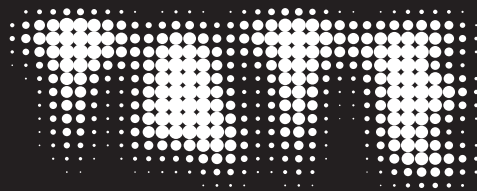
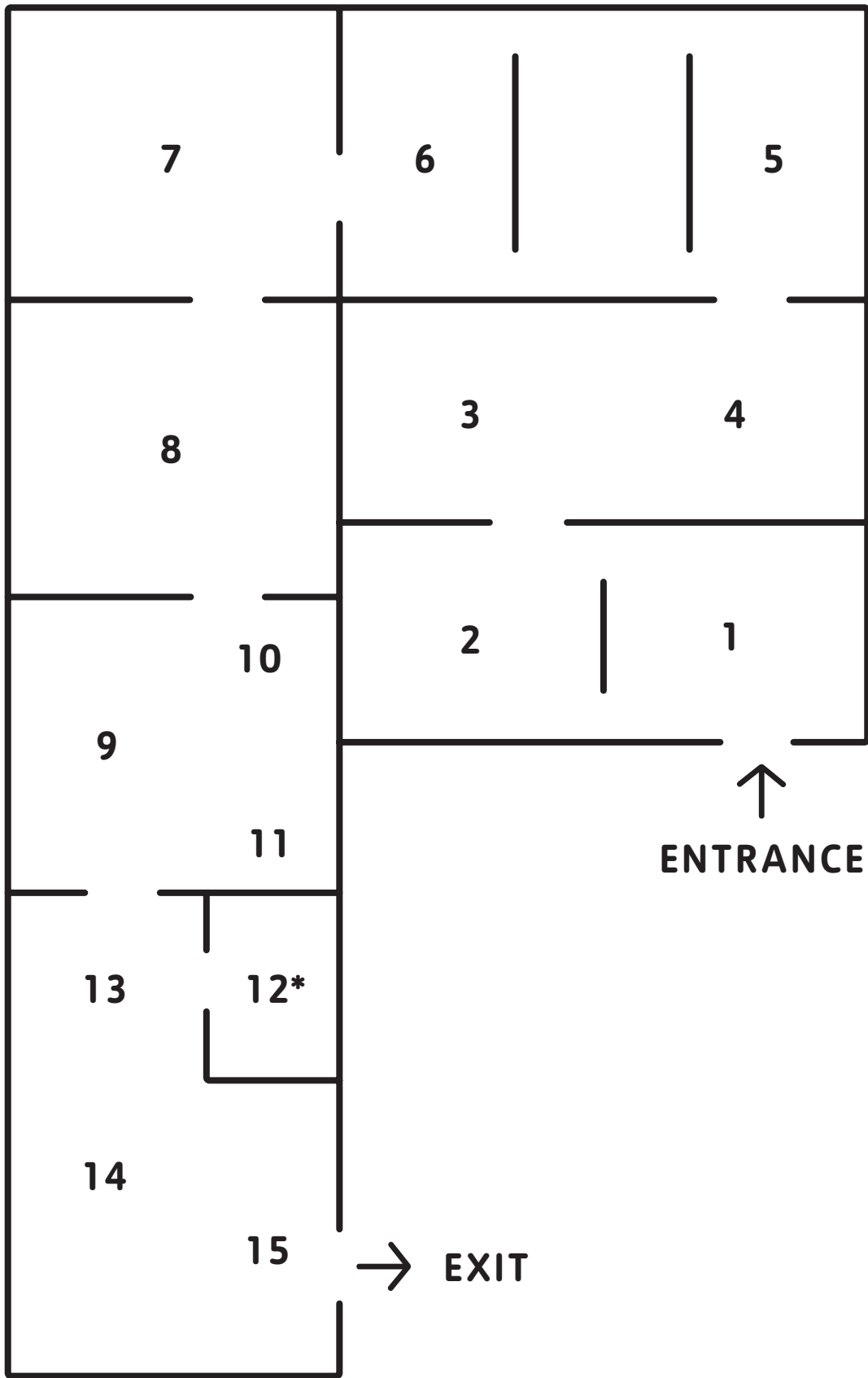


AUBREY BEARDSLEY

4 March – 20 September 2020

LARGE PRINT GUIDE





\*sexually explicit content

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# INTRODUCTION

## Wall in centre of the room

### **AUBREY BEARDSLEY 1872–1898**

Few artists have stamped their personality so indelibly on their era as Aubrey Beardsley. He died in 1898 at the age of just 25 but had already become one of the most discussed and celebrated artists in Europe. His extraordinary black-and-white drawings were instantly recognisable. Then, as now, he seemed the quintessential figure of 1890s decadence.

At the end of the 19th century, a period that had seen vast social and technological changes, many began to fear that civilisation had reached its peak and was doomed to crumble. 'Decadent' artists and writers retreated into the imagination. Severing the link between art and nature, they created a new sensibility based upon self-indulgence, refinement and often a love of the bizarre. No other artist captured the danger and the beauty, the cynicism and brilliance of the age as Beardsley did with pen and ink.

Beardsley was diagnosed with tuberculosis at the age of seven. The disease was then incurable, so he knew from childhood that his life would be a brief one. This led him to work at a hectic pace. One contemporary described his determination 'to fill his few working years with the immediate echo of a great notoriety'. Moving rapidly from style to style, he created well over a thousand illustrations and designs in just five years. Beardsley was catapulted to fame in 1893 by an article about his work in **The Studio** magazine. He went on to illustrate Oscar Wilde's play **Salome** and become art editor of **The Yellow Book**, a periodical that came to define the era.

Beardsley's illustrations displayed remarkable skill and versatility, but few people ever saw his actual drawings. He always drew for publication and his work was seen primarily in books and magazines. He was one of the first artists whose fame came through the easy dissemination of images, his reputation growing day by day as his sensational designs appeared.

This exhibition offers a rare chance to see many of Beardsley's original drawings. It also sets Beardsley in his social and artistic context. Works by other artists punctuate the exhibition, showing how he absorbed diverse artistic influences but always retained his own style.

A timeline of key events in Beardsley's life can be found in your exhibition leaflet. An extended version is available on the exhibition page at [tate.org.uk](http://tate.org.uk)

Light levels in this exhibition are low. Please allow your eyes time to adjust. Works of art on paper are particularly affected by light. The low lighting helps to preserve the condition of the artworks.

The stencil repeated on the walls of the exhibition is one of the designs Beardsley used as a signature.

## Incipit Vita Nova

1892

Graphite, ink and gouache on paper

The title of this drawing refers to Dante Alighieri's 1294 text **La Vita Nuova** and translates as 'New Life Begins'. Some have seen the foetus as a potent symbol for Beardsley. Its significance is unclear beyond linking sexuality, life and death, all key themes in Beardsley's work. It also reflects his fascination with shocking imagery and the grotesque, the term used traditionally to describe deliberate distortions and exaggerations of forms to create an effect of fantasy or strangeness. He once said, 'if I am not grotesque I am nothing'.

Linda Gertner Zatlin

X72111



# 1. BEGINNINGS

## Anticlockwise from exhibition entrance

### 1. BEGINNINGS

Beardsley's artistic career spanned just under seven years, between 1891 and 1898. When he was 18 he met the Pre-Raphaelite painter Edward Burne-Jones, an artist he deeply admired. Having seen Beardsley's portfolio, Burne-Jones responded: 'I seldom or never advise anyone to take up art as a profession, but in your case I can do nothing else.' On his recommendation, for a short time Beardsley attended classes at Westminster School of Art.

Beardsley longed for fame and recognition. This went hand in hand with an intensely cultivated self-image and pose as a dandy-aesthete. This important aspect of his identity is illuminated through self-portraits and portraits by his contemporaries throughout the exhibition.

Witty, tall, 'spotlessly clean & well-groomed', Beardsley was soon noted for his dandyism. A delight in refinement and artificiality in both dress and manner, dandyism was integral to the decadent creed. Some contemporaries related the artist's extreme thinness and fragile physical appearance to ideas of morbidity also associated with decadence.

While Beardsley rejected the label of decadence, his work explores many aspects of it, such as a fascination with the 'anti-natural' and the bizarre, with sexual freedom and gender fluidity. What present-day society refers to as LGBTQIA+ identities were only just beginning to be formulated and articulated during his lifetime. Beardsley was attracted to women, but he was a pioneer in representing what we might now call queer desires and identities. Though fascinated by all aspects of sexuality, it seems likely that his explorations of these interests were primarily through literature and art.

## Self-portrait

1892

Ink on paper

Apart from a few childish sketches, this is Beardsley's first recorded self-portrait, made at the age of about 19. His newly adopted centre-parted fringe, fashionable high collar and large bow tie show that he had already formed a distinctive self-image. A few months earlier, he had described himself as having 'a vile constitution, a sallow face and sunken eyes'.

British Museum, 1906,0423.1.

Presented by Robert Ross in 1906

X72104

## Hamlet Patris Manem Sequitur

1891

Graphite on paper

This drawing represents Shakespeare's Hamlet following his father's ghost. Beardsley made it shortly after his first encounter with his idol, Burne-Jones, in July 1891. Beardsley modestly described it as 'a chef d'oeuvre [a masterpiece]... a stunning design'. He sent the original drawing to A.W. King, the inspirational Brighton Grammar School teacher who had nurtured his passion for literature. King, now teaching at the Blackburn Technical School, included a reproduction of it in the school magazine **The Bee**. This is one of the earliest appearances in print of one of Beardsley's designs.

British Museum, 1922,1209.8. Presented by Dr Harold King for his uncle, A.W.King of Aysgarth in 1922

X72105

## Withered Spring

1891

Graphite, ink and gouache on paper

The framing of the main image by ornamental panels and lettering shows the influence of aesthetic movement illustrators, as well as that of Burne-Jones. The inscription on the gate behind the figure is partly obscured. In full it would read 'Ars Longa Vita Brevis' ('art is long-lasting, life is short'). As Beardsley was diagnosed with tuberculosis aged seven, this Latin saying must have had personal resonance.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection,  
1943, 1943.3.1455

X72109

## Perseus

1891

Ink, wash and gouache on paper

This is one of the earliest examples of Beardsley's use of the shape of the Japanese **kakemono**, or vertical hanging scroll. Echoing Burne-Jones's **Perseus** series (1875–88), he also depicts the Greek hero. Beardsley represents Perseus after he has decapitated Medusa, whose gaze turned all who looked at her to stone.

The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation

X72107

Edward Coley Burne-Jones  
1833–1898

**The Finding of Medusa; The Death of Medusa (The Birth of Pegasus and Chrysaor); Perseus Pursued by the Gorgons**

1875–6

Gouache, paint and ink on paper

This design forms part of Burne-Jones's ambitious scheme for a series of large wall decorations on the theme of Perseus. Although the work was never completed as he intended, Burne-Jones still proudly displayed ten full-scale preparatory drawings for the panels in his garden studio. They must have made a strong impression on Beardsley when he visited Burne-Jones in August 1891.

Tate. Presented by the Trustees of the Chantrey Bequest 1919.  
N03457



## Siegfried, Act II

c.1892–3

Ink and wash on paper

Beardsley made this remarkably assured drawing only a year after his **Perseus** designs. He gave it to Burne-Jones, who kept it in his drawing-room for the rest of his life, even after their later estrangement. It depicts Siegfried, the hero from Richard Wagner's opera, when he has just slayed the dragon Fafner. Beardsley seems to have borrowed Siegfried's graceful pose from Michelangelo's **David**.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.578-1932

X72034

## Perseus and the Monstre

1891

Half-tone block print on paper

The features of Perseus and the use of soft shading reflect Beardsley's close examination of Burne-Jones's work. Perseus's armour is very similar to that of the Greek hero in Burne-Jones's own series of designs. But Beardsley skilfully added drapery to his depiction, and the crouching posture that he chose for Perseus successfully conveys movement.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.432-1899

X72033

## **The Litany of Mary Magdalen**

1891

Graphite on paper

The Italian painter Andrea Mantegna (c.1431–1506) was a key reference for both Burne-Jones and Beardsley. At Burne-Jones's suggestion, Beardsley particularly studied the early engravings after Mantegna's designs. Throughout his life Beardsley kept a set of reproductions of these prints pinned to his wall. In this subject of his own invention, he freely borrows details of costume, pose and gesture from figures in various of Mantegna's works, particularly

**The Entombment** (c.1465–70).

The Art Institute of Chicago, The Charles Deering Collection,

1927.2258

X72108

## Tannhäuser

1891

Ink, wash and gouache on paper

Beardsley was an avid opera-goer. He attended several performances of Wagner's works at this time, including **Tannhäuser** at Covent Garden in April or May 1891. He would return to Wagnerian subjects many times in his art and writings. The story of Tannhäuser was a particular favourite. He later made it the subject of his own erotic novella **The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser**. Here he shows the knight in pilgrim's robes, among trees that appear like prison bars, trying to find his way back to the goddess's enchanted realm, the Venusberg.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection,  
1943, 1943.3.1456

X72106

## Die Götterdämmerung

1892

Ink, wash and gouache on paper

Beardsley took this subject from Wagner's opera, the title of which translates as 'The Twilight of the Gods'. It has been suggested that the frieze-like composition depicts three different moments of the story. According to this interpretation, the scene to the right refers to the prologue, showing the Fates, with the bearded Wotan holding his magic spear. He also appears seated at the centre of the composition with Siegfried standing by him to tell his story to a group of hunters. Finally, Wotan may be represented again seated, in profile, wearing his Wanderer's hat.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 9, Folder 17, RS199  
X74734

## 2. LE MORTE DARTHUR

## 2. LE MORTE DARTHUR

In early 1892, Beardsley received his first major commission. His friend, the photographer and bookseller Frederick H. Evans, introduced him to J.M. Dent. The energetic and enterprising publisher was looking for an illustrator for **Le Morte Darthur**, Sir Thomas Malory's 15th-century version of the legends of King Arthur. Dent planned a substantial edition in the style of William Morris's Kelmscott Press books. Between autumn 1892 and June 1894 Beardsley produced 353 drawings, including full and double-page illustrations, elaborate border designs and numerous small-scale ornamental chapter headings. He received £250 over the course of this commission. This freed him to leave his hated job as a clerk and focus on art-making.

Beardsley gradually grew weary of this colossal undertaking and went off-brief. Subversive details started to appear in his drawings. He also introduced incongruous characters such as mermaids and satyrs, goat-legged hybrid creatures from classical mythology.

His illustrations were reproduced using the relatively new and economical line block printing process in which drawings are transferred onto printing plates photographically. Beardsley was at first disappointed with the printing of his drawings, but he quickly adapted his style to suit the line block process. Uniquely, this could reproduce both the finest of lines and large, flat areas of black.

The works in this room demonstrate the development of Beardsley's art over two years, and how he combined many different sources to create his own visual language.



## Wrapper design for part issues of 'Le Morte Darthur'

1892

Ink and gouache on paper

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library,

Museums and Press, MSL Coll 292

X72974

## The Achieving of the Sangreal

1892

Ink and wash on paper

This is the sample drawing that secured Beardsley the **Morte Darthur** commission. Dent declared it 'a masterpiece', and it was used as the frontispiece for Volume II. It seems to refer to the crucial episode of the book, in Chapter XIV, where Sir Percival kneels to make a prayer to Jesus in the presence of Sir Ector, and the Sangreal (popularly called the Holy Grail) appears to him, 'borne by a maiden'.

Private collection

X72975

## **How Queen Guenever rode on Maying**

c.1893–4

Ink and wash on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.290-1972, E.291-1972  
X72080, X72082

## **Armoured Knight Holding a Lance**

c.1893–4

Ink over graphite on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, D.1827-1904  
X72083

## **How Morgan Le Fay Gave a Shield to Sir Tristram**

1893

Ink on paper

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum,  
University of Cambridge, PD.52-1959  
X72118

## How la Beale Isoud Wrote to Sir Tristram

c.1893

Ink over graphite on paper

This drawing brings to mind the comment by the art historian John Rothenstein that 'the greatest among Beardsley's gifts was his power of assimilating every influence and yet retaining, nay developing, his own peculiar individuality'. Isoud (Isolde) here resembles the Pre-Raphaelite figure Jane Morris. The German Renaissance form of her desk is borrowed from Albrecht Dürer's engraving **St Jerome in his Study** (1513–14). The simple, flattened construction of the space reflects Beardsley's interest in Japanese prints. These contrast with the flowing lines of the sunflower border, a typical aesthetic motif.

Alessandra and Simon Wilson

X37300

## How Sir Tristram Drank of the Love Drink

1893

Ink on paper

This is one of Beardsley's boldest and most rhythmic drawings. Tristram's outstretched arm follows the movement of the hybrid flower. The flat outline of Isolde's recoiling body parallels that of Tristram's cloak, all against the strong vertical and horizontal lines formed by the curtains with their stylised rose border. Isolde's long cape, seen from the back, is a forerunner of Beardsley's famous Peacock Skirt in his **Salome** illustrations (on display later in this exhibition).

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,

Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.681

X72117

## **How La Beale Isoud Nursed Sir Tristram**

1893

Ink over graphite on paper

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,

Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.682

X72116

## **Arthur and the Strange Mantle**

1893

Ink and graphite on paper

Private collection

X72115

## How King Arthur saw the Questing Beast, and thereof had great marvel

1893

Ink and wash on paper

Together with **Siegfried Act II** (shown nearby), this drawing reflects the height of Beardsley's fine 'hair-line manner'. The drawing has great variety of treatment, showing that Beardsley's style evolved while working on the commission. To alleviate boredom, he took great liberties with Malory's text. He introduced mythological characters with little to do with the Arthurian legend, such as Pan, here. There are also discreet additions, including a treble clef top right, and even a phallus on the far left of the bank.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.289-1972

X72043

## A Knight

1893

Ink over graphite on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.310-1972

X72042

## **Two Angels**

1893–4

Ink on paper

Victoria and Albert Museum, D.1823-1904

X72041

## **Eighteen 'Le Morte Darthur' chapter headings**

1892–4

Line block prints on paper

Stephen Calloway

X78053-4

## Cover design proof for *Le Morte Darthur*

c.1894

Proof print on paper

Beardsley's rhythmic, curving lines for this book cover were an important catalyst for art nouveau artists and designers, who embraced flowing lines and organic shapes. The flower motif – a hybrid between a **Clematis viticella**, a passion flower, and perhaps a day lily, with bold, arrow-like leaves – reappears throughout **Le Morte Darthur**.

Stephen Calloway

X72113



**Clockwise from the centre:**

**Initial letter I**

1893

**J.M. Dent, title page vignette**

1893

**Two Large Poppies**

1892

**Four Clematis Buds**

1893

**Stylised Flower**

1893

**Four Large Lilies**

1893

**Stylised Acanthus Leaves**

1892

Ink on paper

Catherine E. Schmidt, USA

X77842, X77844, X77838, X77840, X77843, X77841, X77835

**Vitrine**

**Left to right**

## **The Order of Chivalry**

by Ramon Llull 1232–1316

Reprinted from William Caxton's edition of 1484, edited by F.S. Ellis, with illustrations by Edward Burne-Jones and borders and initials by William Morris, Kelmscott Press, 1893, quarto

William Morris's groundbreaking typographical experiments culminated in his Kelmscott Press books of the early 1890s. They became a reference for Beardsley in terms of decoration and design. **The Order of Chivalry** is the first of the Kelmscott books to include all the key design elements of elaborate borders, initial letters and a full-page illustration by Burne-Jones. Beardsley probably saw it before deciding on a format for **Le Morte Darthur** and commencing on his own designs and illustrations.

The Society of Antiquaries of London (Kelmscott Manor), Cat 127  
Z75131

## **Le Morte Darthur, Volume 2**

by Thomas Malory 1415–1471

J.M. Dent, London, 1894

Stephen Calloway

X72114

## **Le Morte Darthur, Volume 1**

by Thomas Malory 1415–1471

J.M. Dent, London 1894

Unlike William Morris's Kelmscott Press books, J.M. Dent's edition of **Le Morte Darthur** relied on the relatively new photomechanical line block process for reproduction of images and machine printing. Initially, Beardsley had been disappointed with the rendition of washes and half tones when his first drawings were printed. But by the time he started working on the commission in earnest, he had adapted his style, embracing the full potential of the line block process to capture the effect of both very fine lines and areas of flat black contrasted with the white of the paper.

Stephen Calloway, X78032

### 3. 'SOMETHING SUGGESTIVE OF JAPAN'

## Clockwise from room entrance

### 'SOMETHING SUGGESTIVE OF JAPAN'

The European craze for Japanese visual culture had begun in the 1860s after trade links were re-established. Beardsley grew up surrounded by western interpretations of Japanese art. In the summer of 1891, together with his sister Mabel, he visited the London mansion of the shipping magnate Frederick Leyland. There he saw the 'Peacock Room' created 15 years earlier by the expatriate North American artist James McNeill Whistler. Decorated with borrowed and reworked Japanese motifs, this masterpiece of the aesthetic movement had become one of the most celebrated interiors in London. Mesmerised by his visit, Beardsley began to introduce such details into his own drawings.

Japanese woodblock prints (**Ukiyo-e**) were also an important influence. Beardsley adopted their graphic conventions. His new style included areas of flat pattern contrasted with precisely drawn figures against abstracted or empty backgrounds. Like several artists at this time, he also favoured the distinctive, tall and narrow format of traditional Japanese kakemono scrolls.

In a letter to a friend, Beardsley bragged, 'I struck for myself an entirely new method of drawing and composition, something suggestive of Japan... The subjects were quite mad and a little indecent.'

## Autograph letter to G. F. Scotson-Clark

9 August 1891

Ink on paper

During his Brighton schooldays, Beardsley's closest friend was George Scotson-Clark, another aspiring artist. Much of what we know about Beardsley's first years in London comes from their correspondence. Beardsley often illustrated his letters. Here, he attempted to copy the expatriate North American painter James McNeill Whistler's **Arrangement in Grey and Black No.1** 1871 (known as 'Whistler's Mother').

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library, Museums and Press, MSL Coll 278  
X76960

## Vitrine

Frederick Evans 1853–1943

**Aubrey Beardsley [with hands]**

**Aubrey Beardsley**

1893

Platinum print and photogravure, mounted on opposing pages of a paper folio

While working as a clerk, Beardsley spent his lunchtimes browsing in Frederick Evans's nearby second-hand bookshop. This had an important impact on his developing artistic and literary tastes. Beardsley became close friends with Evans, who was also a talented amateur photographer. The image on the left has become known as the 'gargoyle portrait' because Beardsley's pose echoes the famous carved figure on Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. This portrait was used in early editions of Beardsley's work and has become the defining image of the artist.

Wilson Centre for Photography

X72980



Wall

**White Peacock, inside back cover for score of Tristan und Isolde**

1893

Ink, gouache and watercolour over graphite on paper

As a passionate Wagner enthusiast or 'Wagnerite', Beardsley owned musical scores of his operas. He would bring these to follow at performances. He decorated the paper covers of this piano score of **Tristan und Isolde** with an ornamental panel of lettering on the front and this design of a peacock on the back. The elongated view of the bird recalls the painted window shutters in Whistler's Peacock Room.

Linda Gertner Zatlin

X76287

## Caricature of J.M. Whistler

1893

Ink on paper

Beardsley greatly admired James McNeill Whistler and had been captivated by his Peacock Room. In this 'portrait', however, he exaggerates the older artist's affectations of style and even parodies his butterfly signature. When they met, Whistler was dismissive and the two had an uneasy relationship for some time. In 1896, Whistler finally acknowledged Beardsley's talent: 'Aubrey, I have made a very great mistake - you are a very great artist'.

National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection,  
1943, 1943.3.1454

X72122

## La Femme incomprise

1892

Ink on paper

Beardsley borrowed from different Japanese art forms in this drawing. The woman's hairstyle, kimono and large and ferocious cat all seem to derive from Japanese prints. By contrast, the panels of flat ornament, in which leaves, stems and lilies stand against a dark background, seem more closely related to those on Japanese lacquerware. To achieve this effect, Beardsley worked 'in reserve', a technique which involved leaving the white paper untouched. He titled this 'The Misunderstood Woman' but the wider meaning here is unclear.

D. Cohen Collection

X73017

## Virgilius the Sorcerer

c.1893

Ink over graphite on paper laid down on board

Following the glowing article in **The Studio**, many publishers approached Beardsley with commissions for illustrations and book covers. David Nutt, an old established publishing firm, generally specialised in early texts and folklore. Although made for Nutt's 'medieval legends' series, Beardsley's design is, somewhat incongruously, in the style of a Japanese print.

The Art Institute of Chicago, Gift of Robert Allerton, 1925.928  
X72128

## The Birthday of Madame Cigale

1892

Line block print on paper

This is one of Beardsley's largest and most accomplished 'japonesques', as he called his works suggestive of Japanese art. It depicts a woman receiving her wealthy lover (holding his top hat and cane). His entourage, bearing gifts, forms an unlikely procession. The subject may have been prompted by a now forgotten French play, **La Cigale (The Cricket)**. Beardsley deliberately creates spatial ambiguity. In areas such as the flight of cranes at the upper left it is impossible to tell whether flat pattern or three-dimensional space is represented.

Stephen Calloway

X72123

## Carl Maria von Weber

1892

Ink on paper

This is a portrait of the German composer of the previous generation, Carl Maria von Weber (1786–1826). Beardsley drew this similar, idealised image as a sort of companion to his portrait of Chopin. Weber, like Chopin, died at a relatively early age from tuberculosis.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 10, Folder 31, C0056  
X74735

## Katharina Klafsky as Isolde

1892

Ink and graphite on paper

In the summer of 1892 Beardsley attended several Richard Wagner operas, including **Tristan and Isolde**. He was especially struck by one of the stars of the season, Katharina Klafsky, the Hungarian soprano. Seeing her again in 1894 he wrote, 'the German opera is indeed exciting. Klafsky!!! beyond all praise'.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 11, Folder 51, RS237  
X72119

Utagawa Kuniyoshi 1798–1861

## **A Maiden dancing at the Dojoji Temple**

before 1861

Kakemono-e (woodblock print on paper), vertical diptych

After the opening of Japan to European trade in 1854, **ukiyo-ye** ('Prints of the Floating World') were brought to Europe in very large numbers. Beardsley, like many late 19th-century French and British artists, was greatly influenced by the stylised graphic conventions of these coloured woodblock prints with their abstract depiction of pictorial space, linear intricacy and emphasis on flat pattern.

Private collection

X78167



## Frédéric Chopin

1892

Ink on paper

The Polish composer Frédéric Chopin (1810–1849) was one of Beardsley's musical heroes. Beardsley emphasises his delicately pointed fingers here. This relates to Chopin's reputation as a powerful and subtle pianist. Beardsley's setting is not historically accurate. Instead it is reminiscent of 1870s aesthetic movement interiors. The position of the figure and the curtain recall Whistler's celebrated portrait of his mother, copied by Beardsley in the letter nearby.

Private collection, Maas Gallery

X72987

## Les Revenants de musique

1892

Ink and wash on paper

Beardsley had a great love of music. Early in his career he drew several stylised portraits of composers and favourite opera singers. Here he makes a broader statement about the power of music to move the listener. The seated figure is held by the emotional spell of the 'ghosts of music' of the title. It seems that Beardsley intended this drawing to be paired with **Le Dèbris [sic] d'un poète**, displayed nearby. This time, the figure representing the artist is shown having escaped the mundane world.

Private collection, London

X77730

# 4. A NEW ILLUSTRATOR

## Anticlockwise from room entrance

### 4. A NEW ILLUSTRATOR

Beardsley first came to public notice in April 1893. He was the subject of the lead article, 'A New Illustrator', in the first issue of the new art magazine **The Studio**. In it, the graphic art expert Joseph Pennell praised Beardsley's work as 'quite as remarkable in its execution as in its invention: a very rare combination.'

Pennell welcomed Beardsley's use of 'mechanical reproduction for the publication of his drawings'. The article highlighted how photographic line block printing showed the true quality of an artist's line.

The reproductions in **The Studio** article included both medieval and Pre-Raphaelite style illustrations for the forthcoming **Le Morte Darthur** and examples of Beardsley's work inspired by Japanese woodblock prints. This displayed his versatility and led to further commissions for books and popular journals, such as the **Pall Mall Magazine**. J.M. Dent, the publisher of **Le Morte Darthur**, rightly worried Beardsley would get bored of that long-term project. To keep him interested, he invited him to create hundreds of tiny 'grotesque' illustrations for

the **Bon-Mots** series, three miniature books of witty sayings. In this context, the term grotesque relates to distortion or exaggeration of form to create an effect of fantasy or strangeness. For Beardsley the idea was central to his way of seeing the world. Summing up his own art, he later said, 'I am nothing if I am not grotesque.'

## Poster for 'The Studio'

1893

Lithograph and letterpress on paper

This poster advertising **The Studio** magazine simply re-uses Beardsley's design for the cover. In the event, both were issued in censored form with the original figure of the faun excised. The choice for both poster and cover of a soft paper in a gentle green tone was clearly intended to ally the new publication with ideals of the aesthetic movement. This advocated the use of low-key colours rather than 'vulgar', bright ones in printing, in interiors and for women's fashion.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.451-1965

X73277

## The Procession of Joan of Arc

1892

Line block print on paper

Supplement to **The Studio**, 2 May 1893

Like other magazines of the day, **The Studio** offered pictorial 'supplements' to encourage sales. The second number included a long fold-out reproduction of one of Beardsley's largest and most elaborate early drawings, **The Procession of Joan Arc**. The frieze-like composition highlights his lifelong enthusiasm for the work of the Renaissance painter Andrea Mantegna (c.1431–1506). Beardsley saw his celebrated series **The Triumphs of Caesar** at Hampton Court Palace.

Stephen Calloway

X72125

In art history, the grotesque – which originally referred to the decoration of grottoes – has come to denote a strand of Renaissance art composed of deliberately weird elements, often including imaginary hybrid forms. These often combine parts of human heads and bodies, animals and plants. Mermaids, satyrs, fauns and other mythical figures frequently appear in Beardsley's art. But he also added foetuses, often with adult bodies, and other distorted figures to his grotesque repertoire. The resulting imagery is playful, irreverent and fantastical, but also has dark undertones. The grotesque lies at the heart of Beardsley's art. He explained: 'I see everything in a grotesque way. When I go to the theatre, for example, things shape themselves before my eyes just as a I draw them... They all seem weird and strange to me. Things have always impressed me in this way.'



## **Bon-Mots series: Pierrot and Jester**

1893

Graphite and ink on paper

Beardsley's **Bon-Mots** drawings are remarkable for their freedom of composition and calligraphic flourishes. Many feature clowns, jesters or figures in Pierrot costumes.

Beardsley depicted Pierrot, the sad clown in a ruffled white costume from early pantomime, throughout his career.

Geoffrey Munn

X72121

## Vitrine

### Original Prospectus for 'The Studio'

1893

Line block and letterpress print on paper

Beardsley's original drawing for the cover of **The Studio** included a figure of a faun, as printed here in the advertising leaflet. Charles Holme, the magazine's proprietor, and his publicity manager both favoured this version, but the editor Gleeson White timidly insisted on removing the faun. This was because of a suggestive curl of hair on the faun's groin. It was Beardsley's first brush with the sort of censorship that he would encounter throughout his career.

Stephen Calloway

X72124

## **The Studio**, Volume 1, Number 1

edited by Joseph Gleeson White 1851–1898

London, April 1893

The first volume of **The Studio** magazine contained a highly approving article by artist and writer Joseph Pennell: 'A New Illustrator: Aubrey Beardsley'. This effectively launched Beardsley's career. The reproductions of his work gave the public their first sight of both his **Morte Darthur** drawings and his new 'japonesques'. Beardsley also designed the magazine's distinctive covers.

Stephen Calloway

X78029

## Keynotes

by George Egerton 1859–1945

Elkin Mathews and John Lane, The Bodley Head, London 1893

As a clever, unifying design element for the books in the Keynotes Library, Beardsley created a sequence of 'keys', each formed from the initials of their various authors.

Readers at the time would have recognised these keys as a reference to the hotly disputed issue of the day as to whether young, unmarried women should be allowed to have keys to their own homes, enabling them to come and go freely.

Stephen Calloway

X78043

**Bon-Mots of Samuel Foote and Theodore Hooke  
with Grotesques by Aubrey Beardsley**

edited by Walter Jerrold 1865–1929

J.M. Dent, London 1894

Stephen Calloway

X79114

**Bon-Mots of Sydney Smith & R. Brinsley Sheridan  
with Grotesques by Aubrey Beardsley**

edited by Walter Jerrold 1865–1929

J.M. Dent, London 1893

Beardsley made illustrations for three of the books in the **Bon-Mots** series, all of which were issued with the same simple cover design. The miniature format of the volumes required Beardsley's illustrations to be reduced in size dramatically. The resulting tiny images, many of which are repeated in varying sizes, appear to have been sprinkled capriciously across the pages inside. Later volumes were decorated with drawings imitating his style.

Stephen Calloway

X78052

## **The Dancing Faun**

by Florence Farr 1860–1917

Elkin Mathews and John Lane,  
The Bodley Head, London 1894

**The Dancing Faun** by the writer and actor Florence Farr was one of the most amusing books in the Keynotes series. In his design for its cover and title page Beardsley included a figure of a decadent faun reclining on a chaise longue. With its curly hair and monocle, contemporary viewers would have recognised the faun as a caricature of James McNeill Whistler.

Stephen Calloway

X78042

Wall

**Design for cover and title page  
of George Egerton, 'Keynotes'**

1893

Ink on paper

Between 1893 and 1896 John Lane published 34 volumes of the 'Keynotes Library'. This was a collection of novels and volumes of short stories by contemporary writers. The name comes from the first title issued: **Keynotes** by George Egerton (the pen name of Mary Chavelita Dunne). Like many in the series, it dealt with contemporary issues such as female independence, known at the time as the 'New Woman question'.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 10, Folder 32, RS217  
X72126



## **Bon-Mot series: Two Figures by Candlelight Holding a Foetus**

1893

Ink on paper

The **Bon-Mots** project offered a welcome release from what became the chore of making hundreds of illustrations and decorations for the **Morte Darthur**. Beardsley clearly enjoyed the freedom to invent fantastical figures without stylistic constraint. He often included foetuses in his drawings around this time, but their exact meaning remains obscure.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.314-1972

X72085

## Design for the Frontispiece to John Davidson's Plays

1894

Ink and graphite on paper

Beardsley's frontispiece for a collection of plays by the Scottish writer John Davidson features several recognisable caricatures. Oscar Wilde is depicted with 'vine leaves in his hair', a coded reference in Beardsley's circle to drunkenness. The central figure is the British theatre producer Sir Augustus Harris. Behind him, in harlequin costume, stands the poet Richard le Gallienne. In a tongue-in-cheek letter to the press, Beardsley defended this inclusion of likenesses: 'one of the gentlemen... is surely beautiful enough to stand the test of portraiture, the other owes me half a crown.'

Tate. Bequeathed by John Lane 1926

N04172

## The Kiss of Judas

1893

Ink on paper

This drawing illustrates a short story by 'X.L.' (the North American writer of horror fiction Julian Osgood Field). The macabre tale tells of a legend of the descendants of Judas, the disciple who betrayed Jesus in the Christian New Testament. It is written with the arch tone of much 1890s fiction:

'They say that the children of Judas, lineal descendants of the arch traitor, are prowling about the world, seeking to do harm, and that they will kill you with a kiss.' 'Oh, how delightful!' murmured the Dowager Duchess.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.292-1972

X03994

Smaller figures appear in many of Beardsley's works, such as the nude in **The Kiss of Judas**. Some viewers have read these as representations of people with dwarfism. In most cases we do not know if this was Beardsley's intention. He never strived for realism in his work. He played with scale, exaggerating and distorting lines and shapes, including in self-portraits. But the cultural stereotyping of people with dwarfism was prevalent in Beardsley's lifetime. In the late 19th and early 20th century, they were predominantly seen as sources of entertainment in 'freak shows' and carnivals. These offensive attitudes almost certainly influenced Beardsley's imagery to some extent.

## A study of Sir Henry Irving

c.1893

Drypoint etching on paper

In February 1893 Beardsley made a wash drawing of the prominent actor-manager Henry Irving. Later that year he spent a morning with Joseph Pennell learning etching. Impressions of this print were for a long time identified as the result of this lesson. However it now seems more likely that the printing plate was not etched by the artist himself, but created later, by some kind of mechanical process.

Stephen Calloway

X78055

## Le Dèbris [sic] d'un poète

1892

Ink and wash on paper

In spite of its **japonesque** drawing style and the figure's Pierrot costume, this design has generally been taken to be autobiographical. The title translates as 'the remains of a poet'. Describing the drawing, Beardsley wrote: 'Here I am looking very wise over an empty ledger'. It recalls the two years, following his family's move to London, during which he worked as a clerk in an insurance firm. The commission by J.M. Dent to illustrate the **Morte Darthur** released him from his day job.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1965-1934

X72084

# 5. SALOME

## Anticlockwise from room entrance

### 5. SALOME

In 1892, Beardsley made a drawing in response to **Salomé**, Oscar Wilde's play, originally written in French and based on the biblical story. Salomé falls in love with Iokanaan (John the Baptist). When he rejects her, she demands his head from her step-father, Herod Antipas, as a reward for performing the dance of the seven veils. Beardsley depicts her about to kiss Iokanaan's severed head. Wilde admired the drawing and he and his publisher, John Lane, chose Beardsley to illustrate the English translation of the play. The illustrations weave together themes of sensuality and death, and explore a wide range of sexual desires. The play's publication created a sensation, just as Beardsley and Wilde had hoped.

Beardsley delighted in hiding provocative elements in his drawings. Lane recalled, 'one had, so to speak, to place his drawings under a microscope, and look at them upside down'. Nervously, he censored 'problematic' details in Beardsley's title page and the illustration **Enter Herodias** and rejected two designs altogether from the first edition. Even so, Lane missed many erotic details and, surprisingly, also allowed publication of Beardsley's teasing drawings that include caricatures of Wilde.



Beardsley produced 18 designs in total, of which only 10 appeared in the first printing of the play. The impressions exhibited here come from the portfolio which Lane issued in 1907, almost a decade after Beardsley's death. This was the first edition to contain all the original designs and an additional one, **Salome on Settle**.

## Original Design for the Binding of Oscar Wilde's 'Salome'

1893

Ink over graphite on paper

This is Beardsley's original idea for the binding of the first English edition of **Salome**, issued by John Lane and Elkin Matthews in 1894. For the actual cover, the motif of stylised entwined roses and stems was centred and Beardsley's lettering omitted. His signature device on the spine, which appears to prod Wilde's name, was moved to the back. Both author and artist disliked the resulting binding, for which Lane chose a rough-textured blueish linen, despite their protest.

Private collection

X72132

## Vitrine

### Oscar Wilde at Work

1892

in Stuart Mason, **Bibliography of Oscar Wilde**,  
T.W. Laurie, London 1914

Beardsley's command of French was close to that of a native speaker. In this caricature of Oscar Wilde, he makes fun of the difficulties Wilde encountered writing **Salomé** in French. He is pictured here equipped with a dictionary and a grammar guide. Beardsley had offered to translate the play, but Wilde entrusted his lover Lord Alfred Douglas ('Bosie') with the task. The result was so poor that Beardsley, amongst others, had to extensively revise the translation.

Stephen Calloway

X72131

## Salome

by Oscar Wilde 1854–1900

John Lane, The Bodley Head, London 1907

For the later editions of **Salome**, published after the deaths of both Beardsley and Wilde, John Lane finally adopted a cover design of flamboyant peacock feathers based on Beardsley's first, roughly sketched idea for the binding.

Stephen Calloway

X72134

## Salome

by Oscar Wilde 1854–1900

Melmoth & Co., London 1904

This is a pirated edition of **Salome** produced by Leonard Smithers, the only publisher willing to support Beardsley after he was embroiled in the Oscar Wilde scandal. Smithers also published Wilde's last books when everyone else had turned their back on him. Smithers's occasional use of the imprint 'Melmoth & Co.' was a playful nod to the name Sebastian (or Sébastien) Melmoth which Wilde invented to disguise his identity in France.

Stephen Calloway

X78050

**Wall**

## **Enter Herodias**

1893

Annotated printer's proof on paper

This annotated proof shows the image as drawn by Beardsley before John Lane insisted that it was censored. The page's offending genitals have been crossed through in ink and marked with a proof-reader's symbol for deletion but annotated 'stet' (meaning 'ignore the correction' but literally 'let it stand'). These annotations suggest an in-joke in Beardsley's circle.

Dr Simon Reynolds

X74754

## Cul de Lampe

1893

Line block print on paper

In typography, a **cul de lampe** or tailpiece is an ornament at the end of a chapter or, as is the case here, of a book. Especially popular in France in the 18th century, they often bear little relation to the texts they decorate. Beardsley's design, which shows Salome naked, being buried in a powder box by a Pierrot figure and a faun, is very much in that light-hearted tradition. It is much closer to the mood of Beardsley's grotesques for the **Bon-Mots** books.

Stephen Calloway

X76011

## Salome on Settle

1893

Line block print on paper

Stephen Calloway

X76010

## The Climax

1893

Line block print on paper

The flowing, sinuous lines in this design demonstrate how much art nouveau is indebted to Beardsley. He abandoned the Japanese kakemono format and hairline style of his original version of the image **J'ai baisé ta bouche, Iokanaan** (also in this room). By simplifying the lines of the design, he creates a more powerful focus on the moment when Salome can finally kiss Iokanaan's lips – now that he has been beheaded. The stream of blood forms an elegant ribbon, while the lily rising from the pool that the fluid creates symbolises his chastity.

Stephen Calloway

X72146



## The Dancer's Reward

1893

Line block print on paper

Salome is contemplating her prize. Gaping, she tilts Jokanaan's severed and bleeding head towards her. Once again, their expressions mirror each other. The elongated arm of the executioner holds up the platter on which the head rests. This drawing resonates with European symbolist art, in which the contemplation of a severed head is a recurring image.

Stephen Calloway

X72145

## **The Toilette of Salome (first version)**

1893

Line block print on paper

This design was one of three that John Lane suppressed as too sexually explicit. Beardsley portrays Salome with her hand between her thighs, her eyes closed in erotic reverie. The seated attendant to the left is also masturbating. To Victorian audiences a bent spine was a signal of 'immorality'. They would have found the entire image outrageous. The presence of the foetus-like doll or ornament at the very centre of the drawing cannot be entirely explained, but it may allude to some previous sexual activity by Salome.

Stephen Calloway

X72148

## **The Toilette of Salome (second version)**

1893

Line block print on paper

Stephen Calloway

X72149

## The Stomach Dance

1893

Line block print on paper

Salome is shown performing her celebrated dance to the sounds produced by an impish musician. Wilde wrote appreciatively to Beardsley after **Salome** was published: 'For Aubrey: for the only artist who, besides myself, knows what the dance of the seven veils is, and can see that invisible dance.'

Stephen Calloway

X72144

## **The Eyes of Herod**

1893

Line block print on paper

This illustrates the passage before Salome's famous dance in exchange for the head of Jokanaan. Talking about Herod, Salome remarks pensively: 'Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. Of a truth I know it too well.'

Stephen Calloway

X72142

## **Enter Herodias**

1893

Line block print on paper

Stephen Calloway

X72143

## John and Salome

1893

Line block print on paper

This depicts a scene of powerful tension between Jokanaan (left) and Salome (right). By the use of mirrored poses and interlocking folds of drapery – like an image of yin and yang – he expresses the characters' conflicted feelings of attraction and rejection. John Lane refused the design, either because of the partial nudity of Salome, or possibly because of the androgynous appearance of the Baptist who could here be Salome's twin.

Stephen Calloway

X72140

## **A Platonic Lament**

1893

Line block print on paper

The page of Herodias is shown mourning the death of the young Syrian captain. The Syrian's passion for Salome was so strong that he killed himself when he discovered her own infatuation with Jokanaan. The drawing has often been read as a tender representation of same-sex love. Beardsley made daring use of white space and near-abstract forms. Beyond this stylistic purity, he could not resist adding another caricature of Wilde in the moon and clouds at top right.

Stephen Calloway

X72141

## **The Black Cape**

1893

Line block print on paper

Stephen Calloway

X72147

## **The Peacock Skirt**

1893

Line block print on paper

This is one of Beardsley's most famous and acclaimed designs. It conflates two scenes from the play. In one, the page of Herodias warns the young Syrian about looking too much at Salome. In the other, Herod promises 50 of his white peacocks in exchange for Salome's dance and imagines them forming a 'great white cloud' around her. The scene was abstracted by Beardsley in a flamboyant demonstration of his calligraphic skills.

Stephen Calloway

X72139

## **Design for the list of pictures of Salome**

1893

Line block print on paper

Stephen Calloway

X72138

## Design for Title Page

1893

Line block print on paper

In this original design for the title page of **Salome**, Beardsley drew his own version of a herm, or sacred carved stone pillar. In ancient Greece these marked boundaries but were also revered as depictions of Hermes or the garden god Priapus. Here, Beardsley gives the horned deity both breasts and a penis, and eyes in place of nipples and navel. Prior to publication, John Lane censored the genitalia of the god/ess as well as the erect penis of the worshipping angel.

Stephen Calloway

X72137



## The Woman in the Moon

1893

Line block print on paper

This design relates to the passage in which the young Syrian remarks: 'How beautiful is the Princess Salome tonight!', to which the page of Herodias replies: 'Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb.' John Lane apparently changed the title **The Man in the Moon** to **The Woman in the Moon**, but Beardsley reverted to the original when he published his **Book of Fifty Drawings**, probably highlighting that the face in the moon is Oscar Wilde's.

Stephen Calloway

X72136

## The Toilette of Salome (second version)

1893

Ink on paper

Beardsley's first version of this design (see print on adjacent wall) was rejected by Lane for being too sexually explicit. This second version was published in Wilde's first edition of **Salome** in 1894. Here, Beardsley depicts Salome in contemporary dress, at a dressing table inspired by the stylish black furniture designed by the aesthetic movement architect E. W. Godwin.

British Museum, 1919,0412.1. Bequeathed by Robert Ross to the National Art Collections Fund for presentation to the BM in 1919  
X72219

## Enter Herodias

1893

Ink on paper

The pageboy standing to the right of the queen was originally naked. When Lane insisted that the genitalia be censored, Beardsley altered the drawing by adding a fig leaf. The artist composed the following humorous verses as a result:

**Because one figure was undressed  
This little drawing was suppressed  
It was unkind –  
But never mind  
Perhaps it was all for the best**

The phallic candlesticks and aroused state of the figure on the left escaped Lane's censorship, as did a caricature of Oscar Wilde (bottom right).

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Graphic Arts Council  
Fund, M.73-49  
X72217

## The Black Cape

1893

Ink on paper

This striking stylised illustration is like a fashion plate. Beardsley made it to replace the rejected **John and Salome**. Salome is represented in 1890s dress, but with its exaggerated lines and abstracted design, the drawing has a timeless quality. Although Beardsley called it 'simply beautiful but quite irrelevant', it appears to relate to a passage in the play describing Salome: 'The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies'.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 10, Folder 42, RS227  
X72218

## J'ai baisé ta bouche lokanaan

1892/3

Ink and wash on paper

This is Beardsley's first interpretation of Oscar Wilde's play, before it was translated into English. It was reproduced in the first issue of **The Studio**, and it is characteristic of Beardsley's intricate hairline style. It may well have been a bid to illustrate the play. If it was, it paid off, as Wilde did ask John Lane to commission Beardsley. The artist applied some green watercolour to the drawing after it was published.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 13, Folder 97, RS271  
X72130

## Wall in centre of the room

Gustave Moreau 1826–1898

### The Apparition

1874–6

Watercolour on paper

This watercolour made a strong impression on Oscar Wilde at the 1876 Paris Salon exhibition. It represents the bloody vision of John the Baptist's head appearing while Salomé dances for Herod. It featured in Joris-Karl Huysmans's 1884 novel **À Rebours** (Against Nature). In it, the reclusive hero contemplates this watercolour. Wilde could quote at length from this 'bible' of decadence. Both the novel and **The Apparition** played a part in the creation of Wilde's own **Salomé**.

Musée d'Orsay, Paris, gift of Charles Ayem, 1898, RF2130  
X72135

**Enter next section on the right**

## **ALLA NAZIMOVA'S SALOMÉ**

This 1923 silent film is an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's play. The imaginative set and costumes by Natacha Rambova are directly inspired by Beardsley's drawings, and credited as such. The project was conceived and led by Alla Nazimova, a famous Hollywood actor during the silent movie era. She was drawn to **Salome** and financed its screen adaptation herself. Nazimova had relationships with women and her film reflects themes of same-sex desire present in Beardsley's drawings. Charles Bryant, with whom she pretended to be married, was credited as the director, as women did not have equal status in Hollywood.

This film perpetuates some demeaning stereotypes that were current during Beardsley's lifetime and beyond. This is reflected particularly in the portrayal of the musicians with dwarfism. At that time people with restricted growth were widely associated with servitude and treated as a source of spectacle.

Alla Nazimova 1879–1945, Charles Bryant 1879–1948

## **Salomé**

1923

Film, 35 mm, black and white

Running time: 6 minutes

Sets and costumes by Natacha Rambova, after Aubrey Beardsley

Private collection

X80373



# 6. POSTERS

## Anticlockwise from room entrance

### 6. POSTERS

When Beardsley first travelled to Paris in 1892, he was enthralled by the many posters that adorned the city. The French posters showed the possibilities of this new mass-produced outdoor format and the potential of large-scale colour reproduction. Beardsley was quick to embrace this. Understanding that posters would be viewed in passing, often at a distance, his designs experimented with bold, simplified forms and solid blocks of colour. For Beardsley, advertising was central to modern life and an opportunity to integrate art into everyday experience. As he put it, 'Beauty has laid siege to the city'.

In the autumn of 1894, the first ever English exhibition of posters opened in London. Pictorial posters were enjoying a boom in Britain and were beginning to be recognised as an art form. The exhibition featured work by celebrated French artists such as Jules Chéret and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, known as the 'fathers' of the modern poster. Significantly, it also included several works by Beardsley. Not only did this place Beardsley's posters on a par with the art that had inspired him, it also attested to his importance in the development of British poster design.

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec 1864–1901

## Divan Japonais

1892

Colour lithograph on paper

In Paris, Beardsley would have encountered Toulouse-Lautrec's posters, including this one, on hoardings across the city. It advertises the popular cabaret nightspot, the Divan Japonais, and depicts two stars of Parisian nightlife, the singer Yvette Guilbert and the dancer Jane Avril. Beardsley was inspired as much by Toulouse-Lautrec's vivid portrayal of modern life as his striking style, typified by dramatic blocks of colour, silhouettes and bold outlines. The admiration was mutual: Toulouse-Lautrec also expressed the wish to buy a copy of **Salome**.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.233-1921

X76989

## The Pseudonym and Autonym Libraries

1894

Colour lithograph on paper

This poster shares its title with the series of novels and short story collections it promotes. The name was inspired by the publisher, T. Fisher Unwin's, recognition that women often wrote under a pseudonym, whereas men used their actual name (autonym). The woman pictured here appears confident as she rushes towards the bookshop, implying that knowledge brings freedom.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1376-1931

X72224

## **Publisher. Children's Books**

1894

Colour lithograph on paper

This is the second, and Beardsley's preferred, poster design for the progressive publisher T. Fisher Unwin. It advertises a series of children's books. Though the woman is presumably reading to children, her fashionable, low-cut dress may have suggested to Beardsley's contemporaries that she was a figure of the demi-monde, more at home in luxurious 'fast' society.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.956-1966

X72225

## A Comedy of Sighs

1894

Colour lithograph on paper

This was Beardsley's first poster design. It appeared on walls and hoardings around London shortly after the publication of **Salome** and introduced his art to an even wider audience. The poster stole the limelight from the performances of the two short plays it advertised. Critics were outraged by the woman's 'ugliness' and the indecency of her plunging neckline. **Punch** magazine even punned, 'Let's "Ave-a-nue" Poster!'

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.289-1925

X72222

## Isolde

Printed 1899

Colour lithograph and line block print on paper

Turning again to Wagner for inspiration, Beardsley depicts the tragic heroine, Isolde, on the brink of drinking the fateful love potion. She stands against a stage curtain, bright red in the original design and equally bold in the orange used for this first printing. Beardsley asserted, 'I have no great care for colour, but [in posters] colour is essential'. This design was published as a colour lithograph supplement in **The Studio** in October 1895.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.32-1996

X72223

## The Idler "Advanced Woman" Number

1894

Lithograph and line block print on paper

In September 1894, the **Idler** magazine included the article, 'How to Court the "Advanced Woman"'. This poster was designed to accompany it. Though the article undermined female emancipation, Beardsley was probably sympathetic to the cause. He frequently depicted the 'New Woman' of the period as stylish and independent. So much so, that contemporaries used the phrase, 'the Beardsley Woman' interchangeably. The woman here gazes at a fashionable hat. This might indicate her 'idleness' and the acceptance of her role as an object of male desire. However, her expression and direct stare may suggest her defiance.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.3025-1921.

X73281



## The Spinster's Scrip

1894

Line block and letterpress print on paper

Advertising Cecil Raynor's pocket volume of **The Spinster's Scrip** (1896), this poster depicts an encounter between two women. Contemporary audiences would have readily identified the revealing dress and confident pose of the woman on the left as clear indications that she is a sex worker. The woman on the right is depicted as expensively dressed, independent and self-assured. Some critics have suggested that this image connotes a sexual relationship between the two women.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.21-1900

X73279

## The Yellow Book

1894

Line block and letterpress print on paper

Beardsley made this small shop-window poster to advertise the first volume of **The Yellow Book**, a new art and literature periodical. Partly on the back of the notoriety of his edition of **Salome**, but also as a result of clever promotion by the publisher John Lane, the first number sold 7,000 copies in its first few weeks. The tall, narrow **kakemono** format and blocks of flat white and black employed in Beardsley's poster design show the continuing influence of Japanese prints on his work.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.439-1972

X76990

# 7. BEARDSLEY'S CIRCLE

**Anticlockwise from room entrance**

## **7. BEARDSLEY'S CIRCLE**

This room introduces the key figures in Beardsley's life. The glowing article in **The Studio** and his success with **Le Morte D'Arthur** had brought him into the public eye at the age of 20. Following this, a sequence of fortuitous meetings with leading cultural figures of the day led him to the heart of avant-garde literary and artistic circles in 1890s London.

Witty, talented and well-read, he was rapidly taken up by a group of young artists and writers who identified as aesthetes, acutely sensitive to art and beauty. These included the portrait painter William Rothenstein; Max Beerbohm, the essayist and caricaturist; and the art critic and dealer Robert Ross, the friend and former lover of Oscar Wilde. Beardsley's fame grew with the publication of his illustrations to Wilde's **Salome** in 1894 and his involvement in the fashionable magazine **The Yellow Book**, a period addressed in the following room. At this point his group of friends began to expand rapidly. But with the fall of Wilde early in 1895, Beardsley moved first to Dieppe, and thereafter spent little time in England.

In his last years his circle included fellow contributors to **The Savoy** magazine: the poets W.B. Yeats and Arthur Symons and the painter Charles Conder. The wealthy French-Russian poet and writer Marc-André Raffalovich became an important supporter and patron. His most significant friend in this period was Leonard Smithers, his endearing but unscrupulous publisher.

His mother and sister Mabel were constants throughout his brief life. They were with him when he died at Menton on the French Riviera in 1898.

This room nods at Beardsley's orange and black decoration scheme in the Pimlico house that he and Mabel owned briefly in 1894. 'Orangé' was famously described as the chief decadent colour by Joris-Karl Huysmans in his 1884 novel **À rebours** (Against Nature), which may have informed Beardsley's choice.

Oswald Birley 1880–1952

## **Mabel Beardsley as a Page**

1910

Oil paint on canvas

Beardsley's sister Mabel (1871–1916) consciously blurred the boundaries between her professional theatrical roles and everyday life. Her friend Oswald Birley painted her in the striking costume of an Elizabethan page that she wore to a ball. Her intellect and charm made her popular within the Beardsley circle, and she also formed her own interesting group of actors, writers and artists. W.B. Yeats wrote a series of poems about her.

Robin Birley

X73276

## **Professor Fred Brown**

1892

Graphite and ink on paper

In 1891 Beardsley enrolled at the Westminster School of Art on the advice of Edward Burne-Jones. For just a few months he attended evening classes given by the school's principal, the painter Fred Brown. Brown was a pillar of the avant-garde exhibiting society, the New English Art Club. Beardsley added the society's initials to Brown's name in the title of this drawing.

Tate. Presented by Mrs Helen Thorp 1927

N04235

Barbara Leighton 1870–1952

## **Sir Edward Burne-Jones**

1890

Platinum print on paper

Leighton's portrait shows Burne-Jones just as Beardsley and his sister would have first seen him when the artist allowed them to visit his garden studio at Fulham. For a while Burne-Jones became Beardsley's mentor and enthusiastic supporter. Later, as his influence waned, he despaired at what he considered to be his protégé's increasing arrogance and ingratitude.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG x13185

X73019



Jacques-Émile Blanche 1861–1942

## Charles Conder

1904

Oil paint on canvas

Conder specialised in painting fans and small pictures on silk depicting romanticised figures in 18th-century costume. He and Beardsley became close during the planning of **The Savoy** magazine in the summer of 1895 when many of their circle were gathered in Dieppe.

Tate. Presented by Georges A. Mevil-Blanche 1947

N05754

Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec 1864–1901

## Oscar Wilde and Romain Coolus

1896

Lithograph on paper

This image was included in the programme for the first public performance of Oscar Wilde's **Salomé**, which took place in Paris in 1896. The London production with Sarah Bernhardt in the title role had been cancelled when authorities refused the necessary licence. In Paris, **Salomé** was staged as a double bill with **Raphaël**, by the French playwright Romain Coolus. Toulouse-Lautrec made these portraits of the authors for the programme.

The British Library, Add MS 81794  
X72255

Max Beerbohm 1872–1956

**'Is this what you would imply, Will?': Oscar Wilde and his Circle of Friends, Max Beerbohm, Charles Conder and William Rothenstein**

1929

Ink on paper

Beerbohm and Beardsley shared an ambivalent relationship with Oscar Wilde. Their admiration was tinged with distaste for what they saw as the increasing vulgarity and pomposity – and girth – that success brought him. Beerbohm's drawing depicts himself, Wilde and Charles Conder seated drunkenly around a table at London's Café Royal. Rothenstein, sober and prim, looks on disapprovingly. Pasted onto this drawing is Rothenstein's recollection of the event from his memoirs.

Barry Humphries Collection

X72256

## Self-Caricature

1894

Ink, Chinese white and watercolour over photograph

Beardsley seems to have painted over a photograph of himself by Frederick Hollyer to create this telling caricature image. He gave it to Max Beerbohm, most likely in exchange for one of Beerbohm's many portraits of his friend.

Barry Humphries Collection

X72259

Unknown photographer

**Ellen Beardsley 1846–1932**

c.1910

Photograph, sepia silver print

Beardsley's mother, the daughter of a retired army surgeon, was resolute and surprisingly unshockable. Important throughout his life, she nurtured her son's early talents and nursed him throughout his final illness. Beardsley's father, by contrast, was a mostly absent figure.

Stephen Calloway

X74741

Max Beerbohm 1872–1956

## **Aubrey Beardsley**

c.1896

Ink on paper

Beerbohm caricatured Beardsley many times. He always emphasised the severe, abstract geometry of his friend's features in contrast to the languid positions his long limbs fell into so naturally.

Catherine E. Schmidt, USA

X77817

Jacques-Émile Blanche 1861–1942

## **Aubrey Beardsley**

1895

Oil paint on canvas

The society painter Blanche welcomed many of the English artists and writers who visited Dieppe to his nearby family home. This portrait, painted during the summer of 1895, shows the extent to which Beardsley had adopted the dress and cultivated the manner of Parisian dandies such as Comte Robert de Montesquiou.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 1991

X72292

## Beardsley's Paper Knife

before 1898

Silver and ivory

The engraved inscription on the handle of this paper knife reads 'Tim d.d. Aubrey', (the initials conventionally stand for **dono dedit** - given as a gift). This indicates how the knife came into Beardsley's possession, but not the full name of the giver or the circumstances of the gift. The identity of 'Tim' so far remains a mystery.

Stephen Calloway

X72258



## Beardsley's Drawing Table

c.1894

Painted wood

With a small legacy and on the strength of earnings from **The Yellow Book**, Beardsley and his sister Mabel bought a house in Cambridge Street, Pimlico. They decorated it in startling, avant-garde colours (based on interiors described in J.K. Huysmans's decadent novel **À Rebours**), but could not afford lavish furnishings. Beardsley made his drawings at this ordinary Victorian kitchen table which he had painted black to resemble more fashionable aesthetic furniture. He claimed always to work with the curtains drawn, entirely by candlelight.

Stephen Calloway

X72257

Charles Conder 1868–1909

## Ernest Dowson

c.1890s

Graphite on paper

Dowson's poems contain some of the most memorable lines of the period, including 'They are not long the days of wine and roses'. He also coined the phrase 'Gone with the Wind'. Beardsley created the cover design for his **Verses** (1896), as well as the cover and illustrations to a short play **The Pierrot of the Moment** (1897), both published by Smithers. Dowson's literary success was short-lived. At the time of his death, aged 33, he was subsisting on meagre payments from Smithers for translation work.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 2209

X73021

## Illustrated letter to John Lane with self-portrait and gallows

1894

Ink on paper

During preparations for **The Yellow Book**, the publisher John Lane became anxious about Beardsley's drawing, **The Fat Woman**, on display in the next room. He suspected it was an unflattering portrait of James McNeill Whistler's wife Beatrice. In this letter, Beardsley jokingly threatens to kill himself if the drawing does not appear. Lane was unwilling to risk Whistler's wrath and the design appeared instead in the journal **To-Day**.

Barry Humphries Collection

X76997

Walter Richard Sickert 1860–1942

## **Aubrey Beardsley**

1894

Tempera on canvas

Sickert observed Beardsley in Hampstead churchyard following a ceremony for the unveiling of a bust commemorating the Romantic poet John Keats (1795–1821). Though angular and painfully thin, he was elegantly dressed as always. Keats had died young from tuberculosis. The parallel between the poet and the artist cannot have been lost on those friends, like Sickert, who knew of Beardsley's condition.

Tate. Purchased with assistance from the Art Fund 1932

N04655

William Rothenstein 1872–1945

## **Sir Max Beerbohm**

1898 (published 1899)

Lithograph on paper

Beerbohm, Beardsley and Rothenstein were all born in 1872 and formed a close circle of friendship within the wider 1890s literary and artistic scene. Beerbohm gained an early reputation as a satirist and caricaturist. In later years he often looked back to his earlier life in his writings and radio recordings. His books of caricatures of figures of the day became widely popular.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG D32976

X74733

Max Beerbohm 1872–1956

## **Caricature of Leonard Smithers**

1947

Graphite on paper

Leonard Smithers, translator, publisher, pornographer and 'the most learned erotomaniac in Europe', was a key figure in 1890s literary life. Beerbohm was involved with him in various projects but recorded his dislike of the man. This drawing powerfully suggests the seedier side of Smithers's character. Beerbohm made it in 1947 as a recollection of earlier days and sent it as a gift to his friend, the poet John Betjeman.

Barry Humphries Collection

X76996

## Vitrine

Alvin Langdon Coburn 1882–1966

### W.B. Yeats

1908

Photo-etching on paper

Yeats was a leading figure of the Irish poetic and nationalist movement, the 'Celtic Twilight'. He was also central as an activist in London literary circles. The idea of the poets, writers and artists of the 1890s as sensitive, decadent and doomed owes much to Yeats's myth-making in his later memoirs. In these he painted a compelling picture of 'The Tragic Generation'.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG Ax7786  
X73023

## Wall

Frederick Evans 1853–1943

### Arthur William Symons

c.1895–1900

Photograph, sepia platinum print on paper

Symons was a poet, man of letters and self-proclaimed libertine. In the 1890s he shared rooms in the Temple, London, with W.B. Yeats. He was a prominent figure in the Rhymers Club, a group of poets that included many of Beardsley's friends. He became the literary editor of the short-lived **Savoy** magazine, for which Beardsley served as art editor. The two had an uneasy, competitive relationship. Symons wrote the first book about Beardsley, published in the year of the artist's death.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG P104

X73020



William Rothenstein 1872–1945

## **Robert Ross**

1895–1930

Oil paint on canvas

The writer and art critic Robert Ross was a pivotal figure in the aesthetic and decadent culture of 1890s London. He was Oscar Wilde's first male lover and later became his literary executor, working tirelessly to safeguard his works and re-establish his reputation. Ross also used his connections and influence to promote and protect many friends, including Beardsley and his family. His 1909 book on Beardsley was one of the first serious studies and remains a valuable source of insights.

National Portrait Gallery, London, accepted in lieu of tax by H.M. Government and allocated to the Gallery, 2005, NPG 6694 X76343

Reginald Savage 1886–1932

## **John Gray**

c.1896–7

Lithograph on paper

As a young poet John Gray was initially a protégé of Oscar Wilde. He later moved away from the decadents and converted to Catholicism. He was ordained in 1901 and served for many years as the priest at St Peter's Morningside, Edinburgh. The church was built by his lifelong companion Marc-André Raffalovich, a wealthy writer who provided Beardsley's principal financial support in his last years.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG 3844

X73022

# 8. THE YELLOW BOOK

## 8. THE YELLOW BOOK

In 1894, Beardsley became art editor of **The Yellow Book**, a magazine that would become the most iconic publication of the decade. Its distinctive appearance immediately set the tone. Yellow was fashionable, urban, ironic and risqué, recalling the yellow wrappers of popular French erotic novels. The first volume was an instant and controversial success. Notably, it put art and literature on an equal footing. But it was Beardsley's drawings that stole the show and gave the magazine its avant-garde reputation. Their bold style and daring modernity received praise and scorn in equal measure. With each new volume, his notoriety increased. To many the publication embodied the decadent spirit, and, as one critic observed, 'to most, Aubrey Beardsley is **The Yellow Book**.'

However, Beardsley's meteoric success was short-lived. In 1895, Oscar Wilde was put on trial for sexual relationships with men and prosecuted for 'gross indecency'. As the scandal tore through London, the backlash turned towards the notorious magazine and its audacious art editor. In the public mind, Beardsley was already connected to Wilde through his **Salome** illustrations. When Wilde was seen at his arrest carrying a yellow book (in fact a French novel, not **The Yellow Book**), the link between the author and the artist was damning. Outraged crowds broke the windows of the publishing house. John Lane, the publisher, succumbed to pressure and sacked Beardsley.

## **Self-Portrait as Art Editor of 'The Yellow Book'**

1894

Graphite, charcoal and crayon on paper

This sketch introduced Beardsley to the public as the editor of the new arts magazine. He is wearing a low-cut jacket with an 'Italian sleeve' (a tight cut around the arm with a full puff above the shoulder) reminiscent of women's fashions. His long fringe reminded one critic of those 'favoured by the average Fleet Street flower girl'. This androgynous self-presentation was deliberately provocative and pushed the boundaries of Victorian decorum.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library, Museums and Press, MSL Coll 291  
X73267

## Cover Design for 'The Yellow Book' Vol.I

1894

Ink on paper

Beardsley instantly set the tone for the magazine with this design for the first volume. His highly stylised manner, dramatically setting pure white against flat black, was completely new. The subject, two masked revellers abandoning themselves to hedonism, was also bold. The overt sensuality of the laughing woman was particularly shocking for the time. Oscar Wilde described her as 'a terrible naked harlot'.

Tate. Bequeathed by John Lane 1926

N04171

## Design for the Prospectus of 'The Yellow Book', Vol.I

1894

Ink and wash on paper

To promote the new publication, Beardsley pictured a fashionable, independent woman browsing for books alone, at night. The image suggests the kind of liberated reader **The Yellow Book** might appeal to. But it also alludes to the modern setting of 1890s London, particularly the bohemian women and sex workers who frequented popular West End nightspots. The elderly Pierrot character in the doorway is a caricature of Elkin Mathews. A partner at the Bodley Head publishing house, he was later pushed out by John Lane.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.518-1926

X72260

## A Night Piece

1894

Ink on paper

This nocturnal scene shows an unaccompanied young woman in a low-cut dress walking through Leicester Square, an area then known for theatres and prostitution. The title, **Night Piece**, would have reflected such associations. During **The Yellow Book** period, Beardsley became fascinated with depicting figures in darkness. Inspired by a skilful technique used by Japanese artists, he indicated the outlines and other details of his subjects by leaving the untouched white of the paper to show between areas of black wash.

The Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge. Bequest of Louis Colville Gray Clarke, 1961,  
PD.136-1961  
X72265



## Vitrine

### **The Yellow Book, Volume I**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art) and Henry  
Harland 1861–1905 (literature) Elkin Mathews & John Lane,  
London April 1894

Stephen Calloway

X72264

**Wall**

**Mrs Patrick Campbell**

1894

Line block print on paper

Wilde introduced Beardsley to the theatre performer, Mrs Patrick Campbell, in March 1894. She agreed to sit for her portrait, but it seems she did not take a liking to Beardsley. She later described him as 'an unwholesome and incompetent fellow'. This may have been because of the widespread criticism and mockery the portrait received.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1092-1996

X72261

## Ex Libris John Lumsden Propert

1893

Ink on paper

This design for a bookplate was made for John Lumsden Propert, a West End physician who was also an expert on portrait miniatures. Beardsley probably borrowed the original drawing back for reproduction in the first volume of **The Yellow Book**.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.293-1972

X72094

## Design for the Back Cover of 'The Yellow Book'

1894

Ink on paper

Beardsley was inspired by the masked balls being held at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. The back cover subverts conventional class hierarchies by showing costumed revellers in the boxes usually reserved for the wealthier classes. This design was used for all the volumes, even the fifth, when Beardsley's other drawings were removed following his dismissal from **The Yellow Book**.

Barry Humphries Collection

X72263

## The Slippers of Cinderella

1894

Ink and watercolour on paper

This is one of the rare drawings in which Beardsley used colour. It was first printed in black and white as he added the watercolour later. When it was published in the second volume of **The Yellow Book**, it was accompanied by a caption, probably written by the artist himself. This outlined a darker version of the Cinderella story, in which she is poisoned by powdered glass from her own slippers.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library, Museums and Press, MSL Coll 338  
X72268

**Vitrine**

**The Yellow Book, Volume II**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art) and Henry  
Harland 1861–1905 (literature) Elkin Mathews & John Lane,  
London July 1894

Stephen Calloway  
X72266

Wall

## The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes I

1894

Ink on paper

Beardsley made a sequence of three drawings of this title. It has been suggested that they explore themes of sexual temptation. This scene depicts a well-dressed young woman being invited through a doorway by a servant in 18th-century costume. The doorway, with its swagged curtains, has been identified by some critics as having a phallic appearance. Beardsley re-used this composition for **Caprice**, the oil painting displayed in this room.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 11, Folder 44, RS230  
X72267

## The Comedy-Ballet of Marionettes III

1894

Line block print on paper

This image shows two women on stage, alongside a grotesque figure with horns – a symbol associated with cuckolds (a term for a married man with an unfaithful wife). They are also accompanied by a curious group of musicians in the orchestra pit. Beardsley may be inferring from his title that everyone is a puppet to sexual urges.

Stephen Calloway

X72269



## Lady Gold's Escort

1894

Line block print on paper

Another of Beardsley's nocturnal subjects, this print depicts a wealthy, elderly woman attended by a group of far younger men. The implication is that they are motivated by her money. It has been suggested that Lady Gold might be a reference to Baroness Angela Burdett Coutts, the heiress who had married her secretary in 1881 when she was 67 and he was 29.

Stephen Calloway

X73037

## The Wagnerites

1894

Ink, heightened with white on paper

Beardsley depicts the performance of an opera by Wagner, boldly showing only the audience. Wagner's operas were widely thought to stir emotional reactions unsuitable for 'respectable' women. The only man in the stalls is one of the few attendees who seems absorbed in the music. This contrast satirises the difference between true music-lovers and those going to the opera because it was fashionable. Critics have related this figure to stereotypical portrayals of Jewish people at the time. Why Beardsley included this representation is much debated. Wagner published essays expressing antisemitism. Beardsley surely knew of his hateful views, but his personal opinions are unknown.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.136-1932

X72262

**Vitrine**

**The Yellow Book, Volume III**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art) and Henry  
Harland 1861–1905 (literature) Elkin Mathews & John Lane,  
London October 1894

Stephen Calloway

X72270

## Self-portrait in bed

1894

Line block print on paper

Beardsley portrays himself peeping out from a huge bed, a diminished and frightened figure. The inscription, in French, translates as, 'By the twin Gods, not all monsters are in Africa'. The expression 'monstre d'Afrique', in 18th-century literature in particular, evoked European fantasies about the continent.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.429-1899

X72275

**Wall**

**La Dame aux Camélias**

1894

Ink and watercolour on paper

Beardsley was fascinated with the depiction of women at their dressing-tables. Here, the woman gazing into the mirror is the tragic heroine of the novel **La Dame aux Camélias** (1848), by French writer Alexandre Dumas. Beardsley may have identified with her because she, like him, had tuberculosis. He added washes of watercolour to the drawing between 1894 and 1897, after it had been published in **The Yellow Book**.

Tate. Presented by Colonel James Lister Melvill at the request of his brother, Harry Edward Melvill 1931

N04608

## Mantegna

1894

Half-tone block print on paper

This portrait is testament to Beardsley's great admiration for the Renaissance painter, Andrea Mantegna (c.1431–1506). Yet when it appeared in the third volume of **The Yellow Book** it was attributed to a fictional artist, Philip Broughton. Beardsley revelled in the wide praise the picture received, even from critics who had voiced disdain for his art.

Stephen Calloway

X72276

## **First Design for 'The Mysterious Rose Garden'**

1894

Ink and graphite on paper

Beardsley was very secretive about his working methods and few preliminary drawings have survived. Beardsley ripped this drawing into many pieces, but someone saved it. It reveals how he developed his ideas rapidly in pencil, before working over the initial rough sketch with firm ink lines.

The late Anthony J. Ballantine

X72279

## The Mysterious Rose Garden

1895

Line block print on paper

Comparison of this drawing and the sketch displayed nearby shows Beardsley's re-imagining of the scene. It originally showed the Christian annunciation - the moment when the Virgin Mary is told she will become the mother of Jesus. In the final version, the angel on the right has been replaced by a more sinister cloaked figure. His winged boots are a symbol of Hermes, the Greek messenger of the gods.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.379-1899

X72280



**Vitrine**

**The Yellow Book, Volume IV**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art) and Henry  
Harland 1861–1905 (literature) Elkin Mathews & John Lane,  
London January 1895

Stephen Calloway

X72277

## Cover design for Vol. V of 'The Yellow Book'

1895

Ink on paper

When Beardsley was sacked from **The Yellow Book** his contributions to the forthcoming fifth volume, including this cover design, were already in place. The publishing house rushed to remove all his drawings from the volume – apart from the back cover which was overlooked. Consequently, it was not until after his death that this tranquil pastoral scene was published.

Royal Pavilion & Museums, Brighton & Hove, FA100365  
X72281

## The Black Cat

1894–5

Line block print on paper

Commissioned by a North American publisher, Beardsley made four designs for the macabre tales of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). This illustrates Poe's story of a man who tries to cover up the murder of his wife by concealing her body in the wall. He is betrayed by the shrieks of his black cat, mistakenly enclosed in the wall as well. The fearsome cat appears out of the darkness, its form outlined in white and starkly contrasting with the white of the dead woman's face.

Stephen Calloway

X72291

## The Scarlet Pastorale

1894

Ink and graphite on paper

Inspired by his love of theatre, this is one of Beardsley's most striking but most ambiguous drawings. Whilst the harlequin figure dances on the stage, it is unclear whether the other figures are painted onto the curtain or seen through it.

Symbolic details like the peacock feathers and the hoof of the figure on the left, indicating male bravado and lust, suggest a sexual undertone. This is further suggested by the title's ironic reference to 'scarlet women', the sex workers often seen at theatre promenades and masked balls at the time.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.675  
X72283

## Black Coffee

1895

Ink, wash and graphite on paper

This is an image of a sexual encounter between two women in a café. Although they appear to show little emotion and sit side by side, the woman on the right reaches under the table into her companion's hidden lap. Beardsley transformed this second woman's fashionable hairstyle into devil's horns. This hints at the pair's disruption of Victorian values and notions of propriety. While Beardsley seems sympathetic to same-sex desire, his contemporaries would have been outraged by this depiction of independent women behaving as they pleased.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.673  
X72285

## Frontispiece to Chopin's Third Ballade

1895

Ink and wash on paper

Beardsley was a long-standing admirer of Polish composer Frédéric Chopin's music. In this drawing he proposes a visual equivalent to the music of the Third Ballade, one of Chopin's most famous piano pieces. The rearing of the horse and tense control of the rider evoke the syncopated passage at the beginning of the second part of the Ballade.

Tate. Presented by the Patrons of British Art through the Tate Gallery Foundation 1999

T07487

## The Fat Woman

1894

Ink on paper

John Lane refused to publish this drawing in **The Yellow Book**. The most likely reason is because it is an unflattering caricature of the artist Beatrice Whistler, James McNeill Whistler's wife. Seated in the Café Royal, she is depicted as a domineering member of the demi-monde. Beardsley's alternative title for the drawing – **A Study in Major Lines** – emphasises its artistic qualities but also jibes at Whistler's musical titles.

Tate. Presented by Colonel James Lister Melvill at the request of his brother, Harry Edward Melvill 1931

N04609

## Atalanta in Calydon

1895

Ink and wash on paper

Atalanta was a celebrated huntress in Greek mythology, best known for fatally wounding the monstrous Calydonian boar during a hunt. Algernon Swinburne's poem 'Atalanta in Calydon' (1865) was a likely source for this work. This was one of the drawings removed from the fifth volume of **The Yellow Book** when Beardsley was sacked.

British Museum, 1926,0410.3. Bequeathed by John Lane in 1926  
X72284



## **Title page to 'The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser'**

1895

Line block and letterpress print on paper

This design was planned as the frontispiece for Beardsley's own novel. The story was an erotic and humorous version of the Tannhäuser legend, in which the poet discovers the home of Venus and becomes one of her worshippers. Beardsley had ambitions to be a writer and he continued to obsess over the ultimately unfinished novel until his death. He admitted early on that it progressed 'tortoise fashion but admirably'. Initially Lane agreed to publish the novel, but in the aftermath of Wilde's trial he did not dare.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1409-1983

X72289

## The Mirror of Love

1895

Ink over traces of graphite on paper

Beardsley first met Marc-André Raffalovich, a poet and writer, in April 1895. It was not long afterwards that he drew this frontispiece for his collection of poems, **The Thread and the Path**. The figure in the mirror expresses the theme of the first poem: the quest towards a new ideal that transcended traditional definitions of gender and sexuality. However, the publisher, David Nutt, was shocked by the figure which he believed had both female and male attributes and refused to print it.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1966-1934

X72288

## Venus between Terminal Gods

1895

Ink on paper

This drawing was also intended as an illustration for Beardsley's unrealised novel for John Lane. It depicts Venus framed by two statues of male gods in the form of herms. Frederic Leighton (1830–1896), then President of the Royal Academy, was interested in the rising generation of artists and often commissioned drawings from them. Beardsley recorded that Leighton was encouraging about his work and greatly admired this design.

Trustees of the Cecil Higgins Art Gallery (The Higgins Bedford)  
X72290

## Centre of the room

### Caprice

c.1894

Oil paint on canvas

This is Beardsley's only known oil painting. Unusually, it is double-sided. He began it in Walter Sickert's studio, under his guidance. The subject on the front, **Caprice**, was painted first and relates closely to **The Comedy Ballet of Marionettes I**, displayed nearby. It shows a young woman being led through a doorway by an unfinished figure in a fanciful 18th-century costume. In the late-17th and 18th centuries, servants in European noble households included people of colour who were often enslaved and people with dwarfism. They were considered as 'trophies', demonstrating the power and status of those they served. Servants with dwarfism were often treated as 'pets', expected to amuse and entertain.

Tate. Purchased 1923

N03815

## **Masked Woman with a White Mouse**

c.1894

Oil paint on canvas

**Masked Woman with a White Mouse** was painted second. Beardsley seems to have preferred this side and hung it on the wall in the house he bought in Pimlico.

Tate. Purchased 1923

N03815

# 9. THE SAVOY

## Anticlockwise from room entrance

### 9. THE SAVOY

Dismissed from **The Yellow Book**, Beardsley faced the loss of his income and a newly hostile atmosphere in London. Despite his international fame, his financial situation was precarious, and he was forced to sell his house. Beardsley left England for Dieppe, the favourite French seaside resort of English writers and artists. There he encountered Leonard Smithers, an enterprising publisher (and occasional pornographer). Smithers proposed starting a new magazine to rival **The Yellow Book**.

With Beardsley as art editor and the poet Arthur Symons in charge of literature, **The Savoy** was launched in 1896, at first as a quarterly. After two issues, Smithers – perhaps unwisely – decided to publish monthly. The consequent strain on his resources meant **The Savoy** folded after just a year. However, over just eight numbers it became one of the most significant and most beautifully produced ‘little magazines’ of the period.

**The Savoy** was published in Britain, but social and artistic conservatism were on the rise there following Wilde’s trial. Smithers was the only publisher who would print work by Wilde or Beardsley at this time. Some booksellers, like

W.H. Smith, refused to display works by Beardsley in their windows. W.B. Yeats famously declared that **The Savoy** had valiantly waged 'warfare on the British public at a time when we had all against us'.



## Cover for the Prospectus of 'The Savoy', First Version

1895

Ink over graphite on paper

Leonard Smithers apparently rejected this first design for a printed prospectus for the new magazine, calling the Pierrot figure 'too flippant'. Beardsley mischievously offered to make a new drawing with a more substantial figure.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library, Museums and Press, MSL Coll 293  
X72293

## John Bull, Contents Page, 'The Savoy'

1895

Ink and graphite on paper

For the first number of **The Savoy**, Beardsley drew another version of his John Bull figure (see the **Second Prospectus** in the nearby display case). Here he makes a grand gesture of presenting the contents of the magazine. This time no offending erection disturbs the smooth line of John Bull's capacious breeches.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.676  
X74740

## The Abbé

1895

Line block print on paper

Throughout his life Beardsley wanted to be a writer as well as an artist. During the **Savoy** period he wrote several poems. He also continued working on his erotic fantasy **The Story of Venus and Tannhäuser**. The first chapters of this ultimately unfinished work appeared in expurgated and serialised form in **The Savoy** as **Under the Hill**. They were illustrated by some of Beardsley's most elaborate designs. In the earliest version he named the 'hero' of his tale the Abbé Aubrey.

Stephen Calloway

X76993

## Vitrine

### Second Prospectus for 'The Savoy'

1895

Line block print on paper

Beardsley produced this revised design featuring John Bull, a 'substantial' character meant ironically to personify English values. It was only after Smithers had printed thousands of copies that George Moore, one of **The Savoy's** literary contributors, noticed that Beardsley had drawn a small erection in the breeches of this new figure. Knowing that all the copies had already been sent out, Smithers agreed to 'withdraw' the prospectus.

Stephen Calloway

X78045

## Christmas Card for 'The Savoy'

1896

Line block print on paper

This is a rare instance of Beardsley using traditional Christian iconography. He made this design for a card to be included as an insert in the first number of **The Savoy**, due to come out just before Christmas 1896. Publication was delayed until early in the new year so its point was largely lost. Beardsley himself described it as a 'silly pseudo thing'. Other observers were struck by the unwholesome appearance of the mother and child.

Stephen Calloway

X72294

Wall

## The Fruit Bearers

1895

Ink and graphite on paper

Beardsley's elaborate illustrations for his own tale **Under the Hill** reveal his close study of the great French illustrators and engravers of the mid-18th century. By moving away from the distinctive black-and-white style of his **Salome** and **Yellow Book** drawings, Beardsley distanced himself from association with the Wilde scandal.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.663  
X72287

# Vitrine

## The Savoy, Number 1

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, January 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78033

Wall

### Third Tableau of Das Rheingold

c.1896

Ink on paper

This drawing, like a play-within-a-play, illustrates an episode in **Under the Hill** in which the Abbé is 'ravished with the wit and beauty' of a performance of Wagner's opera **Das Rheingold**.

Lent by Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design,  
Providence, Museum Appropriation Fund, 31.361  
X72295



## **Vitrine**

### **The Savoy, Number 2**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, April 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78034

### **The Savoy, Number 3**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, July 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78035

Wall

## Fourth Tableau of Das Rheingold

1896

Ink on paper

This drawing, which Beardsley identified as representing Wotan and Loge (as a fire-god), was used as the cover design for the sixth number of **The Savoy**. At this time Beardsley announced to Smithers that he was writing his own version of Wagner's plot, to be called 'The Comedy of the Rheingold'. He suggested that it would 'make a little teeny book' and promised to send his manuscript as soon as it was ready. Although he completed a few illustrations, nothing further came of the project.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.307-1972

X72296

## **Vitrine**

### **The Savoy, Number 4**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, August 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78036

### **The Savoy, Number 5**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, September 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78037

Wall

## The Return of Tannhäuser to the Venusberg

c.1895

Line block print on paper

Beardsley made this drawing as a gift for J.M. Dent, inscribing it 'to... my kind friend and first publisher'. Appropriately, the design reprises elements, such as the intricately interlaced branches, that had first appeared in Beardsley's illustrations to Dent's edition of the **Morte Darthur**.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.461-1899

X72098

## **Vitrine**

### **The Savoy, Number 6**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, October 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78038

### **The Savoy, Number 7**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, November 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78039

**Wall**

## **Tristan und Isolde**

1896

Ink on paper

Here Beardsley experiments with depicting figures emerging from a dark background. He uses meticulous pen lines drawn in the manner of an engraving to differentiate the varying tones.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.306-1972

X72298

## Vitrine

### **The Savoy, Number 8**

edited by Aubrey Beardsley 1872–1898 (art)  
and Arthur Symons 1865–1945 (literature)  
Leonard Smithers, London, December 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X78040

Wall

## Ave Atque Vale

1896

Ink on paper

This drawing accompanies Beardsley's translation of the 'Hail and Farewell' poem (Carmen CI) by Catullus (c.84 – c.54 BCE). In it, the Roman poet addresses his dead brother. Beardsley's spare and beautiful composition captures the moving spirit of the poem. It attracted considerable praise when it appeared in the seventh number of **The Savoy**. Max Beerbohm wrote that 'Catullus could not have craved a more finely emotional picture for his elegy'.

Private collection

X72297



## Et in Arcadia Ego

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley's title and the inscription on the pedestal of the urn: 'Et in Arcadia Ego' (I, too, have been in Arcadia) is taken from the poet Virgil and has been taken as a theme by many writers and artists to evoke an elegiac sense of loss. Beardsley seems to suggest here an alternative, comic, side of the coin to the mood of his **Ave Atque Vale** drawing: the ageing dandy grieves, presumably, for lost youth and beauty.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 11, Folder 53, RS239  
X72299

# 10. THE RAPE OF THE LOCK

**Clockwise from room entrance**

## **10. THE RAPE OF THE LOCK**

Beardsley was a great admirer of the poet Alexander Pope (1688–1744). Oscar Wilde had ridiculed his poetic taste, claiming 'there are two ways of disliking poetry; one way is to dislike it, the other is to like Pope'.

Yet in 1896 Beardsley embarked on the illustration of his mock-epic poem, **The Rape of the Lock** (1712). In Pope's title, the word 'rape' is used in its original sense of theft or abduction, rather than referring to sexual assault. The poem makes fun of a real incident during which Lord Petre (renamed 'the Baron') cut off a lock of the hair of Arabella Fermor ('Belinda' in the poem) without her permission, causing a feud between their families.

Inspired by the linear intricacies of French 18th-century copper-plate engravings, which he admired and collected, Beardsley developed a new, highly decorative style. The title page amusingly credits him as having 'embroidered' the illustrations.

This is the first time that so many of the original drawings for the book have been exhibited together.

Jacques Firmin Beauvarlet 1731–1797,  
after Jean-François de Troy 1679–1752

## Toilette pour le bal

1757

Retour du bal

1758

Etching and engraving on paper

Beardsley's enthusiasm for the French, 18th-century Rococo style became an increasing influence on his own drawings. In Paris in April 1897 he attended the auction of the print collection formed by the writers the Goncourt brothers. He bought a pair of these celebrated engravings. In a letter to his sister, he described them as 'delicious... dreadfully depraved things'.

British Museum, 1951.1006.37

X76282

## The Dream

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley drew this as the frontispiece for Pope's poem. It illustrates Ariel, Belinda's guardian sylph (a spirit of the air), by her bed, while she is still dreaming. Beardsley used his new 'stippled manner' or use of dots, to render the intricate patterns on the bed curtains.

The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, 99.GA.18  
X72301

## **Vitrine**

### **The Rape of the Lock**

by Alexander Pope 1688–1744  
Leonard Smithers, London 1896

Stephen Calloway  
X76992

### **The Rape of the Lock**

by Alexander Pope 1688–1744  
Bijou Edition, Leonard Smithers, London 1897

Stephen Calloway  
X78030-1

**Wall**

**The Baron's Prayer**

1896

Ink and graphite on paper

The Baron is depicted kneeling at an altar made from a pile of books of love stories. He prays to the God of Love for help to obtain the prize of a lock of Belinda's hair.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.677  
X72302

## The Rape of the Lock

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

The drawing illustrates the fateful moment when the Baron approaches to cut a lock of Belinda's hair. She is unaware, her back turned to him. The fancifully dressed pageboy in the foreground (who may be a person with dwarfism) seems to reference a similar character in **The Toilette** scene in the **Marriage A-la-mode** series by William Hogarth (1697–1764). This adds an 18th-century connection to the work. He is the only figure to engage with the viewer, as if to point knowingly to the Baron's mischief.

Private collection

X72428



## The Cave of Spleen

1896

Ink on paper

Belinda, sitting to the right, across the drawing, has sought refuge in the Cave of Spleen. Umbriel, a gnome, is addressing her. Beardsley interpreted the author's fantastical description of the cave and creatures within. This unleashed his delight in grotesque forms:

**Unnumbered throngs on every side are seen  
of bodies changed to various forms by Spleen.  
Here living teapots stand, one arm held out,  
One bent; the handle this, and that the spout...  
Men prove with child, a powerful fancy works,  
And maids, turned bottles, cry aloud for corks.**

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. William Sturgis Bigelow  
Collection, 27.61  
X72303

## The Battle of the Beaux and the Belles

c.1896

Ink on paper

Belinda, furious at the theft of the lock of her hair, faces her attacker the baron. Beardsley chose to depict the moment in the poem just before she throws a pinch of snuff in his face and overpowers him. This drawing was praised for its dramatic action. Beardsley's virtuosity as a draughtsman is seen in the close-laid lines of his **Rape of the Lock** illustrations which were particularly admired by his contemporaries. Many thought this series of designs his best work.

The Henry Barber Trust, the Barber Institute of Fine Art,

The University of Birmingham, 52.5

X72429

# 11. MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN

## 11. MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN

Beardsley worked on illustrating Théophile Gautier's novel **Mademoiselle de Maupin** (1835) for Leonard Smithers between February and October 1897. The hero of the story, D'Albert, searches for the 'perfect' woman. Instead he becomes overwhelmingly drawn to a young man. The object of his desire is eventually revealed to be Madelaine de Maupin, a woman who does not conform to gender expectations of the day, particularly through dress, and is attracted to both men and women. The plot reflects on an ideal unification of male and female attributes, a widely discussed idea in literary and artistic circles in 19th-century Europe.

In his preface, Gautier promoted 'art for art's sake'. This would become the doctrine of the aesthetic movement, which developed in the late 19th century to promote beauty over meaning or morality in art. D'Albert and de Maupin's sexual encounter is described in terms of aesthetic perfection. However, de Maupin leaves D'Albert immediately afterwards.

Beardsley used watercolour in his drawings to create a new softer decorative style. His friend Robert Ross suggested that this technique was 'less demanding' at a time when his health was in rapid decline. But Beardsley later reverted to a more detailed approach, showing that he was simply exploring new modes of expression.

## Mademoiselle de Maupin

1898

Hand-coloured photo-etching on paper

This is Beardsley's frontispiece for **Mademoiselle de Maupin**. It shows the heroine dressed in her preferred outfit, men's clothes as imagined by Beardsley. This is the first illustration of just six that Beardsley completed for Smithers's planned edition of Gautier's novel. He had optimistically intended to draw 32 but was too unwell to fulfil this ambition.

Stephen Calloway

X78051

## D'Albert in Search of his Ideals

1898

Photo-etching on paper

D'Albert is a dandy figure in **Mademoiselle de Maupin**. Beardsley conveys this by depicting him very richly dressed, in an elaborate lace shirt and fitted coat. D'Albert longs for a woman who possesses what were perceived as male characteristics at the time. Beardsley portrayed him with a waspish waist, wide hips and full thighs, traditionally associated with the female figure.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.418-1972

X72088

## The Lady with the Rose

1897

Ink, wash and graphite on paper

D'Albert does not find Madelaine de Maupin straight away. He first embarks on an affair with a woman he calls Rosette, the subject of this illustration. Beardsley developed different 'types' of women in his work, defined by particular features. Here, Rosette, sultry with large, heavy-lidded eyes, conforms to Beardsley's late 'type'. The striped walls of the room recall the style of interior decoration that Beardsley had favoured in his own house at 114 Cambridge Street, Pimlico.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.669  
X72431

## The Lady with the Monkey

1897

Photo-etching on paper

The relation between Beardsley's drawing and Gautier's novel is not clear. Nor is the identity of the woman. Though she does resemble the character of Rosette in **The Lady with the Rose**, Beardsley even considered transferring this image to his set of designs for **Volpone**. The drawing demonstrates Beardsley's rapid mastery of the demanding technique of watercolour, here used in conjunction with penwork in his 'stippled' manner.

Stephen Calloway

X76994



## 12. 'CURIOSA'

Content guidance:  
Works in this room contain  
sexually explicit content

## Clockwise from room entrance

### 12. 'CURIOSA'

While recuperating in the south of England during the summer of 1896, Beardsley began his two most explicit series of drawings yet. These were both inspired by classical sources. The first was a set of eight designs for the Ancient Greek comedy, **Lysistrata**, by Aristophanes. In this famous satirical play, Athenian and Spartan women bring an end to conflict by refusing to have sex with their warring menfolk until there is peace between their two cities. Beardsley's other, equally outrageous set of drawings was made for Juvenal's **Sixth Satire**, a misogynistic attack on the morals and sexual habits of the women of Ancient Rome.

These subjects chimed with Beardsley's own irreverent humour and fascination with all aspects of sexuality – and, perhaps, his own sexual frustrations. Smithers, who prided himself that he would 'publish what all the others are afraid to touch', no doubt encouraged him. Matching the exuberant eroticism of the texts, Beardsley adopted a starkly linear style for these drawings. This bold new direction was inspired by his knowledge of Ancient Greek vase painting and Japanese erotic prints.

Very few of Beardsley's contemporaries would have known of these drawings. Their 'indecent' meant they could not be published and advertised in the usual way. Instead they were only made available by Smithers to a select group of like-minded collectors through private subscription. Even so, Beardsley seems to have had second thoughts, perhaps prompted by his growing Catholic faith. On his deathbed, he wrote to Smithers imploring him to destroy all his 'obscene drawings', a request that Smithers ignored.

## Lysistrata Shielding her Coynte

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley made this as the frontispiece image for the book. It introduces the key themes of the play. Lysistrata, the women's leader, turns her back on a statue of an aroused male deity, usually a symbol of fertility and virility. With one hand she seems to bar sexual relations or, perhaps, pleasure herself. With the other she holds an olive branch and delicately touches the top of an enormous phallus. The implication is that peace will bring an end to war and male sexual frustration. Her knowing smile reveals her control. Her sexual empowerment disrupts traditional Victorian views of male power and of female ignorance about sex.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.294-1972

X72096

## The Toilet of Lampito

1896

Ink on paper

While most of the **Lysistrata** drawings relate closely to the action of the play, here, Beardsley elaborates on a passing reference in the text. The Spartan woman, Lampito, is described as a 'delicious creature' and it is implied she has taken time over her appearance. Beardsley depicts her adorned with make-up and with her hair coiffed. A smirking adolescent cupid powders her bottom, an act that gives them both sexual pleasure.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.295-1972

X72090

## Lysistrata Haranguing the Athenian Women

1896

Ink on paper

In this pivotal moment of the play, Lysistrata persuades the Athenian women they can put an end to the war if they 'abstain from Penis'. Beardsley's drawing implies that the sex strike would only apply to relations with men. To emphasise the point, he shows the figure on the right of the trio making an overt sexual advance towards the central woman.

Beardsley presents a positive image of same-sex attraction through the confidence of this act and the three women's unembarrassed nudity. However, the drawing also catered to the tastes of Smithers's almost entirely male clientele.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.296-1972

X72091

## **Lysistrata Defending the Acropolis**

1896

Ink on paper

This is the most vulgarly humorous of Beardsley's set of illustrations. Here, he condenses two scenes of the play: the failed attempt of the old Athenian men to recapture the Acropolis that has been occupied by the women, and Lysistrata's argument with their leader, which ends when she douses him in water. Beardsley shows the man's flaming torch – a symbol for desire and intercourse – extinguished by flatulence and the contents of chamber pots.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.297-1972

X33625



## Two Athenian Women in Distress

1896

Collotype print on paper

Beardsley referred to this scene as 'the rampant women'. The play describes the women deserting Athens as abstinence begins to take its toll. One woman even tries to escape by flying on the back of a sparrow. The bird was used as a symbol for male virility and dominance in contemporary pornography, as Beardsley would have known. He subverts that association here by making the sparrow a symbol of female sexual liberation. The drawing for this illustration was destroyed in a fire in 1929. Fortunately, a set of full-size collotype photographic reproductions had been made shortly before.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.747-1945

X72097

## Cinesias Entreating Myrrhina to Coition

1896

Line block printed in purple on paper

Originally Beardsley wanted to print the **Lysistrata** series in purple ink, but Smithers abandoned this idea, probably for financial reasons. This is one of a few coloured proofs that survive. It depicts Myrrhina dashing away after teasing her husband, Cinesias. Myrrhina has provoked him to the point that he will do anything in return for sex. She has all the power while her husband is incapacitated by desire. Her clothes, particularly the thigh-high black stockings, suggest Beardsley was influenced by 18th-century pornography and more recent erotic works such as those of the Belgian artist Félicien Rops (1833–1898).

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.345-1972. X73278

## The Examination of the Herald

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley was greatly inspired by Japanese **shunga** (erotic) prints. He even hung a series by Utamaro (c.1753–1806) on the walls of his house in Pimlico, London – to the shock of those that visited. His study of such art is apparent in his adoption of exaggeratedly large phalluses to dramatise the extent of the men’s sexual frustration. In this illustration, the herald’s arrival in Athens to announce that Sparta is prepared to make peace becomes a bawdy joke. The young Spartan is conspicuously vigorous and virile. In contrast, the Athenian is elderly and shrivelled. His close inspection could be read as desire for the younger man or an interest in restoring his own virility.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.300-1972

X33626

## The Lacedaemonian Ambassadors

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

The success of the women's sex strike is apparent in this drawing. The Lacedaemonian (or Spartan) ambassadors arrive in Athens to make peace, their frustrated sexual desires evident in their absurdly enlarged erections. Beardsley subverts this symbol of male virility and power as it incapacitates the Spartans and makes them ridiculous. The drawing also reveals Beardsley's knowledge of classical culture. In Ancient Greek comic stage performances, actors sometimes wore large stage-prop phalluses to signal aspects of their character to the more distant sections of the audience.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.301-1972

X03997

## Messalina Returning Home

1896

Ink on paper

This drawing is of Messalina, the Roman empress. Following Juvenal's text, Beardsley shows her returning home from volunteering in a brothel, frustrated and still unsated as the dawn has come too quickly. The image of Messalina as a femme fatale had particular resonance in the 1890s. With prostitution and the sexual freedom of the New Woman making headlines, she epitomised both sexual excess and sexual freedom, the transgressive and the progressive woman.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.302-1972

X72092

## Juvenal Scourging a Woman

1896

Ink over graphite on paper

This cruelly violent scene shows a woman trussed and whipped for male gratification. It could be read as evidence of an ambivalent attitude towards women on Beardsley's part. However, the woman's stoic expression invites our sympathy, not complicity in the scene. He seems to suggest the impotence of violence and undermines or condemns Juvenal's misogyny. Nothing in Beardsley's personal life suggests hostility towards women. His closest confidante was his sister Mabel. Significantly, he later distanced himself from this drawing, commenting that although not actually indecent, 'it will always be unpleasant'.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 11, Folder 60, RS245. X72432

## Bathyllus in the Swan Dance

1896

Ink on paper

Bathyllus was a Roman dancer famed for his femininity and sexually suggestive performances. Juvenal mentions him only briefly, but Beardsley focused on him in two illustrations. Bathyllus became a cult figure for 1890s decadents, interested in identities outside conventional gender roles. Beardsley emphasises his androgynous appearance through his curvaceous figure, long hair, and hidden genitals. Here he dances in the character of Leda from Greek mythology, a woman who was seduced by the god Zeus disguised as a swan. His gestures suggest a knowing false modesty.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.303-1972

X72018

## The Impatient Adulterer

1896–7

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley described this drawing as ‘the adulterer fiddling with his foreskin in impatient expectation’. It illustrates Juvenal’s warning against Roman women who pretend to be ill, only so they can stay in bed and await their lovers. The man’s intention is clear, his toes are curled in desire and echo his insulting hand gesture, making the horns of a cuckold (a man whose wife is unfaithful). Contemporary viewers would also have identified his low brow as an indicator of an unintelligent and brutish character – perhaps a subtle signal that this is not his plot, but that of his scheming lover.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.338-1972

X00688



## Messalina and her Companion

1895

Graphite, ink and watercolour on paper

Messalina was the third wife of the Roman Emperor, Claudius I, and a shrewd political strategist. Yet historically she has been portrayed entirely in terms of her sexuality, either as a woman with no control over her desires or as a ruthless courtier using sex to achieve her goals. In his **Sixth Satire**, Juvenal perpetuated the myth that she secretly volunteered in a brothel. In this, Beardsley's first depiction of the empress, he shows her disguised in a blonde wig and hooded cloak as she goes on one of her nightly visits. It was rejected from **The Yellow Book** as too daring.

Tate. Presented by A.L. Assheton 1928

N04423

## Vitrine in centre of the room

Douris

**Psykter**

500BCE – 470BCE

Red figure pottery

Beardsley's drawings in this room reflect his study of ancient Greek vases in the British Museum. The art-historian Julius Meier-Graefe mentioned this vessel as one of the artist's favourite examples. It was painted by the celebrated Athenian artist Douris, who Meier-Graefe called 'the most unrestrained of these artists'.

British Museum, 1868, 0606.7

X74736

# 13. EPILOGUE

### 13. EPILOGUE

After a wild spur-of-the-moment trip to Brussels in the spring of 1896, Beardsley suffered a much more severe haemorrhage of the lung from which he never fully recovered. Painfully aware of his own mortality, he moved from place to place in search of the 'healthier' air his doctors advised. Though the advance of his condition was relentless, with each change of location came new inspiration. His final years are characterised by a pattern of enthusiastically taking up new projects only to grow tired and abandon them. While his focus and energy gradually diminished, his late works show that his ambition, intellect, imagination and technical power did not.

Beardsley died in Menton in the south of France on 16 March 1898. He was 25 years old. As his friend Robert Ross commented: 'there need be no sorrow for an "inheritor of unfulfilled renown." Old age is no more a necessary complement to the realisation of genius than premature death. Within six years... he produced masterpieces he might have repeated but never surpassed.'

## **Anticlockwise from the wall text (13)**

### **Wall**

William Rothenstein 1872–1945

### **Aubrey Beardsley**

1897 (published 1899)

Lithograph on paper

This sensitive portrait of Beardsley was drawn by Rothenstein, one of his closest friends. It was probably done while Beardsley was in Paris in April 1897. The city – with its promenades, shops and cafés – raised his spirits and temporarily revived his health.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG D32975  
X73038

## Vitrine

### A Book of Fifty Drawings

Leonard Smithers, London 1897

At Smithers's suggestion, Beardsley began to work on a collection of his best drawings in the summer of 1896. He had high hopes for the book, commenting 'I am so anxious for it to be an entirely pretty monument to my work and to contain my latest work especially'. Yet it also struck a sombre note. Beardsley, and those around him, understood that it would be a memorial as much as a monument.

Stephen Calloway

X74743

## Under the Hill

Leonard Smithers, London 1898

Beardsley left his erotic fantasy based on the tale of Venus and Tannhäuser unfinished at his death in 1898. In 1904 John Lane issued a heavily censored version, **Under the Hill**. For the cover, he finally made use of the elaborate peacock design that he had previously rejected for the original edition of **Salome**. Later still, in 1907, Smithers printed a fuller version of the text of Beardsley's incomplete manuscript, but this appeared without the illustrations.

Stephen Calloway

X74745

## The Houses of Sin

by Vincent O'Sullivan 1868–1940

Leonard Smithers, London 1897

The winged creature on the cover – part human-part pig – refers to the title poem of the book. The verses describe a seductive 'perfumed wind' and Beardsley gives it physical form. His friend, the poet Ernest Dowson, called this 'one of [his] most charming covers – altogether one of the prettiest of the many pretty books you [Smithers] have published'. During this time, Beardsley made striking cover designs and illustrations for several of Smithers's publications.

Stephen Calloway

X78041



**Wall**

**Autumn**

1896

Ink on paper

This drawing was made for a calendar to be published by William Heinemann, but it was never actually used for this. It is unclear why, although the cautious publisher might have considered the female satyrs decorating the pedestal too explicit.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware Library,  
Museums and Press, MSL Coll 283  
X73268

## Arbuscula

1897

Ink, graphite and wash on paper

This drawing is of Arbuscula, a famous dancer during the early Roman Empire. It was commissioned by the publisher William Heinemann for a new edition of **A History of Dancing** by historian Gaston Vuillier. Heinemann let Beardsley choose his own subject from the book. Depicted in a baroque interior, Arbuscula's dress and pose suggest she is preparing for a romantic encounter. Because Beardsley used subtle pencil-shading and ink washes, the image could only be reproduced expensively by photogravure. As a result, it only appeared in the small deluxe edition of the book.

Sam Fogg

X76500

## Ex Libris Olive Custance

1897

Photo-etching on paper

This bookplate was made for Olive Custance, a writer and poet of the 1890s. She later became the wife of Lord Alfred Douglas, who had been Oscar Wilde's lover. Like **Arbuscula**, on show nearby, the drawing shows Beardsley's interest in rich tones and delicate modelling in this later phase of his art.

Stephen Calloway

X73283

## Volpone Adoring his Treasure

1898

Ink over graphite on paper

Beardsley's final project was to illustrate Ben Jonson's 17th-century play, **Volpone or the Foxe**. He had originally planned a sequence of 24 illustrations but died before the project was completed. This picture of Volpone worshipping at the altar of his wealth is a testament to Beardsley's technical skill. Evoking 17th-century engravings, the drawing balances intricate linework with curving forms and blocks of white space. This was to be his last great drawing. It poignantly shows that Beardsley's imagination and stylistic development continued even as his health was declining.

Aubrey Beardsley Collection, Manuscripts Division,  
Department of Special Collections, Princeton University  
Library, Box 12, Folder 61, RS242  
X72103

**Volpone Initial 'V' with Elephant**

**Volpone Initial 'V' with Herm**

**Volpone Initial 'S'**

1898

Half-tone block prints on paper

As well as the cover and frontispiece, Beardsley completed designs for five initials for **Volpone**. The three initials displayed here reveal yet another new stylistic direction. These ornate, baroque illustrations use rich shading to create tone and depth. By this time, half-tone printing made it possible to reproduce images with varying shades between light and dark. Beardsley welcomed the advent of this method, commenting, 'Now the initials will be stupendous'.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1096-1996, E.1095-1996,  
E.1094-1996

X72101-2, X72100

Ben Jonson 1572–1637

## **Volpone**

Leonard Smithers, London 1898

The cover design for **Volpone** is one of Beardsley's most opulent, depicting stylised foxes entwined by jewels. Initially Beardsley planned this for Ali Baba but changed his mind when he decided to illustrate Jonson's play. Smithers published the book nine months after Beardsley's death.

Stephen Calloway

X74744

Monsieur Abel

**Aubrey Beardsley in the room in which he died,  
Hôtel Cosmopolitain, Menton**

1897

Photograph, collodion printing-out paper print on paper

This photograph is the last portrait of Beardsley before his death. Despite his poor health, he is still dressed elegantly and languorously posed. The walls are covered with his cherished prints by Andrea Mantegna (c.1431–1506). The bookshelf is lined with photographs of those he loved and admired: his mother and sister, Raffalovich and a likeness of Wagner. On his desk stands a crucifix, reflecting his recent conversion to Catholicism.

National Portrait Gallery, London, NPG x4608  
X72970

## Ali Baba

1897

Line block print on paper

This is Beardsley's only other completed design for **Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves**. It was made almost a year after his first drawing (shown nearby) and intended as the cover of the book. Ali Baba is shown, having discovered the cave of treasures, dripping in jewels and grown fat.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.1089-1996

X72099



## Ali Baba in the Wood

1896

Ink and graphite on paper

Smithers first suggested the folktale **Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** as Beardsley's next project in the summer of 1896. But Beardsley only completed two drawings and the book was never realised. Here, he depicts the central character, Ali Baba, frozen with fear. The work demonstrates Beardsley's technical ability, evoking the density of the woods through fine lines and dots of white in reserve. This drawing is often thought to refer to Beardsley's own fears and uncertainty about his health. At around this time he reflected: 'it seems I shall never be out of the wood'.

Harvard Art Museums/Fogg Museum,  
Bequest of Scofield Thayer, 1986.665  
X72433

# 14. AFTER BEARDSLEY – THE EARLY YEARS

## Anticlockwise from room entrance

### 14. AFTER BEARDSLEY – THE EARLY YEARS

The fall of Oscar Wilde was a blow from which the decadent artistic and literary world of the fin de siècle ('end of century') never fully recovered. But it was Beardsley's death in 1898 that truly marked the end of an era. His friend Max Beerbohm caught this mood when he wrote of himself, 'I belong to the Beardsley period'.

Beardsley's drawings had been much imitated in his lifetime. Following his death, many young illustrators sought to step into his shoes. They worked in his style or, in some cases, made deliberate forgeries of his work. Few approached his skill as a draftsman or the rich fantasy of his imagination. Gathered here are some notable exceptions.

Collected editions of Beardsley's drawings published after his death brought his work to an even wider audience. Alongside the illustrations to his most famous books, these included many of his drawings previously printed only in ephemeral publications. His designs proved influential for artists not only in Britain, but also throughout Europe and in Russia and Japan.

## **On the left**

Charles Rennie Mackintosh 1868–1928

### **Poster for 'The Glasgow Institute of Fine Arts'**

1894–6

Facsimile, 2020

The large stylised flower held by the woman and the bold expressive lines used by Mackintosh in this poster were enough for contemporaries to make a link with Beardsley. The art dealer Alexander Reid exhibited posters and designs by Mackintosh, Beardsley and others together in his Glasgow gallery in 1895. This prompted a comparison between both artists in the press.

© The Hunterian, University of Glasgow  
Z75111

## Clockwise from wall text (14)

Edward Tennyson Reed 1860–1933

### **Britannia à la Beardsley**

1894

Ink on paper

This drawing satirises Beardsley's style and casts light on his tremendous popularity in his lifetime. It was published in the influential magazine **Punch**, famous for its caustic cartoons, and distributed in large numbers across Britain and the world. It lampoons Beardsley's fascination with the grotesque and his celebration of independent women.

Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, University of Delaware  
Library, Museums and Press, MSL Coll 4145  
X73271

## Vitrine

Unknown artist

## Oriental Dancer

in Harry S. Nichols, **Fifty Drawings by Aubrey Beardsley, Selected from the Collection owned by Mr H.S. Nichols,** New York 1920

Publisher Harry Sidney Nichols was one of Smithers's most ruthless associates. After Smithers's death, he claimed to have a collection of unpublished Beardsley drawings but they were in fact all fakes. He published them in New York in 1920. The page opening shows one of the most famous of those fakes. Beardsley's old friend, Joseph Pennell, and the Beardsley collector A.E. Gallatin denounced the scam straight away.

Stephen Calloway

X78044

Unknown artist

## **Forgery of Lysistrata shielding her Coynte**

c.1920

Ink on paper

Beardsley's fame and popularity was at its peak before the First World War. However, even into the 1920s, forgers were still attempting to benefit from the artist's reputation.

Stephen Calloway

X78049

## Wall

Unknown artist

### In Memoriam

c.1923

Line block print on paper

This image represents an imaginary death-bed scene of Beardsley, surrounded by a group of characters taken from his drawings. It was produced in 1923 as a keepsake for a meeting of the book enthusiasts' dining society, The Sette of Odd Volumes. At the event, John Lane spoke about **The Yellow Book**.

Stephen Calloway

X78046



## Frontispiece for 'The Sixth Satire of Juvenal' (expurgated)

### Two Athenian Women (expurgated)

1901

Line block prints on paper

These two works show how explicit elements of Beardsley's work were censored for publication after his death. In the first, Juvenal's genitals have been removed and the woman he is whipping in the original drawing is now completely absent. In the second, very little is left of the original **Lysistrata** design. The crop of the drawing is so drastic that the resulting image is almost surreal.

Stephen Calloway

X78048, X78047

Pablo Picasso 1881–1973

## Portrait of Marie Derval

1901

Ink over graphite on paper

The young Picasso, like many artists of his generation, drew upon Beardsley's monochrome style and sharp social observation. He saw Beardsley's drawings in the first issue of the Barcelona magazine **Joventut** and described them as 'highly original' and 'without precedent'. He originally did a few black and white drawings so close to Beardsley's style that they were almost like pastiches. This drawing still demonstrates his study of Beardsley, but it also shows him developing his own style.

The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.

Thaw Collection, 2017.188

X77801

Harry Clarke 1889–1931

**'How did you manage to come on the great rolling river?'**

In Hans Christian Andersen, **Fairy Tales**, 1st edition,  
George Harrap & Co, London 1916

Private collection

Z75120

Harry Clarke 1889–1931

## **The Hindu Maid**

In Hans Christian Andersen, **Fairy Tales**, 1st edition,  
George Harrap & Co, London 1916

Private collection

Z75122

Harry Clarke 1889–1931

**'Music! Music' cried the Emperor. 'You little precious golden bird, sing!'**

In Hans Christian Andersen, **Fairy Tales**, 1st edition,  
George Harrap & Co, London  
1916

The Irish artist Harry Clarke became known for his book illustrations and, later in his career, for his stained-glass windows. His illustrations for Hans Christian Andersen's **Fairy Tales** were his first to be published, in 1916. They reveal a close observation of Beardsley's intricate lines, but also of his subjects. **'Music! Music'**... in particular seems to pay homage to Beardsley's **Self-portrait in Bed**, published in **The Yellow Book**.

Private collection  
Z75121

Harry Clarke 1889–1931

**'I know what you want,' said the Sea Witch**

In Hans Christian Andersen, **Fairy Tales**, 1st edition,  
George Harrap & Co, London 1916

Private collection

Z75123

René Gockinga 1893–1962

## Salome

c.1913

Ink on paper

Artists inspired by Beardsley often chose to illustrate **Salome**. This was a way of paying homage to him, but also of measuring themselves against him. Beardsley's representations of same-sex desire may have struck a chord with Gockinga. The Dutch artist was gay and featured homoerotic imagery in his art. He moved to Java in the 1920s, where he started to paint Indonesian subjects using oil paint. He adopted abstraction after the Second World War, having spent some years in New York.

Barry Humphries Collection

X77003

Carel de Nerée Tot Babberich 1880–1909

## Claartje Rijnbende Triptych

1900

Graphite and chalk on paper

The Dutch artist Carel de Nerée Tot Babberich was a great admirer of Beardsley's drawings and his use of curved lines. This triptych represents his lover Claartje Rijnbende (1881–1971) as a **femme fragile**, or delicate woman. De Nerée and Rijnbende were linked around 1901, but they never married and the relationship ended two or three years later. She also lent her features to de Nérée's most famous works, his illustrations of Louis Couperus's novel **Ecstasy**.

With our grateful thanks to Sander Bink  
for sharing his research for this caption.

Barry Humphries Collection.

X77004



'Alastair' (Hans Henning Voight) 1887–1969

**'Salome' with Luisa Casati in the role of Salome**

c.1914

Graphite and ink on paper

Voight was born in Germany to a noble family. He was largely self-taught and used 'Alastair' as his artist's name. His main muse was the highly eccentric Italian aristocrat and performer Luisa Casati. This represents her as Salome, with John the Baptist's head on a spear. Alastair shares Beardsley's use of curved lines. While Beardsley's influence on Alastair is undeniable, the younger artist also found his own voice.

Barry Humphries Collection

X77005

'Alastair' (Hans Henning Voight) 1887–1969

## **Mlle. de Maupin**

1926

Ink and colour on paper

John Lane stressed the parallels between Alastair's career and that of Beardsley to better present the younger artist as his artistic heir. Alastair illustrated a number of authors for whose work Beardsley had himself made designs, including Oscar Wilde and Edgar Allan Poe. He also drew his own version of Théophile Gautier's **Mlle de Maupin** for Lane.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.3502-1913

X74737

'Alastair' (Hans Henning Voight) 1887–1969

## **Marchesa Luisa Casati**

c.1914

Ink on paper

Italian performer Luisa Casati is this time depicted as herself (rather than Salome). She was one of the most important patrons of the arts and fashion in the early 20th century. Known for her flamboyant style, she is reported to have worn live snakes as jewellery. In this drawing, Alastair chose to portray her off-centre to emphasise her long train, regal poise and bold style. She later inspired haute couture collections by John Galliano, Alexander McQueen and Karl Lagerfeld.

Arwas Archives

X77502

## Vitrine in centre of the room

Konstantin Somov 1869–1939

### Theatre

in N. Radlov, **Der Moderne Buchschmuck in Russland**, Druck der Gesellschaft R. Golicke u. A. Willborg, St Petersburg 1914

Somov's original drawing was first used as the cover for Aleksandr Blok's book **Teatr** (1907). Somov was one of the founders of the Russian **Mir iskusstva** (World of Art) movement in 1898. Their ideas and art were promoted between 1899 and 1909 in the **Mir iskusstva** magazine. Sergei Diaghilev, the founder of the Ballet Russes, was its Chief Editor. Earlier, he had sought Beardsley out when both men were in Dieppe and Beardsley would remain a key reference for him and his circle.

The Syndics of Cambridge University Library, S404:45.a.9.7  
X76322

## Forty-Three Drawings by Alastair

by 'Alastair' (Hans Henning Voight), 1887–1969

The Bodley Head, London and New York 1914

Publisher John Lane launched the career of Alastair, then 18, with this collection of drawings. Its title is deliberately reminiscent of Beardsley's album **Fifty Drawings**, published by Smithers. Lane also invited Beardsley's and Wilde's friend Robert Ross to write the introduction. These links were no coincidence. Lane was keen to present the precocious Alastair as the new Beardsley.

Arwas Archives

Z74862

# 15. AFTER BEARDSLEY – THE SIXTIES

## Wall text on the right of room entrance (15)

### 15. AFTER BEARDSLEY – THE SIXTIES

In the early part of the 20th century, most of Beardsley's contemporaries were forgotten and their work dismissed as having no value in the modern world. But Beardsley's work continued to feel relevant for many younger artists, and in the 1960s a more widespread rediscovery of 'Victoriana' gathered force.

A major 1966 Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum caught a rising tide of interest in 19th century art in general and especially in the fin de siècle. The show attracted a young audience. In Beardsley's drawings they discovered ideas that chimed with their own anti-establishment values. His images provided the perfect back-drop for experimental, 'alternative' lifestyles.

Beardsley's drawing style played a major part in the popular Art Nouveau revival. It found its way into posters and record-sleeves and psychedelic underground magazines such as **Oz**. It even influenced more mainstream advertising, commercial design and interior decoration. Beardsley's images seemed to be everywhere.

Beardsley's strange, long-haired figures in extravagant costumes also had an impact on 1960s fashion. New, independent clothing boutiques sprang up to meet the demands of 'liberated' young women and a new breed of 'male peacocks'. Their clothes reflected their rejection of convention. Just as in 'the Beardsley period', style and image were once again an essential expression of a subversive, counter-cultural sensibility.



## **On the right**

H.M. Stationery Office

### **Poster for the Aubrey Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum**

1966

Lithograph on paper

The Victoria and Albert Museum's 1966 exhibition was hugely popular. Younger visitors in particular found Beardsley's work appealingly subversive. The show kick-started a wider art nouveau revival. It also contributed to the heady mix of cultural experiment and innovation in fashion and popular art that created 'Swinging London'.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.2430-1966  
Z03597

## Vitrine

### Advert for The Head Shop posters

**Oz Magazine**, number 4, 1967

**Oz** was the most significant of the counter-culture magazines of the late 1960s. It developed a rich graphic style using multi-layered pictures and semi-legible lettering. Posters in a similar style became a key indicator of an 'alternative' lifestyle. At this time, posters shifted from being used just for advertising to being sold as interior decoration. This advert for a poster shop in Notting Hill Gate shows Beardsley's images alongside an ironic warning about marijuana and new psychedelic designs by Marijke Koger of the Dutch art collective The Fool.

Stephen Calloway

X78257

## **'Out of the Black Lake'**

by Kenneth Clark 1903–1983

**Sunday Times Magazine, 8 May 1966**

The distinguished art historian Kenneth Clark had been Director of the National Gallery and Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures. He was also a long-time Beardsley enthusiast. In the 1960s he published a book and magazine articles arguing that Beardsley deserved recognition, not merely as a popular phenomenon but as an internationally significant artist.

Private collection

Z75250

## **Anticlockwise from wall text**

Paul Christodoulou born 1937

### **Elliott Alice Boots**

c.1966

Lithograph on paper

Elliott's, a shoe-shop in Notting Hill Gate (with an original art nouveau shop-front), quickly realised the commercial potential of the Victorian revival of the 1960s. Their poster for a range of fashionable footwear creatively plagiarised several of Beardsley's celebrated images.

Private collection

Z74831

**CONTENT GUIDANCE:**

**EXPLICIT CONTENT BEHIND  
THIS CURTAIN, PLEASE  
CLOSE AFTER VIEWING**

Gerald Scarfe born 1936

## **Aubrey Beardsley**

1967

Ink on paper

Gerald Scarfe was the most provocative caricaturist working in Britain in the 1960s – and still is. His admiration for Beardsley's work – especially in its more grotesque forms – was one of the inspirations for his remarkable drawings. He savagely depicted the features and bodies of celebrated characters of his day. Unlike Beardsley, who usually made his designs at roughly the size his drawings would be reproduced, Scarfe drew on a very large scale. This fully reveals his energy and skill as a draughtsman and renders his images all the more uncompromising and startling.

Gerald Scarfe

X78284

Martin Sharp 1942–2013

## **Toad of Whitehall**

1967

Lithograph on paper

Following the Victoria and Albert Museum's Beardsley show in 1966 and with a growing revival of interest in art nouveau and the 1890s, the look and feel of **The Yellow Book** was widely adopted by artists and illustrators. Martin Sharp was one of the leading designers of 1960s psychedelic graphics. Here he plays on the iconic colour-scheme to suggest an association between the subversive, counter-culture magazine **Oz** and its equally outrageous 1890s forerunner.

Stephen Calloway

X77495

## Le Morte Darthur screen

c.1967

Incised and painted gesso on wood

The enormous popularity of the 1966 Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum led to his designs being used on a wide range of domestic objects. Mirrors, coffee mugs and even items of furniture were decorated with different degrees of success. This screen – with its unrefined versions of Beardsley's figures and misunderstood lettering – was probably mass-produced by a manufacturer with little knowledge of the artist's work.

Stephen Calloway

X74746



## **LP Cover for 'Humble Pie'**

Album by Humble Pie, 1970

This album cover uses Beardsley's design for Salome's  
**The Stomach Dance 1893.**

Private collection

Z75109

Greg Jarvis

**LP Cover for 'Come Hell or High Water'**

Album by The Flowers of Hell, 2009

The design of The Flowers of Hell's debut album is based on Beardsley's **Le Morte Darthur** illustration for **La Beale Isoud at Joyous Gard**.

Private collection

Z75106

## LP Cover for 'Witchcraft'

Album by Witchcraft, 2004

This album cover design uses one of Beardsley's black ink designs for **Le Morte Darthur**. It represents the wizard Merlin.

Private collection

Z75108

Klaus Voormann born 1938

## LP Cover for 'Revolver'

Album by The Beatles, 1966

The **Revolver** album came out in 1966, the same year as the Beardsley exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum. The German artist, musician and producer Klaus Voormann designed this album cover. It combines photographic collage and detailed portraits of the Beatles. His black and white drawing style was distinct, but it was popularly associated with Beardsley and his revival.

Private collection

Z75107

Dickinson

## **LP Cover for 'Procol Harum'**

Album by Procol Harum, 1967

The popularity of LP records (12-inch, long-playing vinyl) in the 1960s and 1970s created a new genre of album cover art. Designers for many bands drew on Beardsley's imagery to evoke his subversive reputation and demonstrate their rejection of mainstream culture.

Private collection

Z75110

David Stahlberg

**LP Cover for 'Dreams'**

Album by Gábor Szabó, 1968

Private collection

Z75105

Christopher Charles James born 1946

## Deathbed

1981

Ink on acetate film, animation cells for **After Beardsley**

Chris James's animated film relocates Beardsley's death to a dystopian modern-day New York City. At the end he lies in a hospital bed surrounded by modern medical equipment, but still clutching his rosary and crucifix, as described in the death-bed letter written by his sister Mabel.

Victoria and Albert Museum, E.431A-1982

X74738

# CREDITS



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