

# Whistler at the Fitzwilliam Museum:

The Gentle Art and Palaces in the Night | 29 January – 8 September 2019

To complement the **Whistler & Nature** exhibition, drawing on The Hunterian Museum's collection (8 January to 17 March 2019), The Fitzwilliam is staging two further exhibitions. Concurrently showing, **The Gentle Art** explores our own collection of etchings, drypoints and lithographs, by the American artist, James McNeill Whistler's (1834-1903). Then, later in the year (June 2019), **Palaces in the Night: The urban landscape in Whistler's prints**, picks up the story of his artistic life in Europe and provides another opportunity discover the different printing techniques, including Burr and Impression as well as the above mentioned etchings, drypoint and lithography.

## **The Gentle Art: Friends and strangers in Whistler's prints** - 29 January to 12 May 2019

Running concurrently with the major show, in the Print Room, this exhibition of James McNeill Whistler's etchings, drypoints and lithographs from the Fitzwilliam's collection, focusses on people. The range includes figures emerging from the shadows in the artist's early 'French set' of the 1850s, intimate domestic scenes of friends and fellow artists in London, and late lithographs of nudes and portraits of his sister-in-law 'Bunnie', made in the 1890s. Whistler's relationships with a number of friends quickly soured as they became the victims of his humour.

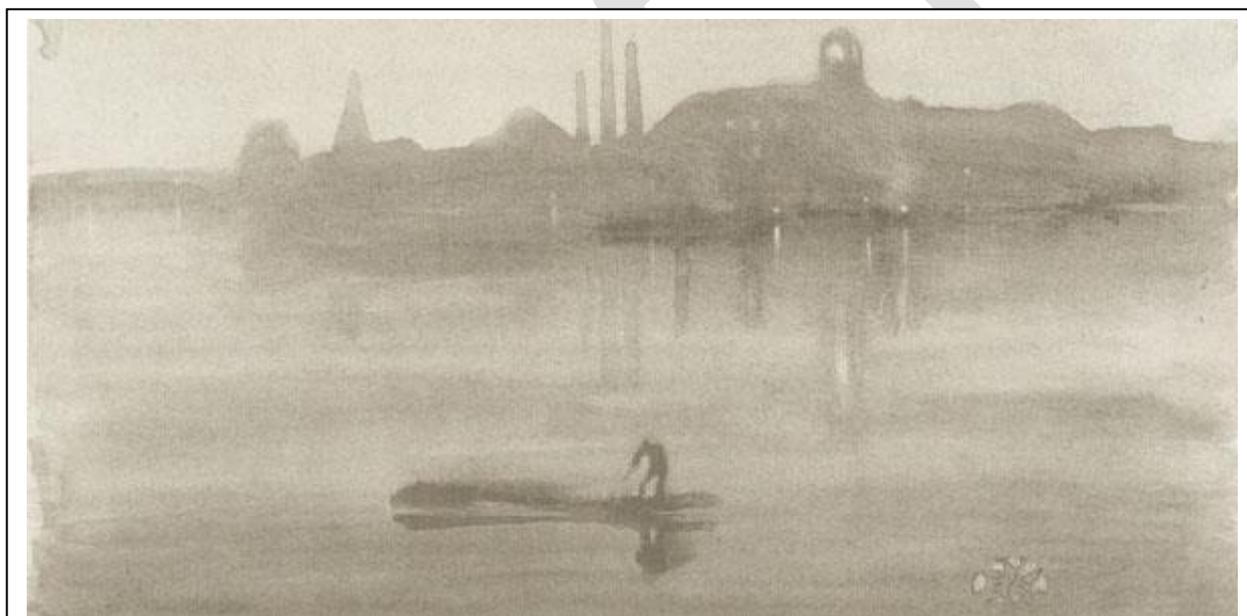


*En Plein Soleil*, from 'Twelve Etchings from Nature', James McNeil Whistler  
© Fitzwilliam Museum

On such occasions his butterfly signature acquired a barbed tail to match the sting of his sharp wit, as immortalised in his collection of letters and pamphlets, such as *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* that is displayed in the exhibition.

## **Palaces in the Night: The urban landscape in Whistler's prints** - 4 June – 8 Sept 2019

In 1855, at the age of 21, Whistler left America to study art in Paris. He never returned to his homeland but instead settled in London, where he made his name as an artist. **Palaces in the Night** is devoted to his cityscapes, ranging from the early 'French set' of the 1850s to the late etchings of Brussels and Amsterdam. The exhibition also offers the opportunity to see a spectacular impression of *The Doorway* - one of a series of twelve prints known as the 'First Venice Set'. First etched in 1879-80 and published by The Fine Art Society, Whistler intended to print 100 impressions of *The Doorway* but by his death in 1903, only 84 had been printed, 16 short!



James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), *Nocturne: The River at Battersea*, 1878,  
© Fitzwilliam Museum

Whistler's progression from crisp realism to atmospheric impressionism can be seen in his images of London and the Thames. *Nocturne: The River at Battersea*, (1878) is a particularly evocative lithotint on display.

Prints of this date give visual expression to his later, famous Ten O'Clock Lecture of 1885: 'the evening mist clothes the riverside with poetry, as with a veil – and the poor buildings lose themselves in the dim sky – and the tall chimneys become campanile – and the warehouses are palaces in the night – and the whole city hangs in the heavens'.

## Notes to editors:

**Whistler & Nature at The Fitzwilliam Museum** (8 January – 17 March) explored James McNeill Whistler's (1834-1903) revolutionary attitude and relationship towards the natural world throughout his life, as expressed in works ranging from his celebrated London Nocturnes to his European coastal and pastoral scenes. The exhibition drew on The Hunterian Museum's collection alongside other UK collections. The exhibition moved from Cambridge to Newcastle upon Tyne's Laing Art Gallery, before going on to Glasgow in the spring of 2020.

## About the Fitzwilliam Museum

Founded in 1816 the Fitzwilliam Museum is the principal museum of the University of Cambridge and lead partner for the University of Cambridge Museums (UCM) Major Partner Museum programme, funded by The Arts Council. The Fitzwilliam's collections explore world history and art from antiquity to the present day. It houses over half a million objects from ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman artefacts, to medieval illuminated manuscripts, masterpiece paintings from the Renaissance to the 21st century, world class prints and drawings, and outstanding collections of coins, Asian arts, ceramics and other applied arts. The Fitzwilliam presents a wide ranging public programme of major exhibitions, events and education activities, and is an internationally recognised institute of learning, research and conservation.

[www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)

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The Fitzwilliam Museum, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RB | Free admission  
OPEN: Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays: 12.00 – 17.00;  
CLOSED: 24-26 & 31 December, 1 January, Good Friday

**Business Partners** The Museum is supported by our Business Partners during 2017; TTP Group plc, ACE Cultural Tours, Hewitsons LLP, and Sotheby's.