



American Federation of Arts

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JAMES TISSOT'S DRAMATIC PORTRAITS OF VICTORIAN LIFE EXAMINED IN MAJOR TRAVELING EXHIBITION

James Tissot: Victorian Life/Modern Love

(May 1999)-*James Tissot: Victorian Life/Modern Love*, the first major U.S. retrospective in 30 years of the French artist James Tissot (1836–1902), opens to the public on September 22 at the Yale Center for British Art. Comprising approximately 40 paintings, 37 prints, and 20 watercolors and gouaches on loan from collections from around the world, the exhibition constitutes the most complete representation of Tissot's work in this country and celebrates his notable return to both popular and scholarly favor in recent years.

The exhibition is organized by The American Federation of Arts and the Yale Center for British Art. The exhibition is supported by an indemnity from the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities. Additional support is provided by the Benefactors Circle of the AFA.

Guest curator Malcolm Warner, Curator of Paintings and Sculpture, Yale Center for British Art, has arranged the exhibition into six thematic sections: Historical Subjects, Modern Life in France, Modern Life in Britain, Prints, *La Femme à Paris*, and Biblical Illustrations.

James Tissot gives prominence to the wry and urbane scenes of Victorian life for which the artist is best known. The exhibition presents a selection of Tissot's finest works with particular emphasis on his years in London, where he lived from 1871 to 1882. The paintings showcase his keen observations of the manners and fashions of his times. With remarkable technical virtuosity, he gently mocked what he admired, reveling in recording the minute details of contemporary finery.

In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, Mr. Warner writes, "At the heart of James Tissot's work as an artist lies the idea of the modern, that which makes the present time distinct in appearance and character from the past." In this setting, he portrayed the nuances of modern love: the drama of attraction, flirtation, passion, and loss, and the gestures through which they were expressed in Paris and London society.

Tissot left London and returned to France in 1882, following the death of his beloved companion and favorite model, Kathleen Newton. Between 1883 and 1885, he created a series of fifteen large paintings titled *La Femme à Paris*. Like the canvases he created in London, these paintings hint at amorous intrigue while depicting scenes from the lives of Parisian women.

In 1886, still mourning the death of Mrs. Newton, Tissot experienced a vision of Christ and, consequently, a deepening of his religious ardor. From this turning point until his death, Tissot devoted himself to creating hundreds of works in a variety of mediums illustrating biblical stories. With their combination of mysticism and realism, these works struck a powerful chord with the public and were immensely popular in both exhibitions and in book form in Europe and North America.

While Tissot is not the kind of artist who features largely in general histories of art, his work is admired, studied, and collected all over the world, sometimes with cult-like devotion. According to Mr. Warner, the

exhibition is designed to "present Tissot on his own terms, to bring out the intelligence, the inventiveness, and the humor that make him such a highly enjoyable artist."

INTERNATIONAL TOUR

- Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT, September 22–November 28, 1999
- Musée du Québec, Québec, Canada, December 16, 1999–March 12, 2000
- Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY, March 25–July 2, 2000

PUBLICATION

A fully illustrated catalogue, written by Malcolm Warner and Tissot scholar Nancy Rose Marshall accompanies the exhibition. *James Tissot: Victorian Life/Modern Love* is published by the Yale Center for British Art and The American Federation of Arts in association with Yale University Press, London. 208 pages, 9 x 10", 96 color and 31 black-and-white illustrations; clothbound \$45.00, paperbound \$24.95.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS:

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