Pre-Raphaelite Sisters

Access Guide

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Introduction

Today, the phrase Pre-Raphaelite evokes images of young women with loose hair and flowing garments, as seen in so many paintings of the art movement. The exhibition, *Pre-Raphaelite Sisters*, opens a new view on the women within and behind the art.

How did these women relate to the images? What did they really look like? How did they become involved? How did they fare? What happened to them in later life? The exhibition invites you to explore the creative contribution of women in the Pre-Raphaelite circle and reveals their own artistic ambitions and glimpses of their private lives.

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**Belcolore**  
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–82)

This is a fine example of the sexually-alluring type of image for which one of the most recognizable Pre-Raphaelite models, Fanny Cornforth (1835–1909), sat in the 1860s. She is shown in a ‘boudoir’ pose with unbound hair and low-cut gown and holds a rose provocatively to her lips. The title Belcolore is the name of a ‘buxom country wench’ in the Decameron by the fourteenth-century Italian writer, Giovanni Boccaccio.

Mixed media, 1868

The Wyvern Collection, London
MODEL
A Pre-Raphaelite model was chosen to play a specific role in a pictorial drama.

Her features, expression and gestures portrayed the character of a courtesan, a saint, a queen or mother.

WIFE
A Pre-Raphaelite wife was housekeeper, studio manager, costume maker and social secretary as well as model and portrait sitter.

She led the ‘behind-the-scenes’ team on which her artist-husband’s professional practice depended.

ARTIST
Women were artists alongside men throughout the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

Though fewer in number, they were equally committed to pictorial ambition and were often significantly supported by husbands, brothers and colleagues.

MUSE
A Pre-Raphaelite muse formed a creative partnership with a painter, her presence inspiring his art.

Her face featured repeatedly in pictures, as emblem of the collaborative process.
The Sisters and the Movement

The women whose lives and creativity are examined in this exhibition were all vitally engaged in creating Pre-Raphaelite art. The roles they fulfilled included model, muse, studio manager, housekeeper and artist; most undertook more than one of these activities that were central to the success of a movement that is generally thought of as entirely dominated by men.

This exhibition takes twelve key women as its focus: Effie Gray Millais, Christina Rossetti, Elizabeth Siddal, Annie Miller, Fanny Cornforth, Joanna Boyce Wells, Fanny Eaton, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Maria Zambaco, Jane Morris, Marie Spartali Stillman and Evelyn De Morgan. The creative world to which they contributed spanned five decades, from 1850-1900, while the network of their life stories intertwined as they crossed between the creative roles available and found a place within the masculine art world of the time.
Effie Gray Millais
1828–1897

Born Euphemia (Effie) Gray in Perth, Effie married the art critic John Ruskin in 1848. As a watercolourist, she aimed to contribute to his work as an architectural historian. The Ruskins’ support for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood led them to commission John Everett Millais to paint *The Order of Release 1746*. For this, Millais asked Effie Ruskin to act as model for the Highland soldier’s wife. Millais and his brother were then invited to accompany the Ruskins to Scotland, when John Everett Millais would work on a portrait of Ruskin. In the course of their stay, Effie Ruskin’s marital unhappiness became clear.

The following year, Effie Ruskin obtained a legal annulment because the marriage was sexually unconsummated. In 1855 she married John Millais. Thereafter she effectively became his business partner, joining actively in research and production of his artworks, finding locations, sourcing costumes, keeping records and cultivating clients. This was in addition to managing household affairs and giving birth to eight children. She became Lady Millais in 1885 when her husband accepted a baronetcy.
**Effie Millais**  
By John Everett Millais

An expression of homage to their partnership, this portrait by John Everett Millais shows Effie Millais in her mid-forties, some months after the stillbirth of their eighth and last child. She holds the Cornhill magazine for August 1873, and points to a seasonal harvest image of threshing.

It hung in the breakfast room of the Millais’s Kensington mansion, built to demonstrate the wealth and status the couple had achieved. The picture foreshadows Effie’s social elevation as Lady Millais following the artist’s elevation to the baronetcy.

Oil on canvas, 1873  
Courtesy of Perth Museum and Art Gallery, Perth and Kinross Council, Scotland

**Study for The Eve of St Agnes**  
By John Everett Millais

John Keats’s poem in which Madeline disrobes at midnight was a favourite of the Pre-Raphaelite circle. Effie Millais and her husband read the poem together one wet afternoon in Scotland. For the painting they chose to work at the Jacobean mansion of Knole in Kent, where Effie posed in an unheated room on moonlit winter evenings, in ‘the severest task she ever undertook’ as model.

For the oil version a professional model was employed. Admired by J.M. Whistler as ‘a real painting, something completely artistic’, its cool nocturnal hues may have influenced his ‘White Girl’ paintings.

Watercolour, c.1863  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Wayside Refreshment
By John Everett Millais

Ink on paper, 1853
Private Collection

Highland Shelter
By John Everett Millais

Ink on paper, 1853
Private Collection

The Countess as Barber
By John Everett Millais

Pen & brown ink on wove paper, 1853
Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Purchased on the Fellows Fund

In Scotland, the Millais brothers entertained Effie Ruskin, playfully calling her the ‘Countess’. Drawn for amusement, these anecdotal sketches show moments from daily life during which John Everett Millais and Effie fell in love – as yet undeclared.

In *Wayside Refreshment*, Millais offers Effie a drink of water from the burn as a stagecoach passes on the road to Callander. *Highland Shelter* shows them sharing her tartan plaid in a rain shower. Having crushed his thumb building stepping stones *The Countess as Barber*, drawn on the same day as the rainy walk, showing Millais with a bandaged hand, as Effie trims his hair.
Sophie Gray
By John Everett Millais

Ellie Ruskin’s younger sister, Sophie Gray, acted as chaperone and go-between during the difficult weeks in London when the annulment of Ruskin’s marriage was being planned. With a similar portrait of a third sister, Alice Gray, this work was commissioned by siblings Joanna and George Boyce, and was inherited by Joanna’s grand-daughter. Her unconventional direct gaze seems strikingly modern.

Oil on paper laid on wood, 1857

Private Collection

The Order of Release 1746
By John Everett Millais

Effie Ruskin modelled as this Scottish woman securing the freedom of her wounded Jacobite husband. The incident was perhaps drawn from her reading the tale of a ‘common highlander’ from Perth, Effie’s home town, captured at the battle of Culloden.

She reported that the artist ‘found my head, like everyone else who has tried it, immensely difficult and he was greatly delighted last night when he said he had quite got it!’

Oil on canvas, 1852-3
Tate: Presented by Sir Henry Tate 1898
Effie with Foxgloves in her Hair (The Foxglove)
By John Everett Millais

Oil on millboard, 1853
National Trust Collections, Wightwick Manor (The Mander Collection)

Copy of The Foxgloves
By Effie Ruskin

Pencil and grey wash on paper, 1853
Private Collection

Ruskin wrote: ‘Wet weather again, but Millais has painted a beautiful study of Effie with foxgloves in her hair’. This was during the summer he and Effie spent with Millais and his brother in Scotland. She is shown stitching a red petticoat skirt for one of her sisters. Millais asked a year later ‘What am I to do with the little portrait I did of you with the foxgloves?’ when the Ruskin marriage was annulled. ‘I do not like to keep it after giving it him’. The painting remained with the sitter and her family. Owing to the rain, Millais gave Effie lessons in drawing. Her copy of the Foxglove portrait is signed with the initials ‘ER’.
**Garden Path with Rose Arch**
Ascribed to Effie Ruskin

This has long been attributed to Effie. The view leads the eye along a stone-flagged path through an arch of purple clematis to woodland beyond, in an accomplished style typical of Victorian garden painting.

Watercolour, no date
The Ruskin (Lancaster University)

**Effie Ruskin**
By Thomas Richmond

This portrait was commissioned by John Ruskin snr., Effie Ruskin’s then father-in-law. It shows a fashionable young wife in the conventional mode of the time. ‘It is the most lovely piece of oil painting but much prettier than me,’ she told her mother. ‘I look like a graceful doll, but John and his father are delighted with it’. The artist was paid £20 in wine from the Ruskin firm.

Oil on board, 1851
National Portrait Gallery. Given by Dr D.M. McDonald, 1977
Raised in an atmosphere of intense creativity and religious fervour, Christina Rossetti was sister to two members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, the artist Dante Gabriel and the writer and critic, William Michael. She posed for the figure of the young Virgin Mary in Gabriel Rossetti’s Ecce Ancilla Domini (1849–50), and contributed the finest poems to the Brotherhood’s magazine *The Germ*.

In 1858, Christina Rossetti started voluntary work at a home for girls thought to be sexually ‘at risk’, which prompted her masterpiece, the fantasy poem ‘Goblin Market’. Its theme is temptation and redemption.

She also published stories for children and nursery verses, as well as three poetic collections and several devotional works. Robert Browning, Algernon Swinburne and Lewis Carroll were among her literary admirers, together with a younger generation of women writers.

From her thirties, Rossetti’s health was impaired by a thyroid disorder. Her last years were spent caring for her brother Gabriel, then two elderly aunts and her mother.
Christina Rossetti
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This large portrait shows Christina at the age thirty-six, in contemplative mood, with an open book of verse. It marked the publication of her collection *The Prince’s Progress and Other Poems*. The image is notable for its compelling sobriety and lack of decorative detail.

Coloured chalks on paper, 1866
Private Collection

Ecce Ancilla Domini! (The Annunciation)
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

In the Annunciation, the Virgin Mary greets the archangel’s announcement that she is to be mother of the son of God with the words ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord!’

A key work from the early Pre-Raphaelite movement, the painting was the second by her brother to use Christina Rossetti’s features for Mary. It aptly reflects her lifelong religious devotion.

This combines Victorian piety with startling pictorial directness by depicting Mary in a nightgown and the angel as a muscular young man, naked beneath a shift. The composition was conceived as the left half of a diptych, but was never presented as such. It is notable for the all-white scheme that symbolizes Mary’s purity.

Oil on canvas, 1849-50
Tate: Purchased 1886
The Rossetti Family
By Lewis Carroll

In 1863, Lewis Carroll photographed the Rossetti family in the garden of Tudor House, at Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. Left to right they are: Christina Georgina, Dante Gabriel, Frances Lavinia, William Michael and Maria Rossetti. The photograph includes a rare image of Christina’s elder sister Maria, a scholar who later entered an Anglican convent.

‘It was our aim to appear in the full family group of five’, recalled Christina; ‘but that particular negative was spoiled by a shower [and] we appear as if splashed by ink.’ The streaks were caused during the development process. Carroll’s admiration for ‘Goblin Market’ influenced his Alice in Wonderland, for which she returned a humorous ‘thousand and one thanks – surely an appropriate number’ for the ‘conversational rabbit’ and ‘very sparkling dormouse’.

Albumen print, 1863
National Portrait Gallery, London
Christina Georgina Rossetti in a Tantrum
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

In childhood, Christina Rossetti was notorious for tempestuous outbursts, on one occasion ripping her arm with scissors, and as an adult she struggled to suppress ‘ebullitions’ of anger. This affectionate sketch depicts her in a comic rage, smashing table, chair, clock, mirror. The china elephant on the mantelpiece was an ornament in the Rossetti family home near Regent’s Park.

At odds with her literary reputation for emotional restraint and denial, it was inspired by a review in The Times newspaper praising her poetry as ‘work which could not easily be mended’.

Pen and wash on paper, 1862

National Trust Collections,
Wightwick Manor (The Mander Collection)
Mrs Frances Rossetti
By Christina Rossetti

In the early days of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Dante Gabriel Rossetti urged everyone to draw. This careful profile study of their mother is one of Christina Rossetti’s achievements.

Frances Rossetti (1800–86) was born in Britain to an Italian father and an English mother. Her husband was the Italian poet and political exile Gabriele Rossetti. A teacher by profession, Frances had ‘a passion for intellect’ and sought excellence for all her four children, wishing later they also had good sense and sound judgement in their adult lives.

Pencil on paper, June 1853
Jane Cohen

Christina Rossetti aged 16
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This brotherly portrait records an unexpectedly fashionable coiffure, with chignon and ringlets. It was drawn to mark Christina Rossetti’s first volume of poetry, entitled Verses ‘composed from the ages of twelve to sixteen’, which launched her literary career.

It is inscribed to Christina Rossetti’s lifelong friend Amelia Heimann, wife of the professor who taught German to the Rossetti siblings.

Drawing, 1846
Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Given by Mrs Moeller
Cross with flowers
By Christina Rossetti

As the years progressed, Christina Rossetti’s religious meditations increased. Theological studies led her to produce several books of devotional writings, together with this design, drawn at her mother’s suggestion while visiting her sister Maria in the All Saints convent. The flowers symbolize the Virgin Mary’s purity, the thorns represent Christ’s suffering, and the Easter promise of resurrection.

Ink on paper, 1875

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library

In an Artist’s Studio

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One self-same figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens:
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer greens,
A saint, an angel – every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is but as she fills his dream.
1856
Christina Rossetti’s Manuscript Book ‘In an Artist’s Studio’

Confirming her vocation as ‘the poet in the family’, Christina Rossetti’s completed poems were copied out in small notebooks. ‘In an Artist’s Studio’ describes her brother’s apartment near Blackfriars Bridge, with its numerous images of Elizabeth Siddal. There, in 1855, Ford Madox Brown saw a ‘drawerful … God knows how many’.

This is notable for its cool assessment of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s obsession with the here unnamed Siddal, ‘not as she is, but as she fills his dream’. Christina’s sonnet was omitted from her first collection in 1862, no doubt owing to the fact that Lizzie had just died.

1856
The British Library
Goblin Market and Other Poems
By Christina Rossetti

Dante Gabriel Rossetti drew two illustrations for the poetic collection containing Christina Rossetti’s masterpiece, ‘Goblin Market’. The frontispiece shows Laura cutting a curl of her golden hair to purchase goblin fruits; the title page depicts sisters Laura and Lizzie asleep in each other’s arms.

The themes of sisterly affection and moral redemption were important to Christina Rossetti, who 1858 began voluntary work at a residential home for young women considered to be sexually ‘at risk’. Goblin Market has inspired many later artists, notably Arthur Rackham and the Japanese-American artist, Kinuko Craft.

Published 1862 (second edition 1865)
The Death of King Arthur
After a design by Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Drawn by Dante Gabriel Rossetti to illustrate Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s poem about the death of King Arthur, who lay, ‘dozing in the vale of Avalon / and watch’d by weeping queens’. The over-crowded composition shows the recumbent king, attended by ten queens. The second on the left was based on Christina Rossetti, and the figure with the uplifted face, on Elizabeth Siddal.

The poems of Tennyson proved a key Pre-Raphaelite sourcebook.

Wood engraving, 1857
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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Published 1862 (second edition 1865)
Christina Rossetti and Frances Mary Lavinia Rossetti
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This was drawn when Christina Rossetti and her mother cared for Gabriel during a psychotic episode. She described her brother as sunk ‘in an attitude of dreadful dejection with drooping head.’ The gloomy mood of the image matches that of the sitters and the artist.

Christina’s own low spirits are expressed in her poem ‘Summer is Ended’: ‘To think that this meaningless thing was ever a rose / Scentless, colourless, this! Will it ever be thus (who knows) / Thus with our bliss / If we wait till the close?’

Working on the double portrait helped bring about recovery for Gabriel, who by the year’s end returned to painting and poetry.

Chalk on paper, 1877
National Portrait Gallery.
Given by the sitter’s brother, William Michael Rossetti, 1895
Elizabeth Siddal
1829–1862

The daughter of a cutler with a shop in Southwark, Elizabeth Siddal, familiarly known as Lizzie, entered the Pre-Raphaelite world by modelling for Walter Deverell, an associate of the Brotherhood. She posed for William Holman Hunt, John Millais and others before becoming Gabriel Rossetti’s model and muse. Tall and pale, with auburn hair and a pronounced overbite, she was not then considered attractive, but images such as Millais’s *Ophelia* and Rossetti’s delicate drawings fashioned a new concept of beauty.

As an aspiring artist, Siddal was the sole female exhibitor in the 1857 Pre-Raphaelite exhibition that toured to the United States. Inspired by the poetry of Tennyson and Browning, as well as late medieval Border ballads, her watercolour works were made on a small scale, suitable for illustration.

After a long engagement, Siddal married Rossetti in 1860, and formed new friendships with Jane Morris, Georgiana Burne-Jones and Joanna Boyce Wells. In 1861, her daughter was stillborn, leading to post-natal depression and death from an opiate overdose. Having laid his manuscript poems in her coffin, Rossetti later retrieved them, offering the justification that ‘art was the only thing for which she felt seriously [and] had it been possible, I should have found the book on my pillow the night she was buried.’
Elizabeth Siddal at Hastings
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This portrait was drawn in the lodging at Hastings where Siddal and Rossetti stayed in summer 1854 (see her nearby drawing, *Lovers Listening to Music*.) Siddal’s withdrawn gaze confirms her characteristic ‘attitude of reserve’. Six years and some heartbreak later, the couple returned to Hastings, to marry.

Pen and ink on paper, 1854
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddals

In this neat reversal of the usual gender roles of artist and model, Siddal is shown drawing Rossetti’s portrait, as he sits awkwardly on a couple of chairs, beneath an oil lamp.

Lithographic print after ink sketch by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1853

National Portrait Gallery D9348
Lovers listening to Music
By Elizabeth Siddal

The unidentified subject of this drawing may relate to Alfred Lord Tennyson’s poem ‘The Day-Dream’, which both Siddal and Rossetti illustrated in 1854–5.

And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world which is the old:
Across the hills, and far away.

The landscape suggests the coastal path near Hastings. William Rossetti stated that the male figure was drawn from his brother Gabriel. The attendant musicians are unexplained.

Pencil, pen and ink on paper, 1854
National Trust Collections, Wightwick Manor (The Mander Collection)
Viola and Olivia
By Walter Howell Deverell

This scene from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night* shows Elizabeth Siddal as Viola, dressed as Cesario, asking to see Olivia’s face as she declares she would ‘Make me a willow cabin at your gate … Halloo your name to the reverberate hills / And make the babbling gossip of the air / Cry out “Olivia!”’

‘However defective in technique’, the etching held a likeness of Siddal, wrote William Rossetti. ‘This face does not give much idea of hers, and yet it is not unlike her in a way.’

The British Library, London

Strands of Elizabeth Siddal’s Hair

In keeping with Victorian mourning customs, strands of Siddal’s auburn hair were cut after death and distributed as mementoes. This, pinned to Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s note, was inherited and preserved by the Rossetti family. It acquired a further melancholy resonance when the exhumation of her coffin in 1869 became known, but is not connected with that event.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
‘At Last’
Manuscript of poem by Elizabeth Siddal

After Elizabeth Siddal’s death in 1862, several draft poems were found by her husband, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who added the poem’s title when planning to publish them. ‘How full of beauty they are, but how painful – how they bring poor Lizzie herself before one, with her voice, face and manner,’ wrote his sister Christina Rossetti. ‘Do you not think that, beautiful as they are, they are almost too hopelessly sad for publication?’

‘At Last’ is in the ballad mode, with archaic, Anglo-Scots diction. Elegaic laments were popular in Victorian poetry, so the expression may not be personal.

Brown ink on laid paper, c.1860–1
The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
Bequeathed by John Bryson, 1977
At Last’
O Mother, open the window wide
And let the daylight in;
The hills grow darker to my sight
And thoughts begin to swim.
And Mother dear, take my young son,
Since I was born of thee
And care for all [its] little ways
And nurse it on your knee.
And Mother, wash my pale pale hands
And then bind up my feet;
My body may no longer rest
Out of its winding sheet.
And Mother dear, take a sapling twig
And green grass newly mown,
And lay it on my empty bed
That my sorrow be not known.

By Elizabeth Siddal, c.1860–1
The Macbeths
By Elizabeth Siddal

This drawing illustrates the dramatic moment in Shakespeare’s play Macbeth when, after the killing of King Duncan, Lady Macbeth demands ‘Give me the daggers’ and returns to Duncan’s room to smear his grooms with blood, ‘For it must seem their guilt’.

It is one of Elizabeth Siddal’s most emotionally charged scenes. Macbeth’s twisted posture expresses irresolution and fear, while his wife appears full of murderous resolve.

Pen and brush, Indian ink with scratching out on paper, c.1855-60
The Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.
Presented by John Bryson, 1937
Lady affixing Pennant to a Knight’s Spear
By Elizabeth Siddal

Elizabeth Siddal and Dante Gabriel Rossetti spent most of 1858 in Derbyshire, where he painted a medieval scene of ladies and knights entitled Before the Battle. This work suggests a companion piece, possibly ‘Before the Tournament’ as the pennant is being fixed to a lance.

Squire and horse wait outside the castle door, in a landscape that suggests the Peak District. The scene may have been inspired by Haddon Hall in Derbyshire, with its medieval great hall.

Watercolour on paper, c.1856
Tate: Bequeathed by W.C. Alexander 1917

Elizabeth Siddal
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

When Elizabeth Siddal went to pose for Rossetti, the pictorial transformation that began with Ophelia continued through his exquisite colour works and delicate drawings. Madox Brown noted the ‘matchless beauty’ of Rossetti’s many drawings of Siddal, declaring ‘it is like a monomania with him.’ This small profile portrait depicts her copper-coloured hair, prized by the Pre-Raphaelites despite contemporary disdain, and her very pale skin and eye-lashes.

Graphite and watercolour on paper, c.1854
Delaware Art Museum, F. V. du Pont Acquisition Fund, 1985
Ophelia
By John Everett Millais

This autograph replica of the Millais’s renowned work shows Elizabeth Siddal as the drowning *Ophelia* from Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, having fallen from a willow branch ‘into the weeping brook’.

Lying in a tin bath as the candles that warmed the water went out, Siddal grew increasingly cold. A ‘foundation myth’ of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, this episode testifies to her commitment to artistic practice. It continues to inspire artists and authors.

Watercolour with gouache on paper, 1865-6
Private Collection

Twelfth Night Act II, Scene IV
By Walter Howell Deverell

The characters are shown in a scene from Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*. Feste the jester sings to Count Orsino, as Viola listens, disguised as the page boy, Cesario.

This was Elizabeth Siddal’s first modelling role, dressed as Viola/Cesario. Her auburn hair and pale skin are accurately rendered. Gabriel Rossetti was the model for Feste, and Deverell used his own features for those of Orsino.

Oil on canvas, 1850
Private Collection
These two illustrations were made by Elizabeth Siddal for a projected edition of *Border Ballads* based on Walter Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.

The ballad ‘Sir Patrick Spens’ relates how the ship carrying Scottish lords to Norway is wrecked in a storm.: ‘O lang, lang may the ladies sit / With their fans into their hand / Before they see Sir Patrick Spens Come sailing to the strand!’ The group of women and children is carefully drawn and the setting suggests an English coastal site.

In ‘Clerk Saunders’, having been killed by her brothers, Margaret’s lover Saunders returns as a ghost to claim his bride. Margaret re-affirms her love and follows to join him in the grave. Later, Burne-Jones depicted the same ballad in a very similar composition.
Annie Miller
1835–1925

The daughter of a soldier, Annie Miller grew up in poverty, in the back streets of Chelsea, close to Holman Hunt’s studio. Aged eighteen, she posed for the figure of a remorseful ‘fallen woman’ in his *The Awakening Conscience*. He then paid for her to be educated in literacy and manners suitable for a wife.

During Hunt’s travels in Egypt and Syria in 1854–6, she posed for John Millais, Gabriel Rossetti, Arthur Hughes, Charles Collins and others. ‘She is a good girl and behaves herself very properly’, Millais reported. In 1859, Hunt ended their engagement, on the grounds of her frivolity and ‘wilfulness’. Fearing she would ‘fall to the lowest’, he offered assisted emigration, which she rejected in favour of modelling. ‘She looks more beautiful than ever,’ remarked George Boyce.

When she encountered Rossetti and Henry Wells at the International Exhibition in 1862, she was ‘looking very handsome’. Her escort was an officer in the Volunteer Reserve Army and cousin of Lord Ranelagh named Thomas Thompson, whom she married the following year. With a daughter and a son, the couple moved to Richmond-on-Thames and then to the south coast, where she died aged ninety, a notable example of having ‘risen’ in the social scale.
Annie Miller
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This portrait dates from around 1860, when Annie Miller modelled for several artists, including Gabriel Rossetti, in the period between the end of her engagement to Holman Hunt and her marriage to Captain Ranelagh Thompson. It conveys a bold and confident spirit.

Pen and ink on paper, c.1860
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm

The Awakening Conscience
By William Holman Hunt

Dressed in her nightgown, this young woman is shown to be living an immoral life as the sexual partner of a wealthy gentleman. The songsheet on the piano is a reminder of youthful innocence that fills her with regret. In Victorian society, promiscuity was publicly condemned although here, Holman Hunt places the blame on the man rather than the ‘fallen woman’.

This was the first painting for which Annie Miller posed. It is likely that as a poor, uneducated and very pretty girl, she was at risk of being seduced into the kind of life illustrated here.

Oil on canvas, 1853
Tate: Presented by Sir Colin and Lady Anderson through the Friends of the Tate Gallery 1976
The Violet’s Message
By John Everett Millais

While Holman Hunt was travelling in the Middle East, he allowed Annie Miller to pose for his friends. Millais depicted her in two small ‘cabinet’ pictures that invite the viewer’s interpretation.

Here, a young woman opens a love letter containing a pressed violet, a flower signifying modesty and faithfulness. Millais altered the colour of the model’s hair, as this was not intended as a portrait.

Oil on panel, 1854
Private Collection

Woman in Yellow
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

When Holman Hunt cancelled his engagement to Annie Miller, she was without support and so approached other artists for modelling work. She was ‘determined on sitting again in preference to doing anything else,’ and ’more beautiful than ever,’ according to George Boyce. Soon afterwards she introduced the artists to her husband-to-be, Captain Thompson, and subsequently she left the artworld behind.

Watercolour on paper, 1863
Tate: Bequeathed by Beresford Rimington Heaton 1940
Il Dolce far niente
By William Holman Hunt

The title translates as ‘sweet to do nothing’ or ‘Sweet Idleness’. With an expression of contentment, the figure stretches before a fire seen reflected in the mirror. The enclosed space and warm colour harmonies convey an atmosphere of comfort.

Hunt criticised Miller’s alleged liking for leisure, and it is not hard to recognise her luxuriant hair, here painted brown rather than blonde.

Oil on canvas, 1866, retouched 1874–5
Private Collection, c/o Grant Ford Ltd

The Flaming Heart
Attributed to Charles Fairfax Murray after Dante Gabriel Rossetti

A signed and dated replica of Rossetti’s Helen of Troy (1863), showing Annie Miller as ‘the face that launched a thousand ships’ with ships and the city burning behind her. When acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum, it was attributed to Charles Fairfax Murray, but the original was not available for him to copy, so this is very probably a version by Rossetti’s hand. The date suggests it could have been given to Miller on her marriage. It re-appeared anonymously near the time of her death.

Oil on panel, c.1863
The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon, 1937
Fanny Cornforth - Clockwise from left

Model, Lover

Fanny Cornforth
1835–1909

Born Sarah Cox into a blacksmith’s family in Sussex, she adopted the name Fanny after her sister who had died in infancy. She met the artists Gabriel Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown and Edward Burne-Jones when visiting the Surrey Pleasure Gardens in London; Fanny recalled, ‘Rossetti gave my hair a flick with his finger as if it were an accident, and it all tumbled down’. She posed for Rossetti, George Boyce and other artists in roles ranging from a ‘fallen woman’ to the sorceresss Sidonia von Bork.

Fanny Cornforth had ‘the most lovely blonde hair, of a harvest-yellow tint’, and inspired Rossetti’s poem ‘Jenny’: ‘Lazy laughing languid Jenny / Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea’. In 1860, when Rossetti married Elizabeth Siddal, Fanny married Timothy Hughes (also known as Cornforth). After Siddal’s death she moved in with Rossetti.

For over a decade she sat for many of his sensuous ‘stunners’, and he supported her until 1877. Fanny Cornforth then married widower John Schott, and when in the late 1890s she developed dementia, Schott’s sister arranged for her care. She died in Sussex, in a Poor Law infirmary.
Fanny Cornforth

**Found**
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This is the first picture for which Fanny Cornforth posed. She is cast by Rossetti as a ‘fallen woman’ discovered in the city street at dawn. As she recalled, ‘he put my head against the wall and drew it for the head in the “calf picture”.’ As a result, Cornforth was retrospectively identified as a prostitute.

Conceived alongside Holman Hunt’s Awakening Conscience, seen in the adjacent room, the unfinished scene illustrates the common belief that country girls coming to the city, were seduced and then abandoned to prostitution. Here, the woman’s village sweetheart, taking his livestock to market, seeks to rescue her from ruin.

Oil on canvas, 1859
Delaware Art Museum, Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Memorial, 1935
Fanny Cornforth
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

In 1874, Fanny Cornforth reached the age of thirty-nine. This likeness, in the delicate pastel format popular with portrait clients, is somewhat glamorised but also shows Cornforth in her maturity, as ‘a pre-eminently fine woman’.

It was drawn when Rossetti’s fragile mental state led him to fear he could no longer paint and therefore could not support Cornforth financially. This and a second portrait showing her luxuriant hair more neatly braided, were the last he made. Both were probably gifted as potentially saleable assets. Cornforth exhibited them together in 1882, and later sold them to Fairfax Murray.

Coloured chalks, 1874
Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on behalf of Birmingham City Council
The Blue Bower
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

In the 1860s, moral views had changed making acceptable alluring, bold women who directly engage the viewer with their gaze. Cornforth then became a favoured model in this newer ‘Venetian courtesan’ style. Here, with a musical instrument based on a Japanese koto, she gazes boldly at the viewer. Oriental-style tiles augment the exotic theme and foreground cornflowers evoke Fanny’s name.

One viewer in 1883 described her as a ‘Nasty, common-looking creature’, echoing the hostile attitude to Fanny that prevailed within a year of Rossetti’s death. He described the work as ‘an oil picture all blue’, cobalt and ultramarine are heightened by sensuous flesh tones and sumptuous green silk, creating a triumphant exercise in the emerging Aesthetic manner.

Oil on canvas, 1865
The Henry Barber Trust, the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, University of Birmingham
Woman’s Head
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This portrait shows Fanny Cornforth’s naturally handsome appearance aged around thirty-two, enhanced by the plump lips and naked elongated neck that were erotic attributes in this Pre-Raphaelite phase. She wears an earring seen in other drawings of her.

Coloured chalk on paper, 1867
National Trust Collections, Standen House and Garden (The Grogan Collection)

Sidonia von Bork 1560
By Edward Burne-Jones

This illustrates the evil Sidonia, sorceress or ‘Amber Witch’, from a popular Gothic novel. Fanny Cornforth posed for the figure, her luxuriant blonde hair caught in a net whose links are magnified in the interlacing knot-bands on her dress. It was painted as a companion piece to the image of Sidonia’s virtuous cousin Clara seen in a later section of the exhibition.

A version of the dress, which was probably made by Georgiana Burne-Jones, was later worn by Georgiana and Edward’s granddaughter Angela Thirkell.

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 1860
Tate: Bequeathed by W. Graham Robertson 1948
Angela Thirkell by John Copperfield, 1910s

Wearing a version of the dress worn by Fanny Cornforth in Sidonia von Bork 1560.

© National Portrait Gallery, London
Thoughts of the Past
By John Roddam Spencer Stanhope

Fanny Cornforth is shown here modelling for her second ‘fallen woman’ role, in a shabby room overlooking the Thames. The man’s gloves and stick on the floor indicate a departing client, while the coins and woman’s nightwear convey her moral degradation. The title invokes regret for lost innocence.

Spencer Stanhope’s studio was in the same riverside building as Rossetti’s. He has given his model a hollow-eyed appearance in keeping with contemporary opinion of the fate ascribed to a prostitute. A friend or relative would not be asked to pose for such a scene.

Oil on canvas, c.1859
Tate: Presented by Mrs F. Evans 1918

Fanny Cornforth
Photographed by W. & D. Downey

This photograph was taken in the garden of Rossetti’s house in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, using a full-length mirror brought outdoors. This was where his brother William and the poet Algernon Swinburne were fellow residents, along with Cornforth.

The dual aspect pose, incorporating a reflected profile, was popular in both painting and photography.

Gelatin silver print copied from original albumen print of June 1863
Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum
Letter from Fanny Cornforth to Samuel Bancroft, Jun.

January 1, 1901

Written by Fanny Cornforth to businessman Samuel Bancroft, Jun, whose collection launched the Delaware Art Museum, this is from their correspondence in the later years of her life, after the deaths of Rossetti and her second husband John Schott.

Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Pre-Raphaelite Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library and Archives, Delaware Art Museum

9 Kilmarsh Road
Hammersmith, W.
Jan. 1st 1901

Dear Mr Bancroft,

Very many thanks for the kind present and the cheque for 5.0,0 [£5], it is indeed kind to think of me and, I am very grateful, you will be pleased to know I have spent a very pleasant Xmas with Mrs Hill (poor Freddy’s friend), who lives in the Hammersmith Road, it was a nice change for me, on my return home I found your kind letter with cheque, which will be a great help to me through the winter months.

I will write you again later on after perusing (?) the Book of Rossetti’s [Rossetti’s] Life. Again thanking you for all kindness

Believe me yours
Very sincerely
Fanny Schott
Graylingwell Case-book, Sarah Hughes 1907–8
By an unknown photographer

This is the patient register from the Graylingwell Asylum in Chichester, West Sussex. It contains the record of Fanny Cornforth’s admission in 1907, aged seventy-two, suffering from dementia. The asylum was a Poor Law hospital for those without their own means.

Her name was given as ‘Sarah Hughes’, as it had been from 1860-1872 while married to Timothy Hughes. The accompanying photograph confirms the record that on admission, Fanny was physically robust but was often agitated and upset. When she died in Graylingwell in 1909, no-one there knew her history or her connection with the art world.

West Sussex Record Office
Lady Lilith
After Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This is a full-colour print by the Medici Society of the first version of this composition, for which Cornforth modelled. The original is now in the Delaware Art Museum. The head of Lilith was later re-painted with Alexa Wilding’s features rather than Cornforth.

In Hebrew lore, Lilith was the name of Adam’s first wife, who in western culture became symbolic of the bewitching sexuality of a femme fatale – as replayed in Goethe’s ‘Faust’ and Keats’s ‘Lamia’.

Chromolithograph, published 1908
Given by The Medici Society Ltd, 1910
The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (PRB) was formed by a group of young British artists, active in the middle of the nineteenth century. They aimed to return to the sincerity of feeling and simplicity of style of the so-called ‘Italian primitives’ with the use of bright colour and flat perspective. The PRB favoured the realistic rendering of people and scenes from nature. As their membership and influence grew and tastes changed, often in response to moral attitudes in society, some of the founding principles expanded to include other styles.

This room introduces some of the men who were key to the PRB and whose names appear most frequently in this exhibition as artists, husbands, business partners and brothers to the Pre-Raphaelite women.
Details from images of:

**Ford Madox Brown**
By W. & D. Downey, c.1864

**Sir John Everett Millais,**
By Fradelle & Marshall, c.1875

**William Holman Hunt**
By Elliott & Fry, 1865

**William De Morgan**
By Walter Stoneman, for James Russell & Sons, c.1916

**George Price Boyce**
By Cundall, Downes & Co, published 1864

**John Roddam Spencer Stanhope**
By Lewis Carroll, 1857

**William Michael Rossetti**
By Julia Margaret Cameron, 19 July 1865

**William Morris**
By Abel Lewis, April 1880

**John Ruskin**
By Elliott & Fry, 1867

**Edward Burne-Jones**
By Elliott & Fry, c.1885
The Burne-Jones and Morris Families
By Federick Hollyer, 1874

This photograph is from a sequence taken in the garden of the Burne-Jones’s home in west London.

From left to right:

The Burne-Jones family: Richard Jones (father of Edward), Margaret, Edward, Philip and Georgiana Burne-Jones.

The Morris family: May, William, Jane and Jenny Morris

© National Portrait Gallery, London
Patron, Husband, Critic

**John Ruskin**
**1819–1900**

One of the most influential writers of the Victorian period. First husband of Effie Gray, patron of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Elizabeth Siddal and other women artists. As a critic, he recognized Joanna Boyce Wells’s talent.

Brother, Writer

**William Michael Rossetti**
**1829–1919**

Founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, brother to Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. He had almost no leanings towards painting, but acted as Secretary to the PRB and editor of its journal, *The Germ.*
The Brotherhood

Artist, Poet, Husband, Lover, Brother

Dante Gabriel Rossetti
1828–1882

Brother to Christina Rossetti, founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, also associated with Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. Married Elizabeth Siddal, had long relationships with Fanny Cornforth and Jane Morris.

Artist, Husband

John Everett Millais
1829–96

In 1848 together with William Holman Hunt and Dante Gabriel Rossetti he formed the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood (1848). Married Effie Gray in 1855.
William Holman Hunt
1827–1910

Founding member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and throughout his life adhered to Pre-Raphaelite principles. Discovered and promoted Annie Miller as an artist’s model. Published his autobiographical *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* in 1905.

Edward Burne-Jones
1833–98

Painter and designer who joined his close friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Morris and others painting murals for the Oxford Union. Founding member of Morris & Co. Married Georgiana Macdonald, friend of John Ruskin. Lover of Maria Zambaco.
Artist, Friend, Uncle

John Roddam Stanhope Spencer
1829–1908


Brother, Artist, Friend

George Price Boyce
1826–97

Landscape painter and brother and supporter of Joanna Boyce Wells. Close friend of Fanny Cornforth and patron of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
Artist, Teacher, Friend

Ford Madox Brown
1821–93

Close friend of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, founding partner of Morris & Co. Tutor and mentor to Georgiana Burne-Jones and Marie Spartali Stillman.

Designer, Poet, Artist, Socialist, Husband

William Morris
1834–96

Henry Tanworth Wells
1828–1903

As an artist, he exhibited at the Royal Academy from the age of eighteen and was associated with the Pre-Raphaelite circle. He married Joanna Boyce in 1857 and promoted her reputation after her death.

William De Morgan
1839–1917

Married Evelyn Pickering, close friend of the Morris family. Established his first pottery in Chelsea in 1871, subsequently developing lustre glazes for which his pottery is famous. In his sixties De Morgan embarked on a second career as a novelist.
Joanna Boyce Wells
1840–1861

One of the most accomplished artists in the Pre-Raphaelite circle, Joanna Boyce was encouraged to paint by her businessman father, artist brother, George Boyce, and husband, Henry Wells.

Her first major success was with the painting Elgiva, shown at the Royal Academy of Arts in 1855, followed by studying in Paris at the atelier of Thomas Couture. The meticulous approach of the Pre-Raphaelites was not the style favoured by Couture. Boyce reported: ‘He complains of my being slow and says I ought to paint a whole figure in one day! only fancy the horror of a P.R.B. … I am provoked for though I wish to paint more quickly, I hate slovenly drawing.’

She married Henry Wells during a visit to Italy in 1857–8, after which the couple created an artistic partnership in Britain. Asserting her ability, she declared: ‘I have a talent and with it the constant impulse to employ it.’ This was ‘God-given proof’ of power, ‘and no man has a right to say that that warning is to be unheeded.’ In Elizabeth Siddal’s opinion, Joanna was ‘the head of the firm’ that was the Wells Partnership. To Gabriel Rossetti she was ‘a marvellously gifted artist’ who would have reached great heights. She died of obstetric fever after the birth of her third child.
Dress Bodice
Made and worn by Joanna Boyce Wells

This bodice is made of black silk, with orange and gold braid, and wide sleeves with contrasting linings. It was designed and probably stitched by Joanna Boyce Wells. It was worn with a black silk skirt, chiffon chemise and full undersleeves, as seen in Henry Wells’s portrait of his wife (shown here). Together, both the bodice and the portrait have been passed down the family and are shown here for the first time.

c.1859–61
Tim and Philip Jackson

Joanna Wells
By Henry Tanworth Wells

Begun with sittings in 1859, this work was put aside, but later resumed as Henry Wells created visual memorials of his wife. It shows her wearing the black silk dress with orange-lined sleeves shown nearby.

The portrait conveys a confident, thoughtful personality. ‘She was probably conscious of power,’ wrote William Rossetti, ‘but quite free from self-applause’, instead regarding her achievement as a spur to greater ambition.

Oil on canvas, 1859–62
Tim and Philip Jackson
Portable Sketching Paintbox  
Owned by Joanna Boyce Wells, 1861–5

This is a pochade box or portable paint palette used for sketches of landscapes, which could be later copied onto canvas. The kit includes oil paints in tubes and several small plywood boards, on which are seen the artist’s last outdoor studies, sketched in the Surrey hills. As with other possessions, the box has been handed down the generations of Joanna Boyce Wells’s descendants.

Private Collection

Elgiva  
By Joanna Boyce Wells

Using a family friend as model, the painting depicts the Anglo-Saxon queen Elgiva or Aelfgifu, who was forcibly divorced, disfigured to destroy her beauty and finally murdered. She is shown here just before her face was burnt with a branding iron. The ‘slight arch of the lip seems to begin to quiver and the eyes fill with ineffable sadness’, John Ruskin wrote, who also praised the ‘beautiful imagination of faint but pure colour’.

The early English theme and the simplicity of the treatment could both be described as quintessential Pre-Raphaelite.

Oil on canvas, 1855
Private Collection
The Departure: An Episode of the Child’s Crusade, 12th Century
By Joanna Boyce Wells

This depicts an imagined incident as a mother bids farewell to boys leaving on a crusade to Jerusalem, blessed by a priest. The background was painted in the Umbrian hill town of Todi in 1857.

Echoing a traditional ‘Holy Family’ composition, the subject conveys early Pre-Raphaelite piety teamed with emotional drama. When exhibited, it was praised by the critics as a ‘refreshing change from the usual scenes from Shakespeare’.

Oil on canvas, 1857–61
The Dr Dennis T. Lanigan Collection

Self-portrait
By Joanna Boyce Wells

This self-portrait was painted when the artist was twenty, as a gift for her father. The meticulous brushwork follows that of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, while the luminous aspects show the influence of French painting.

The profile pose required deft use of mirrors, and the delicate rendering of skin through muslin demonstrates great skill, in keeping with the quite confidence of pose and expression.

Oil on canvas, 1852
Private Collection
Sidney Wells
By Joanna Boyce Wells

This is a tender, unsentimental portrait of the artist’s son Sidney (1859-69) in his first year. Calling him ‘a new sort of baby – my own peculiar and exquisite invention’, she was delighted by ‘his large eyes, dear round little face, his briskness and his intelligence’. All of these qualities are effectively captured in paint and enhanced by the delicate depiction of quilted bib and blue bows. Sadly, Sidney died in childhood. His portrait was presented to the Tate by the artist’s great-granddaughter, herself a painter.

Oil on canvas, 1859
Tate: Presented by Anne Christopherson 1996 to celebrate the Tate Gallery Centenary 1997

Thou Bird of God
By Joanna Boyce Wells

This small, exquisite painting of a child with auburn hair blown by the wind, is given deeper resonance by the angelic wings. The title is from Robert Browning’s poem inspired by the painting Angelo Custode by Guercino (1591–1666). The poet imagines himself in the image: ‘And suddenly my head is covered o’er / with those wings, white above the child ... – and I shall feel thee guarding me.’ According to critics, ‘the tenderly painted head’ displayed the artist’s ‘powers to a fine pitch’.

Oil on card, 1861
Private Collection
Joanna Wells on her Deathbed
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

On Joanna Wells’s death in summer 1861, her husband asked their friend Dante Gabriel Rossetti to draw a final portrait, as was often customary. Rossetti said that she was ‘a great artist’ sadly sacrificed to childbirth. The result was ‘a most wonderful and beautiful study’ according to Joanna’s artist brother, who himself ‘could do nothing, my eyes being blinded with tears’.

The portrait was then photographed, to make prints to share with family and friends. This proved fortunate, as the drawing was destroyed during the Second World War, leaving this print as the only record.

Unmounted cabinet card, 1861
Private Collection
Born Fanny Matilda Antwistle in Jamaica, she travelled with her mother to Britain where she found work as a servant and in 1857 met Londoner James Eaton, a cart and cab driver. In 1859–60 she modelled for Rebecca and Simeon Solomon and Albert Moore, as well as posing for students at the Royal Academy of Arts.

Eaton soon became the first choice for artists depicting female characters in Biblical, Egyptian, Indian and other ‘exotic’ scenes. She sat for Madox Brown, Gabriel Rossetti, John Millais and Joanna Wells, who aimed to cast Eaton as the Libyan Sibyl. Rossetti praised her dark hair, distinct features and ‘very fine figure’.

Several of the Eatons’ ten children also featured in paintings: as the baby Moses and infants of an enslaved mother. Widowed in 1881, she later worked as a cook-housekeeper in Hammersmith, and died in west London at the age of eighty-nine. Discovering her existence through family research, her descendant Brian Eaton has traced her life and career through documents and artworks.
The Young Teacher
By Rebecca Solomon

With her dark hair and skin, Fanny Eaton modelled for figures of varied heritage. Here she is cast as an Indian nanny or ayah, women who were frequently employed by white British families during the period of colonial rule. She and her charges are looking at an illustrated volume, with pictures similar to the print on the wall behind them. The title of this work was humorously intended: according to a contemporary viewer, in the scene ‘a girl of twelve is teaching an ayah and a younger sister’.

The artist Rebecca Solomon (1832-1886) was best known for theatrical subjects. Fanny Eaton also modelled for Rebecca’s brother Simeon Solomon (see The Mother of Moses nearby) and for her friendly rival Joanna Wells.

Oil on canvas, 1861
Private Collection

The Mother of Moses
By Simeon Solomon

Cast here as Jochabed, Fanny Eaton is the character in the centre of the Biblical drama as she prepares to entrust her newborn baby, Moses, to the Nile, laid in the wicker basket held by his sister Miriam. The scene is set during the Jewish captivity in Egypt, with a pyramid in the distance. Eaton’s own son James, who was born early in 1860, probably posed as Moses. ‘A more touching, a more impressive domestic group it would almost be impossible to imagine’, wrote a contemporary critic, adding that all aspects of the painting were ‘excellent’.

Oil on canvas, 1860
Delaware Art Museum, Bequest of Robert Louis Isaacson, 1999
Study of Fanny Eaton
By Joanna Boyce Wells

Intended as a study for an unrealised larger painting, this profile head shows Fanny Eaton wearing a pearl earring and the artist’s own muslin shawl. Her notes record the paint layers for the skin tones followed by ‘a tint composed of madder brown, raw sienna and Naples yellow varied with madder, carmine and white.’ When exhibited, the picture was praised as ‘exceedingly grand’, despite its small size.

Oil on paper, 1861
Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund

Mother of Sisera
By Albert Moore

Here Fanny Eaton poses as the unnamed woman in the Bible story who vainly watched for her warrior son to return from battle against Israel’s army. ‘The mother of Sisera looked out at a window, and cried through the lattice, ‘Why is his chariot so long in coming?’ (Judges 5:28). Victorian viewers would have known the story in which Sisera was killed by Jael, the heroine who drove a tent-peg through his skull.

Albert Moore (1841-1893) was one of the young artists for whom Eaton modelled in 1859-60. His painting was described in a review as a ‘clever and singularly characteristic study of the head of an Arab woman’.

Oil on canvas, 1861
Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.
Bequeathed by Emily and Gordon Bottomley, 1949
The Pearl of Great Price
By John Everett Millais

This drawing illustrates the Biblical parable:

‘The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it’ (Matthew 13: 45-46).

The dramatic focus on the entwined arms conveys the heart of the exchange. The image was first published in Good Words (1863).

As the most sought-after model for Semitic or north African female figures, Fanny Eaton was drawn as the servant holding the donkey, depicted with artistic licence rather younger than she was in life.

Pen and ink and watercolour, c.1860
British Museum, 1900, 0411.6
**Portrait of Mrs Fanny Eaton**  
By Simeon Solomon

This is one of the earliest surviving images of Fanny Eaton, for which she posed - possibly at a life drawing class - on 7 November 1859 as noted on the drawing. It was drawn as a study by Simeon Solomon (1840-1905) for his painting of Eaton as the mother of Moses, in the adjacent canvas. Both figures share a downcast gaze.

Graphite on paper, 1859
The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge.  
Bequeathed by Guy John Fenton Knowle, 1959

**Study for a Sibyl**  
By Joanna Boyce Wells

According to ancient texts, the Sibyls interpreted advice from the oracles, which was sought in times of war. Oracles were located in sites in Persia, Greece, Italy and north Africa. Five were depicted by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel, Rome, where Joanna Wells viewed them with binoculars. Here, her sketch shows Fanny Eaton as the Libyan Sybil consulting the oracular books.

The sketchbook that belonged to Joanna Wells, exhibited to the left, contains studies of Fanny Eaton posing in costume. The other two studies in this frame are unrelated to the proposed Sibyl painting.

Oil sketch centre of frame, c.1860
Private Collection
Aspiring artist Georgiana Macdonald was one of five sisters in a Methodist family. At the age of fifteen she was engaged to Edward Burne-Jones, entering the world of art with classes in drawing and wood-engraving. She also studied with Madox Brown, who judged that her designs showed ‘real intellect’.

Following marriage in 1860, she became friends with Jane Morris and Elizabeth Siddal, with whom she planned to produce an illustrated volume of original fairy tales. Visiting Italy, she revealed an acute ‘eye for a picture’. Small in stature, she was steadfast in affections and judgement.

The birth of daughter Margaret in 1866 closely preceded her husband’s infatuation with Maria Zambaco. Georgiana then devoted her energies to motherhood, managing household and studio, and working in the community. She supported the South London Art Gallery, opposed the Boer War and became a parish councillor in Sussex, promoting rural health care.

Two of her major contributions to the history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement were assistance with the Life of William Morris compiled by her son-in-law (1899), and then her own biography of Edward Burne-Jones (1904). This chronicled the movement through his life, work and friends, while hinting at regret for her own lost art practice.
Finch (Dead Bird)
By Georgiana Macdonald

This life-size study of a stuffed bird depicts a green headed tanager from South America. After studying at the School of Design, Georgiana Macdonald took classes with Ford Madox Brown, who judged that her compositions showed ‘real intellect’ and encouraged her to use colour. The technique employed here follows Ruskin’s instructions to students: ‘lay your colours deliberately, like a mosaic-worker, preparing each carefully and laying it as if it were a piece of coloured cloth’.

Watercolour on paper, 1859
Tate: Presented by Mrs J.W. Mackail 1938

Death and the Lady
By Georgiana Burne-Jones

These two designs depict a skeletal figure appearing to a wealthy young woman in medieval dress. Preserved in a scrapbook, these were drawn for a projected collection of Gothic tales to be written and illustrated by Georgiana Burne-Jones and Elizabeth Siddal. The images were intended for woodblock reproduction.

The image was possibly inspired by Franz Schubert’s song setting of Matthias Claudius’s poem Der Tod und das Mädchen (1817). The design shares formal features with William Morris’s painting La Belle Iseult, also in this exhibition.

Pen and ink on paper, 1861
Private Collection
The Maiden:
Pass me by! Oh, pass me by!
Go, fierce man of bones!
I am still young! Go, rather,
And do not touch me.

.....

Death:
Give me your hand, you beautiful
and tender form!
I am a friend, and come not to punish.
Be of good cheer! I am not fierce,
Softly shall you sleep in my arms!

Death and the Maiden
by Matthias Claudius
Illustrated Poem with Six Sketches
By Georgiana Macdonald

These verses and illustrations form a valentine addressed to young Mabel McLaren, with whose family Georgiana Macdonald stayed in Oxford. ‘What though we’re growing very old – You’re five and I’m nineteen’ declares the text. The strip-cartoon images record Georgiana’s arrival in a rainstorm, the birth of Mabel’s sister, the girls embracing and other incidents.

‘Next year I’ll come again / You’ll hear me ring the gateway bell / In cloud or storm or rain!’

Pen and ink on paper, 1859

The Bridge of Sighs
By Georgiana Macdonald

This scene illustrates Thomas Hood’s poem ‘The Bridge of Sighs’. Set under Waterloo Bridge in London, a group of gentlemen and urchins surround a waterman who has recovered the body of a homeless woman from the river. The detailed urban setting reflects the influence of Ford Madox Brown, with whom Georgiana Macdonald studied. Her initials ‘GM’ are in the lower left corner. A label records her gift of the drawing to her granddaughter Clare Mackail.

Pencil on paper, 1859–60
The Dr T. Lanigan Collection
Clara von Bork 1560
By Edward Burne-Jones

Inspired by the Gothic tale Sidonia the Sorceress, translated by Jane Wilde (Oscar Wilde’s mother) in 1849, this is a companion piece to the painting of Sidonia modelled by Fanny Cornforth earlier in this exhibition. In the story, Clara is Sidonia’s virtuous foil and victim. Described as quiet, faithful and pious, she is murdered by being buried alive. Georgiana Macdonald posed for the figure, in the weeks preceding her wedding. She cradles baby doves against a predatory cat in the setting of a castle interior with whispering maidservants.

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 1860
Tate: Bequeathed by W. Graham Robertson 1948

Georgiana Burne-Jones
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Intended as a wedding gift but never delivered, this candle-lit portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones was probably drawn at the Blackfriars apartment where Elizabeth Siddal and Gabriel Rossetti lived after their marriage. ‘My dear little Georgie, I hope you intend coming over with Ned tomorrow evening like a sweetmeat’, wrote Siddal, closing with ‘a willow-pattern dish full of love to you and Ned’. Ned was the familiar name of Georgiana’s husband Edward Burne-Jones. She wears a dark dress with a long coral necklace, which was her sole adornment, seen also in the portrait painted by her husband some three years later.

Pencil on paper, 1860
Private Collection
Georgiana Burne-Jones
By Edward Burne-Jones

This rather sombre portrait of Georgiana inscribed with her age and initials (‘G.M.J’ for Georgiana Macdonald Jones) dates from before her 23rd birthday in July 1863. Its stylised manner echoes that of Tudor portraits, such as those of Mary I.

The full-sleeved black dress and coral necklace are recognisable from the adjacent portrait drawing by Rossetti, while the archaicised qualities here contrast with the elegant image of Georgiana (opposite) painted twenty years later in 1883.

Gouache on paper, 1863
Lent by Birmingham Museums Trust on behalf of Birmingham City Council

King Arthur
Stitched by Georgiana Burne-Jones

This unfinished embroidery is stitched over a design by Edward Burne-Jones, on a textile hanging intended for the Burne-Jones home, as its attached note explains. This was to be an Arthurian series ‘of which I had finished Merlin and Morgan le Fay and begun Arthur and Lancelot.’ Although a near-fatal illness for Georgiana Burne-Jones curtailed this project, the various pieces were preserved. The tales of King Arthur were a favourite Pre-Raphaelite source. Related subjects in this exhibition include The Death of Arthur, La Belle Iseult and The Beguiling of Merlin.

Watercolour on linen, embroidered with wools and couched gold thread, 1863
Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Georgiana Burne-Jones and Granddaughter
By Emery Walker

Georgiana Burne-Jones was in her sixties when Emery Walker took this photograph of her with her younger granddaughter, Clare Mackail. Copies of Edward Burne-Jones’s art works are seen on the walls behind. Clare Mackail was born in 1896 and would have been about four years old at the time of this photograph.

Bromide contact print, c.1900
National Portrait Gallery. Given by Emery Walker Ltd, 1956

Georgiana Burne-Jones Studying Latin
By Edward Burne-Jones

In this thumbnail sketch Georgiana Burne-Jones studies, surrounded by textbooks and with the family cat. The drawing dates from after 1870 when she sought advice from the novelist George Eliot in respect of marital discord, and resolved among other decisions to upgrade her education by learning Latin. Her instructor was Jules Andrieu, a refugee from the Paris Commune. The study of Latin for women was a contested topic at this date. Generations of men were schooled in classical literature, which was deemed unsuitable for girls.

Ink on paper, c.1880s
Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library
Georgiana Burne-Jones with Philip and Margaret  
By Edward Burne-Jones

Showing Georgiana Burne-Jones in her early 40s, this is a classic example of the genre ‘portrait of the artist’s wife’. It shows her wearing a dark costume similar to those in earlier portraits, now in a richer fabric. She holds Gerard’s *Herball*, open at her favourite heartsease (wild pansy), which Ruskin called the flower of ‘those who love simply, to the death’.

The arm resting on a parapet recalls Renaissance portraiture, with a visual salute to Velázquez in the view into a further room. Endowed with a steady gaze, the likeness has been interpreted as a tacit acknowledgement of Burne-Jones’s betrayals. It also celebrates their family unit, showing son Philip as a professional painter and 17-year-old daughter Margaret, ready to enter society.

Oil on canvas, 1883
Private Collection
Georgiana Burne-Jones
By Charles Fairfax Murray

This portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones captures her quiet composure at a troubled time. As Edward Burne-Jones’s studio assistant and a discreetly observant member of the household, the artist Fairfax Murray witnessed Georgiana’s stoicism during her husband’s involvement with Maria Zambaco.

The portrait was painted in the same year as Murray assisted William Morris in creating an illuminated Book of Verse for Georgiana’s 30th birthday. She later noted that although she was never close to Murray, ‘I would have trusted him as a friend’.

Oil on canvas, 1870
Private Collection
Maria Zambaco
1843–1914

Born in London, Maria Cassavetti was the daughter of an Anglo-Greek businessman in the same community as the Spartali family, and granddaughter of patron of Pre-Raphaelite artists, Constantine Ionides. In 1861, she married a Paris-based physician, Demetrius Zambaco. Her unhappines led to her return to London in 1866 with their son and daughter. Her mother arranged portrait sittings with Edward Burne-Jones, which turned into art instruction and soon into an intense love-affair.

‘She looked and was primeval’ Burne-Jones wrote, as he became obsessed and painted her repeatedly in the guises of Psyche, Phyllis, Circe, Cassandra and Galatea. In the words of his wife, Georgiana Burne-Jones, ‘beauty and misfortune’ held tremendous power over him. ‘She really is extremely beautiful’, Gabriel Rossetti told Jane Morris.

According to William Rossetti, she had great talent and ‘remarkable capacities for painting.’ After the affair with Burne-Jones ended, Zambaco became a sculptor, studying with Alphonse Legros in London and Auguste Rodin in Paris. She produced figurines and portrait medallions – including one depicting Marie Spartali Stillman – and exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts and Paris Salon. She died in Paris and was buried in the Cassavetti family grave in south London.
Study for Head of Cassandra
By Edward Burne-Jones

Cassandra was the Trojan princess in Greek myth whose warnings of disaster were doomed to be always ignored by others. Here, Burne-Jones casts Maria Zambaco in this prophetic role, showing Cassandra lamenting the imminent fall of the city of Troy.

When Zambaco learnt of her lover’s decision to remain with his wife, Rossetti described her as searching for his whereabouts and ‘howling like Cassandra’.

Red chalk on paper, c.1866–70

Victoria and Albert Museum.
Bequeathed by Constantine Alexander Ionides

Portrait Medallions
by Maria Zambaco

In the 1880s, Maria Zambaco turned to sculpture, studying in London and Paris. She first specialised in portrait medallions, a genre that enjoyed widespread popularity at the time. Most of her works are currently unlocated. These examples were presented by the artist to the British Museum soon after being shown at the Royal Academy of Arts.
Marie Spartali Stillman
By Maria Zambaco

Zambaco and Spartali Stillman were friends from childhood and both had artistic aspirations: Zambaco first studied with Burne-Jones; Spartali Stillman with Ford Madox Brown.

The antique medallion format of this portrait highlights their shared Greek heritage. The reverse features a lily and the words ‘sine macula’ (immaculate). These refer both to the Virgin Mary after whom both women were named, and to the goodness and virtue that were universally ascribed to Marie Spartali Stillman.

Alloy medal, 1886

British Museum, 1887,1207.1, donated by Maria Zambaco, 1887

Head of a Girl
By Maria Zambaco

The identity of this sitter has not been ascertained. Maria Zambaco’s own daughter was aged twenty in 1885, whereas the girl portrayed looks much younger. She may have been Marie Spartali’s daughter Effie (Euphrosyne) Stillman, who was aged around thirteen when the likeness was modelled. If so, the link is intriguing, because Effie later became a sculptor. The reverse of the medal shows three interlinked anemones, named from the Greek ‘daughter of the wind’.

Alloy medal, 1885

British Museum, 1887,0209.1, donated by Maria Zambaco, 1887
**Margherita di Prato**
By Maria Zambaco

This was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887. It is vigorously modelled, and the pose and expression convey youthful eagerness. Margherita di prato (meadow daisy) is the flower shown here as a garland. It was also the name of the teenage wife of businessman Francesco Datini, who in the fourteenth century lived in the city of Prato, near Florence. Documents giving vivid accounts of mercantile and domestic affairs found in the Datini home in 1870 were the basis for Iris Origo’s book *The Merchant of Prato* (1957).

Alloy medal, 1886

British Museum, 1887,0209.2, donated by Maria Zambaco, 1887

**John Marshall**
By Maria Zambaco

John Marshall (1818–91) was a surgeon and anatomist who was medical adviser to many in the Pre-Raphaelite circle. This otherwise undocumented portrait suggests that he was also consulted by Maria Zambaco, who evidently became a friend.

Marshall introduced his family to Zambaco, and in 1888 called at her studio in west London with his daughter. Zambaco was not there, but the Marshalls were surprised to find it adjacent to a studio rented by Edward Burne-Jones.

Alloy medal, 1886

British Museum, 1887,1207.2, donated by Maria Zambaco, 1887
Madame Zambaco Drawing
By Charles Keene

This etching offers a glimpse into Edward Burne-Jones’s studio to show Maria Zambaco drawing at an easel. As well as sitting to him as a model, she studied art under his guidance regularly on Tuesdays and Saturdays. Other visitors were discouraged, but Charles Keene evidently snatched this sketch. Her appearance is very similar to that in a thumbnail drawing of Zambaco reading in Burne-Jones studio that he made around the same time.

Etching, 1869–70

British Museum, 1892,0513.49, donated by Henry Eddowes Keene, 1892
Maria Zambaco
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This pastel portrait of Maria Zambaco is in Rossetti’s popular late style, with soft lines and glamourised treatment. It was drawn at the request of Edward Burne-Jones, hoping his friends would accept his affair with her.

‘I am sure her love is all in all to her,’ Rossetti told Jane Morris. ‘She is really extremely beautiful [and has become] much more so within the last year with all her love and trouble.’ Later, he added, ‘I think I have made a good portrait & Ned [as Burne-Jones was known to friends] is greatly delighted with it.’ The drawing was purchased by Zambaco’s grandfather.

Coloured chalks on paper, late 1860s

Victoria and Albert Museum. Bequeathed by Constantine Alexander Ionides
The Beguiling of Merlin
By Edward Burne-Jones

The magician Merlin from the tales of King Arthur was himself bewitched by a Lady of the Lake named Nimue. Here he is shown lying helpless within the tangles of a hawthorn tree, while she steals his book of spells, and thus his power.

This dramatic image of infatuation depicts Maria Zambaco as the enchantress in a pictorial version of her affair with Burne-Jones. ‘The name of her was Mary’, he wrote; ‘and that’s the head and the way of standing and turning … and I was being turned into a hawthorn bush in the forest of Broceliande.’ Oscar Wilde described this portrayal of Nimue as ‘a tall, lithe woman, beautiful and subtle to look on, like a snake.’

Although autobiographical in concept, Merlin’s melancholy features were in fact drawn from William, husband of Marie Spartali Stillman.

Oil on canvas, 1872–7

National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery
The Tree of Forgiveness
By Edward Burne-Jones

The subject, from Ovid’s Metamorphoses tells how Demophoön was away so long that his lover Phyllis killed herself in anguish. Taking pity, the gods turned her into an almond tree. On his return, Demophoön penitently embraced the tree, which immediately blossomed.

This is the larger version of the scene, first depicted by Burne-Jones in 1870, when Demophoön’s nudity, without the present wisp of drapery, together with Maria Zambaco’s recognisable features as Phyllis, aroused scandal. A decade later, he returned to the composition. The face here is still Zambaco’s, and Demophoön stands for the artist. The title may hint at some reconciliation. The picture has ‘a strange and touching beauty’ wrote Henry James; ‘the flesh tones are wan and bloodless, as befits the complexion of people we see through the medium of a certain incredulity’.

Oil on canvas, 1870

National Museums Liverpool, Lady Lever Art Gallery
Jane Burden grew up in poverty in Oxford and was destined for a life of domestic service until she met the Pre-Raphaelite painters who were decorating the University debating chamber in 1857. Gabriel Rossetti drew her as Queen Guinevere and William Morris as Iseult. Tall and slender, she had thick dark hair and striking features that created a new standard of beauty that especially influenced the image of the *femme fatale*. To novelist Henry James, she was ‘a grand synthesis of all the Pre-Raphaelite pictures ever made’.

In spring 1859 she married Morris, becoming his partner in the decorative arts firm later known as Morris & Co, where she managed the embroidery commissions. She became a close friend of Georgiana and Edward Burne-Jones, whose children knew her as ‘Aunt Janey’.

From 1868 when she resumed modelling for Rossetti, she embarked on a love affair with him, that lasted until Rossetti’s irrecoverable breakdown in 1876. She inspired a major sequence of images of her as Pandora, Beatrice, La Pia, Proserpine and other figures.

A renowned needlewoman, who also experimented with calligraphy and bookbinding, Jane was a leading member of the Arts and Crafts movement, Close friends in later life included Evelyn and William De Morgan, and Marie Spartali Stillman.
The Day Dream
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Over the years, Rossetti painted obsessional images of Jane Morris as his muse, using old studies and memories. Here she is cast as a spirit of Nature, seated among branches.

Originally entitled Monna Primavera, it was commissioned by Constantine Ionides, Maria Zambaco’s uncle, and intended to represent spring, with Jane holding snowdrops. As the work progressed, however, the seasons changed. Altering the snowdrops to honeysuckle, Rossetti told Jane that the tree still looked very full in leaf. The theme can be compared with De Morgan’s Dryad, also in this exhibition.

Rossetti’s accompanying sonnet concludes:

She dreams; till now on her forgotten book
Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand.

Oil on canvas, 1880

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Bequeathed by Constantine Alexander Ionides
Study of Guinevere for ‘Sir Launcelot in the Queen’s Chamber’
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This is the first work for which Jane Burden posed, when recruited to model for Rossetti’s depiction of Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot discovered together. This shows the expression of dismay she was asked to hold. The sittings took place in the Oxford lodgings that the artists shared while painting murals at the University. The drawing emphasises Burden’s dark hair, lidded eyes, long neck and mobile fingers, the attributes that feature in Rossetti’s later images of her.

Pencil and ink on paper, 1857

Manchester Art Gallery, George Beatson bequest 1941

Study of Jane in Medieval Gown
By William Morris

This carefully drawn study shows Jane Morris posing as if climbing a ladder to board a ship. It possibly represents Iseult setting off on the fateful voyage that separates her from Sir Tristram. In 1861 the newly-established Morris firm produced a stained-glass sequence with episodes from the tales of the romance between Tristram and Iseult, although this scene was not used. The dress with its wide, richly-lined sleeves was probably made by Jane Morris.

Pencil and ink on paper, 1861

William Morris Gallery,
London Borough of Waltham Forest
La Belle Iseult
By William Morris

The second figure for which Jane Burden posed was William Morris's Iseult (Isolde) from the tales of King Arthur. Here, Iseult grieves alongside the lapdog given her by Sir Tristram, whom she believes to be dead. The figure was painted in Oxford, the table and unmade bed in London, and the background added later. Iseult’s statuesque attitude reappears in Morris’s stained glass designs.

For some years the painting was wrongly identified as Queen Guinevere. “La Belle Iseult” was what your father called it’, Jane told her daughter in 1910.

Oil on canvas, 1858

Tate: Bequeathed by Miss May Morris 1939

Profile of a Lady (Jane Morris)
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This was probably drawn around Christmas 1861 when the Morrises, Rossettis, Burne-Joneses and other friends gathered at the Morrises’ home in Kent. Rossetti was designing an altarpiece for Llandaff cathedral, and cast Jane Morris as the Virgin Mary, whose downward gaze is seen here. Being within weeks of giving birth to her first child, Morris was an apt model for a Nativity scene. In the finished work, William Morris appeared as King David and Burne-Jones as a shepherd.

Pencil and Indian ink, 1861

Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Proserpine
By Dante Gabriel Rossetti

This most famous image of Jane Morris casts her as Proserpine (Persephone), the mythical figure whose return to the earth from captivity in the Underworld symbolises the coming of spring. It represents the arrangement made by artist and sitter, with the agreement of Jane Morris’s husband, that she spend the summers with Rossetti at Kelmscott Manor, Oxfordshire.

The sombre colours, as Proserpine gazes mournfully at sunlight from the Upper Earth while holding a pomegranate, convey the limits of this arrangement and its brief extent. In 1874 Rossetti left Kelmscott. The image was enduringly popular, however, and Rossetti produced several replicas of his masterpiece. This version was at one time owned by the artist L.S. Lowry. Rossetti’s accompanying sonnet, is in Italian (top right) and English (on frame).

Oil on canvas, 1877

Private Collection
Proserpina (for a picture)

Afar away the light that brings cold cheer

Unto this wall, - one instant and no more

Admitted at my distant palace-door.

Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear

Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.

Afar those skies from this Tartarean grey

That chills me: and afar, how far away,

The nights that shall be from the days that were.

Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing

Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign:

And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,

Whose sounds mine inner sense is fain to bring,

Continually together murmuring,

“Woe’s me for thee, unhappy Proserpine!”
**Rossetti Carrying Cushions for Jane Morris**  
*By Edward Burne-Jones*

By 1870, Rossetti’s devotion to Jane Morris was common gossip within the Pre-Raphaelite circle, though seldom spoken of openly. This caricature pokes fun at both his courtly solicitude in ensuring her comfort and at the physical contrast between the short, rotund admirer and the tall willowy beloved. The drawing was among those drawn by Burne-Jones to amuse Maria Zambaco – an exchange that underlines the close social ties within the circle.

Pencil on paper, c.1868

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection,  
University of Delaware Library

**Evening Bag**  
*Designed and stitched by Jane Morris*

This fabric evening bag was new-made to fit an antique clasp with swans attached to a chain. The flowers – recognisable as pink fritillary and white eyebright – are ones that grew around the Morris summer home in Oxfordshire and are freely used in the design. The bag was inherited by Jane Morris’s daughter May and bequeathed to the V&A.

Embroidered coloured silks, metal mount, c.1878

Victoria and Albert Museum, London
Calligraphy and embroidery by Jane Morris
by Jane Morris

Illuminated Poem

This keepsake was sent to Rosalind Howard, Countess of Carlisle, who invited Jane Morris and her daughters to spend the winter of 1877-8 at Oneglia on the Italian Riviera. The year before, Jenny Morris developed untreatable epilepsy, causing the family great distress. ‘Tears, idle tears’, the song from Tennyson’s poem The Princess depicted here, conveys the deep grief of recalling the happy ‘days that are no more’.

Watercolour on paper, 1878

From the Castle Howard Collection

Studies of Jane Morris
By John Robert Parsons

These are two images from the ‘photo shoot’ of seated, standing and reclining poses for which Rossetti asked Jane Morris to model as studies for projected paintings. They were taken in July 1865, in the garden of Rossetti’s house in Chelsea by Parsons, a commercial photographer known to the artist.

Morris wore a dress she had made with embroidery at the wrist and neck, probably blue silk as seen in other portraits.

Bromide prints, 1865

National Portrait Gallery, London
‘The Pilgrims of Siena’
By Paulo Lombardi

From left: Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson; Anne Cobden-Sanderson; Jane Morris; Jane Catherine Cobden Unwin.

In 1881 Jane Morris visited Tuscany, where she saw Marie Spartali Stillman and joined three other friends: the daughters of Richard Cobden MP, and bookbinder Thomas James Sanderson. In Siena, the group was photographed in front of a painted backdrop of the city. Sanderson reclines and Morris kneels between Annie and Jane Cobden. This cabinet card originally belonged to Jane Morris.

The informal title given to the image refers both to the group as travellers, and to Siena’s location on the medieval route to Rome. Visitors were drawn to the city by the magnificent frescoes in the city’s Pellegrinaio and pilgrims’ hostel.

Albumen cabinet card, 1881

National Portrait Gallery. Given by Robert R. Steele, 1939
Jane Morris
By Harry Phillips

Jane Morris, in her late 60s, was photographed on a visit to Leek in Staffordshire in the summer of 1907. She stayed with Sir Thomas Wardle and his wife Elizabeth. He was an innovative industrialist, who worked with Morris & Co to produce printed textiles and coloured yarns; she was a notable needlewoman and co-founder of the Leek School of Embroidery. Her brother was general manager of Morris & Co. so the families were close, although this was probably Jane’s only visit to Leek. The cabinet cards came from her own collection.

Platinum prints on card mounts, c.1907

National Portrait Gallery, London

Kelmscott Manor
By Marie Spartali Stillman

Marie Spartali Stillman often visited Jane Morris at Kelmscott Manor, when both women were widowed. She sketched while Jane stitched. This view shows the house with the great yew hedge trimmed into the shape of a Norse dragon. In 1901 Spartali Stillman wrote ‘I felt quite shut out by the busy world in that beautiful walled garden. One cannot imagine any place as quiet. Nothing ever seems to happen. Things have been at a standstill for 300 years probably.’

Her views on the Cotswold manor sold well, but this one was gifted to Jane Morris, who described the artist as ‘her dearly loved friend’.

Watercolour on paper, c.1906

National Trust Collections,
Wightwick Manor (The Mander Collection)
Study for ‘The Hour Glass’
By Evelyn De Morgan

This portrait of Jane Morris in old age, wearing a white gown and with an abstracted gaze seemingly lost in thought. It was probably drawn in Evelyn De Morgan’s studio, as it shows Morris’s head against a cushion also seen in a figure study. It relates to De Morgan’s painting The Hour Glass (a further study is also in this exhibition).

Warm friendship, silly jokes and simple tastes bound the Morrices and De Morgans together. Here, Morris’s features and abundant hair (albeit now white) are those of her youth, making this a poignant depiction of Pre-Raphaelite age. ‘These windings up of life are not very cheerful’, Jane wrote in 1908. ‘If one could just drop off quietly like Autumn leaves, it would be so pleasant for everybody’.

Pastel on paper, 1904

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
Marie Spartali Stillman
1844–1927

Born into the Anglo-Greek business community in London, Marie Spartali was a childhood friend of Maria Zambaco. Her introduction to the art world came when her sister Christine was painted by James McNeil Whistler and Marie modelled for the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron.

Setting her sights on painting, from 1864 Spartali studied with Madox Brown, who became a lifelong mentor. Her pictures were exhibited from 1867, and when her father urged her to make her first sale into a gift, she insisted she was committed to a professional career. In 1871, she married the American-born journalist William J. Stillman, whose career took the family to Greece and Italy for extended periods. Spartali Stillman developed a distinctive pictorial style of poetic scenes drawn from late-medieval texts by Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch. Notable for colour harmony and evocative atmosphere, her works were eloquently praised by Henry James.

Her closest Pre-Raphaelite friends were Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones and Jane Morris. From 1877 she exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, and also sent works to the USA, where views of the Morrises’ house, Kelmscott Manor, sold well. During the 1890s she painted and exhibited landscapes with the In Arte Libertas group in Rome. She aimed with quiet determination not to paint ‘only what one feels sure of’, when it ‘is so much more interesting to soar above one’s strength.’
Marie Spartali Stillman

By Ford Madox Brown

From 1864, Marie Spartali Stillman studied with Ford Madox Brown, who became her lifelong friend and mentor. Here she is depicted in his studio, pausing while at work, an artist’s mahlstick resting against the picture. Madox Brown is said to have had an unrequited passion for Spartali Stillman. This portrait certainly conveys tender affection for a sitter noted for her gentleness.

The image on the easel partly resembles The Lady Prays-Desire (seen nearby) but may represent a lost work, Korinna, which was criticised for its ‘red, disorderly hair’.

Coloured chalks on paper, 1869

Private Collection

The Lady Prays-Desire

By Marie Spartali Stillman

The title identifies this as the allegorical figure of Ambition in Edmund Spenser’s Faerie Queene. ‘Prayse-Desire’ is one who ‘desires praise’ and aspires to honour: ‘Pensive I yield I am and sad in mind / Through great desire of glory and of fame.’

Although this is an early work, with a naïve Pre-Raphaelite quality, the image challenges the usual focus on beauty. The owl of Athena in the cartouche also references wisdom, as well as Spartali’s Greek heritage. The quotation on the scroll is still to be deciphered.

Watercolour with gold paint on paper, 1867

Private Collection
Madonna Pietra degli Scrovigni
By Marie Spartali Stillman

Working in Florence from 1878-83, Marie Spartali Stillman was influenced by early Italian art and literature. This picture, reminiscent of the work of Leonardo da Vinci, illustrates a poem by Dante Alighieri entitled ‘Madonna Pietra’ (My Lady Stone) which explores a wintry theme. Repeated rhyme-words – green, stone, shade, hills – are transposed by the artist into visual elements. She wrote: ‘it is just a lady clad in green in a green stony landscape which repeats her name.’ This lack of narrative places the work within the Aesthetic spirit of the age, while the colour scheme evokes the contemporary fashion for soft and smokey tints at the Grosvenor Gallery, as satirized by W.S. Gilbert in Patience, where Madonna Pietra was first shown.

The subject also pays homage to the work of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who translated the poem, and died as the painting was commenced.

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 1884

'Sestina of the Lady Pietra degli Scrovigni'
By Dante Alighieri,
translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Utterly frozen is this youthful lady,

Even as the snow that lies within the shade;

For she is no more moved than is the stone

By the sweet season which makes warm the hills

And alters them afresh from white to green

Covering their sides again with flowers and grass.

......

...A while ago, I saw her dressed in green,—

So fair, she might have wakened in a stone

This love which I do feel even for her shade;

And therefore, as one woos a graceful lady,

I wooed her in a field that was all grass

Girdled about with very lofty hills.
How the Virgin Mary Came to Brother Conrad of Offida and Laid her Son in his Arms
By Marie Spartali Stillman

This illustrates a story in The Little Flowers of St Francis, based on legends about the Franciscan order founded in the Italian city of Assisi. Here, Friar Conrad has a vision of the Christ Child, watched by his more nervous companion Friar Peter.

The long landscape view through trees provides both perspective and middle-distance light. Commenting on the composition, Edward Burne-Jones wrote: ‘If the Virgin leaned forward to trust the babe safely it might be better – no she is better upright’. He added that it would be ‘a lovely little picture & full of care & delight to you & I don’t see how it could go wrong anywhere’.

Watercolour, bodycolour and gold paint on paper, 1892

National Trust Collections,
Wightwick Manor (The Mander Collection)
Monte Luce from Perugia at Sunset
By Marie Spartali Stillman

An ancient fortified city, Perugia is the capital of Umbria in Italy. This view is from the road leading east to the convent of Monte Luce, seen on the left, looking towards Monte Subasio and Assisi beyond.

Spartali Stillman spent the summer of 1893 working in Perugia, usually painting in early morning and late afternoon, to capture atmospheric effects.

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 1893
Private Collection

Ponte Nomentano
By Marie Spartali Stillman

The Ponte Nomentano, a picturesque bridge on the edge of Rome, was favoured by artists, including Richard Wilson, Joseph Wright of Derby and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot. This dawn view shows willows on the river bank with meadow flowers in the foreground and a pink sky before sunrise over the landscape.

This is a companion piece to the evening view of Perugia shown nearby. Living and working in Rome in the 1890s, Marie Spartali Stillman aligned herself with the ‘Etruscan School’ of landscapists headed by Giovanni (Nino) Costa. Its hallmarks were cooler lights and wide horizontal scenes.

Watercolour, gouache and graphite on paper, 1890s

Morgan Library & Museum, New York.
Gift from John M. Thayer, 2003
Marie Spartali Stillman’s second child Michael (1878-1967) was named after his Spartali grandfather, in whose garden near Clapham Common this photograph may have been taken.

Michael became an architect and, with American citizenship from his father William Stillman, he settled in the United States. His elder sister Effie Stillman (later Ritchie, 1872-1911) became a sculptor.

Vintage copy print, c.1880

National Portrait Gallery,
Given by Emery Walker Ltd, 1956

Marie Spartali
By Julia Margaret Cameron

As well as posing ‘in character’ for Julia Margaret Cameron, Marie Spartali Stillman sat for portrait photographs. Here she holds lilies-of-the valley which flower in May and symbolize humility, sweetness and the return of love.

Albumen cabinet card, 1868

National Portrait Gallery.
Given by Cordelia Curle (née Fisher), 1959
Embroidered Shoes
By Marie Spartali Stillman

These neatly worked evening shoes in a silk fabric were designed and stitched by Spartali Stillman to accompany a matching short-sleeved tunic. She was known for her stylish dress, and in a letter of February 1905 reported how she had been ‘much engaged’ in embroidering garments for her daughter Effie, ‘who is to be married in a few weeks.’

The wild flower design evokes both Jane Morris’s embroideries and Spartali Stillman’s visits to Kelmscott Manor. The shoes and tunic were passed down in the family.

Embroidery on silk, undated

Delaware Art Museum, Gift of Eugenia Diehl Pell, 2016
Imperial Eleanore
By Julia Margaret Cameron

The photographer, Julia Cameron, was the first artist to ask Marie Spartali to sit for costume roles. Here, wearing her own dress, she is cast as ‘Serene, imperial Eleanore!’ from a poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, who was then Poet Laureate.

Spartali’s family had a house on the Isle of Wight, as did both Cameron and Tennyson. Spartali wrote of being inspected by Tennyson, who held a candle ‘within an inch of my face’ to assess her beauty. Other roles for which she sat to Cameron included ‘The Spirit of the Vine’ and ‘Mother of the Muses’. This print was presented to Spartali by Cameron.

Albumen silver print, 1868

Private Collection

Morgan Library & Museum, New York.
Gift from John M. Thayer, 2003
Marie Spartali Stillman
By Charles Fairfax Murray

This is a previously unexhibited portrait sketch showing Marie Spartali Stillman at the easel. It probably depicts her in the studio that she shared in central Florence, overlooking the river Arno. It thus dates to the years 1878-82 when the Stillmans belonged to the Anglo-American expatriate community in the city, which included painter John Singer Sargent and writer Vernon Lee. Each spring, Spartali Stillman brought pictures to London, for exhibition and sale.

Watercolour, c.1880

Private Collection

The First Meeting of Petrarch and Laura
By Marie Spartali Stillman

The poet Petrarch’s devotion to Laura was traditionally likened to that of Dante for Beatrice. In a skilful rendering of the interior of a medieval church, Spartali Stillman shows their first, wordless, encounter. Laura obliquely acknowledges Petrarch’s attention as she gives alms to an elderly woman. The viewer’s eye is drawn through deep perspective towards the high altar where candles are being quenched.

Laura is attended by a pageboy, modelled on the artist’s son Michael (see nearby photograph).

Watercolour, gouache and graphite on paper, 1889

Private Collection. Courtesy of Peter and Renate Nahum
Artist

Evelyn De Morgan
1855–1919

Born into an aristocratic life as great-granddaughter of the Earl of Leicester, Evelyn Pickering chose to become a professional painter. A prize-winning student at the Slade School of Fine Art, she was ‘full of mischief’ but ‘all seriousness and absorption where painting was concerned’. Her uncle was the Pre-Raphaelite painter J.R. Spencer Stanhope.

She exhibited alongside Marie Spartali Stillman and others at the Grosvenor Gallery from 1877 and in 1887 married the ceramicist William De Morgan. Together, they built a close professional-domestic partnership, with her art sales subsidising his pottery production. ‘They were both artistic in the highest sense’, wrote a friend. ‘His capacity as a businessman was probably nil, hers only a little bit more than nil.’ Their close friends included William and Jane Morris.

Always figural and vividly coloured, Evelyn De Morgan’s works often included Baroque-style drapery. The pictorial subjects ranged from medieval and classical legends to elaborate allegories presenting her Spiritualist belief in a transcendental afterlife. Increasingly, they also conveyed powerful messages against the greed of excessive wealth and the unrelenting violence of the First World War.
Compositional Study for ‘The Hour Glass’
By Evelyn De Morgan

Here, Jane Morris poses for De Morgan’s oil painting, The Hour Glass, conceived as a pictorial ‘echo’ of Beethoven’s ‘Waldstein’ Sonata, which ends on ‘a sudden voice of triumph’. It is a meditation on mortality which in De Morgan’s spiritualist philosophy was the gateway to a finer life.

Aged sixty-five, Jane Morris was an apt model for the figure. She shared her love of music with the De Morgans, who were ‘dear old friends’. The tapestry sketched in the background evokes those at Kelmscott Manor, although is not copied from them.

Chalk on paper, 1905

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
The Dryad
By Evelyn De Morgan

In classical legend, dryads are tree spirits, alongside water nymphs (naiads) and mountain nymphs (oreads). Traditionally, they inhabited oaks, but this wood nymph seems to live within an olive tree on a Mediterranean shore. Yet the colours are cool and her pose suggests a wintry atmosphere.

Exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, The Dryad was mocked by a critic for revealing ‘the discomforts of mythical life in the wild woodlands remote from Liberty’s and Aesthetic teapots’. It was purchased by the shipping magnate William Imrie, who also owned Burne-Jones’s Tree of Forgiveness, which shows Phyllis emerging from an almond tree.

Oil on canvas, 1884–5

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
Queen Eleanor and Fair Rosamund
By Evelyn De Morgan

In medieval legend, King Henry II concealed his lover Fair Rosamund within a woodland maze (seen far left.) Here, a red thread guides his wife, the jealous Queen Eleanor with her phial of poison to Rosamund’s bower. Shadowy spirits of lizards and apes drive away tiny cupids and doves. The window shows embracing lovers, which seems to represent an illicit meeting.

This dramatic tale was a Pre-Raphaelite favourite, dramatized by Algernon Swinburne and painted by Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In De Morgan’s homage to her predecessors, strong lines and clear colours follow early Pre-Raphaelite principles.

Oil on canvas, 1880–1919

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
Night & Sleep
By Evelyn De Morgan

This is one of De Morgan’s allegorical works in an Aesthetic manner. Here, Night pulls her dusky cloak over the world, while sleep-inducing poppies drop from her companion, Sleep. The flying figures are reminiscent of those found in Renaissance ceiling decorations.

When exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery, it was reviewed by the young Oscar Wilde, who compared it to the school of ideal and imaginative painting, epitomised by Edward Burne-Jones.

Oil on canvas, signed and dated 1878
On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
William De Morgan
By Evelyn De Morgan

In a neat reversal of the familiar ‘portrait of the artist’s wife’, this depicts Evelyn De Morgan’s husband William. He holds an iridescent lustreware jar, a masterpiece of his ceramic art. A large dish is shown left, and on the shelf to the right, William’s first three novels mark his late-flowering literary success. The portrait also celebrates three decades of artistic partnership.

‘The face in the picture was a faithful likeness’ wrote Evelyn De Morgan’s sister, except that William’s usually animated appearance was replaced by ‘a most pitiful expression of weariness; for his wife, with the uncompromising accuracy for which her portraiture was remarkable, had … reproduced unerringly the profound boredom which he was experiencing while having to sit to her!’

Oil on canvas, 1909

National Portrait Gallery.
Given by The De Morgan Foundation, 1996

Evelyn De Morgan
By an unknown photographer

This image is thought to show Evelyn De Morgan participating in a Spiritualist session, to receive messages from ‘the other side’. With her husband, she experimented with automatic writing, later publishing transcripts of the resulting exchanges with disembodied spirits.

Gelatin silver print, c.1910

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
Study of a Male Head
By Evelyn De Morgan

This drawing does not relate to a specific work, it is one of many expressive studies made by the artist in preparation for an oil painting. However, a model with similar features embodies the spectre of ‘War’ in the apocalyptic picture 1914.

In 1916, De Morgan exhibited thirteen works for sale in aid of the Red Cross in Britain and Italy, the two countries in which she had lived.

Chalk on paper, 1910–14

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation
Study of a Female Head for St Christina Giving Her Father’s Jewels to the Poor
By Evelyn De Morgan

As an early Christian martyr, St Christina broke pagan idols to give the gold and silver from which they were made to the needy. In the finished painting for which this is a study, she is the central figure distributing precious gems. The multi-figure painting is in the high Renaissance tradition. Its message confirms De Morgan’s belief in the virtue of poverty.

One of several preparatory works, this ideal head epitomises a type of Pre-Raphaelite woman based on Elizabeth Siddal, showing how the early Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood aesthetic continued to influence later artists.

Chalk on paper, 1904

On loan from the De Morgan Foundation

Jenny Morris
By Evelyn De Morgan

Jane Alice (Jenny) Morris (1861-1935) was the elder daughter of Jane and William Morris. Much of her active life was curtailed in her teens by the onset of untreatable epilepsy. Possibly drawn at Kelmscott Manor, where Jenny Morris spent summer holidays and De Morgan was an occasional visitor, its graphic style reflects the artist’s training at the Slade School of Art.

Pastel on paper, c.1905

William Morris Gallery,
London Borough of Waltham Forest
Yet if you should forget me … do not grieve …
Better by far you should forget and smile,
Than that you should remember and be sad

‘Remember’ by Christina Rossetti