

## Columbia Museum of Art Presents Artworks from Wales

*Victorian Visions*, an exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite drawings and watercolors from the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, is opening at the Columbia Museum of Art, in Columbia, SC, on Feb. 11 and continues through Apr. 10, 2005.

The exhibition, from the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, highlights exquisite Pre-Raphaelite drawings and watercolors that are touring the US for the first time together. The exhibition explores a range of approximately 64 works on paper, both highly finished artworks as well as preparatory studies, that illustrate the accomplished and imaginative work of Victorian masters, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Sir Edward Poynter, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, James Abbot McNeill Whistler and William Morris. The exhibition examines methods and motivations behind art of this era and reflects the wide range of styles found in the vast collection of the National Museums & Galleries of Wales, located in Cardiff, the capital and largest city of Wales. Some of the pieces are detailed portraits of recognizable people, while others capture a fleeting impression of people and landscapes. The pieces in this exhibition are linked by the Victorian artists' shared sentiment for the past and interest in the exotic. The fantastical visions created by these painters contrasted sharply with the industrialization and strict social behaviors of the time.

The Victorian era (1837 - 1901) saw a wealth of creativity in Britain and the artists of the day sought a wide range of subjects for their work. The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, formed in 1848, was an association of young British painters, including leaders Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and John Everett Millais, who were students at the Royal Academy Schools in London. The PRB, as they were known, looked to the early Renaissance painting prior to Raphael for inspiration and were intent on ending the Academy-backed prevalence of "false and purposeless art" and intended to establish an art combining truthful naturalism with moral enlightenment.

The Pre-Raphaelites took their subject matter from literature, particularly the works of Shakespeare, Boccaccio, the Bible, and the Romantic poets like Keats, Tennyson and Browning, as well as British history and legends. Pivotal moments of a story were chosen to inspire a dramatic image and to embody emotion.

This exhibition explores the different uses of drawings during this era and is divided into sections: *Drawings for Drawing's Sake* - this section looks at portrait studies and artists' responses to nature, both landscapes and detail studies. *Studies for Paintings* - this section shows studies produced in order to plan an overall design for a painting and its details, such as the poses of the figures or the direction of a glance or the nature of the folds of fabric. *Studies for Commissioned Decorative Schemes* - throughout the reign of Queen Victoria there was a rise in architectural projects across Britain. New hospitals, law courts, schools, libraries, memorials, and town halls were built, often offering the opportunity for decorative schemes. These watercolors and drawings show studies for projects like the Houses of Parliament and the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. *Designs* - many Victorian artists were designers as well as painters and sculptors, most notably William Morris, who set up a company of artist-designers called Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. This section shows working designs for stained glass projects, book illustrations and tile pavement. *Finished Watercolors* - Artists who worked to develop new techniques that rivaled oil painting enhanced the status of watercolor painting, and the growth of the middle class led to a widening range of accessible and affordable art. The works in this section were conceived as finished works of art in their own right and, at the end of the century, began to reflect the developments of the Impressionists in France as they move toward a more spontaneous, modern style of art.

This exhibition is organized by the

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International Arts & Artists for the National Museums and Galleries of Wales.

The Museum is offering the following related programs, including:

Feb. 11, 2005, 10:30am - Gallery Talk with Dr. Margaretta Frederick, presenting, *This Religion of Art, this Worship of Beauty: Art in the Victorian Age*. The outstanding collection of drawings from the National Museums and Galleries of Wales that make up the exhibition *Victorian Visions* is an excellent introduction to the wonderful eccentricities unique to this period and place in the history of art. Dr. Frederick's gallery talk will demystify the many influences of the era with an eye toward identifying the common thread – the quest for beauty – that runs throughout the art of the period. Margaretta Frederick, a native of Wilmington, Delaware, received her PhD in British 19th-century art from Bryn Mawr College in 1996. She is the past curator of the Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art at the Delaware Art Museum and is responsible for organizing a two-year international tour and accompanying catalogue of that collection that will begin in Mar. of 2005. Free with museum admission or membership.

Feb. 18 (7pm), Mar. 12 (2pm), and Apr. 10 (2pm), 2005 - Film - *The Pre-Raphaelite Revolt*. Founded in 1848 to protest against the outmoded academic conventions of the day; the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood's influence

affected fashion, interior design and literature.

This film examines the works of Millais, Ruskin, Hunt, Hughes and Rossetti. (30 minutes) Free with museum admission.

Feb. 20 (2pm), Mar. 11 (2pm), and Apr. 2 (2pm), 2005 - Film - *Ruskin's Journey: Teaching People to See*. John Ruskin was a leading art critic whose prose shaped a generation of writers and artists, including Turner, Whistler and the Pre-Raphaelites.

Scholar Michael Wheeler traces Ruskin's spiritual and intellectual journey, visiting the cathedral at Rouen and other sites that inspired and shaped the thinking of the great writer. (48 minutes, color) Free with museum admission.

Mar. 4, 2005, 6:30pm - Slide Presentation - *The Art of Evelyn De Morgan*. The Museum's deputy director Joelle Ryan-Cook explores the work of one of the important and under-recognized women associated with the Pre-Raphaelite movement. De Morgan's two paintings in the Columbia Museum of Art's collection are the only known works by the artist in North America. Free with museum admission or membership.

Apr. 8, 2005, 6:30pm - Lecture - *The Art and Literature of the Pre-Raphaelites*. Jamie Ridenhour, USC visiting professor of Victorian literature, discusses Pre-Raphaelite literature and art. Free with admission or membership.

For more info check our SC Institutional Gallery listings, call the Museum at 803/799-2810 or at ([www.columbiamuseum.org](http://www.columbiamuseum.org)).

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