

Sickert in Dieppe

4th July - 4th October 2015



Exhibition Notes : Learning Through Art

Designed to support teachers and students as they explore the exhibition

- **Looking Together:** Ideas on how to engage with art during your visit to Pallant House Gallery
- **Exhibition Overview:** An introduction to the current exhibition
- **About the Artist:** A brief biography of the artist
- **Pre-visit Activities:** Useful links and pre-visit ideas
- **Key Themes:** An introduction to each section
- **Works in Focus:** Discussion questions to facilitate open-ended exploration
- **References and Connections:** Artists and art historical terms mentioned in the text

**PALLANT
HOUSE
GALLERY**

Looking Together

These notes are aimed to help you and your students think in terms of shapes, colours and space, to develop the skills and techniques to focus on an object, identify its essential elements and to find meaning and build a visual vocabulary.

Try to keep group numbers to a minimum so everyone can see the work and have time to participate in the discussion.

Use this line of questioning when looking at the **Works in Focus**.

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

Observation

Approach the work and take a closer look. Encourage your students to take a “visual inventory” of the art work, focusing on it and noticing details.

Take the time to look.

What lines and shapes do you see in this drawing?

Where is the figure in relation to the building?

Description

Describe the work as a group to establish an understanding of what is being seen.

It is useful to start by simply listing what everyone sees. Remember to explore the formal properties of the work, as well as naming recognizable objects, for example consider:

• **Line** and **Shape** as well as **Colour** and **Composition**

Material and **Technique**

Subject matter

By looking closely at this painting, can you describe the brushstrokes?

This process allows a wide range of participation and will benefit future interpretation.

Once you feel that the group has thoroughly described the work, summarize all the elements mentioned and point out any important details that have been missed.

What is implied by the way these two figures are interacting?

Interpretation

Interpretation is about assigning meaning to various elements of the work and thinking about its overall significance. Encourage breadth and variety, and use ideas generated to expand the conversation.

Ask questions that prompt your students to reflect on what is not clearly visible in the work but perhaps merely suggested.

Time and **Place**, **Narrative** and **Mood**

Artist's Intention and **Biographical Information**

Historical and **Social Context**

Balance your questions by sharing some of the interesting facts in these notes, make connections and encourage further discussion.

What overall mood is conveyed in this photograph?

How does this painting make you feel?

Connection

Encourage your students to connect the work to their life experiences as well as wider cultural and social events.

Personal Life Experience and **Emotional Effect**

Personal Opinion

Cultural Changes and **World Events**

Artwork by different artists

Why do you think the artist used these found objects together to create this sculpture?

Do you like this painting?

How does this drawing of a landscape compare to the painting next to it that depicts the same scene?

Summary

Toward the end of the discussion of each work, bring together the various threads of conversation, summarizing and synthesizing the points you have talked about.

Exhibition Overview

Sickert in Dieppe explores how the picturesque French seaside town of Dieppe proved to be a formative setting for British painter Walter Sickert (1860–1942). This exhibition demonstrates the artist's interest in the everyday life of Dieppe, to which he was a regular visitor for over four decades and a permanent resident from 1898–1905. His range of subject matter and pictorial techniques are explored through his many paintings, prints, preparatory drawings and etchings as well as archival material.

This exhibition is organised around key themes of leisure, architecture, the harbour, landscapes and the figure, ideas and motifs which Sickert also incorporated into work produced in Venice and London. The influence of James Abbott McNeill Whistler, to whom Sickert was an apprentice, is undeniable in his earliest paintings, and the passion for the quality of paint and the act of painting itself, learnt from Whistler, was to remain central to Sickert's own philosophy. Yet it was another Master of modern art, that was to have a greater affect on his development as an artist.

Sickert's friendship with Edgar Degas, formed in Dieppe during the summer of 1885, encouraged him to broaden his subject matter, to paint modern life and the everyday lives and experiences of ordinary people. Just as significantly it challenged Sickert to reconsider his painting method, to abandon the technique of painting in front of the subject, usually in one sitting, and to work up his paintings from preparatory drawings, once back in the studio.

From the middle of the 1800s to the outbreak of the First World War, Dieppe was one of the most fashionable seaside resorts in Northern France. Sickert was amongst several British artists and writers to visit the town including Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley and Max Beerbohm and enjoy the lively discussions in the local cafés, which were also the subject for many of his paintings *The Cafe Suisse (Cafe des Arcades, Dieppe)*, 1914. Through his friendship with the French painter and loyal patron Jacques Émile Blanche, Sickert was exposed to contemporary French art



The Café Suisse (Café des Arcades, Dieppe), 1914, Oil on canvas, Leeds Museums and Art Galleries

from which he drew inspiration. This positioned him in a unique position as a bridge between the new ideas being explored on the Continent and a more conservative British audience.

Sickert's deep attachment to Dieppe is evident in his commitment to recording the street scenes and cafés as well as his rigorous and systematic exploration of the architecture of Dieppe's churches, St Jacques and St Rémy, in prints, drawings and paintings. It led Blanche to acknowledge 'No other artist has so perfectly felt and expressed the character of the town, whose Canaletto he has become.'¹

During quieter periods Sickert turned his attention away from St. Jacques and the elegant seafront to the fisherman's quarter, east of the harbour known as Le Pollet. The company that Sickert kept here was very different to the fashionable and artistic circle he mixed with in the west of town and offered him an array of interesting subject matter for his work.

Although known for townscapes of Dieppe, the outlying landscape was also a source of inspiration through which Sickert experimented with his painterly style. Inspired by a younger generation of painters such as Spencer Gore, Sickert increased the colour range of his palette and reduced his brushstrokes to simplified patches of pure colour.

The role of the figure in Sickert's paintings is in many ways reflective of his personal and emotional life. He included the public and theatrical, with paintings of performers and the audience of the new music halls and cafés, as well as atmospheric and often claustrophobic intimate domestic interiors, see *Woman Seated on a Bed, Dieppe, 1907*.

Sickert's figurative paintings tempt us into trying to define a narrative, a theme Virginia Woolf navigated in her fictional conversation about Sickert, calling him a novelist. 'He likes to set his characters in motion, to watch them in action... The figures are motionless, of course, but each has been seized in a moment of crisis; it is difficult to look at them and not to invent a plot, to hear what they are saying.'²

As this exhibition shows it was Sickert's sustained investigation into the central importance of drawing, composition and the handling of paint, as well as the treatment and selection of his subject matter, that makes him a truly modern artist. However, Sickert did not believe in taking it further and abjuring the subject matter altogether. His choice of motif is calculated and is evidence of a real commitment to seeing and understanding modern life.³

In his several roles as painter, teacher and polemicist, he was a source of inspiration and influence to successive generations of British painters.

This exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue including essays by Katy Norris, Curator at Pallant House Gallery and a programme of talks, events and workshops.

Words which are underlined refer to the References and Connection section at the end of these notes.



The Trapeze, 1920, Oil on canvas, The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

About the Artist

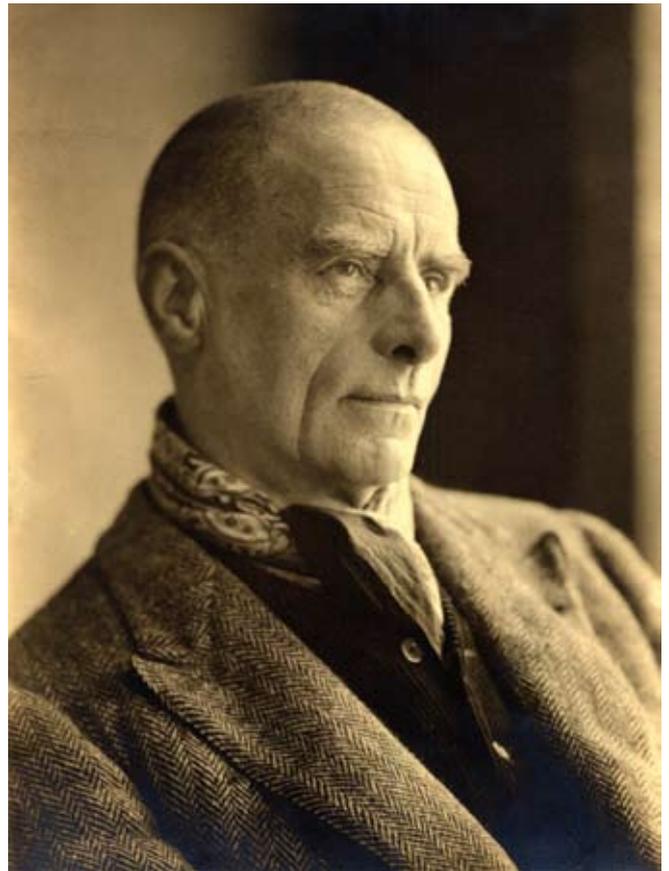
Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942)

Sickert was an entertaining and charming figure who was popular among many cultural and social circles. Although as an artist he often remained slightly distanced, in order to pursue his art and view people and events from a detached perspective. An approach often considered reflective of his desire to portray modern, urban life.

The eldest of six children, he was born in Munich in 1860 to a Danish father (with German nationality) and an Anglo-Irish mother. His early years were spent in Germany but in 1868 the family moved to England. London remained his principal home for the rest of his life, although he lived for periods of time in France and Italy.

As a young man, discouraged from pursuing an artistic career by his father, he turned instead to his other great passion, the theatre. Following a short career on the stage, he signed up for a year's 'General Course' at the Slade School of Fine Art in 1881. However, his first significant step on the turbulent road of a life as an artist, came in 1882. The American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), an artistic hero of Sickert's, advised him to leave the Slade and become an apprentice in his studio on Tite Street in Chelsea. Sickert learnt a great deal about painting and printmaking and under his tutelage his early paintings and graphic works clearly reflect Whistler's influence.

In 1883 Sickert was entrusted to escort Whistler's famous painting *Arrangement in Grey and Black: Portrait of the Artist's Mother* to the Paris Salon. Emboldened by a letter of introduction he called on Edgar Degas (1834–1917), an introduction that was to provide Sickert with another great artistic influence on his life and art. Sickert continued to learn from the example of these two great figures of modern painting and began to establish a reputation for himself as a painter of low-toned landscapes. In 1885 Sickert travelled to Dieppe for the summer



Portrait of Sickert with a Shaved Head, c.1920, Black and white photograph, Islington Local History Centre and Museum London

and renewed his acquaintance with Degas and made friends with many other young French writers and artists including Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861–1942).

Owing to his links to France and Whistler, Sickert occupied a key position among artists concerned with a modern approach to painting. At various times he joined or helped establish alternative exhibiting societies through which to show his work and that of other modern artists. The first group he joined was the newly established New English Art Club (NEAC) in 1887.

In the early 1890s Sickert became friendly with a new social group of young artists after moving to No.1 The Vale, just off the King's Road, London. Here he was friend and neighbour to Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, and briefly partook in the contemporary discussion around the fashionable notion of Decadence and the link to Symbolism. Sickert was briefly involved in contributing copies of his music hall paintings to

the quarterly periodical called The Yellow Book, first published in 1894.

After an extended period away from London between 1898 - 1905, residing in Dieppe and making numerous visits to Venice, Sickert returned to London in 1907. Having met Camille Pissarro in Dieppe in 1901 he was drawn into a new social circle which included Spencer Gore, Harold Gilman, Lucien Pissarro (Camille's eldest son) and sometimes Augustus John. He established himself in rooms in Camden Town and began to hold Saturday afternoon 'At Homes' in his studio in Fitzroy Street. The Fitzroy Street Group was an independent and modern exhibiting society which in 1910 evolved into the Camden Town Group. It was during this time that Sickert produced his paintings of figures in claustrophobic interiors, which included his series of works of 1908 -10 in response to the real life Camden Town Murder of 1907.

Sickert returned to Dieppe in 1913, although the outbreak of the First World War forced him to return to London. In 1914 he moved to Bath where he continued his exploration of landscape painting. However, in 1919 he returned immediately to Dieppe where he remained until 1922.

By the time Sickert returned to London he was regarded as an established painter, and was accepted as an Associate Royal Academician (A.R.A.). From the late 1920s until Sickert's death in 1942, there is a sense of retrenchment from the world coupled with a continuing creativity.⁴ During the 1930s Sickert began to make a series of works based on Victorian art which became known as *English Echoes*, which, although questioned by some critics, continued his investigation into the visual and material qualities of paint, so that art itself became the subject of these paintings.⁵

Sickert also developed his interest in using photographs as a source of visual information. Like his *Echoes* his paintings copied from photographs depended on the idea of transcription or 'translation' as Sickert was inclined to see it. In these paintings, the

photographs were squared up, as had his preparatory drawings of earlier work. Once translated to the canvas the mark of the artist is clearly seen through painterly brushstrokes and idiosyncratic colour.

During the 1920s and 1930s Sickert produced a number of self-portraits which further explored his fascination with the unknowableness of the self and included a number of paintings which recorded, with great compassion, his declining health.

Sickert's final move was to Bathampton, just outside Bath. He lived here from 1938 until his death in 1942.

Pre-visit Activities

Look

Look at a selection of paintings by Walter Sickert before your visit. Use the links and books below for reference.

Explore

Links to explore before you visit

BBC / Your Paintings

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/artists/walter-richard-sickert>

Read

Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings & Drawings*
The Paul Mellon Centre, New Haven and London

Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*

David Peters Corbett, *Walter Sickert*, Tate Publishing London



What is a gallery?

Discuss what a gallery is and what is special about looking at original artwork in comparison to a reproduction.

Who are galleries for?

Ask about any other galleries or museums they have been to and what they saw there?

Words and ideas to investigate

Art Techniques

Oil Paint
Etching
Drawing
Tone
Line
Shape
Form
Colour
Texture

En plein air
Squaring up
Foreground
Perspective

Portraiture
Landscape
Townscapes

Art Movements/ Artists

Impressionism
Post Impressionism
Symbolism

James Whistler
Edgar Degas
Camille Pissarro
Claude Monet
Spencer Gore

New English Art Club
Fitzroy Street Group
Camden Town Group

Think like a Curator

The role of a curator is to decide on the theme of the exhibition, choose what artworks to display and where to put them.

As you explore the exhibition, think about the following:

- What is the theme of this exhibition?
- Why have certain artworks been put together?
- Is there anything you would put in a different place? and why?
- What was your favourite artwork? and why?
- Which artwork did you least like? and why?

Key Themes: La Vie Moderne

It was in the fashionable coastal resort of Dieppe that Sickert developed many of his theories on art and painterly techniques, and saw him mature into an original and influential artist of his time. His sustained engagement with the town spanned over four decades from the early 1880s to the beginning of the 1920s.

It has been widely accepted that a growing friendship with Edgar Degas throughout the summer of 1885 set Sickert on a new creative path. Degas' urban realism provided a vital counterbalance to the particular interpretation of Impressionism that he had learnt under Whistler in London, which emphasised above all else the 'poetry and beauty' of the urban landscape.

In 1885 Sickert's output consisted largely of small wooden panels, which he described as 'sunlight pochades', made in front of various locations around the old town. By the late 1880s to early 1890s paintings such as *The Red Shop (October Sun)* c. 1888, began to represent a hybrid of styles, combining the everyday pictorial detail learnt from Degas with the vague atmosphere of Whistler's ethereal compositions. However, Sickert increasingly wanted to capture pictures of greater firmness and actuality and was interested in the constructional aspect of painting, see **Work in Focus:** *The Laundry Shop*, 1885.

During Dieppe's heyday in the 1890s, Sickert was amongst the glittering line up of writers, artists, patrons and collectors who travelled there for the summer season and often gathered at the home of Jacques-Émile Blanche. Blanche played a crucial role in facilitating Sickert's exposure to Modern painting on the Continent, acquainting him with Impressionist artists and their gallerists such as Durand-Ruel and Bernheim-Jeune, both of whom he eventually convinced to show Sickert's work.

The creative friendships made during the summer season in Dieppe among young British writers and artists inevitably led to discussions on the nature of contemporary art. Impressionism was rarely understood in England and caused controversy among a British audience, whilst it was fervently defended by many artists seeking to define the act of painting.

Dieppe's growing popularity can partly be attributed to its increased accessibility. New train lines to the south coast of England connected with a ferry from Newhaven across to Dieppe, where the train then passed along the Quai Duquesne in the harbour. From here it was just a short ride to the new hotels built on the elegant new la plage. In addition, the building of the Paris-Rouen line in 1843 greatly improved links to Paris. Sickert painted the elegant Hôtel Royal on the Boulevard Aguado many times, see **Work in Focus:** *L'Hôtel Royal, Dieppe*, 1894.



The Red Shop (October Sun) c. 1888, Oil on panel, Norfolk Museums Service, (Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery)

Work in Focus: The Laundry Shop, 1885

Oil on panel

Leeds Museum and Art Gallery



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What lines and shapes have been used in this painting?

There is a strong grid pattern which seems to overlay the picture. This is highlighted by the vertical and horizontal structure of the window and the rectangular doorway and architectural detailing to the right. The grid pattern also suggests the process by which the painting was constructed. This was one of the first paintings Sickert produced using a squared-up preparatory drawing, an approach he turned to after meeting Edgar Degas in 1885.

Was it painted in the street?

Under the tutelage of Whistler, Sickert would have made paintings and sketches direct from nature. Trying to capture the 'beauty and poetry' of an image in a single sitting would often result in vague atmospheric paintings. However, after meeting Degas, Sickert began to realise the limitations of this way of painting. Degas had rejected the favoured approach of painting en plein air of other French Impressionists, and would work up his paintings in his studio from sketches and memory. This was an approach Sickert was to follow for the rest of his own career, which allowed him to control and premeditate his execution, composition and style.

How is the picture composed?

With little sense of the outside street your eye is drawn through the window and open doorway and into the interior of the shop. This highlights the feeling that the drama of the painting is happening within the interior of the space. A desire to capture the emotional tension between two protagonists within an interior setting would become a recurrent theme in Sickert's work.

The picture is divided into two, with the glazed windows to the left and an open doorway to the right. This is suggestive of two sides of an encounter, between that of the customer and the shop worker and perhaps even the encounter of two different social classes. The woman on the right glimpsed through the doorway is wearing quite a plain grey-blue dress and apron and her eyes are casted downwards. The woman to the left, depicted behind the counter of clothes, appears to be dressed in a middle class dress with buttons down the front, which catch the light. She is shown leaning forward in a more active pose, and we see a little more of her face, although this is interrupted by the window frame.

Interestingly it appears that it is the shop worker framed by the open door who is the main focus of the painting. It is as if we are being offered a glimpse 'behind the scenes'. At this time, the ordinary working class was considered quite a radical subject matter for a painting.

Further Discussion Ideas

- Does the colour affect the mood of the painting?
- How can you tell what type of shop it is?
- Who are the two women depicted in the painting. What is their story?
- Have you ever visited an old fashioned shop, what did it smell like?

Play/Observation: Study the shop windows in your local high street. Try to remember as many details as you can about the architecture and what was displayed.

Art: Explore the technique of transferring an image through the squaring up process.

History: Explore the changing status of working women in the nineteenth century.

Work in Focus: L'Hôtel Royal, Dieppe, 1894

Oil on canvas
Museums Sheffield



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What is this building?

It is the Hôtel Royal on the Boulevard Aguado, on the fashionable seafront in Dieppe. It was a subject Sickert was to paint many times after his move to Dieppe in 1898. It was one of the fashionable hotels catering to the seasonal crowd that came to Dieppe during the summer.

Describe the colours used in this painting

Jacques-Émile Blanche, who once owned this painting, wrote 'In it there is a rose and violet after-sunset sky, with the lawns of the marine parade; the houses of the Rue Aguado are a dull greenish-white and the Hôtel Royal has masts, from which hang flags with the French national colours'.

The choice of colours which gives the painting a strong atmospheric mood, could reflect Sickert's attempt to capture an emotional memory of the place, rather than drawing from direct observation. Sickert felt that the role of the painter was not simply to render surface appearances, but rather to draw out the internal beauty of a subject. This idea picks up on the theory of symbolism which was current during the later part of the 1890s. It proposed that the visual world might reveal deeper truths about the essence of human perception, inner experience, mood and emotion.

Think about how the picture is composed

The simplified architecture of the hotel dominates the middle area of the canvas. Its flatness is emphasised by the pattern created by the rows of windows, some in darkness whilst others are highlighted with light. The 'rose and violet' painterly sky dominates the top third of the painting as well as setting the whole tone and atmosphere. The sky is reflected in the loosely painted path that sweeps up through the lawns in the foreground giving a suggestion of spatial depth, to an otherwise flat composition, whilst the flag masts give an element of vertical structure to the painting.

The figures are just dabs of paint

The inclusion of the women and child in white serve as a highlight note, which lifts a low-tone painterly foreground as well as giving a suggestion of depth and a hint of narrative. The figures in the middle distance are hard to work out, they seem to be passing blurs of colour, especially the dark form to the right which also adds an uncanny feel to the painting.

The unresolved details of the figures could suggest the fleeting nature of human encounters, that not only occur in a transitory hotel environment, but also in the increasingly urban society of the late nineteenth century.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- Why do you think the artist used these colours?
- How does the painting make you feel?
- How would you feel walking along the promenade?

Creative writing: Be inspired by the poem by Arthur Symons (see overleaf). Try to write a poem that captures the mood of one of the paintings.

History: Explore the changing history of the seaside resort.

Art: Paint a scene at twilight, what colours can you see in the sky?

Work in Focus: L'Hôtel Royal, Dieppe, 1894

Colour Studies (At Dieppe)

by Arthur Symons (1895)

The grey-green stretch of sandy grass,
Indefinitely desolate;
A sea of lead, a sky of slate;
Already autumn in the air, alas!

One stark monotony of stone,
The long hotel, acutely white,
Against the after-sunset light
Withers grey-green, and takes the grass's tone.

Listless and endless it outlies,
And means, to you and me, no more
Than any pebble on the shore,
Or this indifferent moment as it dies.

Key Themes: An English Impressionist - St. Jacques and the Picturesque

Between 1898 and 1905 picturesque townscapes of both Dieppe and Venice (visited between 1900 and 1904) formed a large proportion of Sickert's work. However, it was his rigorous and systematic exploration of the architecture of Dieppe, capturing the town's prominent monuments and buildings, that led Blanche to acknowledge that 'no other artist has so perfectly felt and expressed the character of the town, whose Canaletto he has become.'⁶

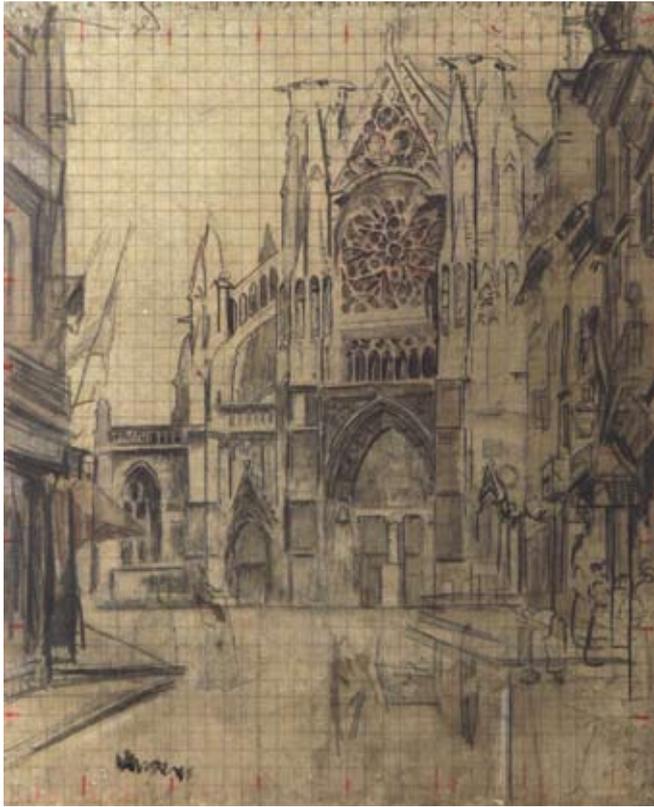
When in 1899 Sickert described his focus on the picturesque he would have been aware of the vivid associations the description had in the popular imagination of the British public. Expressive of a Romantic sensibility the term was also used to describe the Gothic architecture of northern France. This interpretation was central to the work of earlier artists such as J.M.W. Turner and John Sell Cotman, whose engravings from the early 1800s shaped how visitors viewed and experienced the historic sites and recommended vistas of Dieppe, in particular the church of St Jacques and the fourteenth-century Le château d'Arques-la-Bataille.

'His eye probed every stone of the facade of St Jacques as, with the diligence of an ant, he worked his way inch by inch round the church to leave no aspect unrecorded.'⁷

Sickert produced numerous drawings and paintings of the church of St. Jacques on canvas, on panel and on board. More paintings of this view survive than of any other site in Dieppe. Many of the paintings of the West front and the rose window, created between 1899 and 1902, such as *St Jacques, Setting Sun*, 1899-1900, are twilight views. In his many versions of this subject Sickert varied the cropping of the image, the incidental figures, the light effects and the handling. Sickert also painted the church's South portal, viewed from the Rue Pecquet, in 1900 and then again between 1906 and 1910, see **Work in Focus:** *St Jacques, Rue Pecquet*, 1907. Sickert often used restricted tonal contrasts rather than the wide-ranging colour schemes employed by the French Impressionists. However in some



L'Église Saint-Jacques, Façade au Soleil Couchant, c.1899-1900, Oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (1954) on loan to Château-Musée de Dieppe



St Jacques, Dieppe, 1899, Chalk and wash on paper, squared, Hatton Gallery Collection

later paintings, Sickert incorporated brighter colouration and a thicker application of pigment into the composition.

This approach of capturing the same motif in different light links him to his formative teacher Whistler, as well as the work of the French Impressionists. However, unlike these artists, Sickert continued to keep to his routine and would paint from working drawings in his studio, as can be seen from this squared up drawing.

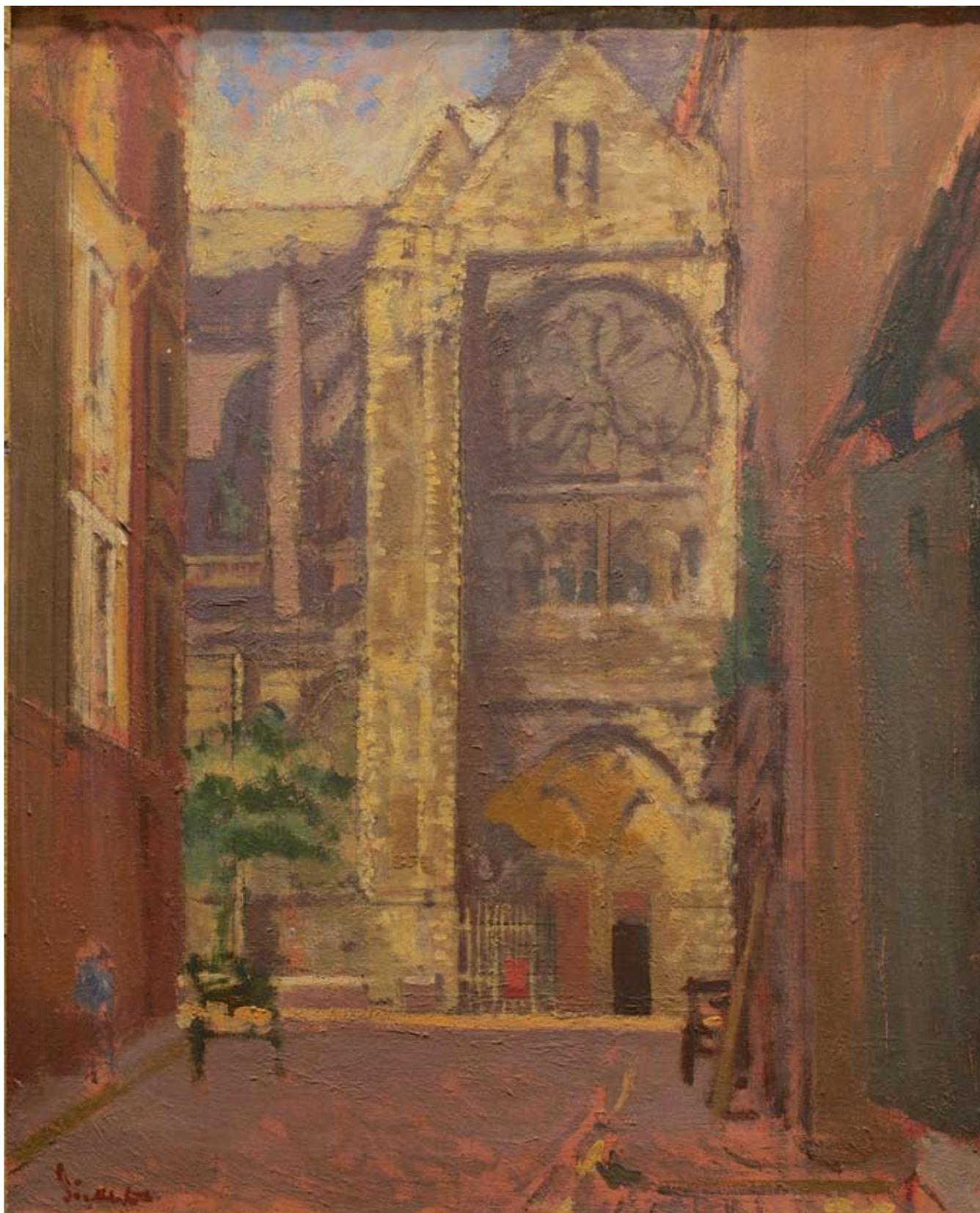
Sickert may have been inspired by the series of paintings of Rouen Cathedral by Claude Monet. In 1895 twenty paintings of the Cathedrals were exhibited at Durand-Ruel in Paris, where Sickert may have had the chance to see them on his way to Venice.

Sickert was also well aware of the commercial popularity of these views. He not only used his sketches to work from in his studio, he also produced a group of works traced directly from his preliminary drawings, before enhancing them with pastel, watercolour or ink washes. He made these works with the expressed hope of producing saleable works for his gallerists, for a much needed source of income.

Work in Focus: St Jacques, Rue Pecquet, Dieppe, 1907

Oil on canvas

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester, on loan from a private collection (1995)



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What can be seen in the painting?

The Rue Pecquet leads up to the south entrance of St Jacques, known at La Porte Ste Catherine. The road is lined on both sides with tall buildings, on the right there is the brown shutter of a closed shop front and beyond some timber or a ladder leaning against the wall. On the opposite side there is a handcart left in the street, perhaps after market day. A suggestion of a figure, in blue and pink, walks along the side pavement. The tracery of the rose window is only cursorily noted as is the flying buttress to the left, usually decorative features of gothic architecture which are rendered with precision.

The focus of the painting is the south façade, which is picked out by light, loosely painted brushstrokes, suggestive of the fleeting movement of sunlight and shade across the stone façade. The open door in the south porch is noted in quite a solid rectangle, which acts like a pause amongst the busily painted surface of the painting.

There is a marked contrast in light which visually separates the everyday reality of the street, with the sunlight flooding onto the facade of the church. The division is emphasised by a line of paint that marks off the end of the street and the bottom of the façade. Through the use of colour and brushstroke, the structure of the painting and the structure of the church are brought into focus. The act of painting as well as the subject matter are of equal importance. This interest in the painterly treatment as well as the subject matter was an important aspect of Sickert's paintings.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- Why did the artist choose this view?
- How would you feel standing in the side street looking up at the church?
- Have you noticed the patterns light and shade make on the surfaces of buildings?

Did he paint this subject more than once?

The church of St Jacques was a subject that Sickert returned to on many occasions over a period of years, capturing it from different angles and in different media - from etchings and watercolour drawings to oils on canvas. Between 1899 and 1910 he interrogated the church from every possible vantage point and avenue.

Why would an artist return to the same subject matter time and again?

For Sickert the chief interest in painting was the handling of paint; having found a motif of sufficient interest it did not matter how often it was repeated. It was primarily considered an excuse for the act of painting itself, for the manipulation of style and for experiments in technique.

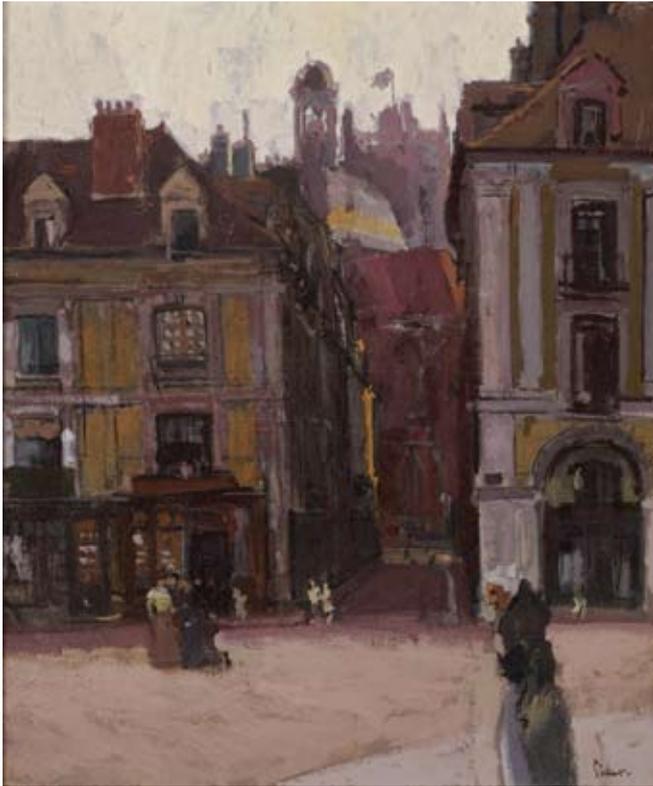
Sickert passionately maintained that drawing was the most valuable skill for an artist and that making observational sketches from the subject was fundamental to his work, and he would have used these as a source of reference when he returned to his studio.

Art: Take a single motif and produce a work in series, changing such elements as light, colour or materials.

History: Look at local historical buildings and think about their significance and how they add to the character of the area.

Maths: Think about proportions, and how they are used in architecture.

Key Themes: The Harbour and Le Pollet



The Rue Notre-Dame and the Quai Duquesne, Dieppe, 1899–1900, Oil on canvas, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Presented by the Christopher Sands Trust, 2001

Throughout the period of 1899–1914 Sickert systematically examined the Quai Duquesne in numerous paintings, drawing and etchings, *La Rue Notre-Dame and the Quai Duquesne, Dieppe*. Despite the variety of sights, sounds and smells of harbour life Sickert typically kept to a limited range of subjects, concentrated around the narrow roads leading off from the Arcades de la Poissonnerie.

The harbour would have proved a fascinating area to explore owing to the convergence of both history and contemporary life. Home to the traditional fishing community that lived in the area know as Le Pollet, the quay also saw the arrival of tourists from Newhaven and the steam train from Paris. Sickert, always the social chameleon, immersed himself in the everyday lives of those he was living among, and often wore baggy overalls of a Polletais fisherman when he went out to paint around the old quarter.⁸

The harbour and its environs provided inspiration when Sickert was commissioned in 1902 by the owner of the Hôtel de la

Plage, Dieppe, to paint views of the town as decorations for his restaurant. Sickert painted six large-scale paintings, which included *La Rue Notre Dame*⁹, *The Statue of Duquesne*¹⁰ (in the exhibition), *St Jacques*¹¹, *Bathers, Dieppe*¹² and two versions of *La Darse, Dieppe*¹³ (one of which is in the exhibition). Unfortunately, the hotel-keeper did not like the sombre tones of the pictures and they were sold.

Sickert not only looked to his surrounding architecture for inspiration but also the people who lived and worked around the harbour. The fishing community of Le Pollet sought their living from selling their catch in conical baskets upon the cobbles of the Quai Duquesne in Dieppe. Frequently pictured in contemporary postcards by Georges Marchand, featuring the women in their traditional costume of distinctive calf-length skirts and wooden clogs, two of its elderly inhabitants, were the subject matter for Sickert's painting **Work in Focus: *The Blind Sea Captain*, 1914.**

Sickert first started this painting in 1912–13 but returned to the painting in 1914 after he was obliged to move from his house in Envermeu to the centre of Dieppe. At this time Sickert felt there was little he could do but continue to work, but the uncertainty of the time adds a layer of vulnerability to the reading of this painting, suggesting a way of life coming to an end and an unknown future.



Marchandes de Moules, c. 1900, Black and white postcard

Work in Focus: The Blind Sea Captain, 1914

Oil on canvas

Private collection, Belgium



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

Who can you see in the painting?

The painting shows an elderly couple, the 'Sea Captain' and his wife or mother. Although the sea captain is still a tall, well built figure, there is a suggestion of his vulnerability through the slightly awkward buttoning of his coat. His blindness is implied by his down cast gaze and stick and his dependency on the arm of his companion, who, though much smaller in height, seems to hold him steady. We can see the woman's face more clearly, and through her steely gaze we get a sense of the effort of their life.

Where is the painting set?

The backdrop to the painting is the entrance to the harbour in the east of Dieppe known as Le Pollet, home to a traditional fishing community. In 1899 Sickert had taken a house on the other side of the harbour in Neuville and enjoyed his dual life, living away from the bustle of Dieppe centre, whilst being able to go in to visit and dine when he wanted.

What do you feel is the relationship between the two figures?

Sickert reflected on the inadequacy of portraiture to capture anything but a false, belittled version of the individual. In this work Sickert is trying to capture a more authentic account of the intimacies and privacies of contemporary life.

In the years previous to this painting, Sickert had immersed himself in the area around Camden Town and produced some of his most well know paintings of figures, often couples, in claustrophobic and dingy interiors. Although the difference of the setting was noted by Sickert himself, referring to it as a 'sentimental' composition, there is still the exploration of the relationship between the couple and we can but wonder at the everyday struggle and hardship experienced by this elderly couple. Sickert's focus on the materiality of the body and on the ways in which experience weighs upon the self is a central theme in all his investigations into modern life.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- How do you think the artist has managed to capture something of their character in this painting?
- How do the colours contribute to the overall mood of the painting?

History: Explore what jobs people had in the past and how they were linked to the areas where they lived.

Art/Drama: Think about how the positioning of two people reflects their relationship and feelings.

Key Themes: The Happy Valley

In 1912 Sickert and his second wife Christine Angus bought the Villa d'Aumaline, in Envermeu, a village set in the Eaulne valley, some miles inland. The subjects easily accessible to him were, perhaps for the first time since his Whistlerian days, exclusively rural. He revelled in this rest from painting urban scenes.

'I have always wanted to paint streams & willows & sous-bois more than anything since I was five years old...'¹⁴

During the summer of 1913 and 1914 he focused upon two rural subjects. The sawmill at Torqueville, *La Scierie de Torqueville*, which he described as 'an old farm-yard with a dovecot raised up on one beam of timber, innumerable mossy beams, writhing like snakes on the ground, a 'fond' of fat rich dark chestnut trees'.¹⁵ The other was the obelisk, a war monument to the victory of Henry IV erected during the sixteenth century and set upon rising ground near Arques-la-Bataille, see **Work on Focus: The Obelisk**, 1914.

Sickert's personal response to the woody lushly overgrown corners of nature was to be reminded of the paintings and drawings of his Danish-German grandfather and father and his upbringing in the Bavarian forests around Munich. He revelled in the expressive play of light and shade on the leaves, and the 'splash of sun merging into the green confusion & cool blue-grey leafage.'¹⁶

At this time, Sickert was also concerned with the technical aspect of painting¹⁷ and the problem he had with the use of impasto in both his own work and that of other contemporary artists. He described it as 'clumsy with thickness' whilst if the paint was thinned it got too 'thin and poor'. The answer was the accumulation of many touches of colour in thin coat upon thin coat of paint. In his landscapes dating from the summer of 1914 Sickert began to build up his surfaces using a greater number of thinner layers in order to achieve the smooth finish and bright colouration that he so desired.¹⁸

In autumn 1914 Sickert left France and did not return until 1919. His painterly investigations, started in Envermeu, continued in the paintings he made in Devon and Bath during the First World War, finally culminating in what Sickert described as his 'ideal use of oil paint'.

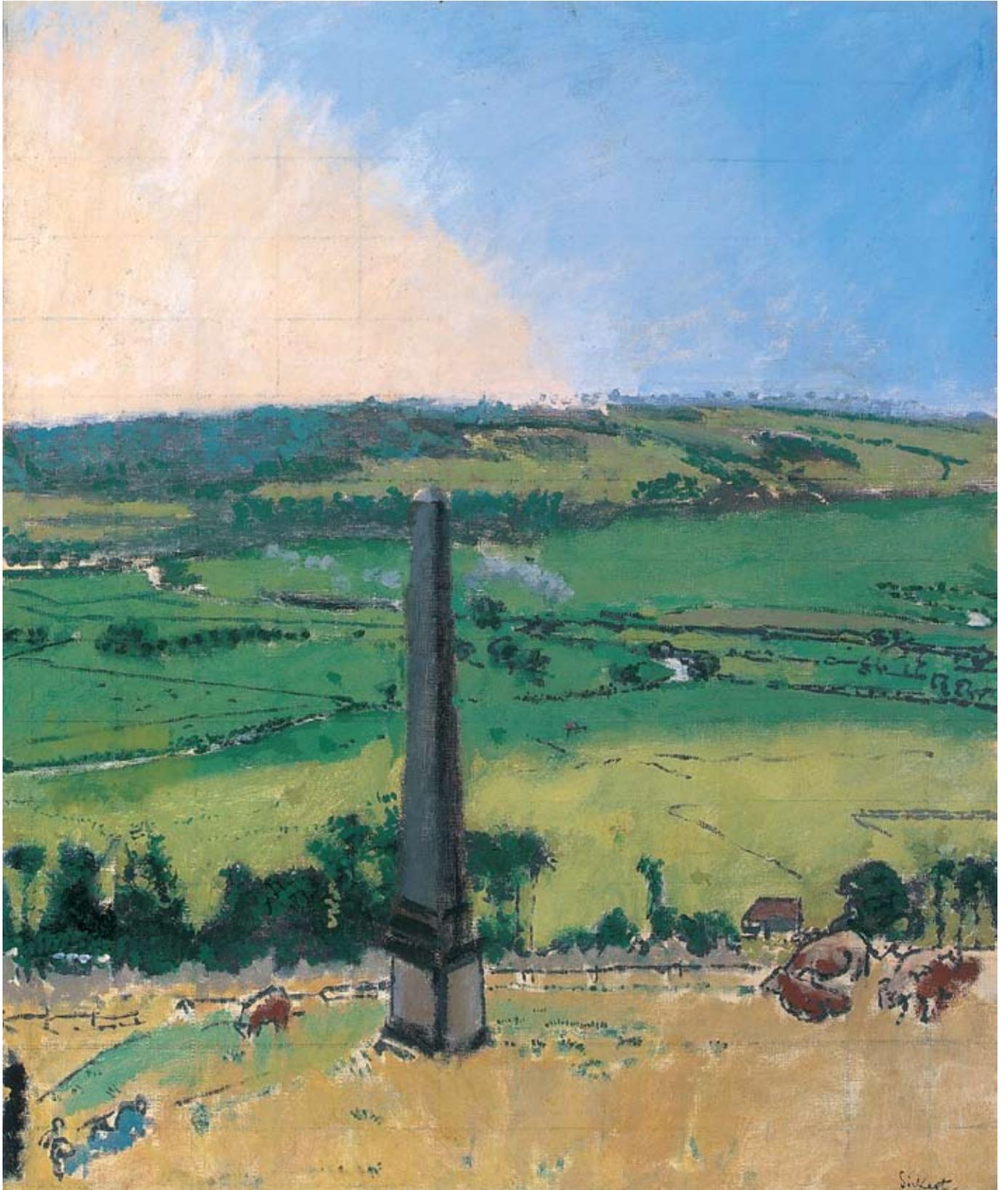
Whilst the landscapes of 1913-14 had been predominately shaped by Sickert's painterly investigations, by 1919-20 they were deeply tied to his domestic life. Referring to the countryside around Envermeu as the 'Happy Valley', Sickert painted landscapes concurrently with a series of rustic still-life paintings. However this happy period was to be tragically brief. In the October of 1920 Christine, his second wife, died. It was an event that deeply affected Sickert's emotional state and was the beginning of the end of his period in Dieppe.



La Scierie de Torqueville (Le Vieux Colombier), 1913
Oil on canvas, Dundee City Council, (Dundee's Art Galleries and Museums)

Work in Focus: The Obelisk, 1914

Oil on canvas
Peyton Skipwith



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What can you see in the painting?

The obelisk, which commemorates the victory of Henry IV over the Duke of Mayenne in 1589, stands on a hill overlooking a rolling landscape, with cows leisurely grazing in the field. A silvery river weaves its way through the fields to loop round to join up with another forming la rivière Arques which finally leads into the port at Dieppe.

Why do you think the artist painted this motif?

In August 1913 Sickert wrote of 'a motive that interests me very much. An obelisk on rising ground. I am looking down on it and the plain below rises above the whole length of the obelisk with a river and willows. So the obelisk serves as a measure of the receding plain'. Sickert was very interested in the handling of paint and the technical difficulties of painting, so he used this composition to explore the question of perspective as well as colour and light and shadow.

Look closely at the brushstrokes and colours

During 1913 Sickert was increasingly concerned with eliminating the thickly encrusted pigment, impasto, found both in his own earlier oil paintings, but also favoured by a younger generation of British artists, who he knew, such as Charles Ginner and Harold Gilman. He felt it dulled the impact of colour owing to the fact that each raised touch of paint casts a shadow which covers the picture 'with a grey reticulation'. Sickert continued to experiment with a more varied palette and simplified patches of pure colour layered on in separate coats of undiluted paint so achieving a smooth finish and brighter colouration.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- Where is the artist standing to see this view?
- How far do you think the valley extends?
- Painted just before the First World War, do you think this affects the way we understand the painting?

Art/Maths: Explore different ideas of perspective and distance in the landscape.

Art: Experiment with layering of colours with paint and other materials.

History: Discuss the changes to the rural landscape, over a period of time, or affected by events in society.

Key Themes: Figure Painting on the Rue Aguado

'i have sittings by electric light nearly every day in (the) flat at No. 44 and am deep in figure subjects again.'

The final period of Sickert's time in Dieppe between 1920 and 1922 can be characterised by a renewed interest in figure painting. He made a significant group of pictures set in his studio on the Rue Aguado, including a masterly painting *Portrait of Victor Lecourt*. Sickert's pictorial treatment of this subject is suggestive of his continued interest in contemporary French painting.¹⁹ The figure, surrounded by a richly patterned interior raises similarities to Henri Matisse's *Odalisque* paintings dating from the same period.



Victor Lecourt 1922-4, dated 1924, Oil on canvas, Manchester City Galleries

The 'intimacy that seems to exist in Sickert's pictures between his people and their rooms'²⁰ was a recurrent theme in his earlier and widely acknowledged figurative paintings set in Camden Town, dating from 1907-1913. Sickert returned to this theme in a series of intimate domestic dramas set in his small bedroom in his flat, see **Work in Focus:** *L'Armoire à Glace*, 1921-4. The resulting pictures represent a succinct interpretation of what Degas described as life seen through a keyhole.²¹

Sickert's days were spent working in his studio. His evenings were spent sketching the performers and the 'raffish clientele' at Vernet's on the Quai Henri IV, where dancing and singing would form part of the evening's entertainment, see **Work in Focus:** *Au Cafe Concert, Vernet's Dance Hall*, 1920.

Later in the evening, Sickert would move onto the Casino where he would discreetly sketch the gamblers crowded around the Baccarat tables. The figures in these paintings are often depicted with their backs to the viewer, which adds a sense of intrigue to the works. It has been suggested that Sickert was being diplomatic in not revealing the identities of some of his friends who frequented the Casino, although one gets the sense that Sickert may have been playing with this idea in *Baccarat - The Fur Cape*, by depicting such a distinctive item of clothing.

Influenced by Degas, Sickert's primary concern in his representation of popular entertainments was to explore the emergence of a new urban identity that was caught between the rapidly changing nature of the public and private experience.²²

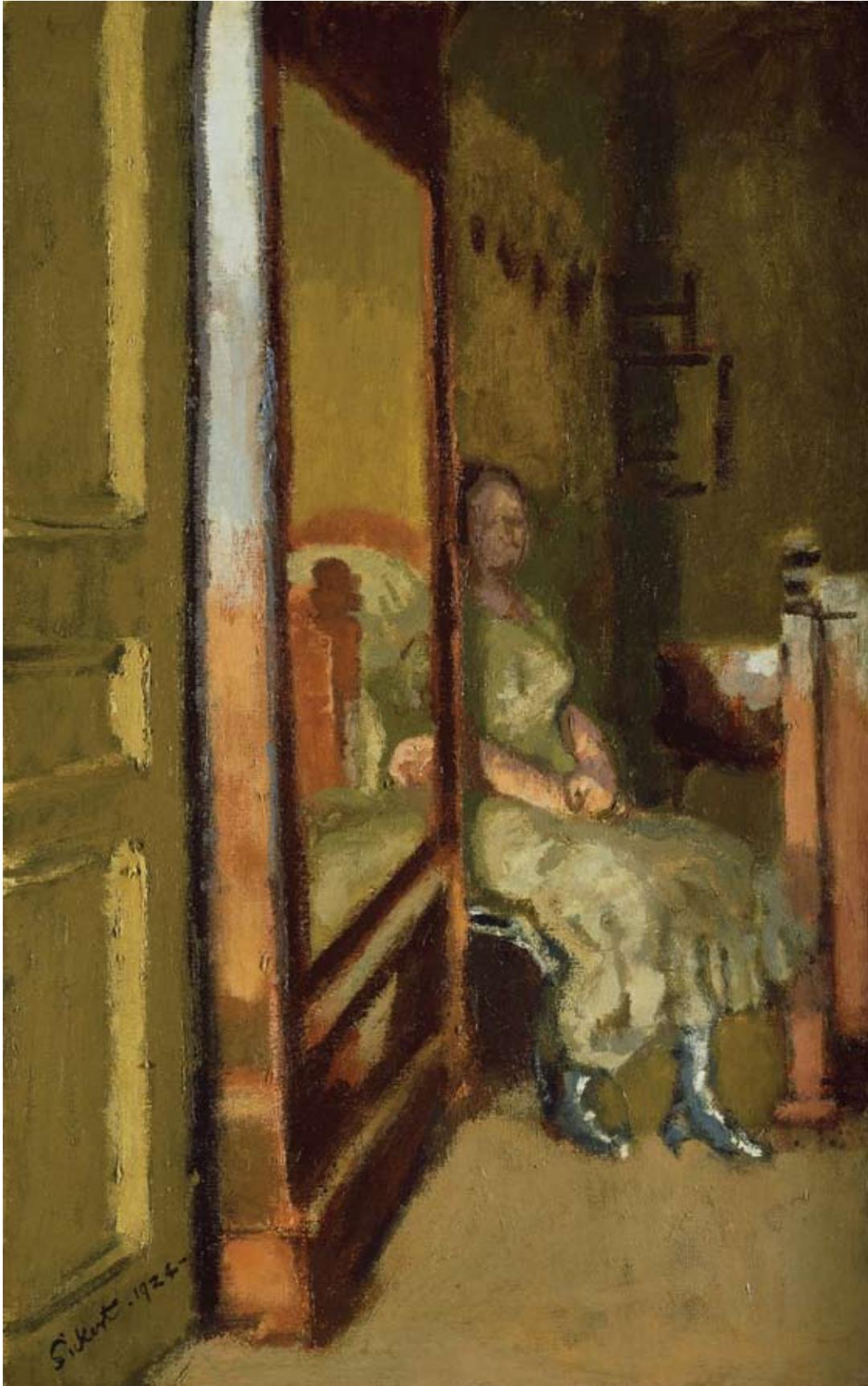


Baccarat - The Fur Cape, 1920, Oil on canvas, Tate: Bequeathed by Lady Henry Cavendish Bentnick 1940

Work in Focus: L'Armoire à Glace, 1921–4

Oil on canvas

Tate: Purchased 1941



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What can you see in this painting?

Looking through the open doorway we are in Sickert's seaside flat at 44 Rue Aguado in Dieppe. To the left of the room there is a mirrored wardrobe, which reflects a bed on the opposite side of the small room. Seated in an alcove, between the wardrobe and the bed, is a woman in a white dress or undergarment and blue heeled boots. Her hands are crossed and resting in her lap and even though her face is turned towards us, her features are out of focus. The room appears sparsely furnished and sombre in colour, apart from a hint of an orange wall which is reflected in the mirror.

How is the picture composed?

The painting is carefully composed, divided into four sections. The first, the beige door opened to the left, that reveals the glimpse of the scene within. As we cross the threshold into the private space of the bedroom, the large dominating mirrored wardrobe juts forward into the room. We see both the side and the front of the wardrobe which reinforces its solidity and interrupts our view into the interior of the bedroom. Here a woman is seated in a dimly lit alcove. Her body is turned towards us, but the lower half of her body and feet point across the picture towards the bed and the suggestion of the rest of the room. There is a sense of depth of space as well as confinement to the picture and the figure looks both isolated and diminished by the furniture.

What colours are used?

The colour palette of the painting, with its yellow, orange and browns dominating the composition has been suggested may be a response to working by the harsh glare of electric lighting. It also adds to the mood and atmosphere of the painting and tells us a little about what type of room it might be.

Who do you think this woman is?

After the death of his second wife in 1920 Sickert, bereaved and depressed, moved back to Dieppe and took rooms at 44 Rue Aguado. His only companion at this time was Marie Pepin, a French peasant whom Sickert had first employed as a servant while he and his wife were living in Envermeu in 1913. As with many of his 'conversation pieces' we do not know for sure who the people are meant to be. This ambiguity allows us to try to understand them on a personal level and create our own narrative around them.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- How do you think the woman feels, what is her story?
- How would you feel sitting in this room?
- How do the colours add to the mood of the painting ?

Creative writing: Write a short descriptive story about who this woman might be?

Art: List or collect items that have some significance to you.

Work in Focus: Au Café Concert, Vernet's Dance Hall, 1920

Oil on canvas

Private collection, courtesy of the Daniel Katz Gallery, London



Look + Discuss

Observation - Description - Interpretation - Connection

What can you see in the painting?

In the distance a performer sings, opened armed, under the glare of electric lights. A plume of red feathers cascading down behind her. Rows of bentwood chairs and café tables run along the side walls. A lone man in a cap, leans his head on his hand, listening to the performance, although his pose gives the suggestion of weariness and self absorption. Another figure, perhaps a woman, seated to the left gazes down at the table, whilst there is a suggestion of two figures seated closer to the stage, marked out by their light coloured hats.

Where is the painting set?

Vernet's dance hall, at the far end of the Quai Henri IV. This was a lively cabaret café facing the harbour in the quarter of Dieppe known as 'au bout du quai' ('at the end of the quay'). Sickert would come here in the early evening to sketch before going on to the Casino.

Describe the atmosphere?

The low tonal colours of this scene and the cursory sense of detail, captures the mood of the dimly lit café interior. As the viewer we seem to sit unnoticed at the back of the café, which reflects Sickert's own position as that of a detached observer sitting alone among strangers, often sketching secretly. The world of the performer seems separate from the world weary atmosphere of the audience. Whilst the singer is highlighted by the cloud of red and the harsh glare of the electric lights, the few customers seem to show no interaction either between each other or with the performance. Like Degas, Sickert anchored his portrayal of modernity in the artificial effects of the stage lights and the spectacle of performance. Here the everyday drama of contemporary life is played out, not only in the public theatre of the stage, but also through the experience of the individuals concealed in the audience.

Further Discussion Ideas:

- Where would you like to sit in this painting?
- Do you think the audience are enjoying the performance?
- What time of day do you think it is?
- Can you imagine the sounds of the cafe?

Drama: Recreate a cafe-concert scene. Explore the different roles of performer and audience.

Music: Compose some music or a song that might be performed in this cafe.

Endnotes

- 1 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings and Drawings*, Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, New Haven and London, p. 37
- 2 Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert, A Conversation* (Kindle Locations 73–77), 3-artnow ebooks, Kindle Edition
- 3 David Peters Corbett, *Walter Sickert*, London, p. 38
- 4 *ibid*, p. 54
- 5 *ibid*, p. 56
- 6 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings*, p. 37
- 7 *ibid*, p. 37
- 8 Katy Norris, *Sickert in Dieppe*, exh. cat. Pallant House Gallery, 2015, p. 69
- 9 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings* cat. 126.12. La Rue Notre Dame and the Quai Duquesne, 1902, 132 x 105.7, Oil on canvas. National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, Massey Collection of English Painting (1946) p. 238
- 10 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings* cat. 125.5. Le Grande Duquesne, 1902, 130.8 x 101, Oil on canvas. Manchester Art Gallery (1935) p. 236
- 11 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings* cat. 130.10. The Facade of St Jacques, 130.8 x 101, Oil on canvas. Private Collection, p. 241.
- 12 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings* cat. 149. Bathers, Dieppe, 1902, 131.5 x 104.6, Oil on canvas. Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (1935) p. 254
- 13 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings* cat. 118.8. La Darse, 151.1 x 53.3, Oil on canvas. Trust to Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow and Wendy Baron cat. 118.9. La Darse, 151.2 x 53.4, Oil on canvas. Private Collection, p. 230
- 14 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings*, p. 89
- 15 *ibid*, p. 89
- 16 *ibid*, p. 89
- 17 Wendy Baron, *Sickert Paintings*. Discussed at length in Chapter Thirteen pp. 89–99
- 18 Katy Norris, *Sickert in Dieppe*, p. 82
- 19 *ibid*, p. 93
- 20 Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert, A Conversation* (Kindle Locations 106–107), e-artnow ebooks, Kindle Edition
- 21 Katy Norris, *Sickert in Dieppe*, p. 90
- 22 *ibid*, p. 22

References and Connections

Exhibition Overview

James Abbott McNeill Whistler, 1834–1903

Nationality: American. Whistler was an American, but he spent almost all his career in Europe, mainly in London. There he was one of the most famous, controversial and influential painters of his time. Whistler's paintings are usually subtle and sensitive, but his views on art were outspoken and progressive. He thought that painting should deal mainly with abstract qualities such as colour and shape, rather than with subject matter. Some critics thought that his paintings looked sloppy and unfinished, and in 1877 Whistler sued one of them, John Ruskin, for saying that his work amounted to 'flinging a pot of paint in the public's face'. Whistler won the case, but the legal costs bankrupted him. Whistler's paintings are mainly portraits or landscapes. His most famous work is a portrait of his mother (1871). Its formal title is *Arrangement in Grey and Black No 1*, but it is often called *Whistler's Mother*.

Edgar Degas, 1834–1917 Nationality: French. Edgar Degas was an acclaimed painter, printmaker and sculptor. He was an early pioneer of Impressionism, although he disliked the term. Today he is best known for his paintings of ballet dancers and race horses. Degas organised the first exhibition of Impressionism with Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir in 1874. Degas often created work in his studio using models, which alienated him from other Impressionists who preferred painting from real life.

Aubrey Beardsley, 1872–1898 Nationality: British. English draughtsman and writer. Early in 1894 Beardsley was appointed art editor of *The Yellow Book*. His ostensible subjects were drawn from Classical literature and history, the Bible and the social world of his own time. His work became widely known, and formed an influential part of the current of Art Nouveau and international Symbolism.

Max Beerbohm, 1872–1956 Nationality: British. Caricaturist and writer. In the 1890s he was an observant sketcher of figures. Drawn in pen or pencil with delicately applied watercolour

tinging, they were in contrast to the narrative illustrations of the *Punch* tradition and showed a lightness of touch and simplicity of line that owed more to a literary tradition.

Jacques-Émile Blanche, 1861–1942

Nationality: French. A well-known figure in artistic and society circles—he was a friend of Degas, Renoir, Whistler and the writers Henry James and Marcel Proust. His best-known works are stylish portraits of people from this social group. Blanche regularly spent his summers at his family house in Dieppe, playing host to many of his artist friends, including Walter Sickert, and popularizing Dieppe as an artistic colony.

Canaletto, 1697–1768 Nationality: Venetian. Giovanni Antonio Canal, commonly known as Canaletto, was considered the finest landscape painter of his time. His most celebrated work consists of detailed view paintings of Venice. In 1746, Canaletto moved to London. He produced views of London during a time of great change, which included the construction of Westminster Bridge.

Spencer Gore, 1878–1914 Nationality: British. Spencer Gore was a founder member of the Camden Town Group. Gore used bright, vivid colours, simplified shapes and thick matt paint to show what he saw around him. Gore and Sickert met in Dieppe in 1904 and on Sickert's return to London, they began painting and drawing together, sometimes sketching in the Bedford music hall in Camden. Gore acquired from Sickert an enthusiasm for painting everyday urban life, especially nudes in intimate interiors as well as encouragement to paint in the studio rather than en plein air as was the more typical impressionist practice.

About the Artist

Paris Salon The Salon was the official art exhibition of the French Academy of Fine Arts (Académie des Beaux-Arts) in Paris. First held in 1667, for almost 150 years (c.1740–1890), the Salon was the most prestigious annual or biannual art event in the world.

References and Connections

New English Art Club (NEAC) The New English Art Club was founded in London in 1886 as an exhibiting society by artists influenced by Impressionism and whose work was rejected by the conservative Royal Academy. Initially avant-garde, the NEAC quickly became increasingly conservative and Sickert and Steer formed an 'impressionist nucleus' within it, staging their own show *London Impressionists* in 1889. NEAC remained important as a showcase for advanced art until 1911 when it was challenged by the Camden Town Group and London Group.

Decadence generally refers to an extreme manifestation of symbolism which appeared towards the end of the nineteenth century and emphasised the spiritual, the morbid and the erotic.

Symbolism initially developed as a French literary movement in the 1880s. It proposed the validity of pure subjectivity and the expression of an idea over a realistic description of the natural world. Though it began as a literary concept, Symbolism was soon identified with the artwork of a generation of painters who similarly believed that art should reflect an emotion or idea rather than represent the natural world in the objective manner. They felt that the symbolic value or meaning of a work of art stemmed from the recreation of emotional experiences in the viewer through colour, line, and composition.

The Yellow Book was a progressive journal of the arts, published in 1894 to 1897. The idea for a more enlightened publication, open to avant-garde ideas, was first formulated by Beardsley and his friend Henry Harland (1861–1905), an American writer who came to London in 1889. Beardsley and the artist James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) then took the idea to John Lane, who agreed to act as publisher. Henry Harland was appointed literary editor and Beardsley art editor.

Camille Pissarro, 1830–1903 Nationality: French. French Impressionist painter, etcher and lithographer of landscapes and figures. Influenced by both Gustave Courbet and Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, he was central to the development of Impressionism. Pissarro is the only artist to have shown his work at all eight Paris Impressionist exhibitions, from 1874 to 1886.

Harold Gilman, 1876–1919 Nationality: British. British painter of interiors, portraits, and landscapes. In 1907 he met Sickert and became one of the leading figures in his circle: he was a founder member of the Camden Town Group in 1911 and of the London Group (of which he was first president) in 1913. His early work was rather sombre, but under the influence of Sickert he adopted a higher colour register and a technique of using a mosaic of opaque touches. From Sickert also he derived his taste for working-class subjects.

Lucien Pissarro, 1863–1944 Nationality: French. Anglo-French painter and graphic artist, born in Paris, the eldest son of the celebrated Impressionist painter Camille Pissarro. Taught by his father, he settled permanently in London in 1890. From 1905 he was a member of Sickert's circle. His main subject was landscape and was important as a link between French Impressionism and Neo-Impressionism and English art.

Augustus John, 1878–1961 Nationality: British. Painter of portraits, figure compositions, landscapes and flowers, draughtsman, etcher and lithographer. He was associated with the New English Art Club and the Camden Town Group but remained largely independent from artistic trends and movements. By the 1920s he was the leading portraitist of his day whose sitters included distinguished contemporaries.

Fitzroy Street Group The Group was formed by Walter Sickert in 1907 in rooms near his studio in Fitzroy Street, in North London. The original membership consisted of Spencer Gore, Harold Gilman, Nan Hudson, Ethel Sands, Walter Russell, and the brothers William and Albert Rothenstein. Their specific aim was to explore contemporary styles and methods, thereby challenging mainstream traditions. Together they established the first artists' collective. In 1911 many of the Group's members, including Walter Sickert, formed the nucleus of the new Camden Town Group, and by November 1913 the Fitzroy Street Group had ceased to exist.

References and Connections

Camden Town Group The Camden Town Group was a short-lived exhibiting society of artists. Named after the area of north London in which the artists Walter Sickert and Spencer Gore lived and painted, the Camden Town Group held just three exhibitions, all at the Carfax, London, in 1911 and 1912. The group dissolved in 1913 but for a period it represented a determined effort by painters to explore new ways of representing the everyday realities of urban life in Edwardian Britain.

The Royal Academy The Royal Academy of Arts was founded in 1768 with a mission to promote the arts of design in Britain through education and exhibition.

La Vie Moderne

Impressionism The term 'Impressionist' was first used as an insult in response to an exhibition of new paintings in Paris in 1874. A diverse group of painters, they included Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and Degas. What characterises Impressionism for most people nowadays, is both the subject matter and the technique. Landscapes, and scenes from modern urban and suburban life painted in bright, pure colours are typical. Impressionists often began (and sometimes completed) their paintings outdoors rather than in a studio. Their rapidly applied brushstrokes are often visible.

Pochades A pochade (from French *poche*, pocket) is a type of sketch used in painting. A pochade captures the colours and atmosphere of a scene. Generally, pochades use a small, portable format often painted on small wood panels.

An English Impressionist: St. Jacques and the Picturesque

Picturesque is an aesthetic ideal introduced into English cultural debate in 1782, which was defined as halfway between the beautiful, with its emphasis on smoothness, regularity and order; and the sublime, which is all about vastness, magnitude and intimations of power; the picturesque must combine aspects of both.

Joseph Mallord William Turner, 1775–1851 Nationality: British. Turner was one of the greatest masters of British watercolour landscape painting and is commonly known as “the painter of light”. He travelled extensively in Europe to find new scenes to paint.

John Sell Cotman, 1782–1842 Nationality: British. English landscape painter (mainly in watercolour) and etcher. He moved from Norwich to London in 1798. 1806 he returned to his native city, where he became an important representative of the Norwich School. As well as depicting local scenery, he made several trips to France, and produced *Architectural Antiquities of Normandy* (1822), one of various books he illustrated with his etchings.

Squaring up In painting squaring up is a simple technique for transferring an image from one surface to another (and sometimes converting the image from one scale to another). The original work to be transferred is divided into a given number of squares; the same number of squares is then marked off— with charcoal or some other easily removable medium—on the surface of the receiving area. The contents of each square of the original are then drawn in the corresponding square of the reproduction. The use of the grid ensures the accurate placement of images onto the reproduction.

Claude Monet, 1840–1926 Nationality: French. Claude Monet was a central member of the Impressionist movement and exhibited with the Impressionists 1874–9 and again 1882. Growing success came from 1890 when he began to paint a series of canvases of the same motif: Haystacks, Poplars, Rouen Cathedral and Water-Lilies.

The Harbour and Le Pollet

Georges Marchand, 1876–1964 Nationality: French. A commercial photographer and publisher of postcards, whose work captured every feature of Dieppe life in the 19th and early 20th Century.

References and Connections

The Happy Valley

Impasto In painting, impasto (from the Italian for dough) describes areas of the surface of a painting which are heavily built up with paint layers. Impasto paint is highly textured; brush or palette knife marks are usually clearly evident.

Figure Painting on the Rue Aguado

Henri Matisse, 1869-1954 Nationality: French. He was a draughtsman, printmaker, and sculptor, but is known primarily as a painter. His mastery of the expressive language of colour and drawing, displayed in a body of work spanning over a half-century, won him recognition as a leading figure in modern art. During the years 1912 and again in 1913 he visited Morocco where he developed his theme of the odalisque (concubine). In these paintings the female figure is frequently posed among decorative textiles and carpets and dressed in typical North African costume.

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