

# Friends, Family and Other Animals

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Manchester Art Gallery





2023 marks our 200th anniversary year and the start of a programme of building repairs. Improvements will be made to our three sites Manchester Art Gallery, Platt Hall and our conservation studios which will lead to better storage and physical access to safeguard the collection for the next 200 years.

This provides a unique opportunity to undertake a review and research process to explore the rich potential of the city's collection and how it is used. Many of our artworks will be moved between sites and different gallery spaces over the next few years.

One of the first building repairs that need attention is the 19th century lantern light in the entrance hall. Whilst this is being refurbished, the paintings that were hung on the first floor balcony have been removed. Many of them are now on show here in this new display of 19th and 20th century artworks from the gallery's collection. There are groupings of artist networks and friendships, scenes of love and reverie and animal and family subjects.

# Animals



**The White Rat 1899**

**Charles Spencelayh 1865-1958**

Oil on canvas

Kent-born Charles Spencelayh lived in Manchester in the 1920s. This tender portrait of a boy with his pet is typical of the artist's style which is notable for its almost photographic realism. Spncelayh's careful attention to detail, evident here in the treatment of the clothes, may stem from the fact that he also produced miniature paintings.

Purchased 1926.10





## **The Girl I Left Behind Me 1886**

**Randolph Caldecott 1846-86**

Oil on panel

The painting is littered with little clues that help the viewer decipher the story suggested by the painting's title. There is the girl's half-turned face, the woman's hand on her back, pushing her on, the gate almost, but not quite, closed. The conclusion of the story is implied by the view of the rear of the horse, hoof raised, ready to leave.



## **Avant et Après le Vote about 1851**

**Charles Daubigny 1817-1878**

Oil on panel

This humorous painting uses animals to make a political comment. It shows the front and back view of two geese and the title translates as Before and After the Vote. This refers to the controversial referendum in France in 1851 which saw Louis Napoleon take power and later proclaim himself Emperor of the French under the title Napoleon III.

The artist came from a Parisian family of painters. He was associated with the Barbizon school, named after a village on the outskirts of the Forest of Fontainebleau in France. These painters sketched and painted outdoors, direct from nature.



**Après l'Ecole (After School) 1957**

**Annette Ollivary 1926-2012**

Oil on canvas





## Escape of the Zebra from the Zoo during an Air Raid 1941

Carel Victor Morlais Weight 1908-1997

Oil on panel

This painting follows the story of the escape of a zebra from Regent's Park Zoo during an air raid. Four panels show the journey of the terrified zebra and close up his hooves are sketchy, capturing the animal in flight. In the top left-hand corner, we see a bombed zoo enclosure with a rearing zebra amongst the rubble. The top right-hand corner shows a deserted street in darkness with the escaped zebra being chased by three firemen. In the bottom left-hand corner, a raging fire is contained in the foreground and the zebra flees. In the bottom right-hand corner, the zebra is cornered by the firemen in a courtyard by an air raid shelter. It's based on a true story and although frightened, the zebra was unharmed.



## **A Red Squirrel eating a Nut 1860-1888**

**Basil Bradley 1842-1904**

Oil on panel

When this painting was created, red squirrels were much more common. They are native to the UK and have lived here for around 10,000 years.

Grey squirrels were introduced to the UK from North America by the Victorians in the 1800s. By 1876 they were established as a wild population across large parts of the UK. Red squirrels have retreated to wilder, remote locations and are less easy to spot.



## Scene de Famille (Family Scene) 1957

Annette Ollivary 1926-2012

Oil on canvas

Born in Marseille, France, Annette Ollivary studied at the Académie Julian in Paris where she developed a technical mastery of painting and compositional design. Although trained in an academic and traditional way, her paintings are childlike in terms of style and subject matter and feature pops of bright colour to draw your eye into the scenes she paints. Ollivary's paintings usually feature children and oversized animals living in harmony. Many of her works reflect the memory of youthful days spent on her family's farm.



# Love and Reverie



## On the Balcony 1898

**John William Godward 1861-1922**

Oil on canvas

Godward painted imaginary everyday scenes in the costume of the ancient past. The setting here seems to be a Greek island.

Although the effect is beautiful and decorative, the women seem bored with their tasks. The poppies, one of the artist's favourite motifs, may symbolise the soporific nature of their lives.



**A Walk on the Beach (formerly known as At the Seaside) about 1855-60**

**Augustus Leopold Egg 1816-1863**

Oil on panel

It feels like we have just met this woman who returns our gaze as she pushes open the gate. Her fashionable mid-Victorian clothes contrast with the seaside setting. Augustus Egg is best known for his narrative paintings on a historical or literary theme, suggesting that this may not just be a portrait but there may be a story behind it.



## **A Song Without Words about 1888**

**John R. A. Pettie 1839-1893**

Oil on canvas

The title of this work implies a musical reverie and a personal moment for the musician, with the lyrics to the tune on the floor. His back view suggests that this is not a performance and adds to the mystery as we cannot see his expression.

Scottish-born Pettie was a painter of historical scenes. After 1870 he turned more to portrait painting, often depicting his sitters in historical costume.

In the late 1800s there was a particular vogue for pastiches of works of art from the 1700s as seen here in the costume, powdered wig and furniture.

Purchased 1904.9





## **Expectation 1900**

**John William Godward 1861-1922**

Oil on canvas

Godward drew inspiration from Classical architecture and history at a time when there was a full-scale classical revival in England. He meticulously studied such details as architecture and dress, to ensure that his works bore the stamp of authenticity. He was therefore able to convey with sensitivity and technical mastery the feel of contrasting textures, flesh, marble, fur and fabrics.

Godward's family didn't approve of him becoming an artist and when he moved to Italy with one of his models in 1912, they broke off all contact with him and even cut his image from family pictures.



## **Battledore 1906**

**Leonard Campbell Taylor 1874-1969**

Oil on panel

Battledore, a forerunner of badminton, is a game played with racquets and a shuttlecock. The bats are two-sided and covered with a skin, which makes an unusual sound when the game is played.

The red headed girl in the painting is Jessie Morris, the daughter of a Surrey farmer.

Although not a professional model, she appears in several other paintings by the artist. The women were deliberately dressed in 1860s crinolines to suggest this is a scene from the past.



## **A Passing Cloud about 1891**

**Marcus Stone 1840-1921**

Oil on canvas

The title implies this lovers' tiff will soon be over and shortly their love and the overcast garden will be filled with light once again. Their body language, however, suggests that the dark mood may last longer. The rose held by the woman symbolises their love: beautiful, delicate, yet thorny and painful.

Marcus Stone was the son and pupil of the painter Frank Stone, who was part of a group involved in the formation of what is now Manchester Art Gallery. Marcus initially painted historical scenes, with figures dressed in the costume of the late 1700s. He later chose more sentimental, romantic subjects and went on to produce illustrations for Dickens' novels.





## **Hush! (also known as The Concert) 1875**

**James Joseph Jacques Tissot 1836-1902**

Oil on canvas

Modern life was the central theme of Tissot's art, with a focus on middle-class social behaviour. As a Frenchman living in London from 1872-82, he was often accused of mocking British society.

Hush! depicts a musical evening at a Kensington salon. Professional models were used for some of the figures, while others may be portraits of known socialites.

Tissot's interest in decor, fashion and polite society echoes that of the contemporary magazine *Vanity Fair* for which he produced cartoons.



## **Byron's Early Love, 'A Dream of Annesley Hall' 1856**

**Edward Matthew Ward 1816-1879**

Oil on canvas

As a youth, the Romantic poet Byron was infatuated with his neighbour Mary Chaworth. Here he watches her dancing with her betrothed at a ball in her home, Annesley Hall, in 1805.

The painting is full of symbolic meaning. Roses with thorns refer to the beauty and pain of love, while the lovesick poet's exclusion from the warm room is emphasised by the cold moonlight outside.

# Gwen John and Friends



**The Student 1903**

**Gwen John 1876-1939**

Oil on canvas

Gwen John is one of a number of significant early 20th century women artists who are now being given their proper place in the narrative of British art. Her life and work sheds light on the networks and discourses that shaped the careers and work of women artists. John studied at the Slade School of Art in the 1890s, one of the few institutions offering female students an education on equal terms with men.

In 1903 the artist and her friend Dorothy McNeill (Dorelia) decided to take a walking trip through France to Rome. During this trip John made three portraits of Dorelia. This painting, made at a time when women were campaigning for equal opportunities, portrays an independent young woman in simple clothing, captured deep in thought. It contrasts with later images of Dorelia by Augustus John, Gwen John's brother, who painted her in extravagant costume as Roma, goddess and earth mother.



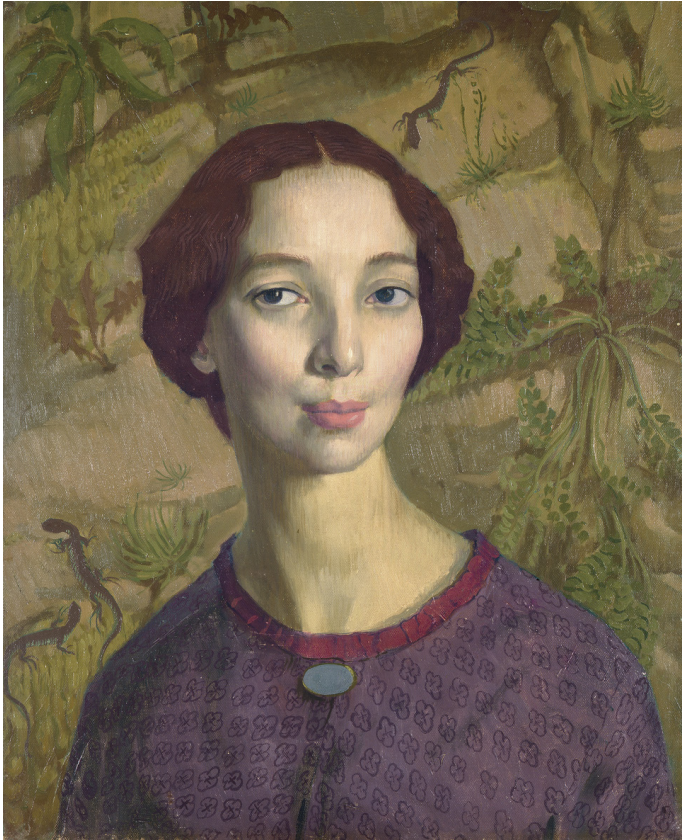


## **Dorelia in a Landscape 1910**

**Augustus John 1878-1961**

Oil on panel

The model is John's second wife, Dorelia. She is dressed much more informally than was standard for women at this time and wears loose, flowing clothing. John was fascinated by the Roma way of life. He led a bohemian existence, and often took to wandering through the countryside in a caravan with his family, friends and children.



## **The Lady with Lizards about 1911**

**Henry Lamb 1883-1960**

Oil on canvas

Henry Lamb has created a mysterious image of a woman against a painted background of lizards, which in some cultures are symbols of wisdom, good fortune or rebirth.

Henry Lamb gave up his medical studies in Manchester to pursue a career in art in London. There he trained under the painter Augustus John. John and Lamb were both infatuated with Dorothy (or Dorelia) McNeill who you can see in paintings by Gwen and Augustus John, also in this group of works. We don't know for certain who the sitter is. It may be Edie McNeill, Dorelia's younger sister.



## **Lyndra by the Pool 1914**

**Derwent Lees 1885-1931**

Oil on panel

Lyndra was Lees' wife and favourite model at this time. Here she is dressed in the flowing, unstructured clothes that became known as 'the Augustus John look'.

She posed for a series of similar works made in Wales inspired by John's paintings of his own wife, Dorelia.





## **The Mirror about 1916 -17**

**Walter Richard Sickert 1860-1942**

Oil on millboard

The young woman seated alone holds her head in a gesture of weariness or sadness. The painting's title suggests that the artist is looking at her reflection in a mirror and is therefore seated nearby. She is thought to be Thérèse Lessore (1884-1945), an artist who later became Sickert's second wife.

The setting is probably a French café or bar in which the single figure is set square amidst the almost abstract geometry of the interior. The establishment appears to be empty of customers, emphasising the mood of isolation and loneliness.



**The Letter (also known as The Convalescent)**  
about 1924

**Gwen John 1876-1939**

Oil on canvas

Gwen John went to study and live in Paris where she was influenced by European art movements and became a significant figure on the art scene herself. Her work played an important role in promoting the significance of the domestic interior as a site for depicting the inner life of the individual, particularly women. These subjects became popular in avant-garde art practice in early 20th century Britain, also seen in the work of other artists in this display such as Walter Sickert.

In this painting the girl's concentration on her letter makes us feel as if we are encroaching into private space and thoughts. The small scale of John's paintings was partly dictated by the travelling easel she brought from England, but also by her painstaking method of making a painting with tiny touches applied over a thinly primed canvas.



**Two Figures: What Maisie Knew 1914  
(formerly called Hubby and Marie)**

**Walter Sickert 1860-1942**

Oil on canvas

The models in this painting are Hubby, who worked for the artist and was a regular Sickert model, along with his wife Minnie.

The paint and loose, patchy brushwork used by Sickert is laid on thinly to create a sense of movement and spontaneity. He wanted to emphasise the reality of life and often used ambiguous narratives to achieve this. The unusual positioning of the two figures suggests psychological tension open to many interpretations.



## Family



**Head of a Girl** late 1800s

**Albert Lynch** 1851-1912

Oil on panel

With her face framed by a frilly bonnet, this is an arresting portrait of an unnamed young girl. She holds our attention by the directness of her gaze. The bonnet may be an artist's historical prop, as it wasn't fashionable in the late 1800s. The girl is probably under seventeen, as after that age her hair would have been pinned up.



### **Study: Head of a Girl 1876**

**George Frederick Watts 1817-1904**

Oil on canvas

This unidentified girl is dressed for the seaside. She holds a bird's egg, possibly a plover's, presumably found on the shore behind her. Plovers are wading birds found near to shorelines. Many are long-distance migrants and can travel over 3000 miles between breeding sites in northern regions and spend their winter in southern or coastal areas. The girl's hand is open to display the delicate egg and to avoid harming it.



## **Music Hath Charms about 1841**

**Alfred Rankley 1819-72**

Oil on canvas

A young girl listens to a boy playing his tin pipe whilst holding on to her mother's skirt. Her mother tenderly kisses her new baby. It looks like the end of the day, as the sunlight fades and shadows grow.

This idealised rural scene, bathed in a glowing light, was typical of pastoral scenes of this time. Artists sought to depict an antidote to the growing industrialisation of everyday life in mid-Victorian England.





**On the Staircase 1859-1917**

**George Goodwin Kilburne 1839-1924**

James Thomas Blair bequest 1917.197



## **Kiss me, Baby 1870s**

**Frederic James Shields 1833-1911**

Oil on canvas

This sketch of a young mother with her baby represents maternal affection in a sentimental way and was a popular subject matter in the 19th century. The wicker cot draws our eye to the open door; perhaps she is passing time waiting for a family member to return?

Frederic Shields was born in Hartlepool in Northeast England. He worked from the age of 14 and when his father died, he supported his family. Poverty and tragedy were never far away; his mother and three siblings all died of tuberculosis. Shields worked here in Manchester for a time. He kept in contact with the city and the artist who influenced him, Ford Madox Brown, who designed murals representing the history of Manchester in the Town Hall.



**Untitled 1973**

**Hamidou Maiga 1932-**

**Photograph**

This unknown mother and child were photographed by Hamidou Maiga in Mali, West Africa in 1973. The portrait is quite formal, with the sitter in fine clothing posed against a painted background of a garden or park. This style of photography connects with the pre-20th century traditional style of portrait painting, posing sitters against landscapes. It also has its parallel in studio portraits that were made in British industrial towns and cities in the 1960s and '70s, which families in the UK would send to their relatives in parts of Africa and Asia.





## **Osier Peeling (on the Cam) 1875**

**Robert Walker Macbeth 1848-1910**

Oil on canvas

This mother is working hard stripping the outer layer of osier, a type of willow with long flexible shoots which are especially useful for basket weaving. She is keeping a close eye on her baby while she works.





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