various European universities and military institutions, had developed under USMA Superintendent Major Sylvanus Thayer's leadership in the 1820s.⁶ When Weir was appointed professor of art in 1834 he continued this tradition by introducing practical European academic art education methods he had learned in Italy. By the time Whistler arrived at the USMA in the 1850s, the study of drawing—mapping, surveying, and sketching positions of soldiers on the battlefield—was mandated by the curriculum. At the time, successful military strategy planning and campaign development relied on visual information provided by soldiers' sketches and renderings of the terrain on the battlefield.

In the classroom, Weir instructed cadets on how to draw landscapes accurately to develop their observational skills and techniques to depict soldiers on the battlefield or in urban areas for the purpose of reconnaissance. Following the leading European academic methods, Weir encouraged his students to train their eyes through copying prints of prized paintings and plasters of distinguished sculptures. Popular treatises on drawing in America, including F. G. Chapman's *The American Drawing Book* (1847), also informed

⁶ See Stephen E. Ambrose. *Duty, Honor, Country: A History of West Point*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999) and Lance Betros (ed.), *West Point: Two Centuries and Beyond*. (Abilene, Texas: McWhiney Foundation Press, 2002)

Weir's lessons. Chapman insists that to improve drawing skills, artists must draw from memory while developing a vocabulary for what he refers to as "ideal" forms. Chapman defined an ideal form as "a standard of form once impressed on the mind," explaining how learning to draw the forms will help any student "measure all deviation by it." Memorizing the general oval shape of the male head before copying a sculpture, Chapman writes, will allow the student to "fix upon the most prominent and characteristic peculiarities."⁷ Practicing such techniques can train the student's eye to distinguish features and details. Within Weir's own writings he discusses a similar vocabulary of forms—a "language which all visual objects speak."⁸ In the pen drawing *Interior of Church with Priest Administering the Sacrament of Holy Communion* (fig. 3), the basic elements of the parishioners' bodies and robes are examples of the type of ideal forms Chapman discusses. The positioning of the priest and patrons within the space is articulated by distinguishing the basic elements of mass, shape, and texture of the drawn line. Segments of parallel patterns and crossing hatched lines separate the foreground and the background to depict the receding space and architectural details. Diagonal lines are added later to develop shadows and offer a rhythm for the eye to follow, illustrating the techniques Weir taught in the classroom. Weir's lessons and support at West Point had a

⁷ John Gadsby Chapman, *The American Drawing Book, A Manual for the Amateur, and Basis of Study for the Professional Artist: Especially Adapted to the Use of Public and Private Schools, as well as Home Instruction*, (New York: J. S. Redfield, Clinton Hall, 1847) 42. See also, Peter C. Marizo, *The Art Crusade: An Analysis of American Drawing Manuals, 1820-1860*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1976)

⁸ Gary Allan Hood, *Robert W. Weir and the Poetry of Art*, (Garrison: Boscobel House and Gardens, 2013) 9.

lasting effect on Whistler, who returned to similar observational devices as a professional artist.

Weir recognized and encouraged Whistler's talent, but it became evident that the young cadet was more inclined to set his own rules than to follow the commands of others; a year before graduating, he was dismissed due to his high number of demerits. On July 1, 1854, Whistler petitioned against the dismissal in a letter to the Honorable Jefferson Davis, United States of America Secretary of War, to fight for the honor of his family name, requesting the chance to retake a chemistry exam and arguing that his achievement in drawing class should afford him the opportunity. Despite his plea, the appeal was denied and the young man diligently followed his mother's advice to settle with the Winans family in Baltimore, Maryland. After it became clear there was not a suitable position for him at the Winans Locomotive Works Company, the family patriarch, Ross Winans, offered support for young James out of respect and honor for his dear friend, Major Whistler, the young man's father. Major Whistler had secured the contract for Winans Locomotive to build the locomotive and stock for the Saint Petersburg project. Thomas Winans, the eldest son, was sent to Saint Petersburg on the company's behalf and became a regular within the Whistlers' insular diplomatic circle. Finally returning to Baltimore by 1850, with a personal fortune estimated at two million dollars, he built the lavish estate Alexandroffsky (named after the town in Russia) and hosted members of the Whistler family often.⁹ George Whistler, James' half-brother, married Julia Winans, Thomas Winans' sister, and became a partner in the family

⁹ Nancy Dorfman Pressly "Whistler in America: An Album of Early Drawings." *Metropolitan Museum Journal*, Vol. 5, 1972, 133.

company, Winans Locomotive, securing the Winans family's association with the Whistlers until the end of the American Civil War. Thomas was sympathetic to James' struggles to pursue a career as a professional artist, even though his father did not share the same admiration. As early as 1854 Thomas began to send stipends to help Whistler purchase art supplies as needed.¹⁰ Thomas then became Whistler's first patron; the men developed a strong partnership, based more on family ties than on financial agreements, and this support became the driving force of Whistler's early career.

In November 1854 Whistler moved to Washington, D.C., to work with Captain H. W. Benham, another close friend of Major Whistler, at the United States Coast Survey Department. Created in 1807, the Coast Survey Department was organized to define and manage a national coordinate system for international transportation, communication, and commerce. Whistler was assigned to create topographical maps of the northeastern coastline to articulate shipping routes. The ultimate goal of the project was to stimulate international trade by publishing maps and detailed renderings of the coastline to assist vessels in navigating the waterways.¹¹ Within the Etching Division, Whistler received technical training on how to produce an etching from a copper plate and how to depict the natural and man-made formations along the coast with topographic accuracy.

A surviving plate Whistler completed at the Coast Survey, *Sketches on the Coast Survey Plate* (figs., 4 & 5), depicts a series of portraits above three topographic

¹⁰ University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter—9569.

¹¹ John Ross Key, 'Recollections of Whistler While in the Office of the United States Coast Survey,' *The Century Magazine*, vol. 75, no. 6, April 1908, pp. 928-32. See also, Lochnan, Katharine. *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. p. 1-17. Key witnessed the first printing of the *Coast Survey* plate and later purchased the plate after Whistler had discarded it.

renderings. In the center of the composition is a view of Boston Bay's rocky coastline, with lighthouses above the high cliffs and a village in the sheltered bay. Each etched line corresponds with the next to develop the steep incline and unique terrain of the cliff. With the same delicacy shown in the artist's earlier drawn maps, reflections of the cliff are briefly suggested in the calm flat water. Within the context of Whistler's larger project for the Coast Survey, the three views of the coast of Boston are drawn to define the national boundaries of the United States and to visualize the character of the territory.

At the top of the plate a series of freehand sketches in small vignettes—including a self-portrait of Whistler as a young French bohemian artist with a hat and mustache—is displayed in opposition to the definitive topographic lines.¹² Nancy Pressly has discussed Whistler's early drawings from this period, arguing that these sketches were strongly influenced by French caricature and popular print periodicals such as *Punch* and *Harper's Weekly*. I believe the brief sketches of characters drawn on the copper plate illustrate Whistler's personal struggle with his desire to embrace his vision of an artistic lifestyle abroad.¹³ By drawing himself as a bohemian, Whistler foreshadows his life in Paris and articulates his own artistic style. The dark shadows of the hat and details of his

¹² Lochnan, p. 16, Whistler's fascination with the romance of an artist's life stems from Henri Murger's *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*.

¹³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "What is Phenomenology", in *European Literary Theory and Practice: From Existential Phenomenology to Structuralism*, edited by Vernon W. Gras, New York: Dell, 1973, p. 75. Here Merleau-Ponty asserts that the operations of portrayal are essential for the consolidation of communities, since "we must necessarily have some appearance for each other." "He [the other] must and I must have an outer appearance, and there must be, besides the perspective of the For Oneself-my view of myself and the other's view of myself and the other's view of himself-a perspective of For Others-my view of others and theirs of me." In this formulation the "reflection" provided by the representation of the self for others leads to the recognition that the self is always already exposed to the gaze of others.

facial features were developed from drawing delicate thin lines on a copper plate with the same fluidity and delicacy of a pen on paper. This link between Whistler's drawing practice and copper plate etching is key. The same cultural curiosity and precision that he demonstrated in his early drawings—throughout his education in America—can be discussed within his early series of etching complete in London by 1859.

It is not clear if Whistler was fired for his distractions or if he left on his own accord; the position at the Coast Survey only lasted a few months. With Winans' continued financial support, international connections, and patronage, however, Whistler was able to move to Paris in 1855 to further his artistic education.

Building a Social Network Abroad

Moving to Paris to follow author Henri Murger's notion of the bohemian artistic lifestyle described in *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* was an extremely popular for choice young American artists in the late nineteenth century. Upon Whistler's arrival in France in 1855, Paris was the center of the art world. The Académie des Beaux-Arts monopolized both Parisian art education and the art market by teaching a standard curriculum and organizing the annual Salon exhibitions.¹⁴ Students trained at the Académie remained predominant contributors to the annual Salon exhibition; prize-winners received fame, salaries, studios, and elevated social standing. Artists whose work was rejected by the jury were forced to follow a path of rebellion to market their art. Whistler chose to study

¹⁴ Patricia Mainardi. *The End of the Salon: Art and the State in the Early Third Republic*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 14. Mainardi discusses how after the French Revolution the Salon was no longer an exhibition of the government's commissions as originally intended, but transformed into a marketplace.

with Swiss-born painter Charles Gleyre, who was not a member of the École, and established relationships with other young French and British artists outside of the Académie. Following a common trend among emerging artists, in January 1859 Whistler—along with Henri Fantin-Latour and Alphonse Legros—formed a collective known as the Société des Trois. The informal group shared an interest in printmaking and an admiration of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, as well as, the Dutch Golden Age and Spanish art. Société des Trois’ primary motivation was economic success. Together the young artists hoped to establish new aesthetic trends while marketing their work in both the Salon in Paris and the Royal Academy in London.

With support from his primary patron, Thomas Winans, Whistler was able to shuttle back and forth between Paris and London to print and market his first series of etchings, published in 1858 as *Douze Eaux-Fortes d’après Nature (Twelve Etchings from Nature)* known as the *French Set*. As a series, the portraits, genres scenes, and landscapes from Whistler’s trip along the River Rhine, pay homage to Dutch, Spanish, and French artistic traditions. Winans also introduced Whistler to George A. Lucas in Paris, who was able to offer financial support for Whistler as he helped promote the *French Set* and became part of the artist’s insular circle. The series of close partnerships and connections Whistler made provided a network to market his art in Paris when his interests turned to establishing a reputation in London.

The British Etching Revival was gaining momentum and Whistler envisioned a prominent place for his work that would draw the attention of both the Royal Academy and collectors. Whistler’s brother-in-law, Francis Seymour Haden, a prominent doctor

and amateur etcher, submitted etchings on behalf of both himself and the young artist to the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1859. Two of Whistler's entries were chosen, and he left Paris to reach London in time for the exhibition opening in May. Haden encouraged Whistler to settle there, as he believed the artist could rise to an influential role in the art establishment through exhibiting at the Royal Academy. A new group of collectors—industrialists, manufacturers, and bankers from London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds—began to open new dimensions of the art market. Original prints, most notably etchings, were popular at the Royal Academy exhibitions and began to catch the attention of collectors. Upon his arrival in London Whistler studied etchings by Rembrandt within Haden's personal collection and together with Haden practiced etching in *plein-air* at sites throughout London. Meanwhile, Whistler remained in close contact with Fantin-Latour and Legros as the young artists discussed their new work and updated each other on what was happening in Paris and London.¹⁵ Alphonse Legros permanently settled in London in 1863, becoming a professor at the Slade School of Fine Art at University College and a significant force within the Etching Revival.

¹⁵ University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter—01073, See Lochnan, *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler*, p.67-77.

“Portrait of Place,” An American in Rotherhithe

Embarking on his next etching project, Whistler ignored protests from family and fellow artists, including Haden, and immersed himself in one of the most dangerous and decaying parts of London from August to October 1859. He stayed at The Angel pub in Bermondsey, near Rotherhithe across the river from Wapping, and completed a group of etchings, including *Thames Warehouses*, *Old Westminster Bridge*, *Limehouse*, *Eagle Wharf*, *Black Lion Wharf*, *The Pool*, *Thames Police*, and *Lime-Burner*, published together as the *Thames Set*. (fig., 6)

Developing a new style and unique voice apart from the *French Set*, Whistler described each composition within the *Thames Set* as a “little portrait of a place,” with the aim to show the Thames “as it was in 1859.”¹⁶ Katharine Lochnan was the first to argue that the impetus to capture an image of the river in 1859 and to explore the community in Rotherhithe stemmed from Whistler’s allegiance to the modern French realist school—mimicking Charles Baudelaire’s forays into poor districts of Paris to locate appropriate subjects of modern life.¹⁷ A large number of artists chronicled the nineteenth-century working class of London. Charles Dickens described the area in *Oliver Twist* (1838):

Near to that part of the Thames on which the church at Rotherhithe abuts, where the buildings on the banks are dirtiest and the vessels on the river blackest with the dust of colliers and the smoke of close-built low-roofed houses, there exists the filthiest, the strangest, the most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London, wholly unknown, even by

¹⁶ Joseph Pennell, Letter to Howard Mansfield, February 22, 1895, Library of Congress, Pennell Collection.

¹⁷ Lochnan, p. 78.

name, to the great mass of its inhabitants. (Chapter 50: “The Pursuit and Escape”)

Dickens described Rotherhithe inhabitants as the “roughest and poorest waterside people”: unemployed laborers, coal-whippers, brazen women, ragged children.

When Whistler arrived in 1859 the stereotype of a disease-ridden community of criminals persisted. The desperation of the watermen and poor of East London was documented by journalists, such as Henry Mayhew in 1851, to expose the extent of chaos, human suffering, and poverty throughout the area. Kathleen Pyne compares Whistler’s *Thames Set* etchings to French artist Gustave Doré’s engravings of the London slums, arguing that Whistler constructed his compositions from the position of an elite viewer within the context of the British picturesque tradition, “distancing himself from the suffering he encountered psychologically to evade concern for the human dilemmas by subsuming them into his overriding aestheticism.”¹⁸ (figs., 7 & 8)

As a West Point-educated topographer, Whistler was able to understand the infrastructure of this community and present a unique view of the men and women on the margins of society for his audience. I disagree and do not think that Whistler aestheticized the environment. His new style cannot solely be subscribed to the Romantic tradition that Pyne suggests. Instead, in a more strategic and quasi-scientific approach within Whistler’s style the psychological and physical are bound. Thus, offering a more complex relationship between, subject, artist, and viewer. Whistler employed a series of visual devices to transcribe information, offering a detailed rendering of the inhabitants

¹⁸ Kathleen Pyne. “Whistler and the Politics of the Urban Picturesque” *American Art*, Vol. 8, No. 3/4 (Summer-Autumn, 1994), p. 61-77.

who worked within the decaying wooden wharves and the cityscape in a moment of tremendous evolution. For example, within the composition of the *The Pool* (fig., 9), we see that the workingman depicted in the foreground, as if he is waiting for someone or something, is very different than the waterman in Doré's engraving *A Waterman's Family*. Doré depicts a man crying and grasping for help in despair; Whistler's subject sheds no tears as sits in the launch vessel, possibly even waiting for the artist to complete his composition. In the final composition of *The Pool* the waterman is positioned just off-center in the foreground; his presence cannot be viewed as incidental to the larger shipping infrastructure surrounding him—he is thoroughly integrated into the landscape.

Trained in military strategy and knowledgeable of waterway navigation, Whistler surveyed the Thames in 1859. The river and its estuaries provided the main method of transporting goods across London before the introduction of the railways and major road improvements. The boats within the foreground of *The Pool* are a common type of wooden dingy, identifiable by their distinctive long profile and ideal for ferrying crew and goods between ship and shore, and played a crucial role in the everyday life of the Docklands.¹⁹

Aware of the threat of disease from traveling on the water near the Docklands and crime prevalent throughout the decrepit streets of Rotherhithe, Whistler spent months

¹⁹Excavated during the London 2012 Olympics building project. A report was published <http://learninglegacy.london2012.com/documents/pdfs/archaeology/113319th-century-boat-aw.pdf>, p.1. This was one of several boat building systems lost today and disappeared when machines introduced the mass production of materials. “There are only a few records or remains of this type of small clinker boat from the nineteenth century, and this vessel can be seen as a rare technological missing-link between recent ‘traditional’ craft and those of the early post-medieval period.”

studying the area and weeks preparing each plate. Examining the first state of *The Pool* (fig., 10), it is possible to gain a glimpse of how he worked. In the first state of the etching, Whistler clearly first drew the waterman, with his scornful expression, then continued to loosely sketch the outline of his surroundings. The buildings on the right seem to blend together; the vessel in the foreground distorts the scale of the large clipper ship on the left. Sketched directly on the plate with a needle, the block formations of the buildings and the outlines of form recall the “ideal” forms encouraged under Robert Weir’s instruction. Unhappy with the original design, possibly because he was unable to articulate how the laborer was immersed within the urban area, Whistler buffed the plate and began anew.

In the final state (fig., 9) it is clear that Whistler devised a new structure for the composition. Instead of capturing the launch vessel in a tight estuary, the new perspective captures the widest bend in the Thames, referred to as the Pool of London; a series of smaller vessels in the middle ground gradually builds the depth of the scene. Lochnan explains the position of the figure in the foreground of *The Pool* as part of Whistler’s artistic practice, influenced by *repoussoir* devices as well as by the division of the picture plane observed in Japanese prints, to create the illusion of a receding background.²⁰ I contend that the discussion should be widened to include Whistler’s education and work experience in the United States. Reminiscent of the lighthouses and cliffs in Boston Bay, the buildings in *The Pool* are depicted in relation to each other and share the same scale.

²⁰ Katharine Lochnan. *The Etchings of James McNeill Whistler*. (New Haven: Yale University, 1984) 87. In painting *repoussoir* is an object along the right or left foreground that directs the viewer’s eye into the composition by bracketing (framing) the edge.

In *Sketches on the Coast Survey Plate* (fig., 4) and *The Pool*, a schematic plan of the coastline offers information concerning the physical dimension of the area and local man-made structures.²¹ Whistler devised similar techniques, such as depicting the water as still and calm, to contrast the multilayered structure of marine vessels and people along the Thames—what Lochnan describes as a “staccato rhythm of the *blank* areas responsible for the dramatic patterning and visual impact of the etching.”²² The calm water is depicted as a *blank* section or void in the middle of the composition. Compared to Weir’s drawing *Interior of Church with Priest Administering the Sacrament of Holy Communion* (fig., 3), the plate features similar segments of parallel patterns, crossing hatched lines, and *blank* areas that separate space throughout the composition. The patterns create a rhythm that draws the viewer’s eye from left to right along the Thames as details of the cityscape emerge.

Significantly, in *The Pool* and all of the *Thames Set* compositions, the new structures of the Victorian commercial docks—already under construction in 1859 to replace the wooden wharves—are edited out.²³ The Angel pub offered Whistler a unique perspective of the Pool of London—the stretch of river from London Bridge to below Tower Bridge, marking the farthest point big ships traveled to up-river. In 1859 the river

²¹ John Ross Key, 930.

²² Katharine Lochnan, p. 87.

²³ See, T. J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and His Followers*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 147-204. Clark discusses the complexity of depicting industry within landscape paintings of Argenteuil. He comments that in works such as, Edouard Manet’s *Argenteuil, Les Canotiers* (1874), the main elements of the middle-class, the pleasure of the countryside, and industry as aligned in order and insist they belong together. It is offering a look for a new form of modern life. Clark continues that it is not “natural”, but is presented as something “already made and self-evident.”

was lined for miles along both banks with nearly continuous walls of wharves and hundreds of ships moored in the river or alongside platforms. With the dawn of steam power, the volume of trade flowing through London massively increased. Markets throughout the empire opened new opportunities for British goods and the population in London grew exponentially. More trade and more demand meant more docks. As the amount of cargo moving through the area multiplied, the population of laborers that supported the ambitions of the British Empire and transported goods between global markets also grew.

Whistler's desire to capture life on the river offered a complexity and profundity of thought for his audience by depicting myriad ways laborers and ship owners interacted with the manmade landscape. In *Eagle Wharf* (fig., 12) the wooden structures the workingmen inhabit become a physical extension of their bodies; the loose outlines of the men blend in to the ships' lines or rigging apparatus. In the foreground a man grasps his knees as he balances his body on the railing of the boat. Upon closer inspection, more than twenty bodies are visible in this one scene, illustrated in a seemingly sequenced order: from the building windows, on the rafts connected to the pilings, on the dock, and reaching for a launch vessel on the far right, the action in the background animated the entire process of loading and unloading cargo. On the far right, the large collier ship remains anchored, as a man pulling a line connects a small boat to the wharf. The dark outline of his body appears almost as a void of space linking all of the action. Jutting precariously from the buildings, a walkway in the center of the composition is draped on both sides with small boats, as the masts of the larger ships consume the distance. The

power of the composition lies in how much information is recorded and how the subtle details of the of the workers' occupations are revealed. With the delicate handling of the etching needle Whistler also took the time to draw the lettering on the building in reverse so it would remain legible in the final print. The sign for the business that owned the wharf, and presumably employed all of the workers, reads "Tyzac Whiteley and Co" in the upper left corner. As the viewer's eye moves from left to right across the composition, the bodies of the laborers begin to become visible, as if they had been embedded in the landscape.

Thames Set, 1859

Within the *Thames Set* etchings Whistler enacts the concept of industry in the context of a colonial British history and nineteenth-century London society. The workingmen depicted in the *Thames Set* represented a group within the larger infrastructure of the British Empire, supporting the transport of cargo in and out of London. Each composition in the series offers a system, or matrix, to examine the colonial port of London by compartmentalizing labor on the Docks. Whistler deliberately engaged with the construction of a formal vocabulary to represent the commercial world around him escaping the more sensational depictions of the Docklands within Victorian popular culture.

The Pool (1859) (fig., 9), exhibited for the first time at the E. Thomas Print Shop on Old Bond Street in 1861, demonstrates how Whistler developed a new method for constructing space within the picture. The portrait of a workingman anchors the

composition, slightly off-center to the left, in the foreground. With a coy expression, the man gazes directly at the viewer, resting his right hand on his chin as if he is waiting for someone or something. When the etching was exhibited at the Salon in Paris in 1863 Philippe Burty reviewed the work in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*. Expressing dislike for Whistler's prominent placement of the man in the foreground, Burty writes, "much of the interest of the piece does not start until the middle of distance area."²⁴ He continues to explain that Whistler seemingly adopted the characteristics of photography by placing more focus on the foreground when drafting *The Pool* and failed to transcribe the depth of the composition correctly. Burty praised Whistler for the originality of his subject, commenting that the etchings, as a series, "speak the purest English" to reassure his readers that the subject was London and not Paris. I am interested in examining how Whistler constructed the intricate landscapes with the *Thames Set* etchings, including *The Pool*, to illustrate the anonymous laborer and invigorate a collective imagination that traversed national boundaries.

After the *Thames Set* was included in the Royal Academy Annual Exhibition in 1863, the *Athenaeum* praised a selection of the etchings: "they deserve noble places and will reward pains taken to obtain a sight of them. . . . Among the finest works here is *The Pool* . . . a view among the shipping and along the shore."²⁵ In London, the *Thames Set*

²⁴ P. Burty, 'Salon Gravure', *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, vol. 15, (1863)147-160; see Glasgow University, Correspondence Database Letter 08044 James McNeill Whistler to H. Fantin Latour, May 25, 1863.

²⁵ *Athenaeum*, vol. 23, no. 1856 (May 23, 1863) 688, Glasgow University Library PC1/17. See Margaret MacDonald and Patricia de Montfort, *An American in London Whistler and the Thames*, (London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2014), 58. When exhibited in London in 1871, F.G. Stephens writing for the *Athenaeum* (August 1871) 280-81,

did not receive the same rigorous formal criticism demonstrated in Burty's review.

Instead, British art critics commented on the hardships Whistler went through when he visited the Docklands. The elites within British society who viewed the etchings from the *Thames Set* at the Royal Academy, or at small group exhibitions within artists societies in the 1860s, would have recognized the names of the companies legible along the wharves within the compositions and had some knowledge of the Dockland's geographic location. Lacking a delineated narrative, the etchings allowed viewers to project a range of feelings about their own social identities against Whistler's portraits of workingmen from the hidden lower-class Docklands community.²⁶

In 1871, when the *Thames Set* was published and made accessible to a wider audience, the wharves they depicted had been destroyed and replaced by the Victoria River Embankment that opened a year earlier. The construction of a new type embankment, along with enclosed docks, offered better facilities and security,

comments, "a waterman in a lumbering wherry, who is evidently sitting with some complacency for his "picture.""

²⁶ The analytical framework of psychoanalysis is effective to examine how individuals form their identity through acknowledging *difference*. See, Luce Irigaray, *This sex which is not one*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) 68-85, Interview with Luce Irigaray translated by Couze Venn, "Women's Exile". *Ideology and Consciousness*, No. 1, May 1977, p. 75. Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York : Routledge, 2006) 188. Judith Butler argues that identity within society, as it pertains to gender, is a performance of set manipulated codes and costumes, rather than a core aspect. Identity does not express some authentic inner "core" self but is the dramatic effect of our performances. "In the place of an original identification which serves as a determining cause, gender identity might be reconceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices which refer laterally to other imitations and which, jointly, construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody that mechanism of that construction." See Felix Driver and David Gilbert, *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999)

reorganizing the infrastructure and traffic throughout the river. The lost wharves depicted within Whistler's compositions developed into historic cultural landscapes and the men and women depicted became silent witnesses of the past. The community who occupied the London Docklands in the nineteenth century was the backbone of the British Industrial Revolution—it was made up of the displaced persons from around the world who provided the physical labor and work needed on the ships and the docks to transport commercial goods. As ancestors to a colonial past, or the product of overpopulation in the busy city, the community was completely segregated from the modern, upper class London inhabited by Whistler's collectors.

British art critics and Whistler's key patrons, including Frederick Leyland, praised the *Thames Set* for the series' depiction of the British shipping industry. Within larger discussions of the British economy the cultural landscape was integral to issues of cultural, politics, and social identity.²⁷ The etchings in turn exposed the epicenter of activity on the Docklands within the context of the British global empire. Whistler's growing awareness of the etchings appeal to patrons tied to the Shipping Industry

²⁷ David Gilbert and Felix Driver, "Capital and Empire: Geographies of Imperial London"

GeoJournal, 51 (2000); 23-32. "The signs of empire were prominently displayed within the built environments of all the major cities of late-nineteenth century Europe, as they came (in different ways) to play the role of regional, national and imperial capitals. In the case of London, British architects frequently complained that London lagged behind its rivals in the struggle for imperial primacy, given the absence of state-sponsored projects to parallel Haussmann's rebuilding of Paris or Leopold's grand plans for Brussels. At the intra-urban scale, the imperial city had a geography, which mattered: in the case of London, different parts of the city were associated with different aspects of empire. More generally, it is clear that national debates over imperial urbanism were conditioned not simply by understandings of the global reach of European empires, but also by attitudes towards social, cultural and political change within Europe itself."

developed into a marketing device that he learned how to exploit. Industry and commerce were just as much a basis for Whistler's professional career as they were for the career of the British collectors who purchased his works of art.

Captivating an Audience

When exhibiting or publishing the *Thames Set*, Whistler deliberately arranged the plates at random to preclude any attempt to assign a single narrative to the series. Described as a “portrait of place” when presented to the public, the wooden wharves—such as the wharf labeled in *Black Lion Wharf* (fig., 13)—were already demolished and new river embankments lined the area. The composition of *Black Lion Wharf* recreates glimpses of the old wharves, focusing on the tension between the relaxed anonymous longshoreman, or perhaps shipping laborer, in the foreground and the men diligently loading and unloading cargo in the background. The center of the action and composition revolves around the loosely sketched barrels on a barge; the central position of the barge also underscores the tension between the overabundance of cargo, on the one hand, and the area's excessive poverty on the other. As the wharves were destroyed to create the new river embankments the community of sailors and workers depicted in Whistler's etching of *Black Lion Wharf* had also been removed from the docks.

The effects of industry and overpopulation led to major urban planning projects throughout London. The impact the development held on periphery communities were concealed from modern London society. He does not offer a clear narrative between the portraits he created and his audience. Rather, he initiates the imaginary relationships

through which the dominant cultures or elite society could project their own feelings and ideals.

The lower echelons of society occupied a transitional position, at once inferior to the ruling elite and yet at the same time playing an active, essential role in the larger culture.²⁸ In this way Whistler develops an image of labor, a tool of oppression, formed during the height of the British colonial empire to subtly critique and call into question the very values of the empire.²⁹ I argue Whistler depicted the people he encountered in the Docklands with the purpose of reconnaissance, transcribing information about how they lived within the docks, as if it were a type of battlefield. He displayed the misplaced or forgotten bodies of this community on the walls of the Royal Academy so they could not be ignored by the social elite, otherwise far removed from the working classes. These complex undertones, of the power and burden of commerce, were not lost on the viewer and the *Thames Set* secured the artist's patronage with key art collectors, such as banker William Alexander, shipping merchant Alexander Constantine Ionides, shipping merchant Frederick Richards Leyland, and Thomas Winans.

Whistler received praise from patrons and critics when selections of the *Thames Set* were exhibited in the 1860s; however, publication and distribution of the *Thames Set* was a complicated process. Whistler printed a selection of the etchings with Auguste

²⁸ Claire L. Lyons and John K. Papadopoulos, eds. *The Archaeology of Colonialism*. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2002) 7. See, Introduction.

²⁹ Nancy Margaret Paul and William Scott Palme, trans, Henri Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, (New York: McMillian Company, 1913) 235. For Bergson, memory is understood as a continuous stream of events becoming through time. Bergson emphasizes that to picture is not to remember, but rather to picture is a movement of bringing a past memory into the perception of the present.

Delâtre after completing the plates in 1860, but found the *Thames Set* much more difficult to market than the *French Set* he printed with Delâtre two years earlier. Whistler considered the *Thames Set* to be superior to his previous work and miscalculated the London art market when he priced each of the etchings at one to two guineas, while the *French Set* had sold for two guineas for a set of twelve.³⁰ This mistake was crucial to understand how Whistler began to exploit the London art market in the 1880s. In only a few years the amateur etching societies in London were undermined by the aggressive Société des Aquafortistes, founded in 1862, which solicited membership from leading etchers in both London and France. The Société des Aquafortistes transformed the publishing and marketing of prints into a competitive industry; Whistler never became a member, making it more and more difficult to match a demand for his own etchings.³¹ Publication of the *Thames Set* series, under the title *Sixteen Etchings of Scenes on the Thames*, finally occurred in the spring of 1871 when the boutique printer Frederick Standridge Ellis, of Ellis & Green of London, distributed it in editions of 100.³² In the end, Whistler chose the boutique printer to emphasize printing as a craft, rather than to capitalize on the vast reproductive aspects of the medium. After being postponed over a decade, the publication of the *Thames Set* held a lasting effect on how he distributed his work and the types of future professional partnerships he developed.

³⁰University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter—06540, Anna Mathilda Whistler to Mr. Gamble, November 22, 1868.

³¹ Lochnan, p.137.

³² University of Glasgow Correspondence Database, Letter 08042 Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, January/June 1861, Library of Congress Pennell Collection

Throughout the 1870s Whistler exhibited the *Thames Set* as a series and selections from the set throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. After publication in 1871, *Black Lion Wharf*, for example, was shown by James Anderson Rose in Liverpool and by Whistler in Paris at Durand-Ruel's gallery (1873) and in London (1874). The response was so positive that in 1879 Whistler convinced Ernest G. Brown at the Fine Art Society in London to publish a new edition of the *Thames Set*. The project was a huge success. Afterward, American art dealer Samuel Putnam Avery sent his impression of *Black Lion Wharf* to an exhibition at the Union League Club in New York in 1881 and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia. After an early career as an engraver Avery met George Lucas in Paris and both dealers began to sell art in New York. Lucas and Avery secured the sale of the *Thames Set* in the United States market and began to open a new network of patrons for Whistler.

As the *Thames Set* circulated throughout England and America the success of the project established a network of patrons Whistler would become reliant upon when marketing his work internationally. As the prints were dispersed within the art market Whistler captured the imagination of elite collectors and connoisseurs. Revolutionizing the role of the artist Whistler continued to experiment with a range of marketing devices to target groups of patrons.

Chapter 2:

Defending the Intrinsic Value of Art

During the 1870s, British shipping magnate and art collector Frederick Leyland provided the financial foundation for Whistler's career that allowed the artist freedom to pursue creative projects outside of his commissioned work. Whistler enjoyed the benefits of this arrangement—similar to the one he had previously established with Thomas Winans—including devoted patronage and the comforts of family, until Leyland terminated the relationship in 1876. While spending time at family estate Speke Hall in Liverpool during the early 1870s, Whistler completed numerous portraits of the family members and offered interior design advice. Though this was a common practice between an artist and patron, Whistler challenged the boundaries between easel painting and interior decoration when he accepted a commission to complete a mural in the family's London home. Instead of restricting himself to the designated wall, he created a new color scheme for the entire space, which he called *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* (1876–1877) (fig., 14). Whistler's central concern for the Peacock Room was to provide the ideal setting to view and appreciate the beauty of his painting *La Princesse du pays de la Porcelaine* (1864–1865) (fig., 15). He accomplished this goal by repainting the walls and ceiling, creating a harmonized balance between the porcelain objects that filled the gilded shelves and the leather wallpaper. Disregarding his patron's desires and privacy, Whistler invited the press to document the complete transformation of the space. Leyland was outraged by the extravagance of painting over the entire décor and by Whistler's blatant disregard for his property. In protest Leyland refused to pay the

full amount of the commission. The press chose to cover the quarrel, siding with Leyland, instead of promoting Whistler's design aesthetic as he had hoped. The color scheme was possibly too radical for the public to appreciate, but it did incite gossip. Ultimately, the publicity brought an end to the artist's relationship with Leyland and diminished his stature as a designer of domestic interiors.

Scandal broke out again only a few months later, in May 1877, when John Ruskin published a lacerating critique of Whistler's painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875), then on display at the Grosvenor Gallery on New Bond Street. The respected critic commented how he "never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face."¹ Whistler sued Ruskin for libel with damages of £1,000—the exact amount Leyland refused to pay Whistler for the Peacock Room—to protect the value of his work and his reputation. The outcome of the trial fell in Whistler's favor. He was not, however, granted the damages he had sought and the legal fees left his fortunes in ruins. Moreover, the London art world held him in contempt for wasting the time of the High Court; patrons he had depended on were now his creditors, chief among them was Leyland. Under British law Whistler was forced to sign bankruptcy papers in May 1879, followed by a public auction of his property. Linda Merrill has shown how the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial was a turning point for the artist because, within the courtroom, Whistler publicly presented his own aesthetic theory of art. I will argue that the trial was also a turning point for Whistler's international reputation as scandalous details of the trial were covered at length in the international press throughout Europe and the United States.

¹ Linda Merrill, *A Point of Paint: Aesthetics on Trial in Whistler vs. Ruskin* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992) 44.

In this chapter I will demonstrate how Whistler fought to reclaim his reputation in the London art world during the 1880s using the commercial gallery spaces of London as his battlefield. He transformed the narrow galleries into aesthetic spaces while entertaining and creating unprecedented cultural experiences for the visitors. The extent of his success in England in the 1880s was dramatic, if brief. In 1886 Whistler was elected president of the Society of British Artists. His ambitious attempts to reorganize the exhibitions and structure of the Society antagonized the majority of members, and in 1888 he was asked to step down. Margaret MacDonald and Joy Newton have argued that Whistler's dismissal was an indication that he had no chance of official acceptance in England and, as a result, turned his interests back to the European art markets.² I propose another scenario: that Whistler began to build an international reputation after witnessing, during the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial, the powerful impact the press could have on the international art market. Even though Whistler had not returned to the United States since leaving for Paris in 1855, the press coverage and aftermath of the trial in London was instrumental in launching his reputation in America.³ His provocative performances during the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial and at various gallery openings served to publicize his art and build up his persona as a witty dandy. Around the same time, his exhibitions were aimed toward attracting a wide audience and potential donors to finance the construction of a new patron circle outside the Royal Academy and beyond London. For the purposes

² Joy Newton and Margaret MacDonald, "Search for a European Reputation" (*Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 41, 1978) 148-159, 149.

³ Merrill, 78. It is telling that he was acutely aware of his performance in the courtroom—even going so far to advise solicitor Anderson Rose that to represent him as anything other than the "well known Whistler" would do more damage than "sticking to this character." See also, Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) 227.

of this writing, I will focus on the dynamics of how Whistler designed the space within a given gallery. By coordinating with art dealers and gallery staff the artist created exhibition programs capable of being replicated in London, Europe, and America, where patrons' own taste could be refined or adapted to Whistler's vision. I will examine Whistler's designs from a series of key exhibitions at the Fine Art Society and how he experimented with innovative dimensions of the visual experience to sell work and create a new group of educated art collectors.

Late nineteenth-century London was the site of a global network designed around the exchange of goods where new structures and mechanisms of the commercial art gallery emerged. I argue that, within the global financial center, Whistler sought to create a rapid rise in the value of his paintings by controlling the installations of his work.⁴ He also offered an alternative pricing method that opposed the traditional practice of an art dealer applying a speculative price.⁵ Aware of the social processes and cultural practices within the enterprise of the art market, Whistler's one-man exhibitions merged an ideology of luxury with a new role for the artist within the economic system of commerce.

⁴ See Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, Local/Global: Mapping Nineteenth-Century London's Art Market www.19th9Assc-artworldwide.org/autumn12/fletcher-helmreich-mapping-the-london-art-market (Accessed June 2014)

⁵ Scholarship on the Pre-Raphaelite, or late-nineteenth-century British School Painting endorsed by the Royal Academy, that employs the methods of a "social history of art" has provided systematic explorations of the meanings of major Pre-Raphaelite works in relation to issues of class, race, gender, and ideology. Accounts have largely ignored questions of aesthetic quality and value. Menpes, Moritmer, *Whistler As I Knew Him* (A. and C. Black, London, 1904) 532, "He knew the value of his work, and he soon impressed us with his views,—dealers and all. He hypnotized the dealers, as he did everyone else; and they worked for him loyally. They showed the right spirit. It mattered little to them whether they sold the Master's work or not. They felt that it was sufficient privilege merely to exhibit them."

As galleries began to flourish, the institution of the commercial art gallery created a reputable economic structure for dealing in contemporary art. The gallery space offered reliability and accountability for the sale of art. Previously, middle-class Victorian opinion dictated that art dealers' activities were perceived as dishonest, while the appropriate business practices of selling art remained a direct transaction between the artist and the patron. The *Art Journal* launched a prolonged attack on unscrupulous practices in the art world, claiming that "a price is frequently put upon the work far exceeding its intrinsic value, so that little than a robbery is committed upon the party whose property the work finally becomes."⁶ As Pamela Fletcher discusses, within the mid-Victorian context the intrinsic value of art is the aesthetic worth of the object, as opposed to the speculative price applied by the dealer. Questions and debates arose—namely, who held the authority to set the value of a work of art? And how could artists make profits from their labor? Within the gallery space the processes of creating value through rhetoric or display were not separated from asserting commodity value and fiscal worth. In my view, Whistler's unconventional exhibition practices of the 1880s bring to light an intriguing convergence of art criticism and art commerce to help illuminate methods of valuing art within the nineteenth-century international art market. Anne Helmreich has outlined the terms *symbolic capital* (a designated space to socialize with prestige) and *cultural capital* (the opportunity to acquire and perform acts of elite connoisseurship) to characterize the means by which dealers Ernest Gambart and Charles

⁶ "The British Institution", *Art Journal*, February 1851, p. 63. See also, Pamela M. Fletcher, 'Creating the French Gallery: Ernest Gambart and the Rise of the Commercial Art Gallery in Mid-Victorian London,' www.19thc-artworldwise.org/spring07

Obach cultivated the art market.⁷ I argue that Whistler's 1881 *Venice Pastels* exhibition and 1883 *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition at the Fine Art Society offered visitors both symbolic capital and cultural capital within the context of a commercial space to promote the economic value of his work.

The Intrinsic Value of Art

In the 1870s, through his exhibition design and coverage in the popular press from the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial, Whistler became the spokesperson for the concept of privileging the intrinsic value, or invoked aesthetic worth, of a work of art. A decade earlier, the Royal Academy of Arts was central to the art market when Whistler debuted *At the Piano* (1858–1859). Throughout the 1860s he experienced firsthand how artists whose work was praised in the Royal Academy exhibitions built promising professional careers through lucrative commissions. Though the annual exhibitions at the Royal Academy were open to all artists, and it was technically not a public institution, the exhibition committee played an powerful role in fostering a national school of British art. As one of the few venues in London to exhibit the work of young artists, the Royal Academy held tremendous power. It shaped both the production of art and public taste, deeply embedded in the changing political structure of the nation.

The Academy defined popular mid-Victorian taste by privileging paintings with a strong narrative content. A generation of art patrons was taught how to read pictures

⁷ Anne Helmreich "Traversing Objects: The London Art Market at the Turn of the Twentieth Century", p. 135, in Fletcher, Pamela and Anne Helmreich, eds. *The Rise of the Modern Art Market, 1850-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). Please reference for a complex historical analysis of the nineteenth-century gallery system.

through the publication of art reviews from the annual exhibitions. Through art reviews audiences were guided to search for an anecdote or moral lesson within the narrative of the painting, as they might also in reading a novel. In 1872 Whistler exhibited his last painting at the Royal Academy, *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* (1871) (fig., 16)—challenging the boundaries of acceptance for both the Royal Academy jury and Victorian public by offering a picture without a clear narrative.

He later explains,

Take the picture of my mother, exhibited at the Royal Academy as an 'Arrangement in Grey and Black.' Now that is what it is. To me it is interesting as a picture of my mother; but what can or ought the public to care about the identity of the portrait?⁸

In this passage Whistler is offering his own interest in the painting. He is also giving license for the audience to make up their own minds about what it represents. Was it possible to ignore the identity of the sitter, and instead contemplate the painting as a formal “arrangement in grey and black”? A long, dark curtain outlines the structure of the composition; framed prints against the gray wall break up any sense of symmetry in background. Seated calmly, the artist's mother commands attention. The hues throughout the canvas—each variation of white, gray, and black—complement her dress, lace bonnet, and skin tone. The range of colors begins to emerge the longer the viewer engages with the painting. The framed etching, reminiscent of *Black Lion Wharf* from the *Thames Set*, offers the illusion of a receding landscape on the flat surface of the painting.

⁸University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter 13153, First published in *The World*, 22 May 1878, 4-5; reproduced as ‘The Red Rag’ in James McNeill Whistler's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*, 1892.

The thin layers of paint offer a variety of textures and layers; for example, the delicate lace of the white bonnet is echoed by the faint decorations on the curtains and reveals itself as part of a larger pattern. A viewer must invest time in examining the work to fully appreciate the nuance of the color harmonies and the subtlety and balance of these illusions.

Whistler disapproved of the Royal Academy for the standards the institution imposed on the art market as well as their outdated installation practices, which he witnessed when his paintings were hung high on overcrowded gallery walls.⁹ It became clear that, due to their subtlety, Whistler's painted arrangements would not succeed within the Academy. As an alternative Whistler began to send his paintings to various exhibition societies and small dealer exhibitions throughout London—a method he had practiced with his prints for over a decade. He also began to exhibit his paintings in independent galleries in Paris, such as Durand-Ruel's gallery, in 1873. Increasingly, Parisian dealers—including Paul Durand-Ruel—selected the works to be shown at their galleries, hosted the opening receptions, placed works in museums, and helped to create prominent private collections.¹⁰

The following year Whistler turned down an invitation to exhibit with a group of young artists in Paris, later identified as the Impressionists, to design his first one-man exhibition in London. The opportunity to lease the Flemish Gallery for June and July of 1874 allowed Whistler to assert his sovereignty and decree of a particular aesthetic

⁹ Gary Tinterow and Henri Loyrette, "The Salon of 1859," *Origins of Impressionism*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994) 4; Kenneth Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2003) 2-4.

¹⁰ Robert Jensen, *Marketing Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 49.

without the influence of a patron or dealer. In his studio and within the homes of friends and patrons Whistler had conceived of and experimented with an idiosyncratic design aesthetic, which was then solidified in his exhibition design.¹¹ A majority of the paintings, etchings, and pastel drawings installed in the exhibition were lent from private collections and not for sale. Whistler was therefore designing a space to showcase his work with the intent of building his reputation through notoriety in the press and attracting new patrons.

The design of the installation at the Flemish Gallery was both an environment in which to view art and a work of art in its own right, situating the audience within a specific ephemeral aesthetic moment in order to bolster Whistler's stature as a noteworthy artist. As Patricia de Montfort convincingly argues, the design was also a reflection of the success he had achieved with middle-class patrons, with the hope of attracting a similar crowd of new patrons.¹² The atmosphere resembled a private parlor within the public gallery space to emulate the effect of entering the intimate environment of a collector's home. Whistler painted the walls gray, covered the floors with yellow mats, and even spread flowers throughout the space. Whistler controlled the hang of the works, as Robin Spencer has outlined, in a "vertical/horizontal rhythm AB AB AB AB" no higher than eye level, guiding the viewer to step away from the wall to view the larger

¹¹ For a discussion of how Whistler develop the Whistlerian design style see, Bendix, Deanna M. Diabolical Designs, *Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995). David Park Curry. *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2004).

¹² Patricia De Montfort, "Negotiating a reputation: J.M. Whistler, D.G. Rossetti, and the art market 1860-1900", 258 in Fletcher, Pamela and Anne Helmreich, eds. *The Rise of the Modern Art Market, 1850-1939*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

paintings, and closer to examine the etchings and smaller drawings.¹³ Couches encouraged visitors to rest and to contemplate each arrangement.

The exhibition did not garnish any profits or prolonged patronage; however, Whistler did receive attention from the press, which described him as a maverick. Within easy walking distance of the Royal Academy, Whistler's installation challenged the Academy's annual exhibition by offering a different environment in which to view a retrospective of his work. Every object was artfully integrated within the setting and every tone blended into a harmony to emphasize the refined sensibilities necessary to appreciate art. Compared to the overwhelming crowds and multilayered hanging of the main gallery at the Royal Academy, the intimate setting encouraged leisure and reflection. This challenge to the Academy was publicly acknowledged; one critic from the *Pictorial World* described Whistler's installation thus: "If anyone wishes to realize what is meant by true feeling for colour and harmony—born of Japanese—let him sit down here . . . just out of sight of the conglomeration of a thousand pictures at the Royal Academy."¹⁴ Whistler's exhibition became a statement about how design can influence methods of viewing and interpreting art, as galleries—such as the Dudley Gallery, the New British Institute, and the Fine Art Society—opened to establish new exhibition venues. Independent galleries became a prevalent means by which works of art could be

¹³Robin Spencer, "Whistler's First One-Man Exhibition Reconstructed", in Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon, eds., *The Documented Image: Visions in Art History*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987, 27-48.

¹⁴ Henry Blackburn, "A Symphony in Pall Mall", *Pictorial World*, June 13, 1874.

priced for the market and brought to the attention of consumers without the approval of the Royal Academy.¹⁵

The Grosvenor Gallery was the centerpiece of artistic life in London when it opened in 1877 (fig., 17). Whistler sent eight paintings for the opening exhibition, including *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875) (fig., 18). After Ruskin's negative review was published in *Fors Clavigera* on July 2, 1877, Whistler sued the critic for libel, resulting in a trial heard at the Queen's Bench of the High Court on November 25 and 26, 1878. On the official court record, in reply to the solicitor's question if *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* was priced at two guineas for the hours of labor, the artist said, "No. I ask it for the knowledge I have gained in the work of a lifetime."¹⁶ Whistler answered doubts about a painter's ability by questioning the audience's own perceptions. Through training outside of the academic structure of the Royal Academy he developed a similar manner of aesthetic judgment celebrated by the privileged artists and poets of the Aesthetic movement.¹⁷ Ultimately arguing, within the

¹⁵ Nicholas Green. "Dealing in Temperaments: Economic Transformation of the Artistic Field in France during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", *Art History* 10, no. 1 (March 1987), 60. During the second half of the nineteenth century there was an economic transformation of the art market. Nicholas Green has outlined how, "All too often accounts of the period segregate aesthetic developments have been brought into play, their significance has been blunted by the commitment to an evolutionary history of modern art—a problematic which structures out broader issues." Within the context of urban consumerism, dealing in contemporary art emerged by the 1860s as distinct economic practice. Beginning as art reproduction business, galleries soon began to cater to a new group of middle class connoisseurs. Small artisans and shop-keepers transformed into entrepreneurial capitalists along with other areas of industry that exploded during mid century.

¹⁶ Merrill, 1-6.

¹⁷ Allen Staley, *The New Painting of the 1860s: Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 15. Staley examines the interplay among artists and poets with shared ambitions underlying their works which gave impetus to what would become known as the Aesthetic Movement.

context of the Grosvenor Gallery aesthetic discretion entered into a new structure of institutionalization; taste, like money, became something that could be acquired with effort and determination. Linda Merrill was the first to note that the democratization of the Aesthetic movement can be linked to Whistler's proposal in the court transcripts.¹⁸ The performance earned him the invaluable opportunity to declare his right to paint and exhibit as he pleased, uncensored by closed-minded critics. I believe Whistler's declaration was not prepared for the courtroom audience, but for the international press that disseminated details of the scandal as it unfolded in London to readers in Paris and New York. Whistler became the recognizable spokesperson for the concept of privileging aesthetic taste and the intrinsic value of a painting.

Fine Art Society

As the number of commercial art galleries grew in London, the Fine Art Society emerged as a pioneer of producing one-artist exhibitions. Founded in 1876 to sell engravings of popular Victorian paintings, the Society played a pivotal role in commodifying the contemporary artist. Under the leadership of Marcus Bourne Huish, works of art for sale were installed in the front gallery on New Bond Street and the Society actively shaped the wider patterns of exhibition display and commerce. Huish cultivated a reputation for the Fine Art Society as a well-lit and good-sized gallery "having nothing but high class exhibitions, often undertaken from the reverse of a commercial standpoint," in which

¹⁸ See Linda Merrill, *The Diffusion of Aesthetic Taste: Whistler and the Popularization of Aestheticism, 1875–1881*, (University of London, Art History, Ph.d, 1985) 12-19, 200-204. Merrill explains how the Aesthetic movement gained tremendous momentum from Whistler's published opinions, or public monologue he prepared for the court.

artists coordinated the hanging of their own work.¹⁹ The exhibitions were distinguished by their quality and educational significance. Each was designed to showcase an artist's work in a manner that allowed the audience to gain insights into the creativity of an individual artist. The success of the Fine Art Society demonstrated the need for a new type of gallery: a gallery space to serve the professional ambitions of contemporary artists and to attract a wide spectrum of patrons and collectors. Between 1880 and 1883 Whistler produced three exhibitions at the Fine Art Society. The 1881 *Venice Pastels* exhibition and 1883 *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition revolutionized the construction of exhibition programs by offering visitors both symbolic capital and cultural capital within the context of a public space where works of art were sold for a set amount of currency.

The affiliation between Whistler and the Fine Art Society was made possible with the support of assistant manager Ernest G. Brown. Upon joining the staff in 1879, Brown persuaded the society to purchase the *Thames Set* plates from the Covent Garden publishing house Ellis and Green and to publish a second edition. The success of the *Thames Set* persuaded Whistler to secure his reputation as a printmaker with a new set of etchings. As early as 1876, wanting to capitalize on the Victorian preoccupation with travel and exotic cultures, Whistler began to approach patrons and dealers about subscribing to a set of etchings of Venice, proposed as a possible companion to the

¹⁹ Patricia de Montfort, *Marketing Art in the British Isles*, 147, in Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, eds. *The Rise of the modern art market, 1850-1939*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

Thames Set.²⁰ Without receiving the financial support he needed, the project was postponed until 1879, when Brown convinced the directors of the Fine Art Society to commission the work.²¹ In chapter one, I argued that within the *Thames Set* Whistler was able to capture the interest of London shipping merchants and bankers through the vocabulary of commerce and trade. Responding to the overwhelming popular interest in distant locations and the genre of nineteenth-century travel and tourist prints, Whistler guaranteed his etchings of Venice would sell. Travel had only been available to the privileged Victorian wealthy upper classes before the establishment of the railroad network, which offered affordable tickets and opened a range of cities to the middle classes. Volumes of prints and photographs of cities throughout Europe adorned Victorian parlors as souvenirs and prospects for possible new adventures. The Fine Art Society exhibited a range of works depicting exotic locations, and Huish accepted Whistler's proposal. Whistler was commissioned to produce twelve etchings of the historic city. Provided with a stipend for his expenses, Whistler traveled to Venice in September 1879, producing fifty-one etchings, a handful of oil paintings and watercolors, and approximately one hundred pastel drawings.

Venice, Twelve Etchings, known as the *First Venice Set*, was put on display at the Fine Art Society upon Whistler's return to London in November 1880. With little preparation the etchings were printed and hung in a matter of weeks. The following set was exhibited in the back room of the Fine Art Society and published in 1880: *The Little*

²⁰ *Academy*, September 2, 1876, "Mr. Whistler who is about to start for Venice, has lately been employed in decorating the dining room of Mr. Leyland's house." See also, Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell, *Life of James McNeill Whistler*, 1908, Vol. 1, p. 204-05.

²¹ Margaret F. MacDonald, *Palaces in the Night: Whistler in Venice* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001) 14.

*Venice, Nocturne, The Little Mast, The Little Mast, The Little Lagoon, The Palaces, The Doorway, The Piazzetta, The Traghetto, The Riva, The Two Doorways, The Beggars, and The Venetian Mast.*²² The Fine Art Society commissioned Whistler to produce twelve plates in edition of one hundred etchings. The fee Whistler agreed upon and the edition number were conservative when compared to other projects the Society was supporting. Following the Royal Academy standards, etching was understood as a medium to be used to express a quick, direct method for sketching. The necessary hand printing limited the available effects and numbers of editions. Printmakers and dealers also preferred mechanical engraving to convey a wide range of effects and prospect to double the available editions. To complete his contract with the Fine Art Society Whistler insisted on printing his own works. He began printing the *First Venice Set* in late 1880 in Venice and continued in London for more than twenty years, never able to complete the full edition of one hundred. Through a rigorous series of states for each etching Whistler experimented with variations of ink, paper, and alterations drawn directly on the plate, in a technique known as drypoint. This process was tedious, time consuming, and frustrating for the Fine Art Society. The complexity of Whistler's printing process required antique paper, as the chemically treated paper available did not offer the same effects. In Venice and London Whistler pulled proofs on a variety of antique European laid paper and Japanese paper in a range of colors. Each print pulled from the press had to satisfy Whistler's intent; each was treated as a unique impression, signed, and numbered.

²² Margaret F. MacDonald, Grischka Petri, Meg Hausberg, and Joanna Meacock, *James McNeill Whistler: The Etchings, a catalogue raisonné*, University of Glasgow, 2012, online website at <http://etchings.arts.gla.ac.uk>. Whistler continued to change the grouping after the exhibition. *The Bridge, Santa Marta* was exhibited in 1880 and was then replaced with *The Little Mast* before publication.

Through this process Whistler's work became more and more elaborate, emphasizing the hand-crafted aspects of printmaking—the antithesis of the mechanical and reproductive.

After the initial exhibition of the *First Venice Set* at the Fine Art Society, Whistler's strongest supporters remarked that the installation was informal and self-defeating.²³ Whistler did not achieve the profits he had hoped. As had been the case with his paintings, the painstaking subtleties in the work—careful inking, delicate imagery—were not fully appreciated by his audience. The new method of printing, with multiple states printed on different papers and with varying amounts of ink, was well received among the small group of collectors who could appreciate the techniques Whistler was attempting to reinvent. Brown sent the complete *First Venice Set* to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, in 1881. Joseph Pennell visited the installation when it was on display at the Pennsylvania Academy, and years later described in his memoirs his experience viewing the etchings within an intimate white-and-gold gallery. Pennell reported that Edward Guthrie Kennedy, dealer with H. Wunderlich & Co., New York, purchased six sets of the etchings, and Howard Mansfield purchased one set.²⁴ The reception of the *First Venice Set* in the United States was favorable among Whistler's key dealers and print collectors, but did not receive much attention in the press.

²³Robert Getscher, *The Stamp of Whistler* (Oberlin: Allen Memorial Art Museum, 1977) 206. Getscher discusses the selection of etchings presented from the point of view of subject and format, suggesting that the etchings were hung in a particular order. See also Lochnan, 211-221.

²⁴Elizabeth and Joseph Pennell. *The Whistler Journal* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1921) 2.

Cultivating Symbolic Capital in the Art Market

On January 29, 1881, Whistler hosted a private viewing of the *Venice Pastels* exhibition within the front gallery of the Fine Art Society. The event offered more than just a preview of the works on sale by presenting to the audience a type of symbolic capital, or a transformative social and aesthetic experience within the art gallery. Whistler encouraged his visitors to openly express their shock and amazement at the design of the exhibition. The revolutionary modes of art display that would soon develop into Whistler's signature style, included a carefully orchestrated color scheme, floor covering, pottery, plants, coordinated frames, and attention to the lighting. For the *Venice Pastels* exhibition Whistler arranged each wall to have "a low skirting of yellow gold, and then a high dado of dull yellow green cloth, then a moulding of green gold, and then a frieze and ceiling of pale reddish brown."²⁵ Hung at eye level in standard wooden frames, gilded in a range of green and yellow hues, each pastel drawing was presented with the same care and attention to detail Whistler exerted when exhibiting paintings.²⁶ The fabric wall coverings, gilded frames, and pastel crayon markings within the compositions created a subtle blending of textures throughout the gallery. Coordinating every detail, including flowers and decorative accents, Whistler even chose to print the catalogue cover on coarse brown paper similar to the support on which he had drawn the compositions. The gallery developed into a stage as art critics and upper-class patrons performed an aligned aesthetic experience through their active participation of appreciating the drawings. This

²⁵ Godwin, *British Architect*, February 4, 1881.

²⁶ Bendix, Deanna M. *Diabolical Designs, Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) 221.

approach was effective, flattering the visitors who attended the show and encouraging anecdotes to spread by word of mouth throughout London.

Having traveled to Venice initially for the sole purpose of producing etchings, Whistler was thrilled by the results of his experimentation with the pastel crayon. On January 21, 1880, he wrote to Huish that they were “totally new and of a brilliancy very different from the customary watercolors—and will sell—I don’t see how they could help it.”²⁷ Returning to London in November 1880 with almost double the amount of pastel drawings than etchings Whistler left his mark on the historic city. Whistler’s audience would have been introduced to the waterways and palazzos through prized artists such as J.M.W. Turner, in canonical literature, and popular travel writing. Whistler depicted a range of views, including San Marco tower, lavish palazzos, and hidden backstreets where poverty was omnipresent to revolutionize art historical traditions in a range of media.

View in Venice, Looking Towards the Molo (fig., 19) offers insights to the variety of drawings Whistler produced in Venice and how the artist transcribed techniques across media. The brief lines and colorful markings of the pastel crayon within *View in Venice* are documented as one of Whistler’s first experiments within the medium that would later characterize his signature drawing style. In alternating passages of charcoal lines and obscurity, Whistler evokes the spectator’s imagination of the exotic destination with nearly evanescent pastel markings. He first sketched the outlines of the Riva degli Schiavoni and the tower of San Marco from the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, leaving a majority of the brown paper exposed. Emulating the techniques developed when

²⁷ University of Glasgow, Correspondence Database, Letter 02992- Whistler to Huish January 21, 1880.

layering paint on canvas, or wiping radiating strokes when printing works such as *Nocturne*, intricate layers of the pastel crayon develop an impression of atmospheric effects of natural light with significant clarity. (fig., 20) The condition of *View in Venice* has preserved the softly drawn white, red, and blue shades within the foreground, as well as the smudged areas Whistler created with his fingers to suggest the reflection of the tower of San Marco. The interrelationship and balance of color and line within *View in Venice* uniquely exemplify Whistler's belief that art should be valued solely on its success in presenting a harmonized composition.

Accented with markings of dark green to distinguish shutters, black to suggest the women's shawls, and the deep browns that define the shadowy interior of the distant building, *Bead Stringers* (fig., 21) Whistler captured a glimpse of everyday life in Venice. As if from the perspective of someone peering down a hidden street the composition was designed to evoke the beauty of the scene for the middle-class London gallery audience along with sense of nostalgia and familiarity. Whistler sketched the outlines of the buildings with dark chalk, leaving the texture of the brown paper exposed to suggest the imposing structures. With the thickly applied white façade of the building in the background contrasted against the light blue of the sky and gray of the stone street, a clear perspective and three-dimensional effect becomes visible within the composition. Tremendous attention to detail and subtly blended white and gray crayons on the façade represent faint shadows from the sun's reflection. Abbreviated strokes of color fill in the details of the women, windows, clothes, and sky, guiding the spectator's eye along the street. Upon closer inspection one can see that the women are cradling trays on their laps. Souvenirs, such as glass beads from Murano, were popular keepsakes middle-class

patrons could purchase to remember their journey after returning home, and many women earned money by stringing the beads to sell to European tourists.

Inspired by Whistler's cherished experiences in Venice, the overall color scheme of the *Venice Pastels* installation combined the red tones, plum shades, green hues, and burnt-gold colors he discovered as fleeting impressions through the city. The installation of the exhibition echoed the transitory character of Whistler's aesthetic experiences by limiting the number of invited guests and the length of the installation. The beauty of an evanescent and heightened aesthetic moment was also expressed within the compositions themselves. Whistler's brief lines and colorful markings of the pastel crayon described details of the Venetian cityscape through a range of effects of sunlight and reflections. Designed to evoke memories of *Venice, Palace: White and Pink* (fig., 22) depicts Ca' da Mosto, the thirteenth-century Veneto-Byzantine-style palace on the Grand Canal. The gray paper provides much of the color and is set off by precise markings of more than fifteen colors. To suggest the rippling effect of the palace's reflection in the canal Whistler turned the chalk on its side, sometimes with firm pressure, to create even passages of color. While simple charcoal lines give structure to the recognizable arches of Ca' da Mosto, the palace is surrounded by a lightly colored haze. With a rich variety of colors, an impression of atmospheric or passing effects of light is depicted with significant clarity; Robert Getscher has described the compositions as capturing the moment when perception and mystery intermingle.²⁸ The critic for *St James's Gazette*

²⁸ Robert Getscher. *James McNeill Whistler Pastels*. (London: Murray, 1991) 90.

echoed these concerns in 1881, adding that the drawing suffered “in force and truth” because of the exposed gray paper.²⁹

The private viewing at the Fine Art Society created a spectacle. The event received praise from both the press and the elite London patrons in attendance, and was Whistler’s most popular art exhibition to date. By the end of March, the Fine Art Society had sold about twenty of the fifty-three drawings exhibited, grossing more than one thousand guineas, and attendance had reached over 42,000.³⁰ Writing to a fellow artist with whom Whistler worked with in Venice, Maud Franklin declared, “As to the Pastels, well—they are the fashion—there has never been such a success known—Whistler has decorated a room for them—an arrangement in brown gold & Venetian red which is very lovely—and in it they look perfect gems. All the London World was at the Private View—Princesses Painters Beauties Actors—everybody—in fact at one moment of the day it was impossible to move—for the room was crammed.”³¹ Within a richly colored gallery, patrons recognized the landmarks of Venice and participated in the performance of the installation by socializing with the prestigious audience members.

Whistler attributed the successful rate of sales to the skillful installation. Pastel drawings were not valued as fine art in London at the time. Some critics reporting on the exhibition were put off by the sketchiness of Whistler’s pastel drawings, noting that their subject was “far more artistic and interesting” than with most other pastels—but pedantically insisted that they should not be described as pastels, since “in a true pastel the ground of the picture is entirely covered with the coloured chalk employed” and

²⁹ *St James’s Gazette*. February 9, 1881.

³⁰ Margaret MacDonald *Palaces at Night*. 107.

³¹ Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Letter from Maud Franklin to Otto Bacher, March 21, 1881.

Whistler did not “entirely cover” the paper ground in his compositions.³² The Royal Academy exhibited a small number of pastels as study drawings, but did not rate them as an established medium.³³ The oil painting and watercolor societies refused to accept pastel drawings for exhibition. Pastel drawing became socially fashionable in London as instructional pamphlets and books were published to establish a British history of the medium. In 1882, Philip Gilbert Hamerton published *The Graphic Arts: A Treatise on the Varieties of Drawing, Painting and Engraving* and devoted an entire chapter of his book to the study of pastel drawing. He declared that the medium “answers to flattering acquiescence, or to affirmation of the very gentlest and mildest kind, which is comparably more pleasing to all of us. On this principle pastel ought to be the most popular of all forms of drawing, for it is like velvet to the eye.” Contradicting popular Victorian preconceptions that the medium held feminine attributes for its accessibility to amateur artists, Hamerton argued that it is a “more firm and masculine art than a careless world imagines.”³⁴ The overwhelming public opinion in London in 1881 seemed to be that pastel drawings were too fragile and could not be valued in the same manner as prints or paintings. Framing and coordinating an aesthetic space for the *Venice Pastels* gave Whistler the opportunity to challenge assumptions about the medium. The amount of press coverage and gossip generated by the *Venice Pastels* exhibition initiated a new vocabulary for how to describe the delicate drawings, as well as a new way of appreciating their market value. Although pastels were exhibited in France in the 1870s

³² *The Times*, February 9, 1881.

³³ John Ruskin, “Catalogue of Rudimentary Series” *The Work of John Ruskin*, 21 (London: George Allen, 1872) 258-259.

³⁴ Philip Gilbert Hamerton. *The Graphic Arts: A Treatise on the Varieties of Drawing, Painting and Engraving*. (London: Seeley Jackson and Halliday, 1882) 151.

and 1880s, it was the *Venice Pastels* exhibition in London that transformed the status of the medium. The young artists who worked with Whistler in Venice were the first to recognize him as the artist who had elevated pastels from “commonplace to a very artistic medium.”³⁵

Developing Cultural Capital in the Art Market

Whistler’s nerve and daring artistry were at their peak when he designed the third and final exhibition of his Venetian material at the Fine Art Society, *Arrangement in Yellow and White*. Following *Venice Pastels*, Whistler created a dynamic color scheme and aesthetic background against which potential buyers could carry out elite acts of connoisseurship and spectacle. The walls were covered in a white fabric and framed with a yellow crown molding. Each etching was framed in a thin, white wooden frame and hung at eye level. It was the first time that Whistler entitled an installation and both he and the Fine Art Society spread the word to the press to create advance publicity. The exhibition included forty etchings from Venice and promised to entertain. The private viewing was held on February 17, 1883, and was graced by the presence of Prince and Princess of Wales. From New Bond Street the guests would have been able to peer in at the gallery, this time prepared with yellow curtains and velarium (fabric draped under the skylight), casting a yellow glow over the etchings (fig., 23). The high-society guests invited to the opening were asked to dress in the same color scheme to complete the artist’s color harmony. The theatricality of the event created a sensation in the press; many of the reviews only briefly mention the etchings while praising the dramatic

³⁵ Otto Bacher. *With Whistler in Venice*. (New York: The Century Company, 1909) 77-78.

presentation. The gallery was described as living theater orchestrated in the oriental hues of Kabuki with a distinctive “Whistlerian yellow.”³⁶ Critics complained that the hues were overwhelming and that the artist was stretching the gallery exhibition experience into realms of psychology and spiritualism.³⁷

Whistler’s choice of a dynamic color scheme allowed him to accomplish his goal of creating an aesthetic experience for his audience. David Park Curry argues that *Arrangement in Yellow and White* was the harbinger of performance and installation art in the twentieth century. I agree, and believe that through his ambitious designs, and by projecting the role of the art critic to the paying audience, Whistler was able to present a new understanding of the cultural value, or cultural capital, of his etchings. He deployed a new format of engaging the audience to great effect when he printed the catalog for *Arrangement in Yellow and White*. “Such a catalogue!—,” Whistler said. “The last inspiration!—I take all I have collected of the silly drivel of the wise fools who write, and I pepper and salt it about the Catalogue under the different etchings I exhibit!—in short I put their nose to the grindstone and turn the wheel with a whirr!—I just let it spin!”³⁸ Just below the title of the works he placed snippets of critical commentary from press clippings, with remarks almost always taken out of context and heavily edited.

³⁶ David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces* (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2004) 120. David Park Curry explains how Whistler borrowed this self-serving format from theater journals at the time. For further details on design see, Deanna M. Bendix, p. 226.

³⁷ John Forbes-Robertson, “Mr. Whistler, His Arrangement in White and Yellow, His Etchings and His Catalogue” *Pictorial World*, March 31, 1883, University of Glasgow, James McNeill Whistler Special Collection, Press Clippings Box 6 48 (clippings 41-50) See, Deanna M. Bendix, 228.

³⁸ University of Glasgow Correspondence- Letter 09430- Whistler to Thomas Waldo Story, February 5, 1883.

Doorway (fig., 24) was exhibited in both the 1880 and 1883 exhibitions. To guide his audience through the 1883 installation—and to belittle art critics by offering a satire of their trade—Whistler published the following quotes about *The Doorway* in the catalog:

“There is seldom in his Etchings any large arrangement of light and shade.” —P. G. Hamerton
 “Short, scratchy lines.” —St James’s Gazette
 “The architectural ornaments and the interlacing bars of the gratings are suggested rather than drawn.” —St James’s Gazette
 “Amateur prodige” —Saturday Review

Presenting his work in this spectacular manner, Whistler encouraged his audience to perform the role of art critic and make judgments about the works in front of them. Just as with the artist’s paintings, his etchings demanded that viewers study the subtleties of the surface of the print in order to fully absorb and enjoy their intricate details. Today there are twenty identifiable states of the plate. Margaret MacDonald explains how Whistler first began to recognize irregular batches or areas of small flecks on the sheets when printing.³⁹ Referred to as “foul biting,” the unintentional marks are caused by acid accidentally eroding through the ground on the plate. The process caused unexpected tonal passages on the plate and added a variety of texture to the printed etchings. When printing *The Doorway*, a view of the Palazzo Gussoni drawn from a boat on the Rio de la Fava, Whistler manipulated the amount of ink on the plate to articulate the canal. Adding extra ink enhanced the darkest of the etched lines of the gate and receding passageway, while wiping the ink from the bottom of the plate created tonal effects or ripples in the water. The women appear silhouetted against the rich darkness of the pigment.

³⁹ Margaret F. MacDonald, Grischka Petri, Meg Hausberg, and Joanna Meacock, *James McNeill Whistler: The Etchings, a Catalogue Raisonné*, (University of Glasgow, 2012) <http://etchings.arts.gla.ac.uk>.

The majority of the checklist for the 1883 exhibition was pulled from the Venetian material, but Whistler did display a few recent etchings of everyday subjects, including *Lobster Pots—Selsea Bill* (fig., 25). It was the only subject in the 1883 exhibition apart from the cities of Venice and London, and was possibly only included in response to a critique from Philip Gilbert Hamerton. In the catalog the title appears as *Lobster Pots—Selsea Bill*, along with the somewhat cryptic comment, “So little in them.” Years earlier, Hamerton had written that there was “So little in them [the etchings], and the visitor, after profound reflection, comes almost to the conclusion that there can be little in the man who etched them.”⁴⁰ The brevity of Whistler’s line developed into his most recognizable skill as an etcher. I posit that he chose the work and edited the review to educate the audience about how to appreciate his etchings as balanced compositions unto themselves, instead of merely their subject matter.

The allure of the *Arrangement in White and Yellow* exhibition led to its restaging on several occasions. On October 10, 1883, H. Wunderlich & Co., later known as the Kennedy Galleries, presented the show in New York with the addition of Whistler’s painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, which gained its notoriety from the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial. The show was coordinated through the Fine Art Society and Whistler sent instructions for the design and coloring of the invitations. The exhibition received rave reviews, but the critics were devastated that Whistler did not attend the opening. The exhibition also traveled to Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, and Detroit. In absentia Whistler’s design and formulaic display strategies privileged the intrinsic value of his art at the expense of promoting a direct narrative or moral. Within

⁴⁰ David Park Curry, 122.

the surviving correspondence references a tour schedule though it is unclear why Whistler never traveled to the United States for the openings of the exhibitions.

By transforming the commercial gallery Whistler found a way to integrate his approach to marketing art with a new means of selling. He becomes sensitive to the demands of wealthy patrons and is aware that to establish a reputation his prints and drawings cannot function in isolation of social, political, and economic elements. Previously understood as separate projects, Whistler's exhibition practices at the Fine Art Society reveal a more nuanced fashion to how he approached his works on paper as an integrated whole. Through a close scrutiny of Whistler's techniques of printing and drawing new dimensions of how he presented works to be experienced emotionally, physically, and visually can be elucidated.

Chapter 3: Strategies to secure an Artistic Legacy

The affinities between the literature and art of the second half of the nineteenth century bespeak the deeply rooted networks of exchange between writers and painters in Great Britain and Europe. Whistler's presence in London and Paris was a decisive catalyst of this exchange through his friendships with artists—painters, poets, and writers, among others—that helped to expand his sphere of influence. Throughout the 1880s Whistler was not only firmly identified in the London art world as an American artist who had trained in Paris, but was also associated, somewhat confusingly, with both the Pre-Raphaelite painters and the French Impressionists. In 1880 Édouard Manet introduced Whistler to his friend Théodore Duret. Not only did this inaugurate an important friendship, but Whistler was able to develop Duret's appreciation of British modern art; Duret, in turn, devoted a chapter to Whistler in his 1885 publication *Critique d'Avant Garde*.¹ In 1882 Whistler decided to return to the Salon in Paris, and encouraged private collectors to allow his work to be shown in annual exhibitions throughout Europe and the United States. Whistler also continued to send works to Durand-Ruel's gallery and exhibited at the annual Exposition Internationale de Peinture held in Georges Petit's gallery in 1883. Through an examination of press clippings and the works Whistler exhibited around this time, we can reconsider Whistler's exhibition practices from the

¹ Robin Spencer, "Whistler, Manet, and the Tradition of the Avant-Garde", *Studies in the History of Art, Vol. 19, Symposium Papers VI: James McNeill Whistler A Reexamination* (1987), pp. 47-64. Duret is recognized as the first author to apply the term Avant-Garde to describe a progressive artistic movement.

1880s, illuminating one of the most fruitful periods of artistic exchange as he worked to expand his sphere of influence and cultivate new markets for his work. For Whistler, success was measured not only in financial terms; he relished the attention and recognition his projects generated. I propose that Whistler conceived each individual project as part of a larger vision that each endeavor functioned as a marketing device to help create his global legacy. Whistler's intention to reach an international audience is revealed through a close analysis of his exhibition practices in the years between 1884 and 1889, with particular emphasis on the *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* exhibitions and his artistic manifesto, known as the *Ten O'clock Lecture*.

As part of his efforts to establish an international following, after 1882 Whistler began to exhibit his work in Munich, Amsterdam, New York, Paris, and Brussels. In France the dominant themes in Whistler's exhibited paintings, prints, and drawings showed especially strong ties to the work of symbolist writers, such as Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine. In Belgium symbolist poets Georges Rodenbach, Maurice Maeterlinck, and Émile Verhaeren discovered Whistler's portraiture as a vital new source of inspiration and creative enrichment for their work. Belgian artists James Ensor and Fernand Khnopff viewed Whistler's painting for the first time at the Salon in Paris in 1882, when Whistler's *Arrangement in Black No. 5: Lady Meux* (fig., 25) was on display.² The full-length portrait of Lady Valerie Susan Meux immortalized the image of a society woman from the new Edwardian era displaying her voluptuous figure, adorned in fur and diamonds. Valerie claimed to be an actress but rumors circulated around London that she was a dancer at a local dance hall in Holburn where prostitutes were

² Joy Newton "Whistler and La Soirée des Vingt" *The Burlington Magazine*, 143 (August 2001) 480-488.

known to work. Lady Meux broke the strict moral code of Victorian society by not only marrying Mr. Henry Meux, rumored to be a former client, but for lavishly displaying her newfound wealth in public.³ Whistler was able to capture his subject's defiance and beauty, which attracted the attention of younger artists.

The following year Ensor and Khnopff, along with a group of other Belgian painters, designers, and sculptors, formed the group Les XX under the leadership of the Brussels entrepreneur Octave Maus. The group began to exhibit annually under the name Les XX, and each year international artists were invited to participate.⁴ Whistler was the first foreign painter invited to participate in the Les XX exhibition in 1884 at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels. For his debut in Brussels, Whistler chose to represent his career to date mainly with works already in private collections, including *Symphony in White No. 3* (1867), *Harmony in Grey and Green No. 3: Miss Cicely Alexander* (1872), and *Nocturne: Blue and Silver—Chelsea* (1871). This selection of a seemingly abstract landscapes and psychological portraits resonated with the dedication of Les XX artists to the study of the nature and the appearance of dreamlike states of being. The annual exhibition program developed into a forum for young artists and offered a celebrated new context for Whistler's paintings. The fact that Whistler exhibited painting already belonging to private collectors suggests that he was less interested in selling his work

³ Richard Dornment and Margaret MacDonald. *James McNeill Whistler*. (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1995) 201-205, Susan Galassi, Susan Grace, Margaret MacDonald, and Aileen Ribeiro. *Whistler, Women, and Fashion*. (London: Yale University Press, 2003) 159-175, 'Lady Meux Dead, Rich Patron of Art', *New York Times*, December 22, 1910.

⁴ Deanna M Bendix,. *Diabolical Designs, Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler*. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) 231. See also, Jane Block, *Les XX and Belgian Avant-Gardism 1868–1894, Studies in Fine Arts: The Avant garde* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Ph.D., 1980).

than in establishing a reputation within the European capital while breaking down the barriers between the British, European, and American art markets.

Between 1884 and 1888 Whistler exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists, accepting the position of president in 1886, while transforming the Society's exhibition practices and establishing experimental programs focusing on international artists.⁵ The Society of British Artists was founded in 1823 as an all-British organization, incorporated by royal charter in 1887, to exhibit works rejected from the Royal Academy and to promote rising artists. By 1886 the Society was competing with new London galleries and losing patronage. Whistler planned to revitalize the group's exhibitions by adapting his signature design style to the gallery space: hanging fewer works at eye level, coordinating color schemes for each installation, adorning each gallery with fabric, using a velarium to control the lighting, and hosting private viewings before each opening. He also invited foreign artists to exhibit their new, and sometimes controversial, work. During the period of Whistler's involvement with the Royal Society of British Artists the organization became one of the most extensively reviewed galleries in London, solidifying his influence within the international art market. However, Whistler's positive reception at the Society cannot be read apart from the wider context of the London art world, whose insularity in the mid 1880s was challenged by young artists who looked to France for direction, and by the equally influential French art critics in London. Faced with what they perceived to be a French cultural invasion, many of the conservative

⁵ See, Lynne Bell. *Fact and Fiction: Whistler's Critical Reputation in England 1890-1892*. (University of East Anglia, Ph.D. 1987), chapter 7, "Whistler and the Society of British Artists (SBA), 1884-1888" 224- 279, See also, Richard Dorment and Margaret MacDonald, 49-55.

Society members opposed Whistler's innovations and instead promoted the rival notion of a strong British school of paintings marked by national characteristics.⁶ Lynne Bell successfully links this desire for cultural autonomy, evident in art reviews of the 1880s, to the wider historical force of nationalism, one of the dominant characteristics of European politics after 1848.⁷

Whistler's presence at the Royal Society of British Artists was supported by a significant number of patrons and critics whose enthusiastic advocacy of the artist angered the conservative members expressing a concern that a "Whistler School of Art" would develop. Whistler's identity as an artist was impossible to pigeonhole: his connection with the Grosvenor Gallery led to his association with the aesthetic movement; his Nocturne paintings were described by critics as impressionistic, based on his painting technique; and, through his ambitious exhibitions at the Royal Society of British Artists, he was frequently labeled an expatriate American. Whistler's determination to achieve greater prominence in the international art market is evident in the extensive reviews of exhibition presented at the Society between 1886 and 1888.

In the 1880s, New York, the commercial and financial center in the United States, was also developing into the aesthetic capital of the nation. Wealthy Americans gravitated to New York as the great emporium where the latest goods could be purchased. Naturally, Whistler's ambition drew his attention to the city's art market. The extraordinary level of detail and elaborate butterfly signature within the composition of *Amsterdam in Winter* (fig., 27) has led Margaret MacDonald to assert that the watercolor

⁶ A. Beaver, "French Influence on British Art," *Artist*, October 1, 1887, 307-311. Beaver describes the perceived invasion of French art as "a national disgrace."

⁷ "Whistler and the Philistines," *Court and Society Review*, July 8, 1886, 611.

was exhibited under the title Snow at the Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition at the National Academy of Design in New York during December 1883.⁸ Listed as “No. 194 Snow Water Color lent by H. Wunderlich” in the exhibition catalog, this composition, or a similar one, was the first contemporary drawing by Whistler to be exhibited in the New York within the first major exhibition of works by the Impressionists. The Pedestal Fund Art Loan Exhibition was a special art exhibition organized by progressive American painters William Merritt Chase and J. Carroll Beckwith to raise funds for the building of a pedestal for the Statue of Liberty. The construction of Liberty Enlightening the World by the French sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi caused a great deal of excitement even before it was officially given to the American people in the fall of 1883. To be erected the statue required a large pedestal, for which many of the funds were provided by the exhibition. The exhibition committee chose paintings by innovative French painters including Eugène Delacroix, Adolphe Monticelli, Théodore Géricault, Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet, and Edgar Degas. Officially opened by General Ulysses S. Grant at the National Academy of Design on the evening of December 3, 1883, the exhibition of 215 works was well attended and covered in the press. Critical reception of the art was mixed, but generally favorable. A review in the *New York Times* reads, “Well may an irascible Parisian who loved pictures and hates Americans, exclaim that we drain France of her finest works and never give them back . . . here too, an ‘impressionist’ of the most pronounced kind—Manet, Degas (repulsively real ballet girls insufficiently brushed in) and Whistler.” Concluding that the attendance at the show “was so large and was composed of elements so unmistakably drawn from the working people that it cannot be

⁸ Margaret MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, And Watercolours A Catalogue Raisonné*. (London: Yale University Press, 1995) 330-331.

said that there is any longer any doubt as to the success of this experiment.”⁹ In 1885 the American Art Association invited Durand-Ruel to send impressionist paintings to the United States for exhibition. Durand-Ruel coordinated the installation of almost 300 paintings and, though reviews were not overwhelmingly favorable, the event marked the beginning of the American interest in the French avant-garde.

As British and French art dealers increasingly looked to North America for sales to satisfy the export market, London remained a key site of exchange between Europe and the United States. I posit that, after a series of one-man exhibitions between 1873 and 1883, Whistler recognized how celebrated events could be translated into artistic statements for visitors and potential new benefactors in New York. Writing to American art dealer George Lucas after his first one-man installation in Paris, Whistler explains,

They are not merely canvasses having interest in themselves alone, but are intended to indicate slightly to “those whom it may concern” something of my theory in art—And the science of color and “picture pattern” as I have worked it out for myself during these years—There!¹⁰

The extensive press coverage of the *Venice Pastels* exhibition reached countless new audiences in Europe as well as the United States. *The New York Times* reported on Whistler’s provocative *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition at the Fine Art Society by describing the psychological effects of the overwhelming color scheme. Details of the crowded opening event—where ladies, gentlemen, and even royalty exploded with laughter over the witty remarks listed in the catalog—made headlines.

⁹ “The Bartholdi Loan Exhibition,” 1883; “The Pedestal Art Loan,” 1883; “To Be Open on Sunday,” 1883; “Art for the Masses,” 1883; “Admiring Objects of Art,” 1883; “A Gift Statue,” 1883; Van Rensselaer, 1884-A; William H. Gerdts, *American Impressionism* (second edition). (New York: Abbeville Press, 2001) 51.

¹⁰ University of Glasgow Database Letter 09182 James McNeill Whistler to George Lucas January 18, 1873.

When the exhibition was installed in New York *The New York Evening Telegram* reported that “numbers of artists and connoisseurs flocked thither during the day.” In lieu of the artist himself attending the opening, his photograph was hung at the entrance of the gallery; the Telegram critic related how “[Whistler’s] whole air speaks for him of the disregard for conventionality and the desire to shock, astonish and delight.”¹¹ New opportunities to reach audiences in the United States presented themselves after a successful tour of *Arrangement in Yellow and White* to areas of the country the artist had never even visited. Though there are accounts of multiple exhibitions and events planned, it is unclear why Whistler did not return to America and by the late 1880s it was unnecessary because he had already attracted the attention of prestigious American collectors.

Dowdeswell Gallery

With the momentum the press generated for the *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition in 1883, Whistler approached the Fine Art Society the following season to arrange the next show, but both parties were unable to agree on a contract. Whistler then turned to Walter Dowdeswell at the Dowdeswell Gallery in London. The Dowdeswell family operated a frame-making and print shop at 36 Chancery Lane before opening an art gallery at 133 New Bond Street, only a few doors down from the Fine Art Society and the Grovesnor Gallery, in 1878 (fig., 27). The gallery held exhibitions featuring established as well as avant-garde artists, and in 1884 Whistler organized his first show at the venue, *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey: Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes*. I

¹¹ University of Glasgow, James McNeill Whistler Special Collections, Press Clippings 4687, See also, *New York Evening Telegram*, October 11, 1883.

believe that Whistler designed this exhibition as a prototype for a new framework, within the commercial gallery context, to showcase his most recent works and which could be reliably replicated abroad to expose a range of new audiences to his theories on art. This installation was the first to be given a separate title from the exhibition: the installation was titled *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* and the exhibition, *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes*. Whistler would assign the same title (*Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes*) to his 1886 exhibition at the Dowdeswell Gallery, as well as to his 1889 exhibition at the H. Wunderlich and Co. Gallery in New York. With each installation Whistler presented his intellectual theories of art at the forefront of the art market by persuading viewers and readers to pose critical questions: What is a finished work of art? What is the decorative value in art? What is the subject? Ultimately, Whistler presented new ways of seeing works of art, of establishing visual experiences where the surface of the works, the physical brush strokes or drawn line, are as important as the subjects they depict. Whistler's emphasis on the formal properties differed from his contemporaries because of how he designed the installation and display of his work in a recognizable signature style that resonated through the gallery.

Designing a carefully conceived setting for his most recent works and displaying his works in a specific context allowed Whistler not only to control the price assigned to each piece but also to showcase the symbolic and cultural value of each works of art. He thereby bypassed the Academy, attracted a public following (as well as a few patrons), and received ample press coverage to further bolster his reputation as a maverick. Throughout the 1880s Whistler's one-man exhibitions were devoted primarily to smaller works. Kenneth Myers has argued that this trend of focusing on smaller, more affordable

works such as prints, watercolors, and pastels was a conscious effort on Whistler's part to lessen his dependence on wealthy patrons.¹² Shipping and insurance costs discouraged private collectors from submitting his work to international exhibitions. I believe that, in addition, Whistler was engaging with smaller-scale oil paintings, watercolors, and pastels so that the works could travel easily and reach a larger network of consumers.

Unlike Whistler's installations at the Fine Art Society, *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey: Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* included sixty-seven oils, twenty-seven watercolors, and three pastel drawings; the average size of each work was no more than 6 x 9 inches. *The Nation* described the exhibition as one of the most entertaining of the season, and extensive reviews elsewhere struggled to find the *mots justes* to describe the subtle hues which created a misty effect of delicate color for the audience. The overall design encouraged guests and critics to judge the décor by the effectiveness with which it united color and works of art within a larger composition. The gallery walls were covered with a textured cloth, varying in colors described as "pink," "salmon," and "a delicate rose tint." The baseboards, crown moldings, doorframes, and ceiling were painted in gray tones; the room was also decorated with the high fashion of a parlor, with "magnificent azaleas in vases" and "a large crater of flesh-coloured earthenware containing a large plant of marguerite daisies." The fireplace was decorated with a pale gray drape "edged with flesh-coloured cord" and signed with Whistler's butterfly monogram appliqué "in the new style of needlework." Even the attendant was dressed "in a grey coat with flesh-coloured collar and cuffs, grey trousers, grey stockings, and fashionably cut patent leather pumps." Whistler orchestrated every detail, and even planned for the opening to be held

¹² Kenneth Myers, *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition*, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2003, p. 4.

during the afternoon so that artificial gas lighting would not affect the subtleties of the chosen color harmonies. The event attracted painters, actors, writers, critics, and the kind of wealthy Londoners that one reviewer described as “fashionable people.”¹³

Whistler pushed the boundary of entertainment to encompass the two types of capital—symbolic and cultural—discussed in chapter two, as well as a didactic function for his installation. Popular Victorian artists deliberately aspired to produce narrative art with accessible meanings that clearly related to the viewers’ lives. Kate Flint has argued that the Victorian art critic’s role “assumed an unquestioned continuity between the world represented and the world inhabited by the reader . . . constituting a ‘refusal to take art as art.’”¹⁴ Earlier critics assumed works of art were merely novels in paint and accordingly borrowed language from fiction and poetry. Pictures of ambiguous and open-ended subjects raised the question of the “democratization of art criticism . . . , in which each spectator is granted their own interpretive license, and the subjectivity of their point of view is hence acknowledged.”¹⁵ Whistler’s installations created an extraordinary visual experience for his audiences and readers by including the wall colors and surfaces of the interiors as part of a larger overall installation. He was not developing a style but expressing his own singular aesthetic vision and artistic ideals; he asserted an aesthetic belief that a work of visual art should be valued not for its accuracy of representation, or for whatever profound meaning it reveals about the world, but instead for the effectiveness with which it combines color and line into a harmonious whole.

¹³ Myers, p.98.

¹⁴ Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 169.

¹⁵ Flint, p. 261.

Within the frontispiece of the 1884 catalog Whistler published an announcement of principles offering a new method of visual art appreciation, including in the sixth stanza a Bible verse echoing this notion of an underlying didactic mission open to further examination. The key message was to judge a work of art solely by the intrinsic beauty created by the composition's harmonious arranged colors and forms. (fig., 29)

Whistler declared,

L'Envoie

A PICTURE is finished when all trace of the means used to bring about the end has disappeared.

To say a picture, as is often said in its praise, that it shows great and earnest labour, is to say that it is incomplete and unfit for view.

Industry in Art is a necessity,—not a virtue,—and any evidence of the same, in the production, is a blemish, not a quality;—a proof, not of achievement, but of absolutely insufficient work, for work alone will efface the footsteps of the work.

The work of a master reeks not of the sweat of the brow,—suggests no effort,—and is finished from its beginning.

The completed task of perseverance only has never begun, and will remain unfinished until eternity, a moment of goodwill and foolishness.

“There is one that laboureth, and taken pains, and maketh haste, and is so much the more behind.”

The masterpiece should appear as a flower to the painter,—perfect in its bud as in its bloom,—with no reason to explain its presence,—no mission to fulfil,—a joy to the artist,—a delusion to the philanthropist, a puzzle to the botanist, an accident of sentiment and alliteration to the literary man.

Many of the reviews of the exhibition expressed confusion about why Whistler printed the passage, titled “L'Envoie,” at the beginning of the catalog, and presumed the title was a misprint or mistake. *The Globe* suggested it was supposed to resemble a poetic

addendum, while others referenced the verses as simply a way for Whistler to justify the sketches he chose to exhibit. Kenneth Myers was the first to interpret the title as invoking the French phrase *en voie de*, loosely translated as “in process of . . .,” suggesting that Whistler offered a method of moving toward the aesthetic experience—understanding that the art object is beautiful in its own right, and that the ultimate goal of appreciation is transient.¹⁶ Stretching the meaning of the term is evidence of Whistler’s understanding of the French language and his biting wit. The English translation implies being sent, as well as, resembling the work envy to provoke the reader in suggesting that each principal might contain multiple meanings.

The installation of *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey: Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* offered Whistler’s audience the context needed to appreciate his paintings and drawings as non-referential compositions. By introducing the works in this manner, Whistler was guiding the audience to experience a purely aesthetic interpretation within the gallery setting. If aesthetic appreciation, or the experience of perceiving beauty, is the central concern of art, then size, medium, and degree of finish become irrelevant. Finish should not be measured by how closely a picture resembles its subject, but how balanced the composition appears as a result of artistic expression. The idea of creating unfinished, unpolished sketches was not radical, but exhibiting them within the context of a commercial gallery fostered contempt; typically, to be sold as a work of fine art, a drawing or an oil painting was expected to exhibit a certain level of finish.

Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey exemplified Whistler’s rejection of scale as an aesthetic criterion; he hung one large painting, a life-size portrait of a young girl,

¹⁶ Myers, p. 24.

among sixty-six smaller works (some much smaller, at 4 x 8 inches). E. W. Godwin began his review of the installation in the *British Architect* by noting that it consisted “of sixty-six small paintings, drawings, pastels—stars of different magnitudes, grouped around a blue moon—a life-size full portrait, called by the artist ‘Scherzo in blue—The Blue Girl.’”¹⁷ Other reviewers only mention the large portrait to complain about Whistler’s loose treatment of the model’s face and his choice of subject matter, which seemed out of place among the other paintings of London street scenes and the coastal village of St. Ives. On several occasions between 1873 and 1884 Whistler began a large oil painting of a young girl dressed in a blue costume, with her hands against her hips, standing in front of a blue background.¹⁸ None of these paintings survive. To reconstruct the effect Whistler created within the gallery space we can compare a photograph of the portrait published by Pennell in *Life of Whistler* (1911) with the pastel sketch *The Blue Girl* that Whistler prepared for a portrait of Eleanor Leyland between 1873 and 1876, which suggests the color effect he possibly desired (figs., 30-33).

Whistler framed the smaller works, such as *Orange Sweet Shop* and *Nocturne: Silver and Opal-Chelsea*, in wide frames usually reserved for large oil paintings. (fig., 33-34) One reviewer, noticing this decision, complained that the frames were “massive.” Whistler’s wide frames and layout of the gallery implied that small works were as important as the larger pictures.¹⁹ Whistler discussed a similar technique of framing his

¹⁷ E.W. Godwin, “The Arts Students: Letter No. 9”, *British Architect*, June 1, 1884.

¹⁸ The subject matter corresponds with the larger Victorian preoccupation with childhood manifested in Pre-Raphaelite paintings, books, and magazines. In 1883 paintings or children were so popular the Fine Art Society produced an exhibition entitled “Pictures of Children.” See, *Times*, April 30, 1883, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Globe*, May 20, 1884.

works to establish a consistent visual element for the installation in a letter to George Lucas in 1873.²⁰ *Arrangement in Flesh Colour and Grey* was the first installation where Whistler redesigned a standard frame, originally developed for the *Venice Pastels* exhibition, widening the molding more than an inch. Although Whistler adopted a standard frame, he used different gildings and toners to vary the color of a given frame to harmonize with the specific work it contained. For example, the seascapes were generally put in frames gilded with silvery gold, often toned with greenish coloring, while the compositions of women were exhibited in frames gilded in a reddish-gold. Measuring more than five inches, the frame's molding was wide and shallow, seemingly devouring the delicate compositions. The slight variations of the gilding drew attention to the varying textures and subtle color harmonies throughout the gallery. By housing a majority of the oil paintings, watercolors, and pastels in a similar manner, the installation suggested that works of art should be valued neither by media nor size, but purely for their beauty.

In fact, according to Whistler's philosophy, the viewer should lose him- or herself in an experience of appreciating beauty in front of a great work of art. Within the third

²⁰ University of Glasgow Database Letter 09182 Whistler to George Lucas January 18, 1873 "You will notice and perhaps meet with opposition that my frames I have designed as carefully as my pictures - and thus they form as important a part as any of the rest [p. 3] of the work - carrying on the particular harmony throughout - This is of course entirely original with me and has never been done - Though many have painted on their frames but never with real purpose - or knowledge - in short never in this way or anything at all like it - This I have so thoroughly established here that no one would dare to put any colour whatever (excepting the old black and white and that quite out of place probably) on their frames without feeling that they would at once be pointed out as forgers or imitators; and I wish this to be also clearly stated in Paris that I am the inventor of all this kind of decoration of in color in the frames; that I may not have a lot of clever little Frenchmen trespassing on my ground."

stanza of “L’Envoie” Whistler proclaims that to accomplish this, the artist must remove all possible distractions. Whistler’s use of unconventional watercolor techniques created elegant surfaces that call for close study and prove to be just as vital to the composition as the subjects they depicted. *Amsterdam in Winter* (fig., 27) shows Whistler’s mastery of the medium in his depiction of skaters on a frozen canal. Pushing the boundaries of drawing and painting through a series of techniques—wet scrapping, blotting, and flat washes—Whistler’s delicate handling of the brush transforms a dark urban setting into a beautiful impression of the scene.²¹ When using traditional British watercolor techniques, an artist applies colored washes from lightest to darkest to preserve transparency and luminosity of the pigments throughout a composition. Typically the artist reserves areas of unpainted white paper for the brightest highlights; light is reflected by the white of the paper through thinnest washes, creating an effect of radiance. Whistler reserves some areas of paper to draw the viewer’s attention to the light that illuminates the building in the center, along with the frozen streets. The subtle lines, representing light emanating from the building, were either drawn quickly, before a wash dried, or later, after rewetting. This technique is referred to as wet scrapping. Such reapplications of clear water dislodge and redeposit pigment particles, forming a ring or tide line, around the wet area, which can also be detected around the building’s glowing window. Whistler also blotted the wash in the sky in order to lighten the dark gray color and produce effects suggesting billowing smoke or wind. Applying water softens a wash,

²¹ For a detailed description of these terms please refer to Martha Tedeschi with Kristi Dahm, *Watercolors by Winslow Homer: The Color of Light*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 78, 104, 128. See also, Walsh, Judith. 1993. “A Summer’s Pleasure: Incoming Tide, Scarborough, Maine by Winslow Homer.” *American Art Journal* 25, p. 62–73.

while blotting paper absorbs color from the high points of the textured paper, leaving it in the lower interstices of the paper.

Details of the subject matter of *Amsterdam in Winter* are at first difficult to discern, forcing a prolonged study to capture the full composition. In the middle ground of the composition skaters emerge—first the bodies appear as brief dark markings of the brush, from a distance appearing to merge with the faintest suggestion of red wash to create a couple dancing on the ice. Whistler's variations of wet-on-wet watercolor techniques were not part of the Western watercolor tradition and consequently are absent from the numerous watercolor manuals that proliferated in the nineteenth century. Margaret MacDonald argues that Whistler learned the practice from studying Japanese ink paintings.²² In *Amsterdam in Winter*, Whistler painted the frozen canal by applying broad, flat washes of black wash. Laying a flat wash was a fundamental technique for depicting sky and water in his Nocturne landscape paintings. In the dark portion of the sky, the artist manipulated this flat-wash method. Instead of letting the first wash dry, he painted wet-on-wet and interspersed brushstrokes of clear water in order to create a pattern with dark, feathered edges where pigment was displaced. The dying patterns indicate that washes flowed both up and down, suggesting that Whistler rocked the sheet back and forth vertically. Laying a flat wash takes practice to perfect and an educated aesthetic sensibility to appreciate.

Scherzo in Blue: The Little Blue Girl was the centerpiece of the exhibition design, and Whistler presented a range of compositions depicting women in a variety of media including oil paint, watercolor, and pastel. Whistler's preoccupation with the female

²² Margaret MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, And Watercolours A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 330.

figure, from full-length society portraits to intimate studies of models in the studio followed a gradual shift in interest in genre paintings among many of his contemporaries. *The Yellow Room* (1883/1884) (fig., 36) captures Maud Franklin, relaxing in a casual pose with her hands above her head, in Whistler's London home at 13 Tite Street. The room is painted in Whistler's distinct yellow hue and is adorned with a range of Chinese porcelain vases, fans, a parasol, and flowers. The intricate details echo the design scheme within the gallery. Whistler worked with pink and violet pigments while wet to create patterns on the parasol and throughout the room. Within the composition Whistler worked freely with varied watercolor techniques—as each surface required various treatments similar to the aesthetic objects on the mantel, Maud offered the viewer a beautiful subject to be admired. Fine brushstrokes suggest detailed embroidery on Maud's dress. Describing *Yellow and Grey* (fig., 35), the critic for *The Builder* commented, “A good many contain figures of young girls reading, lounging, in various attitudes, their dresses and surroundings giving the colour combination demonstrated.” The female models Whistler depicted are passive, ornamental, and domestic:

[T]hese figures are very lightly sketched, and their faces will certainly not bear looking close at; but they nearly all have character in pose, and show that there is a good drawing underlying their shadowy similitude. One in particular, *Yellow and Grey* (43), a girl standing before a yellow background is charming in attitude and in the masterly indication of the figure.”²³

The spontaneous brushstrokes that gather at the model's waist evoke a powerful sensibility that the critic evidently appreciated.

²³*The Builder*, May 24, 1884. Reproduced in Myers p. 92.

When *Parasol: Red Note* (fig., 37) was mentioned in reviews, critics reacted strongly to the subject matter as well as to Whistler's audacity to frame and exhibit compositions that were no more designed than a mere preparatory sketch—including a depiction of a nude model holding a parasol, drawn on a narrow piece of brown paper measuring nearly 12 x 4 inches. One review went so far to say that “the drawing is execrable; see, for instance, *Parasol: Red Note*, in which the right leg is much longer than the left.” Frederick Wedmore commented, “Is there much suggestion of the real figure in the young woman dressed in a parasol and a red head-gear? It appears not a fortunate transcript, but an imperfect and graceless recollection.”²⁴ Whistler's ability to draw from life was attacked. The critic for the *Kensington News* wrote: “I don't admire the young lady who considers a parasol full dress costume, she is hardly classical.”²⁵ The girl was understood to be a contemporary model and the stylized drawing Whistler executed was condemned for its lack of finish and for not following the conventional classical technique. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Royal Academy's standard practice drew a clear distinction between complete works of art in which the entire surface of the image was worked with a consistent style and degree of finish, and preliminary sketches or studies. Whistler believed that the artist's only goal is to create beauty within a harmonious composition, and that the amount of finish that goes into its creation is irrelevant to its ultimate quality. The London audience would accept

²⁴ Wedmore, Frederic, *Academy*, May 24, 1884. Reproduced in Myers, Kenneth John. *Mr. Whistler's Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition*. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003) 95.

²⁵ *The Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, July 1, 1884. Reproduced in Myers, 20003, 95. The original work of art has been destroyed, but a reproduction from 1886 can offer the general design.

Whistler's experimental watercolor techniques, but the simplicity of *Parasol: Red Note* was too radical.

The "Ten O'Clock Lecture": An Artistic Manifesto

In the late nineteenth century, artists working in the fields of literature and the visual arts re-conceptualized the relationship between the verbal and the visual; artists and writers reactivated the traditional doctrine that privileged the faithful representation of nature in search of beauty.²⁶ By 1885 Whistler was ready for a more formal declaration of his pioneering efforts, which exceeded the attention he received in the courtroom or through exhibition reviews. Following the prototype of an international lecture tour designed for writers, such as Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain, Whistler redesigned the programming to suit his own perspective. On February 20, 1885, he delivered a lecture at Prince's Hall in London. As he had with his exhibitions and publications Whistler designed the form of the entire event: he issued 1,500 invitations to the lecture, coordinated an elaborate seating plan, and scheduled the performance to begin at 10:00 in the evening—late enough to accommodate his fashionable audience's taste for dining and cocktails beforehand.

Whistler's previous performances in galleries throughout London had served as preparatory dress rehearsals for this lecture at Prince's Hall. The artist spoke for nearly an hour, extolling many of his cherished beliefs with the goal of elucidating the artist's role

²⁶ See Marc Simpson, ed. *Like Breath on Glass: Whistler, Inness, and the Art of painting Softly*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), Sarah Burns, *The poetic mode in American Painting : George Fuller and Thomas Dewing*, (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Ph.D., 1979)

in pursuit of beauty. He asserted that the principal aim of art should be to create beauty through a coherent design, and that art should never be defined or restrained by morality. His eloquent delivery represented a culmination of the myriad themes conveyed through his solo installations during the previous decade.

Beauty is confounded with virtue, and, before a work of art it is asked:—
‘What good shall it do?’

Hence it is that nobility of action, in this life, is hopelessly linked with the merit of the work that portrays it; and thus the people have acquired the habit of looking, as who should say, not at a picture, but through it, at some human fact, that shall, or shall not, from a social point of view, better their mental or moral state.²⁷

Frustrated in general with the Critics’ misunderstanding and the general audience’s naïve approaches to understanding his art, Whistler devised a manifesto to proclaim his theories separate from the popularized notions of the aesthetic movement championed by Oscar Wilde.

In order to create a conceptual context for his art, Whistler movingly described how he created his Nocturne series of paintings. He was inspired by nature and, in his view, improved upon its darkest moments: Nature contains the elements, in colour and form, of all pictures, as the keyboard contains the notes of music . . .

To say to the painter, that Nature is to be taken as she is, is to say to the player, that he may sit on the piano.

That Nature is always right, is an assertion, artistically, as untrue, as it is one whose truth is taken for granted. Nature is very rarely right, to such an extent even, that it might almost be said that Nature is usually wrong: that is to say, the condition of things that shall bring about the perfection of harmony worthy of a picture is rare, and not common at all.²⁸

Whistler romantically envisioned the true artist as possessing the power of creation. Such an individual is rare and godlike, with the power to drive inspiration from nature.

²⁷James McNeill Whistler, *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. (London: Heinemann, 1890) 138.

²⁸Ibid, 143.

Throughout the entire lecture Whistler demonstrated his ability to synthesize complex notions of art from a range of international sources to develop his own unique vision autonomous from any national identity. On February 20, 1885, Whistler did not receive the standing ovation that he longed for; nonetheless, the event marked an important moment in his career and firmly established his vision of modernity. The published text was distributed throughout the British, French, and American press, disseminating Whistler's artistic intentions and declaring a new role for the modern artist. I am interested in how Whistler was able to communicate his message across national borders and reach such a wide-ranging audience by engaging with multiple literary sources. David Park Curry was the first to argue successfully how Whistler's art serves as "a nexus linking movements ordinarily distinct" at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹ It is my view that Whistler was able to expand his network of supporters and influence over younger artists through his coordinated exhibition programs throughout the 1880s and the *Ten O'Clock Lecture*.

The crafted prose reveals the calculated use of tradition to negotiate aesthetic issues within the social and economic confines of the international art market. Readers in Paris, London, and New York would have been able to identify and connect with different threads of recognizable imagery or poetic language. The theoretical background for Whistler's *Ten O'Clock Lecture* has been linked to the nineteenth-century French literary avant-garde in Paris, in particular the work of Théophile Gautier and Charles Baudelaire, as well as the British aesthetes Walter Pater and Algernon Swinburne; this network should be expanded to also include the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Gautier

²⁹David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler: Uneasy Pieces*. (Richmond: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2004) 164.

was among the first to draw an analogy between art and music and to celebrate fashion as art. Baudelaire promoted a cult of beauty and a science of the harmony of color. Pater's philosophy made an indelible impression on how Whistler articulated his artistic theories.³⁰ In Emerson's transcendental universe, nature plays a crucial role and is the sole source of truth.

For Emerson the natural world is charged with symbols of the divine; those individuals with sincere intentions, seeking harmony, can decipher their meaning. Similar to Henry David Thoreau, Emerson argued for the poet to nurture an original relationship to the universe, as opposed to a reductive one created from biographies and histories. Whistler also rejected the notion that other eras were artistically superior to the present, writing that art

is a goddess of dainty thought.
She is, withal, selfishly occupied with her own perfection
only—having no desire to teach—seeking and finding the
beautiful in all time.

In *Nature* Emerson hit upon a fundamental way of looking at life available equally to the poet and to the great poets of history—to connect the mind and the universe. “It is the true poet—the genius—who can pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things.”³¹ The beauty of nature reforms itself in the mind and not for barren

³⁰ Carolyn Williams, *Transfigured world: Walter Pater's aesthetic historicism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) 14. Williams insists that Pater's work must be approached “not as ideas or simple content, but as forms, as habits of organization, as relations through which figures are implicated with one another to compose narratives.” Form helps shift ‘content’ to ‘narratives.’ It distracts from the search of subject and instead emphasizes a sense of style.

³¹ Joel Porte, ed. *Nature*, Ralph Waldo Emerson Essays and Lectures (New York: Library of America, 1983) 22-23. Emerson's *Nature* is one of a trio of works, which articulate his philosophy of individualism and self-sufficiency, rooted in mankind's unity with nature. Chapter 3, *Beauty* follows and is drawn in contrast to Chapter 2 *Commodity*. For Emerson

contemplation, but for new creation. The creation of beauty is art. The production of a work of art throws a light upon the mystery of humanity. The poet may be “isolated among his contemporaries by truth and by his art, but this consolation in his pursuits, that they will draw all men sooner or later. For all men live by truth and stand in need of expression.” Perhaps the verb form, “expressing,” would be a better choice of word as it connotes the process of creation, not its finished product—which, for Emerson, constitutes the essence about poetry.³² Whistler reiterates many of the same goals for the modern artist. He strove to achieve a direct style of writing similar to Emerson’s and to craft a clear message confirming his reputation as a modern prophet. Whistler’s prose should be considered within the context of the nature-essay as a literary mode that combines observation and description of the scene with dreamy ruminations and poetic interpretive comments on the beauties of sights, sounds, and tactile sensations experienced in nature. Press coverage of the *Ten O’Clock Lecture* and the subsequent publication of the text successfully enhanced the perception of Whistler’s wit and artistic ideals in America.

humanity has material needs and ‘a nobler want of man is served by nature, namely the love of Beauty.’ Beauty for Emerson is an end in itself. The aspects of beauty are outlined as threefold: 1) the simple perception of natural forms is delight 2) The presence of a higher, namely, of the spiritual element is essential to its perfection 3) There is still another aspect under which the beauty of the world may be viewed, nameless as it becomes as object of the intellect. The intellectual and the active powers seem to succeed each other in man, and the exclusive activity of the one, generates the exclusive activity of the other.

³² Porte, 465.

New York, H. Wunderlich & Co., “Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes,” 1889

The aesthetic movement was a global cultural phenomenon that deconstructed the national artistic vision of earlier periods to establish an artistic style more widely accessible—an aim facilitated by the international market. Whistler’s influence in the United States was not felt forcefully until the 1880s when his works of art began to travel across the Atlantic more frequently. During the first twenty years of Whistler’s career a majority of Americans only knew of him through reports from the English press and reproductions of his paintings. When his paintings were first shown in New York they had already been completed up to a decade beforehand. Continuing to send works to exhibitions in Paris, Brussels, Munich, and following the successful press coverage of the *Arrangement in Yellow and White* exhibition in New York, Whistler began to plan an exhibition to correspond with his upcoming lecture tour of the United States. The project was postponed numerous times and finally cancelled, but in March 1889 Whistler orchestrated a presentation of *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* in New York. The exhibition was held at the H. Wunderlich & Co. gallery following Whistler’s design style of the 1884 and 1886 exhibitions at the Dowdeswell gallery in London. The American exhibition catalog listed sixty-two works—thirty watercolors, fifteen pastels, twelve oil paintings, and a few drawings. The event also featured two Nocturne paintings—*Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* and *Black and Gold: The Fire Wheel*. The light pink/flesh-tone color scheme and catalogue mimicked Whistler’s 1884 installation at the Dowdeswell Gallery. I argue that Whistler designed the exhibition with a specific didactic function to present his aesthetic taste to a new American audience.

During the thirty years following the Civil War, New York became preeminent as a cultural, commercial, and industrial center for the United States. Wealth in America shifted from the old, established families who had gained their status by colonial ancestry, to a new, moneyed elite—the self-made man. Beginning around 1840, railroads expanded rapidly, becoming a major part of the nation’s economy and, by 1886, the central force in this economic growth. Particularly in America, the accumulation of large fortunes became an act of patriotism. Collecting paintings was an integral part of the country’s new obsession with financial success, but the activity was justified as self-improving and even democratic. Writers of the period spoke often of the moral and monetary value of collecting. Money could buy culture, but it also brought social responsibility, as expressed strongly in various art journals and newspapers. In America at the time, accumulation of wealth and position required social justification, since it seemed to perpetuate a class system of privilege. The formation of the *nouveau riche* seemed to be creating an aristocracy of money. Writers defended an American’s right to live more prosperously than his neighbors because it was self-improving, and with hard work and ingenuity, anybody could achieve the same status. The rise of large art collections, and certainly the development of museums, parks, and other public facilities, arose directly because of the need to democratize privilege—or at least, make it useful to the masses.³³

³³ See James Livingston, *Origins of the Federal Reserve System: Money, Class, and Corporate Capitalism, 1890-1913*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1986).

In the 1870s and 1880s galleries and auction houses attempted to create a public image as milieus of refinement and culture, not simply as places of business.³⁴ The role of art dealers such as Samuel P. Avery and George A. Lucas changed from that of salesman to patron, encouraging artists to produce certain subjects or to work in a particular style. The practice of buying only contemporary art protected collectors from forgery. Since the 1840s, the major European art galleries maintained branches in New York. King's Handbook of New York City described how "the patrician mansions of New York secure their choicest pictures . . . and many a hamlet among the New-England hills or on the limitless Western prairies has been enriched by paintings from the magnificent centre of art." The galleries are "commodious and well-lighted, . . . only one flight from the street," and contained "the finest and most highly-trained aesthetic taste," the "crown jewels of each year's studios and salons."³⁵

The Whistler exhibition at the H. Wunderlich & Co. gallery depicted a unique aesthetic through the artistic arrangement of the works of art and overall harmonious design of the gallery. For the *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* exhibition, the works of art were all hung in plain frames at eye level on a wall covered in a light pink silk chosen by gallery manger E. G. Kennedy under Whistler's direction.³⁶ Whistler's signature velarium, in a similar pink hue, was added to control the lighting, while carefully placed tables displayed vases with flowers.³⁷ Without the artist present, it was the printed

³⁴ Henry J. Duffy, *New York City Collections: 1865-1895*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers State University of New Jersey, 2001)16.

³⁵ Duffy, 32.

³⁶ University of Glasgow Database Letter 07172, David A. Kennedy to James McNeill Whistler 18 March 1889, F1901.68

³⁷ *Evening Sunday*, New York March 16, 1889, University of Glasgow James McNeill Whistler Press Clippings, Vol. 10, See also, Bendix, Deanna M. *Diabolical Designs*,

catalogues—prefaced by *L'Envoie*, which originally appeared in 1884—that guided the visitors through the layout.

A majority of the work had already been exhibited in London and other venues before arriving in New York, but on the whole this was the largest exhibition of Whistler's contemporary work to date. Whistler had visited northern France in 1885 and completed the watercolor *Variations in Violet and Grey—Market Place, Dieppe* (fig., 38). First exhibited in London at the Dowdeswell Gallery in 1886, the watercolor was sent to Paris in 1887, to Munich in 1888, and was listed in the 1889 catalogue as *Blue and Violet—The Market Dieppe*.³⁸ The intricate details of the composition reflect Whistler's mastery over the unconventional wet-on-wet watercolor techniques he pioneered only a few years before. Without any underdrawing, the architectural details and sky are drawn with fine brushstrokes in diluted pigments so faint that the perspective of the composition is created solely from slight variations and contrasts of hues. Under close study, the subtle contrasts of market stalls and people begin emerge from the surface of the paper. When the work was exhibited in Paris, Camille Pissarro, who was investigating similar subjects in his own work, wrote, "[Whistler's] little sketches show fine draftsmanship and again Whistler is very artistic; he is a showman, but nevertheless an artist."³⁹ In New York, the critic writing for the *Evening Sun* described "a confused mass of blotches, single strokes of the brush, spots but little more than microscopic, and

Paintings, Interiors, and Exhibitions of James McNeill Whistler. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) 245-246.

³⁸ MacDonald, 385.

³⁹ Camille Pissarro writing to Lucien Pissarro May 15, 1887, Reproduced in MacDonald, 385.

these resolve into the busy industries of a market.”⁴⁰ Though praised in Paris and New York the watercolor was apparently not sold until 1891.

Overall, the New York critics and public found the smaller works of art displayed in *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* to be accessible and pleasing compared to the abstract and infamous *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, also on display. One critic described the expectation of the exhibition this way: “[A]ll the world to-day has heard something of Mr. Whistler, and all the world knows much more about his personality than about his work.” A majority of the reviews reprinted prose from *L’Envoie*, praised both the watercolors and pastels, and raved about the design while declaring Whistler an American artist. When referring to the watercolors, another critic commented, “this exhibition is not one which demands extended notice. One the whole it is pleasant to see, and a creditable exemplification of the level which American art has reached in this particular medium.”⁴¹

Whistler made the decision to send fifteen pastels to the New York exhibition—the most he had exhibited at one time since the 1881 *Venice Pastels* exhibition. In my view, this move was an example of Whistler’s understanding of the art market in New York. With the ferment in artistic activity during the late nineteenth century and the increasing popularity of pastel, works in this medium began to appear with greater frequency at New York auction sales and dealers. Whistler’s influence on American artists had been acknowledged during the first exhibition of the Society of

⁴⁰ Glasgow University Library, James McNeill Whistler Special Collections Press Clippings, Vol. 10, p. 85.

⁴¹ James McNeill Whistler, *Notes, Harmonies, Nocturnes*, (New York: H. Wunderlich & Company, 1889), EN.48 W96.w57 Frick Art Reference Library Rare Books. Catalogue and Newspaper Clippings.

Painters in Pastel in 1884.⁴² Although he was often mislabeled an impressionist by critics, Whistler's soft color harmonies and economy of line offered an alternative to the exuberance of French impressionism. *Variations in Violet and Rose*, listed as *Pink and Violet* in the 1889 exhibition catalogue, depicts a scantily draped model standing with her head turned in profile (fig., 39). The figure is first outlined in black chalk; Whistler then applied a range of colors of varying amounts to create a transparent gown. Touches of deep plum pink, light pink, beige-toned pink, and purplish blue engulf the female body while areas of the brown paper are left bare. Unlike other artists working in pastel, Whistler did not use fixative, so the surface of the composition is extremely fragile and fresh. The critic for the *New York Herald* reported that there were three studies of women; of these, *Pink and Violet* was "one of remarkable grace . . . a young woman, with her form beautifully shown through a semi-transparent robe, leaning on a balustrade."⁴³ Henry Havemeyer visited the H. Wunderlich & Co.'s installation and selected three watercolors, and *Pink and Violet*, for his collection. Louisine Havemeyer was already a collector of Whistler's pastels, including *Palace: White and Pink*, which the couple purchased from the *Venice Pastels* exhibition at the Fine Art Society.

The managers at H. Wunderlich & Co. were disappointed with the sales of the exhibition and most of the smaller works were sent back to the artist; however, Whistler was able to connect with several Americans who would become leading collectors of his work. The Havemeyers continued to show interest in Whistler's watercolors and pastels.

⁴² Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, 'The Painters in Pastel' *New York Times* (March 17 1884) 5. See Doreen Bolger, *American Pastels in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1889).

⁴³ University of Glasgow, James McNeill Whistler Special Collections Press Clippings. Vol. 10, 87.

Howard Mansfield, who at the time had amassed one of the comprehensive collections of Whistler prints, acquired works directly from the H. Wunderlich gallery. The well-known collector of impressionist art, Harris Whittemore, also purchased works. Print collector Charles Lang Freer, who will become one of Whistler's most important patrons, purchased his first watercolor by Whistler. *Grey and Silver: The Mersey* (fig., 40). David Park Curry has pointed out that Freer's acquisition of this work grew out of his interest in Whistler's *Venice Set* etchings, which he had purchased in 1887. The young collector's print-collecting methods reflected his appreciation for the printmaking process and the surface of each print—detecting the artist's changes to the plate as he pulled proofs and the nuances of the inking process.⁴⁴ The sparse composition of *Grey and Silver: The Mersey* captured the connoisseur's eye, as if the artist himself had trained him. The slightest application of a few drops of pigment made the water appear to almost throb on the surface of the watercolor. In 1889 Freer was conservative in his collecting goals because of his financial resources. He placed value in focusing on the best examples of Whistler's prints and drawings instead of investing solely in one painting. In the following chapters I will discuss how this relationship changed when Freer retires at the age of forty-five and developed a collection to secure Whistler's legacy in the United States.

By reconsidering Whistler's exhibition practices within the context of the international art market it becomes clear that his actions in London helped guide the development of his work and manner of installation in the United States. After a series of exhibitions between 1873-1883, and the performance of his *Ten O'Clock Lecture* in

⁴⁴ David Park Curry. *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art*. (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art, 1987) 14.

1885, Whistler recognized how these celebrated events could translate his artistic statements to a wider audience. As Whistler's ambition drew so did his attention to the New York art world. The works he produced and exhibited between 1884-1889 held a didactic function in articulating his own theory of art that could then be displayed and marketed across the Atlantic.

Chapter 4:

James McNeill Whistler's Return to Paris in the 1890s

The efforts Whistler made to cultivate a reputation in Europe and America came to fruition in the early 1890s. After almost a decade of sending pictures to the Salon in Paris and exhibitions in Dublin, Munich, Brussels, Amsterdam, as well as coordinating traveling one-man exhibitions across America, Whistler was showered with honors throughout Europe and the United States. In 1888 he received the award of a first-class medal in Munich and the Cross of Saint Michael of Bavaria, followed by a gold medal in Amsterdam in 1889, a gold medal at the International Exhibition in Paris, and the honor of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur that same year. Encouraged by a network of art critics and poets in Paris, drawn from contacts he made through his friendship with Théodore Duret and Stéphane Mallarmé, Whistler moved to Paris with his wife Beatrix in 1892. The community Whistler developed was receptive and supportive of his work—so supportive, in fact, that in November 1891 the French state purchased *Arrangement in Gray and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother*. With the publication and subsequent distribution of Whistler's *Ten O'Clock Lecture* (in both English and French), the installation of *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* at H. Wunderlich and Co. gallery in 1889, and a major representation of his work at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago interest in Whistler's paintings soared in the United States.¹ By 1894 the largest group of collectors

¹ Barbara Weinberg, “When to-day we look for ‘American Art’ we find it mainly in Paris: The Training of American Painters in France and the Influence of French Art on

buying Whistler's art were American. This period is crucial to understanding how the artist maneuvered between international art markets to secure his legacy within the history of art. I argue that close examination of the pastel drawings, particularly the drawings of nude or draped models completed between 1885 and 1894, offers insights into this brief historical period to create a new picture of how Whistler evolved his exhibition practices to facilitate the development of his reputation as a progressive artist.

The nude subject inspired invigorating debates concerning the moral implications of how to depict a female model across national boundaries within the French and British art markets. Nineteenth-century French painters returned to the tradition of nude genre in distinct ways to present their own vision of modernity. Édouard Manet exploited the classical genre of the female nude in a new and challenging manner in 1863 with the submission of the *Olympia* to the Salon.² T.J. Clark argues that Manet's bold presentation

American Painting." in *America: The New World in 19th-Century Painting*, edited by Stephen Kojan, (New York: Prestel, 1999) 220-225, See also, Grischka Petri, *Arrangement in Business: The Art Markets and the Career of James McNeill Whistler*. (Hildesheim: Olms, 2011), 405-487. Collectors in New York, Philadelphia, and throughout the United States, developed a pronounced interest in the French paintings in the 1880s. As Barbara Weinberg explains, by 1886 American collectors spent such vast sums of money on French works of art that the French government investigated the situation. University of Glasgow Correspondence Database No. 07231, Edward Guthrie Kennedy to James McNeill Whistler, February 20, 1894. Within this letter he also comments, "Have any Parisians bought your pictures? The English & Americans are the picture buyers. Paris may be a good place to live, but that is all. All the French painters look to America for support, and many receive it who don't deserve it I admit, yet all look there for appreciation and shall I say, profit."

² Carol Armstrong, *Manet Manette*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). Armstrong situates Manet's *Olympia* (1863) as an appropriation of the classical nude within the Baudelairean dialectic of femininity. Femininity as costume (with nudity counting as a type of covering in these cases) and the reading of accessories as the pleasure point of the paintings' illusions, because they emphasize the artificiality of painting as a construct. Armstrong locates the painting away from a reading of class and

of a nude prostitute reflects the disintegrating of genre—the achievement of the painting is that it depicts details of the model’s particular sexulaity instead of a general one.³ Here is it is necessary to understand the nude genre as a construction which existed to reconcile propriety and sexual pleasure. Exhibiting in the Salon des Refusés in Paris the same year Whistler’s interest in the nude genre also began to flourish while working in London throughout the 1860s. Returning to the subject in the 1880s and 1890s, with such works as *Parasol: Red Note* (fig., 37), Whistler stretched notions of possession and desire associated with the classical nude subject. In the 1880s with the rise of the new moralism and the formation of social purity organizations in England, Whistler’s depictions of the nude were subject to the debates of moral responsibility in high art that consumed the press. The pastel drawings in particular exemplify the collaborative effort between Whistler and his wife Beatrix, as well as Stéphane Mallarmé, to produce some of the most provocative compositions of female models made during his career. It is precisely Whistler’s experimentation within his drawing practice that interests me. Similar to his etching practice, Whistler’s ambition and determination to present his own style or mark on the art historical tradition lead to some of his most compelling compositions.

In the last decades of Whistler’s life he produced multiple drawings and paintings of the female nude. He also mentioned his progress in his correspondence with fellow

the object of the gaze toward a feminist understanding of them as products of the studio, where the artist’s enterprise is dedicated to modernity based on multiplying the ambiguities of personhood rather than smoothing them over. Her reading of the images insists upon their multiformity as pictorial strategies constantly oscillating between painter and model, the use of color and the achieved illusion.

³ TJ Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 128.

artists and privileged patron Charles Lang Freer. Monica Kjellman-Chapin has argued that Whistler regarded these paintings as important elements in the project of his legacy and intended them to lay claim to the canonical statues within the history of art that had eluded him.⁴ Bailey van Hook called into question Whistler's age, suggesting the artist's late nudes were "rather unambitious works" and adds that the paintings represent "a kind of nostalgic longing for youth by an aging artist."⁵ Both scholars suggest a psychological and autobiographic value of the subject and the overworked or tortured, surfaces of the paintings. I believe the pastel drawings offer new insights—they are the sum of actions that demonstrate control and balance rather than anxiety and hesitation.

Between 1874 and 1900, approximately fifty of the pastels that portrayed female models were exhibited and about twenty were sold directly from the studio. When shown in London, critical reactions disparaged the drawings—both the immoral subject of the nude female and the radical treatment of the medium lead the Victorian audience to discredit this work. In 1885 Whistler exhibited *Note in Violet and Green* exhibited at the Society of British Artists, underdrawing reveals that he created and signed the work in the 1870s and then returned to the composition before the exhibition.⁶ (fig., 41) The outline of the earlier pale blue geometric butterfly signature is visible at the upper left, parallel with the model's shoulder. Before the exhibition Whistler reworked the

⁴Monica Kjellman-Chapin, "Framing the Nudes", Lee Glazer, eds. *James McNeill Whistler in context : essays from the Whistler Centenary Symposium, University of Glasgow, 2003* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2008) 20.

⁵Bailey van Hook, *Angels of Art: Women and Art in American Society, 1876-1914* (University Park, Penn State University Press, 1996) 164.

⁶David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1984) 243.

composition and re-signed the pastel with a more vibrant signature. A richly colored gray-pink and periwinkle butterfly, at the bottom left of the composition, balances the model's voluptuous pale green and brilliant blue draperies. The nature of the pastel medium allowed Whistler to begin a composition, leave it, and return to it at a later date. Assigning a single date to each drawing can be a difficult task when trying to create a sequence of developments defining Whistler's artistic ideas within the pastel medium; however, the artist's manipulation of color throughout a selection of the exhibited drawings helps to identify a facet of his creative process.

Throughout the 1890s, Whistler continued to send his unsold pastel drawings of Venice to exhibitions in London, Paris, Brussels, Munich, and New York. He also began to include pastel drawings of nude models. After 1885 Whistler exhibited pastel drawings in London sporadically and he began to focus a majority of his attention on the art markets in Paris and New York. The technically complex compositions require a connoisseur with a delicately tuned aesthetic sensibility that the artist sought to find. The images strongly resonated with the artist's French literary circles and American collectors at the turn of the century. At the first exhibition of the Society of Painters in Pastel, held in New York in 1884, art critic Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer compared Whistler's pastel drawings to that of Barbizon school painter Jean-François Millet, adding, "Mr. Whistler gave [the medium of pastel a] fresh impulse and popularity with his exquisite, subtle, yet freely handled and brilliantly colored" drawings.⁷ As mentioned in chapter three, fifteen pastel drawings were included within the New York exhibition

⁷Marianna Griswold van Rensselaer, "American Painters in Pastel," *Century*, vol. 29 (December 1884) 207.

Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes at H. Wunderlich & Co. gallery. Henry Havemeyer purchased *Pink and Violet* (fig., 39) from H. Wunderlich & Co. to add to his already substantial Whistler collection and after visiting the New York exhibition Charles Lang Freer purchased his first pastel drawing from Whistler, *Harmony in Blue and Violet* (fig., 41), during a studio visit the following year.

Created in collaboration with Beatrix, the production of drawings and lithographs of the female models increased significantly in the 1890s. To decipher the meaning of these works, or the appeal they offered to American collectors, it is imperative to consider the issues surrounding the environment of Whistler's studio and his return to Paris. Through an association with Stéphane Mallarmé—particularly in respect to their shared contempt for the conventions of artistic form (be it the written word or the drawn line)—I argue Whistler strived to push the boundaries of aesthetic appreciation.⁸ The *Ten O'Clock* lecture brought Whistler's artistic ideals to Mallarmé's attention. Both artists recognized the compatability of their visions, with Mallarmé's poems interpreting the female form on stage and Whistler's devotion to the female form in his drawing practice.

⁸ Grischka Petri, *Arrangement in Business: The Art Market and the Career of James McNeill Whistler* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag, 2011), p. 450-455. See also, Stratis, Harriet K. and Martha Tedeschi, eds. *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler*. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1998), p. 104-110. Grischka Petri observes an increasing aesthetic and philosophical overlap between both Whistler's and Mallarmé's theories and practice. Beginning with the *Ten O'Clock Lecture* performed on February 20, 1885 the text of Whistler's lecture was published in English in London and New York following the debut. Mallarmé translated the text to French to be pulished in *La Revue indépendante* in 1888. In his own work Mallarmé subscribed a subtle form to explore the essence of reality by engaging with nature and the world around him as sources for metaphors within his poetry.

The pastel drawings uniquely exemplify Whistler's belief that art should be valued solely by its success in presenting a coherent and harmonized composition. The thin refinement of Whistler's, which appear as if they are pencil markings and the intricate texture he developed on the surfaces of the paper set his work apart from his British, French, and American contemporary artists.⁹ Whistler's handling of the pastel crayon—both in terms of eliminating a strong fixative to set the final drawing and the soft blending of the pastel crayons—offers a unique blurring of the lines depicting the translucent drapery and contours of the body. Vision and touch are simultaneously involved in Whistler's practice of drawing. While studying the models in the studio the rough brown paper provided a texture which allowed Whistler to apply the friable pastel crayon to the surface in a range of ways—even pressing the color into the fibers with his own fingers. I argue the delicate surfaces of the drawings elicit a reaction for both the artist and the viewer by translating a novel language of calligraphic strokes and distinct

⁹ See Carol Armstrong, "Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body", in *The Female Body in Western Culture, Contemporary Perspectives*, ed, Susan Rubin Suleiman . (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) and Hauptman, Jodi, and Starr Figura. *Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon*. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2005). Both Edgar Degas and Odilon Redon were French artists contemporary of Whistler who each engaged with the pastel medium. Degas' drawing technique incorporated a layering of the pastel crayon adhered with fixative and resembled sculpture. Redon's subjects were of a psychological nature that pushed the boundaries of representation and fantasy. See also, Staley, Allen. *The New Painting of the 1860s: Between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Aesthetic Movement*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). Albert Moore taught Whistler how to create pastel sketches in preparation for large paintings. At the end of his Moore created a series of pastel drawings in coorespondence to his paintings. See also, Bolger, Doreen, ed., with Marjorie Shelley *American Pastels in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1989), William Merritt Chase in particular embodied the quintessential characteristics of American Impressionist pastel drawings: a colorful palette, an energetic drawn line, and an application of the pastel crayon similar to oil painting.

markings. Whistler unified classical motifs of beauty with the female form—bypassing the traditional notions and verging on abstraction—to preserve the integrity of the figure. By observing and portraying young models Whistler strove endlessly, in a range of media, to claim the historic, artistic, and imaginary theme of the female form. The spaces between the drawn contours of the body and the marks of color create a characteristic that is uniquely recognizable in Whistler's work.

International Reputation and Artistic Legacy

In the 1860s Whistler was identified on both sides of the channel with the French school of Realism; As President of the Society of British Artists in 1886 he encouraged French artists to exhibit in London. Whistler's strategies to establish an international reputation also involved sending full-length portraits to the large venues, such as the Salon in Paris, while presenting small paintings and drawings in progressive art galleries in London and New York. This pattern changed radically in London on March 21, 1892, when Whistler installed an exhibition titled *Nocturnes, Marines, and Chevalet Pieces* at the Goupil Gallery on Bond Street. Recognition of Whistler's artistic merit with the purchase of *Arrangement in Gray and Black: Portrait of the Painter's Mother* in France facilitated recognition in Britain and the presentation of the artist's first retrospective exhibition.

Unlike Whistler's previous exhibitions, the gallery was not designed in the artist's signature color scheme; instead, Whistler selected forty-three oil paintings spanning more than thirty years of his career and hung them on pale walls. Writing the Goupil Gallery

dealer David Croal Thomson from Paris Whistler secured all of the loans from private collections himself and gave specific instructions for the event,

Date - Here I can scarcely help you - I have done what I could - even to writing over to America for the picture of "Wapping" - but the people are so long in answering and so difficult about lending -

It would I think myself perhaps not so much matter after all as to number of works - on the whole it is not proposed that there should be other than a small collection - hung in groups in the large Gallery - more or less in the centres of the four walls - I think you might go yourself and see Mr. Alexander- (Aubrey House) and ask him if, now that the large portrait of his daughter is cleaned and varnished, he will not be pleased to let you have it for the short space of four weeks - so that the people may see it in its splendid condition - and propose that he himself would like to see it there, now that it is so much envied - Of course get his Nocturne—

By the way I think it would be most effective if the Exhibition were announced as of only three weeks duration - It is much more smart and select - and rare -¹⁰

Only open for three weeks, the exhibition *Nocturnes, Marines and Chevalet Pieces* presented a testament to Whistler's successful career and, I argue, was designed as a pronouncement of the legacy the artist desired. Overall, the majority of the works were *Nocturnes* landscape paintings, highlighting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, and portraits of women in society, including *Harmony in Pink and Grey: Portrait of Lady Meux* (the companion portrait to *Arrangement in Black, No. 5: Portrait of Lady Meux* discussed in chapter three). Hung in groups centered on the gallery walls, the large paintings created an impression of grandeur; their imposing presence bespoke Whistler's calculated quest for praise and prestige.

¹⁰ University of Glasgow Correspondence Database No. 08219, James McNeill Whistler to David Croal Thomson, February 20, 1892.

By 1892 Whistler's stature was well established in London. His work had been purchased for national collections and he had a number of wealthy patrons. The Goupil Gallery installation was a stark contrast to the more than one dozen exhibition designs he had presented for the Fine Art Society, Dowdeswell, H. Wunderlich & Co., and the Society of British Artists. Whistler was no longer striving to increase the value of his work with a clear mission. Instead, the installation inspired a sense of achievement and repose. Whistler's showmanship and familiar cutting wit, however, was preserved in the catalog. He added the following quote from the *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial to the preface, "I do not know when so much amusement has been afforded to the British public as by Mr. Whistler's pictures. –Speech of the Attorney-General of England, Westminster, November 16, 1878." Following the format Whistler created in 1883 for the *Arrangement in White and Yellow* exhibition at the Fine Art Society he continued to provoke his audience by publishing past reviews that criticized his work, along with listing the titles and owners of each painting. . At the very end of the catalog Whistler signed the following passage with his butterfly signature:

MORAL: Modern British (!) art will now be represented in the National Gallery of Luxembourg by one of the finest paintings due to the brush of an *English artist* (!), namely Mr. Whistler's portrait of his mother.

Presenting a selection of his great paintings on Bond Street, and going so as far to self-identify as an "English artist," Whistler forcefully inserted himself into the canon of nineteenth-century British modern art, defying the convention of the mainstream British art world. The gallery was immensely crowded during the exhibition's run and the

attention became impetus for a sharp rise in the prices of Whistler's work. Despite the artist's efforts honors from British institutions still eluded him. As the demand of the work rose (particularly his *Nocturne* paintings from the 1870s), many London collectors began to sell their works marking the end of his pursuit of acceptance in the British art world.

Scandalous Subjects in Victorian London

Whistler's actions in the 1880s reveal the extent to which his art was subject to the social and economic demands of the art market in Paris, London, and New York. Beginning in the 1890s the artist revised his exhibition practices and strategies to attract international patrons. As I discussed in chapter two, in 1881, Whistler created an avant-garde exhibition in the London art world by presenting the *Venice Pastels* exhibition at the Fine Art Society. Rarely exhibited in London, Whistler challenged the conventions associated with exhibition design and the medium of pastel by hanging the entire front room of the Fine Art Society with only pastel drawings. Installed in the similar manner as oil paintings the presentation of the drawings challenged the conventions of display and how to view the pastel medium. Having generated a remarkable amount of attention in the press, the pastel drawings sold better at the close of the exhibition than did etchings of the same subject matter. The reviews, however, revealed that art critics were uncertain about how to evaluate the pastel medium—the terms “pastel,” “chalk,” and “crayon” were used interchangeably without a clear sense of the criteria to judge the compositions. Whistler

was praised for offering an entirely new method for viewing the drawings, but the compositions were attacked for remaining unfinished even though they were framed on the wall.¹¹ One critic wrote, “in spite of the declaration made many seasons ago that Venice had no longer power to charm, nor the Venetians either, we find ourselves once more standing amid the glories of that enchanted city as presented by the enchanting pencil of Whistler.”¹² Surveying period art reviews it is clear that nineteenth-century British art patrons and critics were hesitant to accept the medium as an established genre of art even though Whistler’s competitors evoked an overwhelming response.¹³ This not only established a new path for the reception of Whistler’s work, but also for the pastel medium in late nineteenth-century London

Whistler left his mark again when he submitted a series of nude pastel drawings to the annual Society of British Artists exhibition in 1885. At the time the display of the female nude subject within London art institutions was heavily debated within academic art circles and the press. Sexuality, censorship, and morality were all issues projected onto the nude genre. Concerns ranged from questions regarding the morality (or immorality) of presenting subjects to the public to the economic and social consequences

¹¹ Emma Hermens, “A Note on Whistler’s Venetian Pastels: Bright Beauty—Merry Lightness and Daintiness” pp. 43, in Emma Hermens, Joanna Meacock, and Grischka Petri, eds. *Connecting Whistler: Essays in Honor of Margaret MacDonald*. (Online publication, Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2010)

¹² *The Court Journal*, February 12, 1881. University of Glasgow Press Clippings 15:39.

¹³ Frederick Wedmore. *The Academy: A Weekly Review of Literature, Science, and Art*. vol. 19, no. 459: 24. Critic Frederick Wedmore declared that the artist’s genius was proven by “the knowledge of what to select, of what to reject, and then of what to express with especial summariness of treatment has seldom been shown so completely. In his best work here Mr. Whistler has been quite unerring; there is unity in its form beginning to end.”

of male artists employing young female models in the studio. Views were circulated through the press in magazine articles, reviews of the Royal Academy and the Grosvenor Gallery, and in correspondence columns. Even *Punch* commented on the material (fig., 42). To counteract the immortality found in public a group known as the Purity Campaigners formed with the aim of ridding Victorian Britain of sexual corruption.¹⁴ By including the drawings, and hanging them as painting at the Society of British Artists, Whistler made the clear decision to take the anti-philistine battle to the British art world. In October 1885, painter and Royal Academy member John Calcott Horsley supported the Purity Campaigners at a church congress in Portsmouth. His lecture, entitled *Religion and Art*, posed the question, “Is not clothedness a distinct type and feature of our Christian faith? All art representations of nakedness are out of harmony with it.”¹⁵ He continued to claim that women who modeled nude lose “all that is pure and lovely in their womanhood.”

¹⁴ See, Alison Smith, *The Victorian Nude: Sexuality, Morality, and Art*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). The Victorian art scene seemed at odds with the emergence of modernism in Europe. Smith examines how cultural production within Victorian society has particular economic and social overtones in the specific Victorian context, art emerged from and was ideologically bound up with the supremacy of the industrial bourgeoisie. Smith outlines “how the nude became one of the most prestigious categories within Victorian high art, yet also aroused the most bitter disputes.”(2) Documenting three phases: the first, from 1837 through to 1849 under the moral view of art, the second, from the 1860s and 1870s under the influence of art brought by popular exhibitions of French neoclassicism in England, and finally revealing a backlash in the 1880s with the rise of the new moralism and the formation of social purity organization in an England of growing poverty and economic decline.

¹⁵ John Calcott Horsley. *Recollections of a Royal Academician*. (London: 1903) 52. See also, Lynne Bell, *Fact and Fiction: James McNeill Whistler's Critical Reputation In England, 1880-1892*. (Phd. Dissertation, University of East Anglia, 1987) 249-253.

When exhibiting *Note in Violet and Green* at the Society of British Artists in 1885, Whistler added the label “*Horsley soit qui mal y pense*”—the artist’s pun on the Anglo-Norman chivalric motto “*Honi soit qui mal y pense*” (“Evil to him who evil thinks”). Whistler was pressured to remove the label at the beginning of the exhibition. Nonetheless, the label was on display for enough time for the press to spread the news. The *Pall Mall Gazette* responded by declaring Whistler’s action “an indignant protest against the idea that there is any immorality in the nude.”¹⁶ In 1890 the artist later remarked, “Art certainly requires ‘no indignant protest’ against the unseemliness of senility. ‘Horsley soit qui mal y pense’ is meanwhile a sweet sentiment—why more—and why morality?”¹⁷

Note in Violet and Green expanded upon the aesthetic beliefs Whistler outlined in his *Ten O’Clock Lecture*: namely, opposing the Victorian notion that art had a moral or social function. Labeling the work was an act of defiance towards British critics and the comment sparked controversy—not only for the drawing’s lack of finish but also for what was described as a disturbing rendering of a nude model.. Critic Frederick Wedmore defended both the artist (against charges of impropriety) and the artist’s talent (against the unfavorable remarks on his drawing technique) in the medium with a favorable description of the three pastel drawings on display at the Society of British Artists. Commenting on *Note in Violet and Green* as part of a group of “very well chosen, and very well placed models, lightly draped and drawn with a delicate vision of what it

¹⁶ *Pall Mall Gazette*, December 10, 1885

¹⁷ James McNeill Whistler. *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*. (London: Heinemann, 1890) 195.

was most graceful to include and most wise to omit.”¹⁸ In spite of Whistler’s best efforts to cause controversy and inspire admiration, the overwhelming response to the works in London remained negative.

Artistic Collaboration in Paris, 1888-1894

At the urging of Stéphane Mallarmé, James McNeill Whistler and his wife Beatrix Whistler moved to Paris in 1892, relocating to a home on the Left Bank not far from the Louvre. Upon arrival in Paris, Beatrix transformed Whistler’s life by becoming a true partner for his artistic ambitions—she worked with him in the studio, promoted the sale of his works of art, and met the domestic needs of their life together. Beatrix, the second daughter of sculptor John Birnie Philip, was an artist and designer in her own right. After marrying architect E. W. Godwin in 1876, Godwin commissioned Whistler to paint her portrait in 1884. Resulting in *Harmony in Red: Lamplight*, under the glare of a gaslight Beatrix posed in a red cloak while Whistler captured the details of her expression and lively personality with noticeable affection. After Godwin’s death in 1886 Whistler reached out to Beatrix; the couple married in 1888. Affectionately referring to her as “Trixie” or “Chickie” Whistler taught her how to etch while on their honeymoon in 1888.¹⁹ They worked alongside each other until Beatrix’s death in 1896. As a group, the lithographs of Beatrix and sister-in-laws Ethel and Rosalind Philip from the 1890s, including *La Robe Rouge*, *The Duet*, *The Sisters*, *Gants de Suède* and *The Medici Collar*,

¹⁸ University of Glasgow Whistler Press Clippings Vol. 6, p. 39.

¹⁹ Galassi, Susan Grace, Margaret MacDonald, and Aileen Ribeiro. *Whistler, Women and Fashion*, (London: Yale University Press, 2003)189.

illustrate the intimate dialogue between husband and wife while offering a new dynamic approach to lithography and a new dimension to his drawing technique.

Whistler's renewed interest in drawing and lithography in the 1890s has been linked to Beatrix's encouragement.²⁰ Printer Thomas Way recalled that, "Mrs. Whistler showed the very greatest interest in the matter, as though she felt it offered [her husband] a field where he might surpass his reputation in any other of his works."²¹ The nature of the medium allowed Whistler to sketch on transfer sheets in Paris that would then be printed by Way in London. Surviving correspondence details discussions between Whistler and Way that document the range of papers used to experiment during the printing process. In an 1894 letter to Way, Whistler expresses his delight with a group of proofs, including a portrait of Beatrix entitled *La Robe Rouge* (fig., 43),

Surely you must feel with me that there is something about the proofs that is more fascinating than what we obtained from the other paper. In the first place they are much more like absolute drawings on the stone itself direct....²²

The image for *La Robe Rouge* was drawn during the evening of September 22, 1894. Doctor William Whistler, the artist's brother, was visiting Paris at that time to examine Beatrix and to confirm the couple's worst fears; the composition documents the

²⁰ Pamela Robertson, *Beauty and the Butterfly: Whistler's Depictionsof Women, Pastels, Ertchings and Lithographs*(Glasgow: University of Glasgow Hunterian Art Gallery, 2003) 52.

²¹Thomas Way, *Memories of James McNeill Whistler, The Artist*, (New York: John Lane, 1912) 89-90.

²² University of Glasgow Whistler Coorespondence Letter 09574, James McNeill Whistler to Thomas Way.

moments after Beatrix was diagnosed with cancer.²³ Through the intricate documentation of Whistler's lithographic printing process insights into his drawing practice can be elucidated. Similar to his etching practice, Whistler promoted the brevity of line and tonal effects to evoke a pure instrument of emotion for the viewer. I have argued that for Whistler working with a needle on a copper plate emulated the action of a pencil. It is imperative to also recognize that the pressure exerted to create the deep groves for the acid to deposit, requires an action similar to sculpting metal. Lithography, on the other hand, is not an intaglio printing technique; the image is not incised into a surface of the stone. The oils of the crayon are directly translated to the lithographic stone from the transfer paper. The tonal range and linear clarity of Whistler's lithographic printed line offers a unique sensuous character.²⁴ Without a clear narrative—or identification of the

²³ University of Glasgow Whistler Coorespondence Letter 07423, James McNeill Whistler to Thomas Way.

²⁴ Richard Shiff, "Cezanne's physicality: the politics of touch" in *The Language of art history* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 140. Using the work of Paul Cézanne Richard Shiff has examined qualities of touch—located objective facts and subjective responses within the general dynamics of surface, picture, plane and depth—to transform the self expression of modern art is transformed by how the material substance is applied to the surface. "Cezanne's painting exhibits a feature that conventionally allows a viewer to coordinate touch with vision—namely, a repetitive pattern of marks that, when varied in color, can be perceived as facets of a turning surface (comprehended ultimately by touch)." Cezanne develops visual puns created by the sense of touch as well as the general principle of analogy or things made to look like another within his paintings. The works continue to provoke the viewer because within the subtle placement of objects the discourse of the senses fails to correspond to the preferred modes of critical evaluation. I argue in similar manner Whistler's drawn line within his lithographs were uniquely his own. Edouard Manet and Paul Cezanne also experiemented with the medium, but the results were profoundly different. Unlike Manet and Cezanne, Whistler did not reproduce imagery from his paintings. Working primarily with black ink, for Whistler the lithographic line is distinct from the painted or drawn pastel line. He did not follow the contours of the body—instead through a series of brief markings and shading he captured an essential part of each image to offer a suggestion of form.

sitter—the viewer responds to the subtle forms by appreciating the sense of harmony within the composition.

Beatrix's role as collaborator, in Whistler's personal and professional life, was singular. In *La Robe Rouge* this sentiment is communicated through Whistler's ability to elicit a deep sense of intimacy from the act of drawing. Beatrix reclines on a sofa in the drawing room while Whistler captures an ephemeral impression of his wife in deep thought. Resting her head on a pillow, and her hands clasped at her waist, the volume and fullness of Beatrix's body emerges through a series of textured zigzag strokes drawn on a diagonal. Subtle tonalities due to varying degrees of pressure in Whistler's hand convey a sense of urgency.

As the couple struggled with Beatrix's diagnosis friends and family, especially Ethel Birnie Philip and Stéphane Mallarmé, offered support to alleviate the stress and pain of the situation. *The Duet* (fig., 44) and *The Sisters* (fig., 45) can be deciphered as glimpses of Whistler's intimate circle from this period. As early as 1859 Whistler began to combine domestic scenes with the pastime of listening to music. Reprising this theme in 1894 Beatrix and Ethel are drawn seated next to one another playing the family's piano in *The Duet*. An intimate scene of sisters playing music together is illuminated from a small lamp above the piano. Dark shadows and their long gowns merge the sisters' bodies—emulating an effect similar to the combined notes within a musical ensemble. Using a stump Whistler rubbed the crayon to create the deep richness of the shadows. The distinguishable likeness of the sister's facial expressions speaks to Whistler's extraordinary skill as a draftsman and deep affection for both women. The physical pain

and fatigue Beatrix is experiencing in 1894 is expressed in *The Sisters*. The illness has caused a lassitude and frailness that Beatrix and Whistler cannot hide.

The unsettling tragedies of everyday life were sources of inspiration for Whistler and Mallarmé as the artists connected with young artists and playwrights in Paris. The domestic scenes of Whistler's late lithographs share the same *intimiste* quality found in the work of Nabis artists, particularly Pierre Bonnard and Edouard Vuillard.²⁵ The 1890s was a transitional period for Vuillard as domestic interiors remained central to his art, similar to Whistler he recorded the daily routines of his family. *Interior Mother and Sister of the Artist* (fig., 46) is a dramatic visual confrontation between mother and daughter. As Susan Sidlauskas describes, there lies a sympathy between theme and technique within Vuillard's painting practice.²⁶ Within the painting the composition hinges on the juxtaposition of the two protagonists. Seated just off center Vuillard's mother is depicted in a dark dress and masculine pose. In contrast Marie, Vuillard's sister, is depicted awkwardly placed within the room—seemingly vanishing against the decorative backdrop. For Sidlauskas the distortion of the figures holds meaning, as she writes, “the female figures that Vuillard painted between 1890 and 1895 were generated by a more fundamental transmutation of the “feminine” body. These forms might be thought of as ‘body-signs’ rather than bodies—visual and conceptual hybrids of the

²⁵ Guy Cogeval. *Edouard Vuillard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 142, Stratis, Harriet K. and Martha Tedeschi, eds. *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler*. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1998) 291. Bonnard and the Nabis are mentioned in James McNeill Whistler's coorespondence from the 1890s.

²⁶ Susan Sidlauskas. “The ‘Surface of Existence’: Edouard Vuillard's Mother and Sister of the Artist.” In *Body, Place, and Self in Nineteenth-Century Painting*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000., 85-111.

figure and object.” By connecting discourses of fin de siècle femininity and social conditions of Parisian women in relation to *Interior Mother and Sister of the Artist* Sidlauskas unravels the complexity of Vuillard’s painting.

In a similar manner the insular portraits of Beatrix, Ethel, and Rosalind evoke universal dramas of the fin de siècle woman while demonstrating a mastery of lithographic printing. Within the seemingly conventional depictions of the women *Gants de Suède* (fig., 47) and *The Medici Collar* (fig., 48), the female form remains elusive, capturing an almost unattainable glimpse of the female body. Drawn in long definite strokes, *Gants de Suède* is an example of how Whistler embraced the soft, yet gritty, and malleable line of the lithographic crayon. The limited number of markings merely suggests Ethel’s figure, and the beautiful details of her dress and accessories, as if to evoke a memory for the viewer of passing a modern woman on the street. Anna Gruetzner Robins discusses Whistler’s painted portraits of the same period as distinctly modern images of the newly independent woman who was becoming more visible in public spaces.²⁷ I argue the same atmospheric depth Whistler evokes in painting can be recognized in the brevity of his lithographic markings as a metaphor for the unknowable aspects of the feminine modern identity.

In January 1897 Whistler completed *The Medici Collar* when he was staying with Rosalind and her mother in Paris. *The Medici Collar* repeats the similar theme of *Gants de Suède*, however, I argue it also asserts a sense of unease and suffering. The voluptuous

²⁷Anna Gruetzner Robins. *A Fragile Modernism: Whistler and his Impressionist Followers*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007) 67-93. Galassi, Susan Grace, Margaret MacDonald, and Aileen Ribeiro. *Whistler, Women and Fashion*. (London: Yale University Press, 2003) 19-51.

dress and the large collar do not fit Rosalind's slim body. Her facial expression and tight posture reveal a sense of both physical and emotional unease possibly because she was experiencing the same inconsolable grief as the artist following Beatrix's death in 1896. *The Medici Collar* is one of the last lithographs Whistler produced before abandoning the medium. A detailed analysis of Whistler's drawing practice, whether with a lithographic or pastel crayon, in relation to Beatrix, reveals that the pictorial thematization of the feminine within his compositions of women from the 1890s does not in fact serve the usual, conventional function as a means of visual possession of the subject. Instead I will argue Whistler's experimentation with drawing offers a unique form of facture as a method to engage the the viewer's imagination.²⁸

Drawing Practice in the Studio

Working alongside her husband in the studio Beatrix enthusiastically supported Whistler's renewed interest of drawing in the 1890s. The patronage of a small group of wealthy, progressive, self-made collectors—rather than members of the academic establishment—was also crucial to Whistler's development of sometimes radical compositions of female models in the studio. It is clear that both artists found a mutual

²⁸ Here I locate the term facture in the work of Carol Armstrong as a way of separating *what* is represented and *how* it is represented in Whistler's compositions of female models. See Carol Armstrong, "Facturing Femininity: Manet's 'Before the Mirror'", *October*, Vol. 74 (Autumn 1995)74-104. With overt male-female binaries, Armstrong presents a strategy of interjecting the feminine Other into close readings of Manet art as it relates to facture and subjectivity. Discussing nineteenth-century novels on art such as Honore de Balzac's *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu*, the Goncourt brothers' *Manette Salomon*, and Zola's *L'Oeuvre*, focusing on how these writers conceive of their female models and how their facture in prose is borrowed from the artist's palette of colors and pigmented materiality, how the flesh is made word. This treatment of the term facture is distinct from the discourse of formalism.

interest in the classical and mythological associations of the female form. Young models were hired to pose in the studio adorned with colored robes and occasionally fans or patterned cloaks. A group of work by both Beatrix and Whistler depict the robes as simply designed fabrics with a narrow tube of material gathered at the neck, varying in width, draped over the model's head. The most elaborate of Whistler's drawings retain a facture, or what I would like to define as the artist's characteristic handling of the pastel medium. Carol Armstrong discusses ways to address facture, and "facture's capacity as a form of *un-form*; facture's dissolution of form and readability, its disruption of the singleness and unified gestalt of the image, and its attachment to the amorphous regime of color as against rationality of design."²⁹ Distinct from Beatrix's techniques and traditional methods of drawing, Whistler depicted studio models draped in thin layers of drapery and began to focus his attention to reflections of light and color on the model's body.

In *Grey and Pink* it is clear that Beatrix was studying and working from the same models in a variety of watercolor and chalk techniques.(fig., 49) It was unusual at the time for a female artist to have access to live nude models. However, Beatrix would have been accustomed to this practice from her youth, having spent time in her father's studio. The University of Glasgow Hunterian Art Gallery collection also contains thirty large-scale studies of nude women and children by Beatrix Whistler (figs., 49 & 50) in charcoal or black and white chalk on brown paper. Some of the poses are similar to drawings by Whistler yet retain a distinct style. Margaret MacDonald has observed that "where

²⁹ Ibid, 78.

Whistler's line is soft and delicate, Beatrix Whistler emphasizes the weight of the pose, muscular curves and soft skin of her models by using strong lines and rubbed chalk.”³⁰

As a group Beatrix's drawings offer a sensual image of the female body. Following academic drawing standards, and demonstrating a high level of skill, the pastel crayon or white chalk develops the volume of the model's body. The contour lines of the young girl's torso, legs, and breasts are clearly defined and remain in correct proportion. The curves of the breast and the faint shades of the posed muscles demonstrate Beatrix's sharp observational skills and keen shading to develop the illusion of volume and depth on the two-dimensional surface of the paper.

Juxtaposed to the demonstrated refinement of Beatrix's drawing skills, James Whistler did not utilize the same rigid academic methods. Comparing the precision and control of Beatrix's drawn line to that of James' reveals his lack of training. The hesitation can be understood as the improvisational nature of Whistler's drawing technique as he attempts to garnish the effects of a finished drawing. He regularly worked on brown paper pinned to cardboard experimenting with varying applications of the pastel crayon.³¹ He also commonly used inexpensive manufactured paper with a firm surface (large fibers and wood chips often remained exposed). The luster and grain of the paper was attractive to him, as well as serving the purpose of holding the friable pastel crayon. Transcribing the technique from his lithographic prints to the pastel drawings

³⁰ Margaret MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, And Watercolours A Catalogue Raisonné*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 474-475.

³¹ Margaret MacDonald. *Whistler Pastels and Related Works in the Hunterian Art Gallery*. (Glasgow: Hunterian Art Gallery, 1984), 15. The source of the paper is noted as W. Holland of 12 Sherwood Street, Golden Square, London.

Whistler began to focus on the texture of each line. He commonly used stumping, or blending the pastels with a drawing tool or his thumb, to apply a shadowing effect. In collaboration with paper conservator Michelle Facini, I have been able to draw new insights into Whistler's creative process and the innovative techniques the artist experimented with when drawing the figure to call attention to the surface of the paper. By struggling to master academic drawing techniques and calling attention to the surface of the paper, I argue Whistler was trying to create a unique portrayal of the female form. Disdaining the kind of delicate, illusionist images the viewer expected, Whistler attempted to retain as little as possible from the feminine body but still be recognizable.

When examining *Nude Standing, with Legs Crossed* (figs., 52 & 53) with a strong light from behind, one sees a series of pinholes at the edges of the figure's feet as well as at the tips of her knees. Drawing on top of a board, Whistler clearly marked the pins to help him correct the proportions of the model. The awkward pose of the model's bent right arm can be read, as an indication of the artist's idiosyncratic approach to drawing—struggling to create the correct proportions of the body the pinholes can be understood as visual guidelines to follow. The number of drawn contours developed with the pastel crayons through her torso and upper thighs reveal his effort to create balance in the composition. Michelle Facini has suggested that the multiple strokes of the pastel crayon could be an attempt to emulate effects of old master drawings. Without a clear knowledge of how to develop the chiaroscuro effects—demonstrated in Beatrix's work—Whistler's pastel markings present a rough and unfinished technique. As a result of this struggle and experimentation, the pressure Whistler applied to pastel crayon builds

a unique texture of pastel pigments on the thick paper.³² In the studio with Beatrix, during the process of drawing and attempting to master the medium, Whistler developed a range of new methods of manipulating the pastel crayon rebelling against the traditional associations of the medium and techniques employed by his contemporary artists.

After moving to Paris and setting up a studio with Beatrix as confidant and advisor, Whistler enjoyed new artistic interest in drawing and the high acclaim he had dreamed of since his days as a young bohemian artist. Writing to Beatrix in June 1891 after visiting the *1st Exhibition, Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, Paris*, Whistler commented,

“it is really stupendous how every thing is not only bad, but going on to the bad! baddest without stopping for breath - just galloping down - I don't believe that in London we would notice it so much, simply because there, nothing is of any quality whatever - there every thing is absolutely beneath notice and cannot even excite your contempt - There is the quiet trade of painting Parishoners [sic], beadles and Workus [i.e. workhouse] boys - and one year is what all years have been & will be - but here the painters you are forced to look at - and they seem to be gone stark staring mad after the Bad!! - The Impressionist analines (I can't even spell it) seem to have been spilled over all the palettes.”³³

This passage makes the clear distinction that Whistler was not interested in exhibiting with his fellow painters in Paris. Instead, he sent works to popular private galleries to

³² These conclusions were made after a series of three meetings with Michelle Facini within the National Gallery of Art Conservation labs during the summer of 2012. From examining the pastels within the collection of the National Gallery of Art, I have observed Whistler's meticulous attention to detail. Attracted by the thick pulp and brown color of the paper, he would cut or even tear the pieces himself, drawing on the screen side of the paper to utilize more texture, albeit subtle (the difference between sides is difficult to see, even under the microscope).

³³ University of Glasgow Correspondence Database No. 06591, James McNeill Whistler to Beatrix Whistler June 11, 1891.

promote his reputation and accumulated important contacts with symbolist writers and critics, most notably Théodore Duret, Robert de Montesquiou, and Stéphane Mallarmé.

Delicate Surfaces Evoking the Sense of Touch

Historically, pastel drawings became popular in the late seventeenth century. Thea Burns discusses the sudden emergence of the medium in France as “aesthetic, grounded in social function and technical response.”³⁴ During the second half of the seventeenth century the first pastel crayon stick sets became available to artists. A technique referred to as pastel-painting was the principal technique—the pastel colors were applied to the surface of the paper and layers were built up by smudging the pigments to build a softer effect. In the nineteenth century new technologies changed both the production of pastel pigments, the paper industry, and artists experimented with a range of techniques. Pastel crayons offered a range of new expressive possibilities and a sense of spontaneity in creation compared to oil paintings because the medium did not demand preparation or drying time. Richard Kendall has acclaimed Edgar Degas as the great innovator of the medium, “arguably the boldest, most persistent and the least apologetic pastelist of the nineteenth century; perhaps of the entire modern era.”³⁵ Degas combined a range of materials when drafting his pastel compositions. After each application of the pigments, including his recognizable signature of distinct cross-hatching, he would apply a layer of

³⁴ Thea Burns, *The Inventing of Pastel Painting* (London: Arcchetype Publications, 2007), xi. This is one of the first compregensive studies of the pastel medium using primary source material and providing a historcal overview of its technical developments.

³⁵ Richard Kendall, “Materials, Methods, and Meanings in Edgar Degas’ Late Pastels,” in *The Broad Spectrum: Studies in the Materials, Techniques, and Conservation of Color on Paper*, ed. H.K. Stratis and B. Salvsen (London: Archetype Publications, 2002) 23.

fixative to prevent mixing. Tracing paper was often also glued to the support board during the drawing process to build texture on the surface of the paper.³⁶ The last Impressionist exhibition in 1886 was a pivotal moment when Degas included a suite of compositions depicting the female nude drawn in pastel.³⁷

When compared to a work such as Degas' pastel drawing *The Tub* (fig., 54) that was exhibited in Paris in 1886, Whistler's drawings of the female nude are clearly derived from a different intellectual project. For Degas the technical skill of drawing a clear rendering of the body is a key component of the composition along with the heavy application of a fixative to secure the modeled layers of pastel. The composition of *The Tub* is framed with a unique perspective developed by the corresponding shapes of the crouching woman's back paired with the diagonal slightly tilted shelf above her. The layering of fixative on the surface allowed Degas to sculpt the nude body in stages, securing the pastel pigments to the paper while stabilizing the individual shades of his strokes to emulate the skin of his subjects.

Carol Armstrong successfully argues Degas's pastels are constructed as a sophisticated and self-conscious critique of the articulation of contemporary modes of viewing and representing the female body. For Armstrong the ethical and the artistic are inseparable. The ethics of the practice lies in the pictorial integrity—the way in which the complexities of its formal components require that it be read in relation to and against the

³⁶ Ibid., 26.

³⁷ See, Richard Kendall and Jill Devonyar, *Degas and the Dance*, (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2002), George T.M. Shackelford, eds., *Degas and the Nude*, (Boston : Museum of Fine Arts Boston, 2011), Alison Luchs, *Degas's Little Dancer*, exhibition brochure, (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2014).

grain of contemporary accounts and painterly precedents.³⁸ There is a level of resistance between the female body, the corporeality of the act of pastel painting, and the physicality of the material itself; in other words, there exists a tension between facture and form, or signification and object hood. Within the composition of *The Tub*, Armstrong contends, the primary concern of the pastel drawing remains the tension between surface and depth. The brush on the shelf hangs precariously over the edge suggesting the viewer to reach for it. Armstrong continues to evoke this tactile appeal throughout the composition arguing the position of the model's body and the rich textured pastel surface offer a similar temptation. The colored lines of the pastel crayon are drawn and fixed to the surface in a way to conceal the female body instead of making it more accessible for the male viewer. The viewer can see only part of the body and cannot touch the skin.

Similar to that of Degas, Whistler's young model's body is suggested but not fully exposed to the viewer. *Harmony of Blue and Violet* reveals an awkwardness or tension in the artist's rendering of the female body. Multiple black lines suggest the model's right leg, crossed over her left; the viewer is left to imagine the right foot to complete the posture. The deep blue of the model's drapery entwines with the body, leaving no clear

³⁸ Carol Armstrong, 'Edgar Degas and the Representation of the Female Body', in *The Female Body in Western Culture, Contemporary Perspectives*, ed, Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986) 241. Armstrong emphasizes how for Degas, the scrim of pastel strokes was a resistance against transparent looking, a foil to desire and a move that insisted on the primacy of the pastel strokes themselves, not the potentially touchable skin of the nude that was the ostensible "subject."

distinction between. Here Whistler modified the tip of the pastel crayon to a fine point—emulating that of an etching needle.

Separating himself from artists such as Degas or traditional methods of the pastel medium, Whistler did not apply any fixative to his drawings. This refusal to apply fixative to the surface of the paper fundamentally alters the range of effects Whistler could achieve through the direct application and blending of the colored pastel crayons. The colored pigments of the friable crayons adhere to the surface from the pressure the artists exerted in the process of creation. Ultimately, the surface of the work is very different from the sculpted line created from layers upon layers of fixative. As with Whistler's signature etching style, the exposed surface of the paper played a key role in the overall composition of his pastel drawings. Acting as a third element or unifying backdrop, the dark lines and bright colors merge on the textured paper to create a tonal, jewel-like appearance. Exposure to light, while on view in exhibitions or private homes, has bleached the paper of many of the pastel drawings today. This damage directly affected the illusion of three-dimensionality designed within the finished drawings. In the works that retain the original color of the paper, the touches of color, dark lines of chalk, and tone of the paper allow the figure or image to seem to leap from the sheet. Physically on the paper Whistler separately draws contour lines of the body and accentuates dimensions of the drawing with color to present a specific allusion when all elements are visually combined for the viewer. I argue that Whistler's particular technique offers drawing to be one aspect of the creative process; the varied application of pastel crayons offers another, leaving color exposed on the sheet without a fixative in tension or balance

with the drawn line.³⁹ Instead of covering the entire surface of the paper, and generally imitating the effect of an oil painting, Whistler emulated a pencil with the pastel crayon—drawing with it, rather than building layers. Color was added sparingly and the total effect offers a poetic suggestiveness of the female form. To further understand this element of facture within Whistler's pastel drawings, as well as the clear rejection of the conventions, it is imperative to discuss his association with Stéphane Mallarmé.

Incisive Touches of Color

Whistler's Paris studio remained an intimate, productive, and creative space. Indeed, Whistler was inspired by French artists throughout his career: as a student, by Delacroix's abrasive color and the rise of Courbet's realism; in the 1860s, by Ingres's dedication to drawing; in the 1890s, by the concepts of representation associated with the symbolist poets. In 1888 Stéphane Mallarmé translated the "Ten O'Clock Lecture" into French and it was published in *La Revue Indépendante*.⁴⁰ Many of the French symbolist poets and artists sympathized with Whistler's vision, and in Paris he was able to develop a lively intellectual exchange with a range of artists introduced to him by Mallarmé. The theme of music and dance fascinated them and Whistler's series of pastel drawings and lithographs of dancing models echoed Mallarmé's poetic celebration of dance as a means of

³⁹ David Park Curry. *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1984), 50. Curry has argued that the perceived spontaneity of Whistler's application of color reveals the artist's lasting struggle to control color with line--literally drawing color *as* line in his late pastel drawings.

⁴⁰ Paul Barbier, *Correspondance Mallarmé; histoire de la grande amitié de leurs dernières années* (Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1964), 18-19. "Je sympathisais tout avec votre vision de l'Art", "heureux d'une occasion de mettre mon nom au dessous du vôtre." Mallarmé to Whistler May 7 or 13, 1888.

liberating the beauty of the female body.⁴¹ Identifying with Mallarmé's inspiration of the image of the veiled female body in the ballet, Whistler offered his friend the gift of the *Dancing Girl* around 1889.⁴² (fig., 55) Publishing the sonnet 'Billet à Whistler' in 1890 Mallarmé demonstrated his appreciation for Whistler.

At this moment Mallarmé was confronting a crisis in his poetry. From the awareness that poetic language cannot be reduced to its referential function (to speak of things does not convey their reality except in a commercial sense) and encapsulate a symbolic dimension which goes beyond the referential. Heather Williams redirects the discussion of Mallarmé's poetic mastery by arguing that his significance derives from his means of negotiating the gulf between the abstract and the real. This world of speculation, as described in *Prosé (pour des Esseintes)* from 1885, captures both the negation and the qualification of an idea in parallel. Through specific word arrangements and dictation, Mallarmé's poetry became more than a means of expressing thought; it became a way of commenting on how to represent an idea. For his part Whistler, I argue, was also re-conceptualizing the visual within drawing through his negotiation of new drawing techniques. The physical and conceptual gaps of exposed paper left between the drawn lines and colored pastel accents—the space between color and line—is Whistler's locus of contemplation for the limits of his sight and distillation of notions of beauty while engaging with the female nude.

⁴¹Tedeschi, Kevin Sharp, Nicholas Smale, Harriet K. Stratis, Nesta R. Spink, *The Lithographs of James McNeill Whistler: A Catalogue Raisonné*, (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 1998) 104.

⁴² Petri, 479.

On the surface of his pastel drawings, Whistler achieved an effect that coincided with Mallarmé's view of matter as impermanent and evanescent. In *Blue and Rose: The Open Fan*, Whistler captured a lissome woman's general figure while summarizing her features (fig., 56). Whistler drew with long strokes of robin's egg and marine blue, interwoven with black chalk lines to establish the figure on the sheet. Some areas of the brown paper shimmer where he brushed the flat side of the chalk ever so lightly over the surface, but each color remains individual; there is almost no evidence of blending. Whistler's separation of the elements of color and line yielded a new, balanced dimension of materiality that merits further discussion. It was precisely this sense of precarious balance, established by a sensuous linearity touched with color that came to characterize Whistler's mature pastel techniques. To better articulate this observation and to contextualize the ideas of representation and abstraction that Whistler was discussing at the time, we must turn to the critical analysis of Stéphane Mallarmé's late poetry.

Mallarmé is regarded as a master of poetic abstraction. His originality, however, has little to do with the introduction of abstraction into poetic form—but much to do with how he handled concepts.⁴³ Drawing upon previous lexicographical studies of Mallarmé's

⁴³ In 2003, Bertrand Marchal published the second and final volume of Stéphane Mallarmé's complete works with his prose compositions. *Stéphane Mallarmé, Oeuvres complètes, Vol. 2. Ed.* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003). In the same year Gordon Millan also completed a new series of Documents, including what he terms Mallarmé's "Proses expérimentales." Stéphane Mallarmé, Documents, Ed. Gordon Millan, *Nouvelle Série III*. (Saint-Genouph: Nizet, 2003). Millan's editorial work on Mallarmé's prose is diligent and detailed, tracing the various states of Mallarmé's text. Marchal and Millan have now paved the way for new methods of reading Mallarmé's work within the context of his life, his writings on fashion, and his literature and art criticism, elucidating a deeper understanding of the poet's intentions. While much scholarship has discussed Mallarmé's ideas on language as a key to his difficult text, Heather Williams argues that something

idiolect, recent scholars disagree with past interpretations of Mallarmé's prose and insist that the poet's genius is not only described by the questions he posed, but also by *how* he explored and qualified a concept. Each of Mallarmé's poems is built around a central symbol, idea, or metaphor and consists of subordinate images that illustrate and help to develop a concept. According to Mallarmé's theories, beyond reality is a space where the essence of perfect forms exists, and it is the task of the artist or poet to reveal and crystallize these essences. Throughout the literary criticism devoted to Mallarmé's work, his prose has been described as "difficult" and "unstable." By condensing figures and using unorthodox syntax, Mallarmé embedded ideas in complex verbal textures. His vocabulary remains in the rhetoric of storytelling, while certain syntax or placement of words make it impossible to complete a running narrative. The words function completely independently of one other.⁴⁴ This fractured poetic process has been identified as "self-allegorical" because it forces the reader to identify certain signifiers without a clear meaning.⁴⁵ Williams redirects the importance of Mallarmé's textual mastery by focusing on concept words such as "idea," "ideal," and "absolute" to concentrate on the correlation between metaphysical speculation and the pressure placed on language. Mallarmé's originality as a masterful handler of concepts is identified only through a joint consideration of disposition and concept.

far more fundamental to his originality has been largely overlooked: his ideas in language.

⁴⁴ Heather Williams. *Mallarmé's Ideas in Language*. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), 56.

⁴⁵ For more information see, Roger Pearson. *Unfolding Mallarmé: The Development of a Poetic Art*. (Oxford, 1996).

In 1885 Mallarmé published *Prosé (pour des Esseintes)*, a project often viewed as the landmark after which his work becomes uniquely and truly his own style. *Prosé* addresses the relation of the spiritual to the physical world, for example in this passage recounting a walk in the country with a companion: “Nous promenions notre visage / Sur maints charmes de paysage.”⁴⁶ The format tends toward a series of questions rather than a description of the spiritual or idealized realm. Did the flowers in the landscape really exist “*de vue et non de visions*”?⁴⁷ We can begin to explore the question if we consider that it is based around an opposition—either the idealized realm exists or it does not. Mallarmé positioned these ideas not to be rigidly divided into the abstract and concrete, but rather, to swing between the extremes. Williams argues that the abstract words hold a poetic responsibility, and the text shows how the empirical and the metaphysical are inseparable.⁴⁸ Understanding Mallarmé requires accepting that significance derives from his means of negotiating the gulf between the real and the ethereal. This world of speculation, hope, and fear separates the “*calices sus*” growing in the garden at Valvins from the “*absente de tous bouquets*” as described in *Prosé (pour des Esseintes)*.⁴⁹ Mallarmé captured both the negation and the qualification of an original idea in parallel.

⁴⁶ Williams, 2004, 65 (Line 9) “We walked our face / Of many charms of landscape.”

⁴⁷ Ibid, (Line 22) “views and visions not.”

⁴⁸ Williams, 2004, 69, “The word-play infuses the situation with doubt: is the ‘ère’ (era) responsible for insisting on ‘vue’ rather than ‘visions’, and does the troubling of the ‘ère d’autorité’ expose this as an ‘air d’autorité’, as nothing but an air, a forbidding look. This attention to sound patterning allows for the further scandalous suggestion that music is what has authority (‘air’ also meaning music), and that language is indeed more sound than sense: even ‘désir’ and ‘Idées’ would be nothing but noise, if carefully chosen because of their rhyme with ‘des iridées’.”

⁴⁹ Ibid, 17.

The solid foundation that Whistler sought by drawing figures from life was refined in his late pastels into elegant suggestive forms. I argue that many of the same questions proposed by Mallarmé's word arrangements are addressed upon the surface of Whistler's pastel drawings. The union of color with line suited his technical ability—he had trained as a graphic artist and had precise skills in draughtsmanship. Chalk drawings in the 1870s helped Whistler break away from the precision of etching and acquire a more individual style. Color was soon added with strokes of the pastel crayon—some hard and pointed, some soft and crumbly. With increasing boldness he experimented in applying color (fig., 57-59).

In the pastel drawings the viewer must adjust to Whistler's abbreviated handling and open-ended subject matter. The drawings require yet a further leap to understand Whistler's purpose: both elements are potent and distinct, dissolving almost independently. While suggesting a narrative through the figure's pose and studio props, the delicate lines and markings of the pastel crayon convey a purely aesthetic response from the viewer through a sense of harmony within the design. Distillations of a lifetime of thought about art, Whistler's late pastel drawings emerge as the artist's most personal and innovative variations on themes that preoccupied him throughout his artistic career. Applying the same methodology that Williams established in examining Mallarmé's poetry, it is possible to discuss a new vision of Whistler's ideas about abstraction; as with Mallarmé, Whistler is asserting his firmly held beliefs in these images. The form of the figure is outlined and suggested. The elements of the exposed paper, detailed or gestured strokes of the black chalk, and the incisive touches of the color pastel crayon provoke the

viewer to think about the nude female body. Desire, sexuality, and beauty all are brought to the surface, with color only visible in the center or core of the body through the artist's touch. The combined and parallel independence of the elements seem to be classified for the viewer in order to question the relationship between the concrete and the abstract. Studio props and drapery still appear in these later works but the poses, gestures, and backdrops suggest something otherworldly and timeless.

The tension of amalgamated and independent elements of line and color on the surface of Whistler's late pastel drawings is evident in *A Nude Pulling a Black Robe Over Her Head* and *La Jeunesse* (figs., 60-61). Whistler explored the subtle colors of the pastel crayons and varied applications of strokes that sometimes even resembled fingerprints. *A Nude Pulling a Black Robe Over Her Head* remained in the artist's studio until his death and is currently in the Hunterian Art Gallery's collection in Glasgow. There is a small "O" inscribed on the work. Margaret MacDonald has noticed these markings on a number of pastels and etchings in the Hunterian collection. She suggests that these notations might be a mark of appreciation added by Beatrix to works she and her husband found especially pleasing. The absence of color in some areas, the dramatic buildup of color in others, and the loose lines of dark chalk create a harmonious composition worthy of prolonged appreciation.

Each element enhances the depth and clarity of this image of a young woman revealing herself to the artist as *La Jeunesse*. Her gaze—soft, natural, and inviting—encourages the viewer to share this moment. The couch and loose areas of color in the background center the figure in the composition, adding a glimpse of

descriptive detail to confirm that the act of viewing is contained to the studio, without suggesting a developed narrative. The shape and form of the young woman's body is outlined in black chalk, but it is the form of her torso and breasts, heightened in white, that comes to the forefront on the sheet. The isolation of each element contrasts with the buildup of color on her chest. More than ten colors can be identified in the glistening jewel like effect Whistler created on the surface of the paper as he captured variations of light. The touches of rosy red hues in the pastel mimic the contour of the model's sumptuously soft flesh. The subject is transformed into a symbol of femininity, as well as an opportunity to question the definition of that femininity. The image is timeless, introspective, and abstracted for the viewer, who may appreciate the delicacy of colors and suggestions of lines without inscribing a narrative, period of time, or moral context to the scene.

Upon returning to Paris in 1892 with his wife Beatrix Whistler a surge of inspiration compelled Whistler to produce lithographs and drawings. The pastel drawings, particularly of female models, can offer insights to how Whistler pushed the boundaries of aesthetic appreciation. As a vehicle to translate Whistler's mature aesthetic theories, the drawings themselves remain central to how Whistler's color harmonies were first presented to French artists and American collectors.

Chapter 5:

Partnership with Charles Lang Freer

With the purchase of *Arrangement in Gray and Black, No. 2: Portrait of Thomas Carlyle* by the Corporation of Glasgow and *Arrangement in Gray and Black, No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother* by the Musée du Luxembourg in the 1880s, James McNeill Whistler saw his efforts to build his reputation and establish an artistic legacy within public collections coming to fruition. Unfortunately, his desires to be recognized as a member of the Royal Academy and to place his major paintings within art institutions in London still proved elusive. Following the success of the *Venice Pastels* exhibition at the Fine Art Society in 1881 until the turn of the century, Whistler witnessed the unparalleled growth and popularity of pastel drawings and his own direct impact on the international art market. Whistler was conscious of the popularity of pastel drawings among the impressionists but, as I have discussed in chapter four, his drawings resonated more strongly with the symbolist writers. Upon his death in 1903 the greatest concentration of his work was found in American collections. I argue Whistler's pastel drawings remain a key component in the trajectory of Whistler's American legacy.

As a savvy self-promoter, Whistler accepted a range of portrait commissions by the American industrial elite and presented solo exhibitions in the United States to market his work internationally. He actively pursued targeted relationships with American patrons to expand his reputation outside of Great Britain. Charles Lang Freer visited Whistler's studio unannounced in February 1890 to inquire about purchasing prints

directly from the artist. Freer later commented that he had been unable to find the quality he desired from the New York art dealers. Noted in Freer's business diary as "luncheon with Whistler," the event was memorialized in March of the same year when the article "A Day With Whistler" was published in the *Detroit Free Press* after Freer presented a lecture about the experience at the Witenagemote club.¹ From that point forward Freer no longer spoke to the press about his partnership with the artist. Taking on the role as patron, promoter, and student, Freer countered the negative image of Whistler in the United States by cultivating a network of friends and collectors to ensure that the artist's work was well represented in American collections.

During that first visit to Whistler's studio Freer witnessed the artist pull impressions of his latest etching set, comprising the *Amsterdam Set*. Along with adding to his extensive Whistler etching collection Freer also purchased his first pastel drawing, *Harmony in Blue and Violet*. The partnership of Freer and Whistler engages the concept of shared agency, suggesting that a complex network of collaboration was at work to establish Whistler's legacy, in lieu of the strictly independent actions of a single heroic artist. During the last years of Whistler's life, prints, pastel drawings, watercolors, and oil paintings were sent directly to Freer from the artist's studio. Whistler also assisted Freer in developing a core collection of his prized achievements from his entire career. When Freer observed connections between Whistler's work and Japanese woodblock prints the artist encouraged the collector to travel to Asia and seek out Chinese and Japanese art to juxtapose his own. With Whistler's counsel Freer kept his collecting goals sharply

¹ Freer Gallery of Art, Freer Archives, Whistler Scrapbook 1:2. The Witenagemote club was a private gentlemen's club in Detroit dedicated to increase the exposure of culture to its members.

focused and continued to refine his holdings. Subsequently, Freer established the Freer Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the institution's prominence ultimately secured a position for Whistler's aesthetic beliefs and works of art within the canon of American art.

When Freer offered his collection to the nation in 1906, the gift included more than eight hundred prints, paintings, watercolors and drawings by Whistler. The bequest was made with the stipulation that no additional works of American art could be acquired. As an ensemble, the works represented the premier collection of the Whistler's work; the decision to present it as a group can be understood as the patron's intention to protect the artist's legacy and artistic vision. I am particularly interested in how certain works of art from the 1890s can elucidate the development of Freer's aesthetic taste and offer a new way of tracking the spread of the Aesthetic movement to the United States.

Whistler's Presence in Pastel Societies, London and New York

By 1900 London art audiences had embraced the pastel medium in large part because of Whistler's efforts in promoting the value of his own work. Throughout the 1880s there had been hesitation to grant pastel drawings the same status as watercolor or oil paint. One argument against its value was the fragile nature of the crayons, as compared to the permanence of oil paint, and questions of whether the works would endure as a stable investment. As more artists exhibited their works in the medium, the discussion began to reflect a greater acceptance of the pastel as a legitimate artistic medium; meanwhile, Whistler retained his authority as an established master. In London in 1888, the Grosvenor Gallery hosted its first pastel exhibition. Five of Whistler's pastels were

displayed in the west gallery, listed in the exhibition catalog as numbers 4, 84, 85, 88, and 89 under the artist's name with the title *Venice*. One reviewer referred to the works as a "group of little pastel sketches," but it is unclear if they had been included in the 1881 exhibition at the Fine Art Society. In a review of the entire exhibition by the *Times*, Whistler's pastel portraits were lauded and few classical figure compositions were "praised almost without deduction as studies."²

The London Pastel Society held its first exhibition in 1899 at the galleries of the Royal Institute of Painters in Piccadilly with more than three hundred works on display in the west and east galleries. The society continued to battle similar prejudice against the pastel medium. *The Academy* reported in 1899 "the aim of the society is to make the art of pastel and the beautiful results which can be obtained in that medium more widely known in this country."³ Art critic Cosmo Monkhouse published a full-page article on the exhibition, in which he meticulously described the artists—including "Mr. Whistler (already a past master)"⁴—and voiced amazement at how the works were executed in "a personal manner" so that color "takes on solemnity and spiritual significance, as if a rainbow." Whistler submitted six pastel drawings: *In a Calle*, *The Cemetery*, *Venice from the Lagoon*, *Venice (Schiavoni)*, *Canal, Gondolas and Bridge in Foreground*, and *Canal and Bridge*. All of the works were noted in the catalog and hung in the east gallery. A year later, for the second Pastel Society exhibition in February 1900, the *Times* critic compared the British artists of the day to the glory of eighteenth-century French masters: "The revived art, which till a few years ago was only practiced by a way of diversion by a

² *The Times*, October 20, 1888, Issue 32522, Column A, 7.

³ *The Academy* Vol. 56 1899 January/ July

⁴ *The Academy* Vol. 34, 1888 July/December, 294.

few artists, has settled down into what seems a permanent position, and many of our best painters now handle the chalk with a freedom and accuracy that rivals that of the celebrated pastellists of old time.”⁵ Even though Whistler did not submit works for the exhibition, he was awarded an honorary membership as listed in the catalogue.

Whistler’s influence was not limited to London. The inaugural exhibition of the Society of American Painters in Pastel was held in New York in 1884, a year before a similar group was formed in Paris and fourteen years before there was a society in London.⁶ In 1884 Robert Blum, a young student who had worked closely with Whistler in Venice during the summer of 1880, was president of the New York Society. Blum’s inclusion of Whistler’s pastels in the inaugural exhibition held great impact on Whistler’s reputation in the American art world. The revolutionary defense that Whistler offered of his painting during the 1878 *Whistler vs. Ruskin* trial had perplexed American audiences, because paintings such as *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* were not exhibited in the country until 1889. Whistler’s pastel drawings offered a glimpse of his color theory to American audiences for the first time. The Whistler’s influence on the medium was also already evident through Blum’s compositions as well as those by the young artist John Henry Twachtman. The positive reviews of Whistler’s work encouraged the artist to send a large number of pastel drawings for the 1889 *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* exhibition in New York. A reviewer for the *Art Age* commented, “As a pastellist Mr. Whistler differs. He has not heaviness of the English School, the firmness and dash of the French, the broad nonchalance and security of the

⁵ *The Times* February 1900, Issue 36056; Column B, 15.

⁶ Dianne Pilgrim, “The Revival of Pastels in Nineteenth-century America: The Society of Painters in Pastel, *The American Art Journal* (November 1978) 43-62.

American. His style is even more personal than in his water-colors. He has the same habit of assuming relations of color to suit his mood and a touch even more evanescent and ethereal, almost fairy-like. Pastel in his hands seems like pollen brushed from the pistil of a flower.”⁷ Pastel became the perfect vehicle for conveying intimacy, spontaneity, and the effects of light and atmosphere generally associated with the influence of Whistler’s aesthetic beliefs.

The Artistic Vision of an American Industrialist

Charles Lang Freer was a self-made American railroad industrialist born in Kingston, New York, to modest means. After the death of his mother Freer helped support his siblings with a clerk position at the Kingston general store. The young man’s diligent work ethic and precise bookkeeping caught the attention of Frank J. Hecker. In 1876 Hecker was appointed manager of the local Eel River Railroad Company in Logansport, Indiana, and encouraged Freer to join him as the company’s bookkeeper.⁸ During the mid-1870s American investors began to purchase small railroad lines, connecting midsize cities across the country to create larger interstate railroad lines. The Eel River Railroad caught the attention of large Detroit investors with the hope of extending the Logansport lines to Detroit and then possibly through to Illinois. Freer witnessed firsthand the cutthroat nature of industrial expansion when Wabash Railroad bought out the Eel River Railroad Company in 1879. Stress from losing his position caused Freer to suffer extreme fatigue and he followed a popular therapeutic regimen of

⁷ “Whistler’s Water Colors and Prints,” *Art Age*, Vol. IX, no.68 (March 1889), p. 60.

⁸Thomas Lawton and Linda Merrill, *Freer: A Legacy of Art*, (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press) 13-30.

hiking in the Canadian woods to regain his strength.⁹ Caught in the battle of developing the transcontinental railroad, Hecker and Freer realized that by manufacturing a product, such as boxcars, a company could profit without having to manage the construction of the railroad. Eventually, Hecker and Freer moved to Detroit to form the Peninsular Car Company, a railroad boxcar-manufacturing business, which later merged with the Michigan Car Company and then, in 1899, formed the American Car and Foundry Company. Freer's wealth almost doubled from the merger and in 1900 at the age of forty-five he retired from the business world to focus solely on art collecting.

Freer's position at the Michigan Car Company in the 1880s placed him in charge of the bidding and sales operations for the company in the midst of unprecedented expansion of the American railroad industry. He soon began to apply the same discipline practiced in business to his art education and collecting. After settling in Detroit his first purchases followed collecting patterns of fellow American industrialists—including landscape prints by old masters, the Barbizon school, and nineteenth-century artists associated with the Etching Revival in England, such as Francis Seymour Haden. Freer cultivated his artistic sensibility by studying works of art, traveling, and avidly reading romantic and aesthetic poetry and prose. Volumes by American writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, along with Oscar Wilde, Algernon Charles Swinburne, Walter Pater, and Thomas Carlyle, filled his library.

In 1888 Freer became the chairman of the arts committee for the Detroit Club and was in charge of coordinating three annual exhibitions of American paintings. Involved in every stage of planning, Freer met a range of artists including Frederick Stuart Church,

⁹ See, Kathleen Pyne, "Portrait of a Collector as an Agnostic: Charles Lang Freer and Connoisseurship", *Art Bulletin*, vol. 78, no. 1, (March 1996) 77-80.

Gari Melchers, Dwight William Tryon, and Charles Platt. As his wealth and art appreciation grew Freer commissioned Wilson Eyre to design a private residence in Detroit that he envisioned as a congenial environment in which to display his collection. Freer commissioned Dwight Tryon to complete a series of landscape paintings. (fig. 63) Through the extensive correspondence between Freer and Tryon that emerged from this project, it becomes clear that Freer enjoyed Tryon's work for capturing a similar restorative power he found in the natural world.¹⁰ Thomas Wilmer Dewing and Abbott Handerson Thayer were also commissioned to create works to adorn the parlor and the main hall. (figs., 64 & 65) From this point forward Freer's role as a collector went beyond purchasing works of art.

The allegiances Freer nurtured with this small group of contemporary American artists differed from conventional patronage.¹¹ Freer contributed in intellectual discussion with these artists to enrich their productivity and his own appreciation of the arts. The financial support he offered was distributed in two distinct forms: first was an outright

¹⁰ In 1891, Tryon offered to paint a picture or two for the house Charles Lang Freer was building in Detroit, "a dream of Beauty," as it was described, "inside and out." Freer readily accepted Tryon's offer, and before long the commission had grown to include seven paintings for the main hall: *Summer* (F1893.15), *Autumn* (F1893.16), *Winter* (F1893.17), *Springtime* (F1893.14) and *Dawn*. In these "decorations," as Tryon called these paintings, the artist attempted to maintain the classic "purity" of the interior design by keeping a consistent horizon in every scene. Although some of the paintings were occasionally exhibited separately, Freer and Tryon always regarded them as an "ensemble." *Dawn* was the final painting in the decorative cycle for Freer's hall, where it hung above one mantel of a doublesided fireplace. Dawn was conceived as a site-specific work, but Tryon and Freer also anticipated its periodic absence. The space behind the picture was paneled in oak so that, as the artist explained to Freer, "when the picture is removed (for exhibition and other uses) the room will appear complete." At Tryon's request, Freer lent Dawn to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1901, to a solo exhibition in New York in 1903, and to a "small tasteful" showing of works by Dewing and Tryon in New York in 1907.

¹¹ Lee Glazer, *"A Modern Instance": Thomas Dewing and Aesthetic Vision at the Turn of the Century*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Pennsylvania, 1996).

loan of funds to be used against future purchases, and second was the underwriting of projects or commissions without a deadline or stipulating agreement.¹² Freer was a compassionate supporter and continued to send works from his collection to major exhibitions to help secure a prominent reputation within the art market for each artist he supported. As his art collection grew Freer added adjoining art galleries to his home in Detroit. Although he never intended for the building to become a private museum he shared the experience of viewing his collection with friends and family and the setting remained a private treat where art played a key aesthetic role.

An avid reader, Freer developed a philosophy on life based around the practice of exercising an aesthetic discretion. As a participant in the expanding international and somewhat speculative art market, Freer realized that travel and carefully nurtured personal contacts were necessary for pursuing the best works. In a letter to Tryon, Freer explains how he developed a discriminating eye while visiting museums and private collections throughout Europe and the Far East:

Engagements were made for me, often without consultation, which was far better, and so I put everything else aside and sailed under orders like an old tar. Not an hour was lost. It was look, study, absorb all day, make notes after dinner, sleep like a beast, get up at daylight and begin over again. This seems shockingly inartistic but it did not prove so. My old training in business taught me the value of time and how to use it, taught me self-discipline too, and I applied my experience to good advantage.¹³

Freer's approach to collecting and art appreciation, appropriated from his business practice, provides the insight for understanding the appeal of Whistler's art to wealthy American patrons. Freer encouraged friends and business associates, most notably Frank

¹² Clark, Nicholas, "Charles Lang Freer: An American Aesthete in the Gilded Age," *American Art Journal*, vol. 11, no. 4 (October 1979), 59.

¹³ Freer to Tryon, July 7, 1907. Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Archives.

Hecker and William K. Bixby, to purchase the kind of art he was collecting and to exercise his high standard of quality and discretion. The aesthetic connections Freer made in displaying masterpieces from the Near East or Asia alongside contemporary American paintings in his home was a radically different translation of the American reception of the Aesthetic movement's central message of mass appeal that spread through the popular press.

When Freer began collecting, both commercial and traditional printmaking had been undergoing dynamic technological, economic, and ideological transformations. The invention of new technologies reached a critical mass, fostering an explosive proliferation of artists' printed images. Establishing contacts with New York print dealers and making the acquaintance of other serious collectors, most notably New York lawyer Howard Mansfield, Freer began to focus his collecting practice. Art Nouveau was growing in popularity in Paris when Freer sought out Whistler's etchings. Freer purchased the entire set of Whistler's *Venice, Second Series* etchings from M. Knoedler & Co. on November 11, 1887. Working with Auguste Delâtre in Paris and the Fine Art Society in London, Whistler increasingly directed his publishing efforts toward focusing public attention to the inherent creative and unique qualities of his original prints, as opposed to the mechanical nature of reproduction. Devoted collectors, such as Freer, understood the commercial value of the limited-edition, signed and numbered proofs guaranteeing the artistic merit of the print. The prices for the prints and drawings were high compared to market value, however, when compared to the limited number of paintings available they allowed a wider range of collectors to acquire works of art by the artist. At the moment Freer began collecting, his wealth was not at the point where he could afford a painting

by Whistler and it was not until his retirement in 1900 that he held the funds necessary to do so. By 1889 Freer had developed one of the most comprehensive collections of the artist's etchings and purchased his first watercolor.

I argue that, after meeting the artist and appropriating Whistler's mature artistic vision in the 1890s, Freer understood the Aesthetic movement in a new light—establishing visual experiences where the design and aesthetic surfaces of works of art were as important as the subjects they depicted. Freer came to embrace an elitist viewpoint, maintaining that art could be understood only by the trained connoisseur. Along with the surviving documentation of his installations, Freer described methods of evaluating art thus: “I make no pretence to art knowledge nor do I think it necessary to analyze art, but I do believe that one's appreciation of beauty, in any form, can be strengthened, deepened and broadened by intelligent comparative study.”¹⁴ David Park Curry has made it clear that Whistler's impact upon Freer as a collector is difficult to overstate. One example of this influence is revealed in a portrait of the collector by Alvin Langdon Coburn in 1909, where Freer poses in front of a framed pastel by Whistler, titled *Resting*, and a pair of ancient Egyptian bronze statuettes (figs., 66, 31, & 67). Curry understands the purpose of such a display was to demonstrate a stylized continuum of the female figure, thus articulating Whistler's “artistic truth” by evoking a sense of beauty from previous masters.¹⁵ In scale and form Freer found a harmony of composition and technical quality between the opposing bronze sculptors and Whistler's framed pastel drawing. Displaying the works of art side by side offers an evaluation of their

¹⁴ Freer to Tryon, July 7, 1907. Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Archives.

¹⁵ David Park Curry, *James McNeill Whistler at the Freer Gallery of Art* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1984) 22.

importance, both aesthetically and historically. The surfaces of the works reveal delicate craftsmanship. Freer's understood his role, as a collector was to locate a continuum based on a certain quality and to display his works in a manner that accentuated each object's beauty.

Through his unique installations, similar to the example captured in Coburn's photograph, Freer established a lineage from the Egyptian sculptures that influenced the Greek Tanagran figurines Whistler studied within private collections and at the British Museum to the contemporary pastel drawing. The beauty of form that Freer ascribed to Whistler's pastel drawings offers a unique insight into the role the drawings played for the patron and artist. During their thirteen-year consociation, Whistler and Freer's deeply shared intellectual and personal connection allowed them to discover new dimensions of the visual experience. I am interested in highlighting the collaborative process of Whistler's development of his vision of beauty in the 1890s, in tandem with Freer, within the context of late nineteenth-century debates concerning how to define the aesthetic or cultural value of a work of art. This partnership between Whistler and Freer, perhaps more than that of any other artist and patron relationship at the end of the nineteenth century, reflects the newly emerging apparatus of cultural exchange caused by the breakdown of academic traditions, the emergence of the modern commercial art market, and the international appeal of the Aesthetic movement.

Dialogue between Artist and Patron

After meeting Whistler, Freer acquired a radically different theoretical framework with values that guided his collecting for the rest of his life. The breadth of scholarship defining Whistler's artistic vision has considered the artist not only caught in the tensions that developed between the Pre-Raphaelites and the aesthetes, but within the larger context of the complete breakdown of the British Academic tradition. Whistler's participation in the Aesthetic movement in London provoked him to pose difficult questions, such as: What is the decorative value in art? How does art relate to morality, to the state? What is the subject? What is a finished work of art? Whistler's pictorial style came to maturity within this movement, whereas his art theory did not develop fully until decades later. The same rich and complex questions revolving around the concepts of truth and beauty can also be identified in Freer's collecting ambitions, acquiring objects that constituted "the most refined in spirit, poetical in design, and deepest in artistic truth of this century."¹⁶ For Freer, I argue, "truth" in art referred to the choice of subject and the extent to which such a subject imitated nature; "beauty" referred to the purely aesthetic qualities of a work of art—qualities of line, color, and shape. Whistler's technique of developing a single effect within a work of art, eliminating the process of imitation of nature altogether in favor of a different kind of visual knowledge, strongly resonated with Freer.

Arriving at Whistler's studio at an opportune moment in February 1890, Freer was among the first to see the completed Amsterdam etchings and acquired a set

¹⁶ Freer to Dewing, July 19, 1893, Smithsonian Institution, Freer Gallery of Art Archives.

autographed by the artist. Freer wrote weeks later, thanking the artist for the hospitality the Whistlers shared with him in London and updating him on the press his exhibitions in the United States had received. Freer also offered a mutually advantageous agreement with Whistler whereby the collector would purchase impressions of all future etchings and lithographs directly from the artist.¹⁷ Although Freer considered Whistler's recent work his highest achievements and continually inquired about the artist's current projects, the earlier works, in particular his paintings from the 1870s, continued to hold the highest market value. Freer's correspondence with Beatrix and inventory records reveal that the patron was not only investing in Whistler's work for financial gains. Freer became a regular correspondent with both James and Beatrix Whistler between 1890 and 1894. Managing the shipment of works from the studio to Detroit for Freer's private collection, as well as the collections of colleagues such as Mansfield and Hecker, Beatrix and Freer updated one another on the excitement and minutiae of the American art market.

Writing from Detroit on May 6, 1892:

My dear Mrs. Whistler,

Owing to an absence of several weeks from home, your valued letter of March 19th, written at Paris, did not reach me until about ten days ago, since then, I have visited New York and Chicago and at each place I have made careful inquiry of the persons I met who were likely to know about the commission rumored to be offered to Mr. Whistler to paint a picture to commemorate the Chicago Exhibition &c. but thus far I have failed to learn of any decisive action having been taken—

On May 16th, one week from Monday next, a convention of American artists and art lovers is to be held in Washington for the purpose of organizing a National Art Association—

¹⁷ University of Glasgow Correspondence Database 01500, Charles Lang Freer to James McNeill Whistler, 31 March 1890.

The desire being to remove the duty on art, to organize a Government Commission of Art and Architecture, and to make true art more accessible to the masses—

This convention promises to be attended by nearly all of the prominent collectors and amateurs of this country—

While at the convention I shall learn all that I can concerning the facts of the talked of commission to Mr. Whistler, and if anything of note is brought out or developed in the matter, I will write you promptly and fully.

I heartily wish that such a work might be undertaken by Mr. Whistler for it would stand [as] a lasting monument of the best art of this century—may I add of any century?—commemorating an event of the utmost consequence to the American people and furnishing inspiration in the years to come to countless thousands who are destined to study Art for its real value and enjoy collections of Art in this country second to none in existence—

The coming years will see extraordinary sums of American money spent for Art—The question of the day should be: what steps shall be taken to properly start a movement of such great educational and social importance—How unfortunate that discrimination in such matters is so rare!

The beautiful lot of lithographs give me increasing pleasure—I am particularly interested in the single figures—the charming old bridge over the Thames—the interior of the blacksmith shop and the outdoor scene of the tea party, but it is very hard to choose when all are so beautiful—

May I soon expect the colored Lithographs and the Venice Etchings?

Is Mr. Whistler doing any work in pastel this spring? I must have another some day to hang beside the extraordinary one I brought home with me two years ago—It is what we Americans call "great"—Also some day, I hope to have another water color—a companion for the Liverpool from the Wunderlich Exhibition—possibly I might be favored with a springtime landscape, showing the first flush and delicate tones of early spring, the new life, a resurrection thought you know—or perhaps this idea might be beautifully translated in a single figure in pastel—perhaps the same thought for each of the pictures, different of course in treatment as well as medium?

I have read many notices of Mr Whistler's London Exhibition and am glad to know that it has been genuinely successful in the best way—Can you tell me how to secure a copy of the catalogue?

My sister bids me thank you for your kind remembrance and
congratulations—With kindest regards to yourself and Mr. Whistler, I am,
Sincerely yours,
Charles L. Freer

This letter bears quoting at length because it outlines Freer's strong commitment to promoting the legacy and cultural value of Whistler's work within the United States. In past scholarship, sections of the letter have been pulled apart and quoted. In its entirety, I believe the letter offers new perspectives on how the patron communicated with both James and Beatrix Whistler.¹⁸ The National Art Association lecture Freer mentions was held at Columbian University in Washington, D.C., on May 16, 1892, with a corresponding exhibition in the Smithsonian Institution. In preparation for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition Daniel Huntington, president of the National Art Association and ex-president of the National Academy of Design, organized distinguished speakers in art, architecture, science, education, and politics to discuss the best way to improve and advance the popular taste in art throughout the country. Whistler did not complete a commemorative picture as the rumors suggested, but he did exhibit six paintings in Chicago in 1893. It is clear from Freer's description of those "who are destined to study Art for its real value" that the symbolic and cultural value he enjoyed in Whistler's work were inaccessible to the masses, without study or the appropriate setting. The great expense of the World's Columbian Exposition, as well as the extraordinary amount of wealth Freer witnessed within the American art market, elicited concern for

¹⁸ See Clark, p. 59, as well as, Lawton and Merrill p. 45.

the future of American institutions, foreshadowing a cause he would take up after the turn of the century by offering the Smithsonian Institution his own collection in 1906.

The most overwhelming impression from the letter is the informal nature of Freer's remarks to Beatrix, offering a rare glimpse at how the collector oscillated between businessman and aesthete. The suggestion of creating a landscape or image of a female figure as a "resurrection thought" is a revealing insight into Freer's opinions about pastel drawings, such as *Harmony in Blue and Violet*, which both men must have discussed at length during their first meeting in 1890. Two years later, after Freer sent this request, Whistler accepted Freer's challenge but offered an oil painting instead of a pastel drawing to capture a "hint of Spring" that he would later title *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl*.¹⁹ (fig., 68) Freer was delighted to see what Whistler would create from the similar instructions he offered to Tryon when designing his home in Detroit.

Following the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago Freer proclaimed to Thomas Dewing, "After careful study at the Fair, I am more thoroughly impressed than ever that the art of yourself, Tryon, Thayer and Whistler is the most refined in spirit, poetical in design and deepest in artistic truth of this century."²⁰ Linda Merrill has argued that this belief became the basis for Freer's practices in collecting American art.²¹ Moving forward he pronounced himself as a devotee to the four aforementioned American artists. When describing a landscape pastel drawing by Tryon in a letter, Freer

¹⁹ University of Glasgow Correspondence Database 11569, James McNeill Whistler to Charles Lang Freer, July 18, 1894, Freer Gallery of Art Archives.

²⁰ Charles Lang Freer to Thomas Dewing July 19, 1893, Smithsonian Institution Freer Gallery of Art Archives. The carbon copy of the letter is barely legible. At the bottom of the sheet Freer rewrote the passage in pen. His correspondence records are meticulous and I believe he did this to highlight the importance of this message.

²¹ Lawton and Merrill, 153.

praised the composition, noting how, when in front of the work, he experienced “charm in the highest order in the most delightfully mysterious way” and going on to declare, “I doubt if art can do more.”²² Freer also discussed Whistler’s paintings and pastel drawings from the 1890s as having a similar spiritual, symbolic, or metaphysical presence. The figures in Whistler’s pastel drawings remain unrestrained by a specific narrative or art-historical period, allowing a field of possibility for the viewer’s imagination to draw associations through introspection. As Richard Shiff has noted, the privileging of memory or past art-historical moments—which characterized artistic practice and theory at the middle of the nineteenth-century—risks the rich dialectic between art and actual experience.²³ The pastel drawings that Freer cherished reveal the process by which Whistler captured images of young models in his studio, how his interpretation added meaning to the everyday experience, and finally, how the final composition provided a metaphor for what Freer brought to the work.

Freer planned a second visit to the Whistlers’ studio in November 1894, during his first voyage to the Far East, to review purchases and to discuss Whistler’s progress on *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Little Blue Girl*. Freer departed Detroit on September 22, 1894, traveling to Italy before arriving in Paris in November, and then across the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal, across the Indian Ocean to modern-day Sri Lanka and India, and returning home from Kobe, Japan, nearly twelve months later. Freer also provided the financial support for Thomas Dewing to meet him in Paris where he hosted a party for thirteen American artists in honor of Whistler. His diary entries indicate that

²² Charles Lang Freer to Dwight W. Tryon, September 1894, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

²³ Richard Shiff, “Remembering Impressions,” *Critical Inquiry*, 12 (Winter 1986), 439.

upon arriving Freer enjoyed a dinner with “students” in the Latin Quarter that lasted until dawn. Relishing his new role as “student of Whistler,” Freer made multiple visits to the Whistlers’ studio over the two weeks he was in Paris.

Unbeknownst to Freer, Beatrix was suffering from cancer during the time he spent with her in Paris; it would be their last visit together. A few months after the diagnosis the Whistlers left Paris to seek treatment in London. During his adventures in Calcutta Freer had located a pair of songbirds that Beatrix had inquired about weeks before. Only one of the songbirds survived the journey to London, where Beatrix was able to enjoy the gift through her last days with her husband by her side at the Savoy Hotel. While Beatrix was trying to remain comfortable Whistler completed sketches on transfer paper. Later that year Thomas Way produced the lithographs titled *Siesta* and *Savoy Pigeons* (figs., 69 & 70). Within the composition of *Siesta* Beatrix’s body is completely covered, except for her face and left hand. Without directly acknowledging the dire situation of her pain or her impending death, Whistler imbued his artist’s gaze with compassion for the subject. The absence or negation of a healthy body is signaled only by Beatrix’s hand, hanging helplessly from the bed. The textures and shadows of her surroundings, reserved and thought-provoking, were depicted in haste with simple strokes that evoke a sense of a passing time. The artist’s signature is prominently displayed on the wall, as if to represent his desire to be close to her. *Savoy Pigeons* was drawn from the hotel balcony. As Whistler returns to the River Thames the brief markings he utilized in his etchings were echoed in the lines of the busy road and bridge that suggest the life of the city outside of the hotel walls. In the center of the composition are two pigeons.

One peers straight ahead as the other turns to the left toward the river, as if gazing over the heart of London's metropolis, mimicking the actions of artist and wife.

On May 10, 1896 Beatrix died in a cottage on Hampstead Heath. Months later Whistler wrote Freer expressing his gratitude for his support, describing the soothing sound of Beatrix's bird's voice:

And suddenly it was made known to me that, in this mysterious magpie waif from beyond the temples of India, the spirit of my beautiful Lady had lingered on its way—and the song was her song of love—and courage—and command that the work, in which she had taken her part should be complete—and so was her farewell.²⁴

Within the same letter Whistler hoped Freer would someday enjoy the interest taken in perfecting the composition of *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The little Blue Girl*. Linda Merrill has argued that the obscured details of the model's face, which appear as tortured brushstrokes on the canvas, reflect the artist's own grief over the loss of his wife.²⁵ Monica Kjellmen-Chapin has identified these strained brushstrokes as Whistler's anxiety to capture the female nude in his oil painting in the service of negotiating his own artistic legacy or his position within the tradition of Western painting.²⁶

After 1896 Whistler gave up lithography and continued to depict the unveiling of the female body in a range of media. It was in the pastel drawings, however, that Whistler branded a new distinctive form that evoked imagination from the viewer and converted the young models into symbols of eternal beauty. *Venus Astaré* was purchased by Freer after the artist's death in 1904 yet the earliest titles of the drawings *Birth of Venus* dates

²⁴ James McNeill Whistler to Charles Lang Freer, March 24, 1897, Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Smithsonian Institution.

²⁵ Lawton and Merrill, p. 46.

²⁶ Monica Kjellman-Chapin. *Embodying Aestheticism: Whistler and the Tradition of the Nude*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 2003), 55.

between 1888 and 1890.²⁷ (fig., 71) As in *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Blue Girl*, a green-blue drapery frames the model. The surface of the drawing is delicate and sensual, echoing the beauty of the young model. The long fibers of the paper and the smooth markings of the pastel crayon accentuate this illusion. The deep blue-green tones of the drapery intensify the seemingly natural curve of the model's hips as she poses for the artist. The bare paper negates the voluminous contrapposto stance. The brief stumping, or marking of the crayon with the artist's own fingers, are reminiscent of light reflecting off of delicate skin. The pale yellows, pinks, and white rubbings transform the materials of pastel and paper to the evanescent light revealing the model's tender skin within the viewer's own imagination.

This form was repeated in numerous iterations during the 1890s. *La Jeunesse* (fig., 62) marks the clearest break for Whistler by separating the dark lines of the model's surroundings from the brief touches of color he added with the pastel crayon. The barely detectable marks of pink on her feet, knees, and cheeks correspond with the intricate layering of colors on her torso. Throughout the composition, this relative absence of color evokes the viewer's own imagination, inviting one to draw their own conclusions or insights upon the subject. The expressive touches of pastel develop a surface on the paper that offers a tactile appeal to evoke a response from a range of the senses. I argue that, by engaging with symbolist ideals, Whistler was able to project the transformative powers of the artistic imagination to provoke the regeneration of life through art.²⁸ The transitive

²⁷ MacDonald, *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, And Watercolours A Catalogue Raisonné*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 569.

²⁸ Susan Sidlauskas, "Creating Immortality: Turner, Sloane, and the Great Chain of Being", *Art Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2 (Summer 1993), 59-65. Sidlauskas has argued that Turner achieved the ability to initiate an artistic transformation through a "metaphorical

power or “resurrection thought” which Freer described to Whistler can be applied to *Venus Astaré* and *La Jeunesse*. To create a kind of supernatural light through rubbing the pastel crayon and effectively animating the female form is a direct representation of the triumph of the artist’s devotion to beauty.

The Charles Lang Freer Collection

Throughout the 1890s Freer and Whistler shared ideas and life events through regular correspondence and scheduled visits in Paris and London. At sixty-five on July 29, 1899, Whistler wrote to Freer, “I think I may tell you without the least chance of being misunderstood, that I wish to tell you to have a fine collection of Whistlers!! Perhaps The collection—,” declaring his proposal in “proof of friendship and sympathy already proven.”²⁹ In 1900 Freer retired after receiving a substantial settlement from his business transactions, and art collecting became his primary focus. Two years later Freer scheduled a prolonged visit to London and began making large purchases of Whistler pictures. Whistler had scheduled Freer to visit a range of private collectors in London and throughout the United Kingdom to purchase works by Whistler within their collection. Money was no longer a limiting factor to Freer’s collecting. He made large purchases through galleries and has also arranged a personal settlement with Whistler.

In a letter to his business associate Frank Hecker in June 1902, Freer asked Hecker to sell his Pressed Steel stock to finance his recent purchases. Listing the highest value of the stock, Freer instructed his partner to sell it at any cost and that he would be

fusion of light, water, and color” to creating an “artistic rebirth” within *Interior at Petworth*. Capturing the artist’s own preoccupation with death and his artistic legacy this transformative act can offer a glimpse of hope that art itself will endure through eternity.

²⁹ Freer Gallery of Art Archives, James McNeill Whistler correspondence, letter 40.

satisfied. “What I am picking up here is worth much more than Pressed Steel—a good name for my new findings would be pressed or compressed joy.”³⁰ Freer not only found value in the large oil paintings he was able to acquire, but sought out the small works from the 1880s. The most expensive purchase Freer made during the summer of 1902 was from Sir Henry Studdy Theobald for thirty-one small oil paintings, watercolors, and pastels by Whistler. Theobald had purchased the works from the artist in 1885; many were works that did not sell after the *Notes—Harmonies—Nocturnes* exhibition in 1884. As Kenneth Myers has explained, the aesthetic principles Whistler assigned to these small works made his titles especially vulnerable, but in surviving documents it is clear that Freer was cataloging the works from the 1884 exhibition.³¹ As discussed in chapter three, the 1884 catalog and exhibition were didactic projects for Whistler to create a new type of art collector. After acquiring the group of over thirty works, almost half of the original installation, Freer reveled in his appreciation and admiration for Whistler’s aesthetic, promoting an awareness of beauty as a non-referential, ephemeral experience.

After spending the summer in London in 1902 Freer joined Whistler on a trip to Amsterdam. Unfortunately, on the first leg of the journey Whistler suffered a severe heart attack. Along with Beatrix’s sisters, Rosalind Philip and Ethel Whibley, Freer stayed at Whistler’s bedside during his recovery for about a month. While Whistler was ill Freer continued to communicate with Hecker, describing the patient as “brave as a lion and a true West Point man.” During the long days Freer commented on how both men reminisced about the events they shared in “Paris just prior to Mrs. Whistler’s death and

³⁰ Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer to Frank Hecker, June 13, 1902.

³¹ Kenneth Myers. *Mr. Whistler’s Gallery: Pictures at an 1884 Exhibition* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003) 82-83.

those of the seven weeks spent so much together in London.”³² During this period Freer was not just a student (though he often referred to Whistler as the master) and confidant; he also acquired the role as guardian of Whistler’s artistic reputation. Though Whistler was not expected to make a full recovery, he regained his strength—until the following summer when his health once again took a turn for the worse. Freer again visited London to support his friend and spend the last days of his life with him; Whistler passed away on July 17, 1903. Freer was asked to serve as executor of the estate and declined in favor of Miss Rosalind Philip.³³ From the artist’s studio Freer acquired *Harmony in Blue and Gold: Little Blue Girl* along with an ensemble of “unfinished” works. Making the conscious effort to acquire a number of Whistler’s works before they would be released on the market, Freer explains the need to liquidate assets to Hecker thus: “[M]any days after bonds or anything else can serve me, others will be serves, well served, intelligently served by my slight efforts of this year.”³⁴

Freer continued to purchase Whistler’s pastel drawings after the artist’s death. In 1905 Freer acquired a pastel drawing from Thomas Way Jr. titled *Niobe*, the Greek mythological symbol of eternal mourning. In the purchase inventory, written in Freer’s own hand, the title *Annabel Lee*—derived from Edgar Allan Poe’s poem of the same name—was listed (fig., 72). The original title of Whistler’s drawing is debated; however, both posthumous versions speak to the drawing’s ability to evoke a sense of immortal

³² Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer to Frank Hecker, June 30, 1902.

³³ Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer to Fullerton L. Waldo, 16 April 1910, Freer Letterpress Book 30.

³⁴ Freer Gallery of Art Archives, Charles Lang Freer to Frank Hecker, July 12, 1903.

mourning or longing.³⁵ Freer described the composition as “a female figure stand[ing] on a railing. She is dressed in gauzy white, a purple shawl floats from her arms, and a purple cap on her head. Behind is a wide expanse of blue sea and sky. At the foot of the drawing are purple irises.”³⁶ In *Annabel Lee* the figure’s pose and gesture remain restrained as the model turns away from the artist and the viewer; the fraught lines and brilliant marks of color Whistler developed within the drawing occupy the same pride of place as the figure they circumscribe. Created with a broken-off tip of a crayon, sharp highlights through the drapery and around the model’s right foot reflect the variety of techniques in this composition. The grain of the paper serves to hold the powdery pastel crayon and adds a unique luster. Similar to in Whistler’s mature etchings, the exposed surface of the paper plays a key role in the overall composition of the pastel drawing. The dark lines and bright colors merge on the textured paper to create a tonal, three-dimensional, jewel-like appearance. The grittiness of the paper and oiliness of the pastel crayon emphasize both the near-abstraction of the color, while the materiality of the pastel medium itself reveals the artist’s fingerprints, suggesting a rich, immediate tangibility.³⁷

³⁵ Margaret F. MacDonald. *James McNeill Whistler: Drawings, Pastels, and Watercolours : A Catalogue Raisonné* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 142.

³⁶ Freer Gallery of Art Archives, 1905 Freer Collection Inventory.

³⁷ The elements of line and color within the pastel drawings develop within the phenomenology of drawing defined by Rosand. David Rosand *The Meaning of the Mark: Leonardo and Titian* (Spencer Museum of Art: University of Kansas, 1988), p. 11. “For in viewing a drawn line we follow the record of a path of motion, and our viewing involves, on several levels, a trajectory of vision, the movement of our eyes. But we also, and even primarily, respond to the *quality* of the line—to the way in which it was drawn, the nature of the marker’s tracing, its material, the weight and velocity of the hand behind it, its physiognomy and its larger affective resonance. All of this, then, becomes implicated in what we might call the phenomenology of drawing. Also implicated is the function of a line within our set of pictorial expectations, the degree to which it cedes its independence as a mark in order to participate in a system of representation.”

In *Annabel Lee*, Whistler's central concern is the interplay of semitransparent veils draped about the figure in a harmony of soft pale blues and brilliant yellows. Drawn between 1885 and 1887, the background details were further developed with the later addition of periwinkle, aqua blue, and bright yellow highlights. Strokes or twists with the round end of the crayon were used to cover large areas of blue and white. By rubbing the area with a blending stump or his fingers, Whistler created a dreamlike effect. A similar technique was used with a paintbrush in his *Nocturne* paintings of the 1870s. The pervasive doubt concerning objective reality that characterized the symbolist mode encouraged a focus on inner experience. Whistler developed these concepts within a variety of media; however, scholarship has privileged the *Nocturne* paintings over Whistler's later works on paper. I argue that Whistler refined a new visual language in the 1890s that coincided with and was informed by his interest in poetry, in particular the work of Stéphane Mallarmé and Edgar Allan Poe.

The form, purpose, effects, and innovations of this new visual language are best distilled in Whistler's late pastel drawings that, until now, have been completely eliminated from the larger discourse of the artist's work, receiving no critical analysis. After freely engaging with symbolist writers, Whistler was able to express dimensions of beauty within the ephemeral aesthetic moment in a unique way, distinct from the earlier *Nocturne* paintings. Whistler's association with Mallarmé, and their shared renouncement of the conventions of form, allowed Whistler to experiment through his drawing practice to articulate a new agency for color. The grittiness of the paper and richness of the pastel crayons offered the artist the platform upon which he sculpted impressions of his young models. Separating line and color completely—each image remains elusive, capturing the

external impression beneath a contingent and fleeting moment.

Though the symbolist movement began in France, symbolism also manifested itself in British and American art, which remained entangled within a larger international network of artistic societies and collectors.³⁸ It is right to reposition Whistler's place within the historical niche of the symbolist mode characteristic of late nineteenth-century European and American aesthetic attitudes to widen the discussion of influence.³⁹ To this end, an examination of the critical analysis of Poe's poetry is helpful. As discussed in chapter four, Mallarmé and the French symbolist writers exerted an enduring influence on Whistler's artistic development and international reputation in the late 1880s and 1890s. A similar methodology that Heather Williams applied to Mallarmé's poetry may also be applied to Poe. Through dictation or the specific word arrangements developed throughout Poe's poem *Annabel Lee* the verses express a way of envisioning beauty, or commenting on a the painful memory a long-lost love.

*It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know*

³⁸ Sarah Burns, *The Poetic Mode in American Painting : George Fuller and Thomas Dewing*, (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Ph.D., 1979) Appenix B *Tonalist Painting in Relation to European Symbolism*, 335-339. "During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, the ideological threads linking France and England ramified, combined, and re-combined into a nearly impenetrable network of interrelated tendencies. Indeed, American idealism, through the work of Edgar Allen Poe, contributed to this new European creative impulse. The retreat to ideal imaginary realms was an international artistic phenomenon. In England, this orientation was revealed in phases of later Pre-Raphaelitism; in France by various tendencies under the rubric of symbolist art, an in America by tonialist painting. However, from Rossetti and Baudelaire on to countless subsequent disciplines and innovators, fundamental impulses gave a dimension of coherence to the evolution of poetic and aesthetic concepts, which moved steadily toward higher levels of idealism, mysticism, transcendence, and solipsism, to culminate in the soulful nineteenth-century romanticism of symbolism."

³⁹ Marc Simpson, ed. *Like Breath on Glass: Whistler, Inness, and the Art of painting Softly*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008) 25-52.

*By the name of Annabel Lee;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.*

*I was a child and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea:
But we loved with a love that was more than love--
I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven*

Meeting her at a young age, the narrator describes the love as being so strong the angels in heaven noticed and this sparked jealousy among them.

*And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful Annabel Lee;*

*So that her highborn kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulcher
In this kingdom by the sea.*

A forceful wind emerges from the clouds and eventually killed Annabel Lee. After her dead relatives came and took her away from the speaker, and shut her up in a tomb. The title introduces us to the sound of her name, which is clearly important for Poe: he repeats her name seven times, and more than half the lines in the poem end with the *_ * vowel sound, echoing her name through the rest of the poem. She is the focal point of the poem, but remains shrouded in mystery; the narrator reveals nothing about her except that she was young and her name was Annabel Lee. In a sense, the incessantly repeated sound of her name subsumes her, supplants her. The poem forces us to ask whether death is the end and has the power to kill love—or whether, in fact, love can triumph and continue after death.

Titling the drawing *Annabel Lee*, Freer clearly believed Whistler, similar to Poe, was capturing both the negation and the qualification of beauty.⁴⁰ Re-conceptualizing the visual within his pastel drawings, Whistler contemplated the limits of his sight and distilled notions of beauty in the space between color and line, while engaging with the female form in a new way that departed from previous conventions surrounding the portrayal of the female nude. Freer understood Whistler to be a visionary—whose drawings and paintings of young female models possessed psychological and symbolic qualities. *Annabel Lee* is one example of how the artist interpreted visual phenomena and how that interpretation adds meaning to the subject offering a metaphor of whatever the viewer brings to the work.

As a collector and devotee, Freer appreciated Whistler's art primarily for its abstract appeal. The sketchy or loose drawing style of the pastels obscured the specific subjects and offered a Freer the ability to assert their beauty as he plotted a linear progression of art through the centuries within his personal collection, in effect articulating Whistler's concepts of the transcendental nature of the aesthetic experience. Whistler was able to transform a sensual experience into an aesthetic object and a symbol of beauty. In the eyes of both Whistler and Freer, the power of art was to convey the mutability and elusiveness of sensual phenomena while transcending the emotions and sentiments that characterize these experiences in reality.

⁴⁰Gerald J. Kennedy. *Poe, Death, and the Life of Writing*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 132.

Conclusion

By 1900 James McNeill Whistler's influence was a global phenomenon—elements of his *Nocturne* landscapes and psychological portraits were everywhere in the art of Europe, Russia, and the United States.¹ However, Whistler's position within the canon of the history of art does not fit neatly into any single category of national project. In order to justify Whistler's canonical status one must examine his artistic practice in a holistic context. Integrating his approach to art making as a means of selling art within the commercial art gallery allowed Whistler to reflect his belief that art could not function in isolation to social, political, and economic elements. By targeting specific groups of patrons, planning strategic exhibition programs, and establishing a network of supporters for his work internationally, Whistler successfully infiltrated the art market to increase the value and impact of his work.

To articulate the theories of art Whistler engaged I have tracked the modalities of cultural transmission, and discussed different ways his work was presented and experienced in London, Paris, and New York. He drew freely from a variety of sources to secure the legacy of his work—including economic marketing devices established by Oscar Wilde and Charles Dickens to reach a vast audience—dissolving a clear association with a particular nation state. By re-establishing Whistler's connection to the art market new insights can be made into the alliances the artist forged with printers,

¹ Robert Rosenblum, Mary Anne Stevens, Ann Dumas. *1900: Art at the Crossroads*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000)

dealers and collectors to run his successful sale campaigns. Within the nineteenth-century international art market, Whistler demonstrated his economic savvy through implementing marketing devices to control the dissemination of his work and artistic vision.

Whistler orchestrated a series of exhibition programs for the international market with the underlying intention to promote the concept that works of art must solely be appreciated for their harmonious balance of line and color. I have shown that to understand this dedicated vision it is essential to discuss his drawing practice. From his early childhood education, his etching practice in London, his experience in Venice, and finally in his late drawings from the 1890s, Whistler's approach to art making remains central to how he fought to find his own artistic vision. His aesthetic beliefs were rooted in sensual experience, transcending the limits of a specific medium each work of art was to be experienced environmentally, emotionally, physically, and visually. The textured surfaces of Whistler's work demand the viewer's imagination—moving beyond the skill of reading an image to a more intimate experience of aesthetic appreciation. To understand the subtle nature of Whistler's work it became imperative for the artist to create new innovative ways of displaying his artistic vision for his audiences.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to study the artist's practice while connecting events previously understood as singular and non-consequential to his professional career. Close analyses of the pastel drawings allowed me to discuss the decision Whistler made to focus on smaller scale works in the 1880s. After struggling and failing to achieve the recognition he desired from the Royal Academy in London Whistler created new opportunities within the growing art market to reach his patrons.

Demonstrating his knowledge and understanding of economic trends, by focusing on smaller paintings and drawings, the growing international shipping and tax expenses did not diminish Whistler's profits. The smaller works made it possible for the artist to send works internationally and develop exhibitions of his work under his instruction.

Through his exhibition design Whistler experimented with art's relationship to the realm of psychological experience. Numerous studies have discussed Whistler's relationship to the symbolist movement. I have examined this relationship in a new light, both in its historical and theoretical aspects. My original contribution has been to develop a comparison between Stéphane Mallarmé and Edgar Allen Poe's writing techniques and Whistler's pastel drawings. Through an acute sensitivity to Whistler's artistic process, in addition to the image they bear on the surface, I have been able to demonstrate the artist's recognition that his new approaches to art making demanded new ways of showing, installing, and marketing the works. By pushing the boundaries of aesthetic appreciation, the pastel drawings attracted a new audience for Whistler's work, particularly connoisseurs who could appreciate beauty with a delicately tuned aesthetic sensibility.

In 1894 the largest number of Whistler's collectors were American and the drawings offer new insights into this phenomena. After the artist's death, key American collectors leveraged to secure his reputation in the canon of American Art. As both aesthete and businessman Charles Lang Freer is the model for the late-nineteenth-century collector and the establishment of the Freer Gallery of Art remain central to Whistler's artistic legacy. I have now been able to more thoroughly discuss the artistic dialogue and exchange between Whistler and Freer to develop a better understanding of the aesthetic experience both artist and patron shared when viewing his late pastel drawings. Within

the nineteenth-century international art market, Whistler revolutionized the role of the artist by actively experimenting with marketing devices to promote the sale of his work and to create a targeted dialogue with his patrons.

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