

# Whistler in Watercolor

On view May 18–October 6, 2019, Freer Gallery of Art

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@FreerSackler #WhistlerAtTheFreer

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For renowned artist James McNeill Whistler, watercolor was the medium through which he reinvented himself in the 1880s and painted his way into posterity. Museum founder Charles Lang Freer amassed the world's largest collection of watercolors by the artist and included them in his bequest to the Smithsonian in 1906. Freer's collection comprises more than fifty examples—seascapes, nocturnes, street scenes, and interiors—of Whistler's watercolors. Due to Freer's will, these works are not permitted to leave the museum, and the fragile watercolors have rarely been displayed. *Whistler in Watercolor* introduces museum visitors to the artist's vast creative output, including prints, drawings, and oil paintings, and provides wide access to a rarely seen segment of his work. Recent research by museum curators, scientists, and conservators shines new light on Whistler's materials, techniques, and artistic genius, as seen in this first major exhibition of his watercolors since the 1930s.

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**The Ocean Wave**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1883–84 p

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1906.54



**Blue and Silver—Choppy Channel**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

ca. 1893–97

Watercolor on paper mounted to board

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1899.24



**St. Ives: Cornwall**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1883–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1905.117



**Southend-Sunset**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1882–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1905.119



**Southend Pier**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1882–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1904.82



**Milly Finch**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1883–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1907.170



**Violet and Amber-Tea**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1882–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.162



**Pink Note-The Novelette**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1883–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.158



**Chelsea Children**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

ca. 1897

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.116



**Green and Silver-Beaulieu, Touraine**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1888

Watercolor on linen mounted on board

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1899.25



**Southend-The Pleasure Yacht**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1882–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1905.120



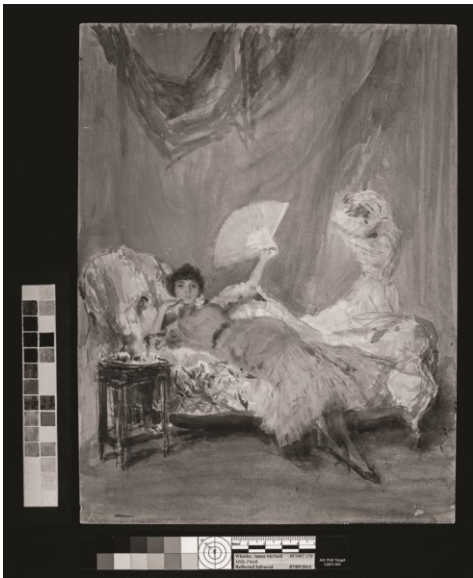
**Pink Note-Shelling Peas**

James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)

1882–84

Watercolor on paper

Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.166



This reflected infrared (IR) image reveals Whistler reworked Milly Finch's skirt. It was originally spread across the sofa. He overpainted the skirt to create a slimmer profile and to maintain focus on Milly's face and fan.

MEDIA IMAGES

# Peacock Room in Blue and White

On view starting May 18, 2019, Freer Gallery of Art

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*The Peacock Room in Blue and White* once again fills the room's shelves with Chinese porcelains. This installation returns the Peacock Room to its appearance in the 1870s, when it was the dining room of Frederick Leyland, a shipping magnate in London. Caught up in the Chinamania craze that swept England during Queen Victoria's reign, Leyland was an avid collector of Kangxi blue-and-white ceramics.

When Leyland allowed artist James McNeill Whistler to add touches of color to his dining room, the artist responded to the sinuous patterns and brilliant colors of the Chinese porcelains on the shelves. Whistler painted over the room in a flurry of blue and gold. The peacock motifs and the intricate designs of their plumage created a tonal counterpoint to the bolder patterns and colors of the porcelains. The current installation allows visitors to experience the room in much the same way Whistler originally envisioned it.

Porcelain pieces from the Freer Gallery's permanent collection, similar to what Leyland owned, adorn the shelves of the east and north walls of the Peacock Room. Newly commissioned blue-and-white ceramics in the Kangxi style line the west and south walls. These porcelains are not reproductions of historical blue-and-white ware. Instead, they reflect the continuity of a 1,500-year-old tradition of making and decorating porcelain in Jingdezhen, China. Porcelain production during the Kangxi period (1662–1722) greatly expanded China's export trade with Europe, sparking the East-West exchange that endures to this day.

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**The Peacock Room in Blue and White**  
James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)  
Oil paint and gold leaf on canvas, leather, and wood  
Gift of Charles Lang Freer, Freer Gallery of Art, F1904.61



**The Peacock Room in Blue and White**  
James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903)  
Oil paint and gold leaf on canvas, leather, and wood  
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The shelves of the Peacock Room with blue-and-white Chinese porcelain



The shelves of the Peacock Room with blue-and-white Chinese porcelain