



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

THE FRICK PITTSBURGH PRESENTS *VICTORIAN RADICALS: FROM THE PRE-RAPHAELITES TO THE ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT*

November 6, 2021 – January 22, 2022

PITTSBURGH, PA, October 25, 2021 – The Frick Pittsburgh is pleased to present *Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement*, exploring how three generations of rebellious artists, designers, and makers responded to a time of great social upheaval and an increasingly industrial world. Organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA) and the Birmingham Museums Trust, the exhibition features more than 100 works from the collection of the city of Birmingham—including paintings, drawings, stained glass, textiles, and other decorative arts—many of which have never been shown outside of the United Kingdom.

“We’re delighted to share this stunningly beautiful exhibition—featuring celebrated works of art that rarely leave the U.K.—with our community here in Pittsburgh,” remarked Elizabeth Barker, Executive Director of The Frick Pittsburgh. “*Victorian Radicals* explores a revolutionary group of artists and makers whose creations pose bold questions about art and society that still feel fresh today.”

“These artists genuinely believed in the capacity of art as a force for social good,” added Dawn R. Brean, Chief Curator and Director of Collections at The Frick Pittsburgh. “They rejected the prevailing thinking of the day and envisioned a better future by, somewhat surprisingly, looking to the pre-industrial past. They

prized truth, nature, authenticity and the handmade. Their search for beauty in an age of industry generated questions that remain as relevant today as they were then.”

The Frick is the final venue to present this exhibition on its American tour, which began at the Oklahoma City Museum of Art in October 2018. “With Birmingham’s strong tradition of artisans and workshops as well as its history of early and rapid industrialization, we couldn’t have asked for a better partner in this project,” said Pauline Willis, Director & CEO of the American Federation of Arts. “Birmingham Museums Trust is unique as the city’s holdings include the largest Pre-Raphaelite collection in the world, and we are thrilled to be able to share these treasures with audiences across the United States.”

Toby Watley, Director of Collections at Birmingham Museums Trust, said: “This is Birmingham Museums Trust’s largest ever touring exhibition. It will bring the story of the city’s pioneering artistic figures to America, for the first time in this depth: from the progressive work of the Pre-Raphaelites to the inspiring designs of the Arts and Crafts movement,” and added, “This is an exciting opportunity for Birmingham, helping to raise the profile of both the city and its collection internationally.”

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Victorian Radicals is presented chronologically, tracing a 60-year period across the turn of the 20th century.

The First Industrial Nation

The exhibition opens with an introduction to the academic tradition that the Pre-Raphaelites would come to reject. In the late 1840s, London’s Royal Academy of Arts prized artworks that presented a narrow range of subjects and emulated conventional definitions of beauty drawn from Classical art. At the same time, new technologies—such as electroplating and the introduction of steam power—were rapidly increasing the speed and quantity of manufactured, mass-produced objects.

The Pre-Raphaelite Avant-Garde

Led by Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, and William Holman Hunt, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was founded in 1848 with the intent to return modern art to the simplicity, clarity, and honesty of European painting before the time of Raphael (1483–1520). Drawing inspiration from

literature, the Bible, and modern life, these artists insisted on depicting “the truth” with a philosophy that prized nature and the immediacy of vivid colors and human emotion. A highlight of this section is Hunt’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona (Valentine Rescuing Sylvia from Proteus)* (1851), which was attacked by reviewers when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy, but inspired an impassioned public defense of the Brotherhood by the critic and reformer John Ruskin that transformed the group’s reception. The artist engaged friends as models and took advantage of new chemical pigments to produce strikingly vivid jewel tones that at the time were seen as garishly bright.

This section also includes one of the most famous Pre-Raphaelite paintings, *Pretty Baa-Lambs* (1851–59), which marks the artist Ford Madox Brown’s pioneering attempt to paint a landscape from nature in direct sunlight. Other highlights from this period include commentaries on the harsh working conditions and social stratification of Britain at the time, such as Henry Wallis’s *The Stonebreaker* (1857) and Brown’s *Work* (1859–63). Decorative objects in such as handmade silver and gilded vessels crafted in refined, Gothic Revival styles reflect a similar interest in honesty and simplicity.

Secular Ministry

A second wave of Pre-Raphaelitism emerged in the late 1850s, brought together by the charismatic poet and painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This group, including Frederick Sandys, Simeon Solomon, William Morris, and Edward Burne-Jones, was heavily inspired by the culture and religion of the Middle Ages, especially the rich colors, narrative focus, and idealistic approach to beauty.

This section also foregrounds the role of women as artists and models. Elizabeth Siddall is represented in the exhibition as both a fiercely original artist of the Pre-Raphaelite circle and as Rossetti’s model, muse, and later, wife. Rossetti’s *Beata Beatrix* imagines the death of Beatrice, beloved of the medieval Italian poet Dante Alighieri, as a visionary trance. It is also a tribute to Siddall, who died of a laudanum overdose in 1862. Also in this section is Burne-Jones’ *Pygmalion* series depicting Ovid’s myth about a sculptor’s love for his creation.

William Morris’ lasting impact on design is explored in a group of artworks produced by his firm of “Fine Art Workmen,” Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (later named Morris & Co.). Bolstered by Ruskin’s critiques of contemporary art and design, the progressive company’s collaborative working methods and return to pre-industrial techniques enabled its artist-designers to create objects that stood out from the factory-produced commodities of the period. Some remarkable examples include stained glass by Morris,

Rossetti, and Burne-Jones, tiles designed by Morris and Burne-Jones and painted by Kate and Lucy Faulkner, and a fine group of textiles and wallpaper designs by Morris. *Victorian Radicals* also includes an extraordinary gilded chest, *The Hesperides Cassone* (1888), designed by Burne-Jones with decoration executed by Kate Faulkner, unseen outside Birmingham since it was first displayed at the 1893 Arts & Crafts Exhibition in London. Works by Morris's associates include luster-glazed ceramics designed by William de Morgan and a remarkable, complete tea set designed and manufactured by W. A. S. Benson, a founding member of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.

Utopias for a New Century

Victorian Radicals presents many illustrious examples from the Arts & Crafts Movement, with a particular focus on the products of the city of Birmingham. Inspired by the notion that the act of making could heal a society dehumanized by industry and mechanization, new educational centers that emerged in Britain's leading industrial cities of the late nineteenth century, such as Birmingham's municipal School of Art, emphasized the practical teaching of crafts and the union of art and design. Among the pieces in the exhibition are outstanding works by key proponents of this movement, including metalwork and jewelry by Charles Robert Ashbee and the Guild of Handicraft as well as exceptional pottery by the Martin Brothers. The paintings on view in this section echo the Pre-Raphaelite interest in precise lines and brilliant color, demonstrated in works by Kate Bunce and Joseph Southall, whose experiments in tempera led to a revival of the medieval medium in Britain at the dawn of the 20th century.

EXHIBITION ADMISSION AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

ADMISSION

Admission fees to *Victorian Radicals* are: \$15 for adult non-members; \$13 for seniors/students; \$8 for youth 6-16. Children 5 and under are admitted for free. Members of The Frick Pittsburgh receive free admission. Tickets may be purchased online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org/tickets, or by calling 412-371-0600.

HOURS

The Frick Pittsburgh is open Tuesday through Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

COVID-19 SAFETY

Masks Required

Visitors over the age of 2 are required to wear a close-fitting mask over their nose and mouth when indoors and on outdoor group tours. Disposable masks are available free of charge at the Grable Visitor Center.

Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination or Recent PCR Test

The Frick requires proof of full COVID-19 vaccination or a recent negative COVID-19 PCR test for indoor activities in which people from different households will be in close proximity to one another for extended periods of time, such as attending a lecture, concert, or group tour, or dining inside The Café at the Frick.

Proof of vaccination or a recent negative test is not required to view exhibitions at The Frick Art Museum or Car and Carriage Museum, shop at the Frick Museum Store, dine on The Café patio, order carryout, visit the Greenhouse, or participate in outdoor programs. Detailed information regarding the Frick's COVID-19 safety guidelines for visitors is available at TheFrickPittsburgh.org/COVID-19.

EXHIBITION ORGANIZATION AND SUPPORT

Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement is organized by the American Federation of Arts and Birmingham Museums Trust. This exhibition is supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional funding provided by Clare McKeon and the Dr. Lee MacCormick Edwards Charitable Foundation.

Major exhibition program support for the Pittsburgh presentation of *Victorian Radicals* is provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

CURATORS

Tim Barringer is Paul Mellon Professor and Chair of the History of Art at Yale University. He specializes in the art of Britain and the British Empire, notably the Pre-Raphaelites and American painting. He has curated exhibitions at Tate Britain, Yale, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Martin Ellis is a freelance curator, lecturer, and broadcaster. As Curator of Applied Art at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for many years, he has particular expertise in the fields of metalwork, ceramics, and stained glass.

Victoria Osborne is Curator of Fine Art for Birmingham Museums Trust, specializing in British 19th-century works on paper. She has co-curated several major international loan exhibitions of British 19th-century art.

EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A 280-page exhibition catalogue (including 320 color illustrations) published by the American Federation of Arts and Prestel will be available for purchase at the Frick Museum Store (\$65.00). Also titled *Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts & Crafts Movement* (ISBN: 978-3-7913-5763-8), it features essays by Tim Barringer, Paul Mellon Professor of the History of Art at Yale University; Martin Ellis, a curator, lecturer, broadcaster, and former Curator of Applied Art at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; and Victoria Osborne, Curator of Fine Art for Birmingham Museums Trust in England.

ABOUT AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS

The American Federation of Arts is the leader in traveling exhibitions internationally. A nonprofit institution founded in 1909, the AFA is dedicated to enriching the public's experience and understanding of the visual arts through organizing and touring art exhibitions for presentation in museums around the world, publishing scholarly exhibition catalogues, developing innovative educational programs, and fostering a better understanding among nations through the international exchange of art.

ABOUT BIRMINGHAM MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery is operated by Birmingham Museums Trust, an independent charity that manages the city's museum collection and venues on behalf of Birmingham City Council. It uses the collection of around 1,000,000 objects to provide a wide range of arts, cultural and historical experiences,

events and activities that deliver accessible learning, creativity and enjoyment for citizens and visitors to the city.

The collection is one of the three great civic collections of the UK, reflecting the city's historic and continuing position as a major international centre for manufacturing, commerce, education and culture. Most areas of the collection are designated as being of national importance, including the finest public collection of Pre-Raphaelite art in the world.

Attracting over one million visits a year, the Trust's venues include Aston Hall, Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, Blakesley Hall, Museum Collections Centre, Museum of the Jewellery Quarter, Sarehole Mill, Soho House, Thinktank and Weoley Castle. birminghammuseums.org.uk

ABOUT THE FRICK PITTSBURGH

Located on the estate of 19th-century industrialist Henry Clay Frick, The Frick Pittsburgh offers authentic experiences with art, history and nature that inspire and delight. Visitors of all ages and backgrounds are warmly welcomed to explore The Frick Art Museum, offering world-class collections of European art and Chinese porcelain alongside an active schedule of temporary exhibitions; Clayton, the Frick family's French chateau-style mansion (remodeled by architect Frederick J. Osterling in the 1890s); the Car and Carriage Museum; and a large working greenhouse designed by architects Alden & Harlow—all nestled on six acres of beautifully landscaped lawns and gardens in Pittsburgh's East End. Amenities include an Education Center, the Frick children's playhouse (also designed by Alden & Harlow), The Café at the Frick, and the Grable Visitor Center, which houses the Frick Museum Store. Information about The Frick Pittsburgh is available online at TheFrickPittsburgh.org.

For additional information or images, please contact Kaitlyn Clem, Marketing and Communications Associate, at KClem@TheFrickPittsburgh.org or 412-342-4025.

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