James Watson Dawson (1832-1892): An Overview

Biographical Materials

John Dawson Watson was a painter, watercolourist and illustrator. He studied at the Manchester School of Design and at the Royal Academy Schools. He exhibited at the Royal Academy 1853 to 1890, the British Institution, the Society of British Artists Suffolk Street, the Old Watercolour Society, the Grosvenor Gallery and elsewhere. Painted genre scenes, often of children. His pictures are usually small, painted on panel or board, and show a Pre-Raphaelite feeling for colour and detail. He was also a prolific and notable illustrator, producing many designs for books and periodicals. He worked for Once a Week, Good Words, London Society and others; among the many books he illustrated were Pilgrim's Progress, Arabian Nights, and Watt's Diine and Floral Songs. Works by him are in the Victoria and Albert Museum, Norwich and Liverpool.

Works

- Illustrations
- Drawings and Portraits
  - Portrait of Charles Keene seated on a Table
  - Portrait of William Watson
  - Portrait of Charles Collinson

Last modified 22 August 2005

http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/watson/index.html
John Dawson Watson, 1832-1892

Identity:

John Dawson Watson was a painter, watercolourist and illustrator.

Life:

Watson studied at the Manchester School of Design and the Royal Academy Schools. He achieved his first success with The Wounded Cavalier at the Manchester Royal Institution in 1851. Ford Madox Brown was an early mentor and a Pre-Raphaelite attention to detail and colour developed in Watson's work. He soon became a regular exhibitor at the Royal Academy, the Society of British Artists and the Old Watercolour Society. He was also a successful illustrator for books and periodicals including Good Words, London Society and Once a Week.

Bibliography:


ten of page

enquiries to: enquiries@whistler.gla.ac.uk

last updated: 16 September 2005
Dear Mr Whistler

I am well, and will come down to meet you tomorrow night. I am anxious to know if you can give me any particular role, because I am prepared to speak at length, and with such a solemn pretense as age and experience might give weight to. I was in the Cafe d'Le [sic] Europe on Saturday and met Edwin Ellis [2] - [p. 2] I give you a sketch of the conversation.

Ellis - Are you coming to the meeting on Wednesday?
Watson - I don't see why I shouldn't.
Ellis - What the Devil does Whistler mean by calling this meeting?
Watson - I don't know of any particular motive, I only think that it is quite natural that our President, before leaving the chair, should explain his relations with the Society, and might be listened to with a certain respect, because it appears to me, that in spite of all petty squabbles, that he has been (viewing him in [p. 3] the large) a benefactor to the Society - and in this light I regard him -
Ellis - Why did you resign with Whistler [3]?
Watson - Because I thought he was most disgracefully treated, and never in my life did I see such an exhibition of coarse insult and brutality as I saw that night -
Ellis (softening a little) [-] Well, I must say it was in bad taste, and therefore, as you said at the time, indecent - But Whistler is a man who will sacrifice everything for an epigram or a smart speech - He took me [p. 4] up to Leightons picture [4], and talking of the Society called it a "Sty".
Watson, Quite right -

And now, if I can meet you and your confreres anywhere before the meeting, I am your man.

Yours always

http://www.whistler.arts.gla.ac.uk/letters/06069.asp
Notes:

1. John Dawson Watson
   John Dawson Watson (1832-1892), painter and illustrator [biography].

2. Edwin Ellis
   Edwin Ellis (1841-1895), marine and landscape painter [biography].

3. resign with Whistler
   JW was forced to resign as PRBA in June 1888 and a large number of artists resigned with him.

4. Leightons picture
   A portrait of a blonde girl, A Study (cat. no. 237) by Frederic Leighton (1830-1896), painter and sculptor [biography], hung in the most prominent position in Spring Exhibition, Royal Society of British Artists, London, 1888, (Morning Post, 28 November 1888; St James’s Gazette, 26 November 1888). He also exhibited three sketches of Rhodes (cat. nos. 536, 538, 540) and Sketch for the Daphnephoria (cat. no. 157). The story is told in the World: "Our James, with his merry men, put in an unexpected appearance the other night in the galleries of Suffolk Street, "to perceive the results of the 'effort in the other direction'," he said, as he joyously scanned the walls. An admiring group of Ancients were standing before the tiny Leighton in the place of honour in the large room. "Quite exquisite!" they cried. "A gem! - really a gem!" "Yes," said the ex-President, leaning forward with his dangerous smile of appreciation, "like a diamond in the sty!" (World, 28 November 1888; see also Menpes, Mortimer, Whistler as I Knew Him, London, 1904, p. 112).