



JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE

ARTIST GUIDE

Life, paintings, drawings, poetry and myth



TheHistoryOfArt.org

John William Waterhouse

Artist Guide



TheHistoryOfArt.org

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This free guide draws on the completed John William Waterhouse section prepared for TheHistoryOfArt.org. It is a portable companion to the fuller online articles, references, FAQs and linked comparisons.

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How to use this guide

A structured doorway into the Waterhouse cluster, not a substitute for the full online articles.

LOOK FIRST

Begin with the whole composition. Notice scale, format, figure placement, thresholds, water, architecture and the direction of every gaze.

SEPARATE FACT FROM INTERPRETATION

Dates, materials, dimensions and collection histories are object facts. Literary connections and psychological readings should be weighed against what the painting actually shows.

COMPARE RELATED WORKS

Waterhouse returned to the Lady of Shalott, Circe, Ophelia, flower gatherers and classical heroines. Version titles and dates matter.

CONTINUE ONLINE

Each profile links to the completed online guide with its longer article, citations, reference list, FAQs and related pages.

Waterhouse at a glance

A concise orientation before the guide turns to the major works.

FULL NAME	John William Waterhouse
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BORN	6 April 1849, Rome
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DIED	10 February 1917, London
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TRAINING	Royal Academy Schools, London
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FIELDS	Oil painting, drawing and preparatory studies
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KNOWN FOR	Classical, literary and Pre-Raphaelite subjects
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GUIDE SCOPE	106 paintings and 20 drawings/studies, with direct links to the completed online cluster
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Life and career

From a Roman childhood to Royal Academy success, Waterhouse's career joined Victorian institutions to a highly personal imaginative world.



John William Waterhouse built one of the most successful careers in late Victorian narrative painting while leaving remarkably little public testimony about himself. Born in Rome to a British artistic family, he trained in London, rose through the Royal Academy and spent more than forty years turning classical myth, medieval legend and English poetry into ambitious figure paintings. *The Lady of Shalott*, *Hylas and the Nymphs* and his images of *Circe* now seem inseparable from the stories they illustrate.

The apparent familiarity of those pictures can make Waterhouse himself seem more knowable than he is. No substantial body of diaries or intimate correspondence has emerged to illuminate his motives, models or domestic life. Museum records, exhibition catalogues, surviving studies and the testimony of colleagues provide a firm career outline, but they do not support every personal story repeated about him. His biography is therefore clearest when it follows the institutions, places, relationships and paintings that can be documented, while allowing the private man to remain partly out of view.

Waterhouse's career can be traced with unusual precision through the Royal Academy. Its annual exhibitions record the pictures by which he sought notice, election and sales. The National Portrait Gallery's catalogue places him in the Academy exhibitions almost every year from 1874 until 1917, except 1890 and 1915. It also records his studios, marriage, institutional elections and international prizes. These facts establish the public rhythm of his adult life.

John William Waterhouse's career unfolded through an unusually sustained relationship with the Royal Academy. From his first accepted picture in 1874 to works shown in the year of his death, he used the Academy exhibition as the principal public stage for paintings drawn from classical history, Greek and Roman myth, medieval legend and English poetry. The chronology below follows that public career alongside the quieter facts of training, studios, marriage, travel, professional status, collecting and reputation.

Style and technique

Waterhouse combined academic figure construction, staged interiors, fluid paint and carefully controlled passages of colour and light.



John William Waterhouse made imaginary scenes feel physically present. A chain rests beneath the Lady of Shalott's hand; Circe tips poison into water; Hylas bends towards a pool; Penelope turns from her suitors while continuing to weave. The stories may come from Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare or Tennyson, but their emotional force enters through bodies, objects, colour and paint.

A Waterhouse painting often announces itself before its story is known. One or more figures occupy a charged enclosure: a boat, pool, throne room, garden, doorway, mirror or circle. A gesture connects the body to an object. Colour concentrates around that action. The surrounding space is convincing enough to sustain the fiction but rarely neutral.

His style cannot be reduced to a formula called "Pre-Raphaelite." Waterhouse trained at the Royal Academy, established his reputation with classical history and genre subjects, absorbed the colour and literary intensity of later Pre-Raphaelitism, and used a direct, sometimes broad manner that contemporary observers associated with French painting. Surviving drawings, oil studies and unfinished canvases reveal careful preparation alongside repeated repainting. What they do not provide is one universal sequence for every work. The most revealing account of his technique therefore joins documented working evidence to close looking-and keeps both distinct from unsupported claims about pigments or hidden layers.

Poetry, myth and symbols

Classical myth, medieval legend and Victorian poetry supplied narratives, but each painting reshaped its source through gesture, threshold and atmosphere.



John William Waterhouse did not paint one imaginary world. His pictures move between Homer's wandering sailors, Ovid's transformations, Shakespeare's heroines, Tennyson's enchanted rooms, Keats's dangerous lovers, Christian martyrdom and the dynastic violence recorded by Josephus. Their visual family resemblance can disguise how different these sources are.

The distinction matters. A painting may illustrate a precise line from a poem, reshape an episode from an ancient narrative, attach a modern title to a mood, or use a mythological name without following one identifiable text. Waterhouse's art becomes more intelligent-not less magical-when those levels of certainty are kept apart.

Waterhouse's titles often sound like labels attached to an illustrated anthology. They are more varied than that. Before interpreting a picture, it helps to ask what kind of source claim the evidence can support.

Studio, sitters and reception

Models, repeated figure types, exhibitions and later reception help explain both Waterhouse's working habits and his modern popularity.



The faces in John William Waterhouse's paintings are among the most recognisable in Victorian art, yet the people behind them are often unknown. A red-haired woman may become Circe, Lamia, Thisbe or a nameless gatherer of flowers; one head can recur across drawings and finished canvases; a pose may be reversed or retained while costume and character change. Visual continuity is abundant. Documentary identification is not.

This guide separates three categories commonly blurred online: the model who posed in the studio, the sitter represented as a particular person, and the literary or mythological character named by the picture. It also restores Waterhouse's formal portraits to a career often described as though it contained only imaginary women. The result is more careful and more interesting: an artist working with real bodies and professional models, family and patrons, while transforming them so thoroughly that resemblance alone cannot recover biography.

A portrait claims to represent a particular person. A model supplies a body, face, gesture or pose for an artist's work. A character belongs to the story represented. One individual can occupy all three roles, but Waterhouse's evidence rarely permits that assumption.

John William Waterhouse built his reputation through exhibitions. From his first accepted Royal Academy picture in 1874 to works shown after his death in 1917, public display governed the rhythm of his career: paintings were conceived for crowded galleries, reviewed in newspapers, bought by collectors and museums, and sometimes sent abroad to represent British art. The familiar image of Waterhouse as a solitary painter of private dreams misses this highly public professional life.

His exhibition history also complicates the idea that his fame is a recent product of posters and the internet. Waterhouse was elected to the Royal Academy, received international recognition for Mariamne, and entered public collections in Britain and Australia during his lifetime. Yet his standing did change. Modernism altered the histories told about Victorian painting, and a major specialist exhibition did not arrive until 1978. The international retrospective of 2008-10 marked a further stage: Waterhouse was no longer treated only as a popular survivor of Pre-Raphaelitism but as a painter whose classical learning, French-influenced handling and Edwardian modernity required sustained reassessment.

Paintings and drawings

The catalogue brings together 106 paintings and 20 drawings or preparatory studies, with version-aware routes back to the full online articles.



John William Waterhouse's paintings move between ancient Rome, Greek myth, medieval legend and Victorian poetry. The familiar image of a beautiful woman beside dark water belongs to only one part of that achievement. His career began with ambitious scenes of classical life, gathered force through public history paintings in the early 1880s and changed decisively when he made solitary figures, supernatural events and moments of psychological suspense the centre of his art.

This guide follows that development through the paintings themselves. It explains how Diogenes differs from *The Lady of Shalott*, why the Homeric pictures are not simply illustrations, how Waterhouse returned to subjects such as Circe and Ophelia, and where important works can be seen today. It also separates paintings that are often confused because their titles, heroines or settings are closely related.

Waterhouse's development is sometimes reduced to a neat change from academic classicism to Pre-Raphaelitism. The paintings tell a more interesting story. Classical subject matter never disappeared after *The Lady of Shalott*, and literary subjects did not require him to abandon the scale, figure training or exhibition strategy of an ambitious Royal Academy painter. What changed was the kind of incident he chose and the degree to which atmosphere carried the narrative.

The Lady of Shalott

1888 | Oil paint on canvas | Tate, London



John William Waterhouse's *The Lady of Shalott* shows a departure that already contains its ending. A young woman sits in a low wooden boat, one hand still near the chain that held it to the bank. Behind her, reeds and autumnal woodland close around the river. Before her stand a crucifix, three candles and a lantern. An embroidered textile spills across the boat and into the water. Her lips are parted as if in song, but the voyage is not a rescue. Viewers who know Alfred Tennyson's poem understand that she is travelling towards Camelot and towards death.

Painted in 1888, the work is an oil on canvas measuring 153 × 200 cm. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy that year and entered the national collection when Sir Henry Tate presented it in 1894. It is now among the best-known paintings in Tate's collection, with the accession number N01543.

Waterhouse does more than select an episode from a celebrated poem. He gives physical weight to a psychological threshold: the interval between confinement and experience, obedience and self-determination, representation and life. The painting's power lies partly in its refusal to make that threshold simple. The Lady moves freely only after the curse has fallen. Her first direct encounter with the world is also her final journey through it.

Tennyson's Lady lives in a tower on an island called Shalott, separated from the road to Camelot. A mysterious prohibition prevents her from looking directly out of the window. Instead she watches the world through a mirror and weaves its reflected appearances into a web. The arrival of Sir Lancelot breaks this closed arrangement. At the sight and sound of him she turns from the mirror, looks towards Camelot and declares that the curse has come. She later finds a boat, writes her name upon it, releases it from its mooring and drifts downstream while singing. She dies before reaching the city.

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Hylas and the Nymphs

1896 | Oil on canvas | Manchester Art Gallery



John William Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* makes danger still. At a dark pool, a young man kneels with a water jar. Seven nymphs rise among white lilies. One touches his arm; another reaches towards his clothing; others watch. Nothing shows the violence that will follow, yet the ancient story supplies it: Hylas has come to fetch water for the Argonauts, and he will not return.

Painted in 1896, the oil on canvas measures 98.2 × 163.3 cm and belongs to Manchester Art Gallery. The gallery purchased it directly from Waterhouse in the year it was painted. He signed and dated it at the lower left, and it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1897.

The picture's hold on viewers comes from a contradiction Waterhouse never resolves. The nymphs appear both human and inseparable from the pool; their faces are inviting, but their hands have begun to close around Hylas. His body leans towards them of its own accord even as the myth tells us that he is being taken. Attraction and capture, looking and possession, nature and the supernatural occupy the same surface.

Waterhouse chooses the last moment in which Hylas still belongs to the visible world. The youth has reached the spring, knelt on the bank and lowered his bronze-coloured vessel. He is close enough for the nearest nymph to hold his forearm. Yet he has not fallen, struggled or cried out. Heracles is absent, the Argo is absent, and the search that follows has not begun.

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Echo and Narcissus

1903 | Oil on canvas | Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool



John William Waterhouse's *Echo and Narcissus* is a painting about two people who cannot reach what they desire. Echo looks across a stream towards Narcissus, but he does not return her gaze. Narcissus leans over the water towards a face that appears to meet his own, yet it is only a reflection. Waterhouse gives each figure an object of love and makes both objects unavailable.

Painted in 1903 and now in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, the wide canvas turns a long episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into one suspended encounter. Echo remains bodily present although Ovid says that she wastes into voice; Narcissus is already absorbed by the pool although that happens later; flowers bearing his name already grow beside him although his transformation belongs to the end. The picture does not illustrate one instant. It makes several times visible together, using water, posture and the direction of looking to reveal a tragedy of failed communication.

The first fact of the composition is separation. Echo occupies the left bank of a narrow stream. Narcissus lies on the right. They share the same open landscape and appear close enough for speech, but the water divides their bodies and their attention. Echo looks diagonally across towards Narcissus; Narcissus looks sharply down; the reflection looks back from the pool. The viewer alone sees the whole circuit.

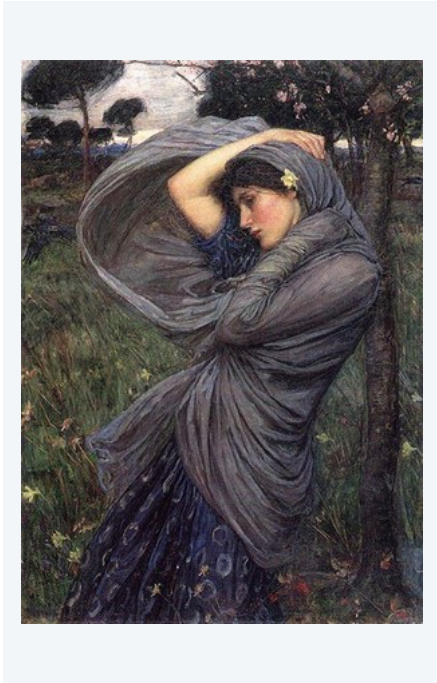
That circuit replaces conventional dramatic action. There is no embrace, rejection, divine punishment or visible death. Waterhouse chooses three directions of sight and lets them explain the relationships. Echo's gaze travels towards someone who does not notice her. Narcissus's gaze returns to him in altered form. His reflected face seems responsive while Echo's living face receives no answer.

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Boreas

1903 | Oil on canvas



Boreas

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A young woman crosses a spring landscape while a hard wind drives her drapery sideways.

Pink blossom and yellow daffodils announce the season; slate-blue folds still carry the cold. John William Waterhouse's *Boreas* contains no mythological god in visible form. The north wind is known through what it does to cloth, hair, branches and the effort of walking.

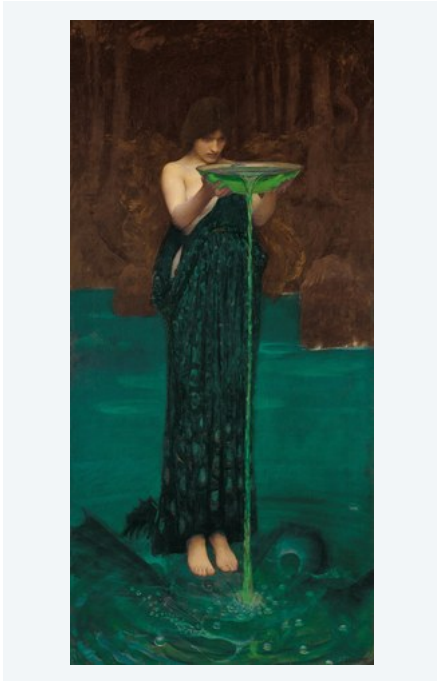
Signed in 1903 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1904, the painting is among Waterhouse's most concentrated studies of weather and inward mood. Its title gives a classical name to an ordinary encounter with wind. The resulting image is neither full narrative nor simple portrait. A passing figure becomes the place where winter and spring meet.

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Circe Invidiosa

1892 | Oil on canvas | Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



Circe Invidiosa

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *Circe Invidiosa* shows jealousy becoming an environment.

The enchantress stands alone above dark water and tips a bowl of brilliant green liquid into the sea. Poison spreads beneath her, but its colour also seems to rise through water, dress and atmosphere. The intended victim is absent. Waterhouse concentrates on the instant when inward resentment becomes an irreversible act.

Painted in 1892 and acquired immediately for the Art Gallery of South Australia, the tall canvas draws on Book XIV of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Circe desires the sea-god Glaucus; Glaucus loves Scylla; Circe retaliates by contaminating the cove where Scylla bathes and transforming her into a monster. Waterhouse removes both members of that triangle and gives the whole field to Circe. Her beauty is not an alternative to danger, and her self-possession is not innocence. The painting's power comes from watching deliberate harm carried...

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The Siren

c. 1900 | Oil on canvas



The Siren

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A shipwrecked sailor clings to a dark rock while a siren sits above him, singing to the accompaniment of a shell-like harp.

Sea water breaks around her scaled lower body. She looks down; he looks up. John William Waterhouse reduces maritime disaster to an exchange of attention in which rescue and destruction are almost impossible to distinguish.

Painted around 1900 and sold by Agnew's in February 1901, *The Siren* belongs to the same marine period as *A Mermaid and Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus*. Unlike Waterhouse's attacking bird-women in *Ulysses* and the *Sirens* (1891), this siren is a solitary mermaid-like singer. Her danger is intimate, beautiful and uncertain even when the sailor's condition makes the likely outcome clear.

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Destiny

Signed and dated 1900 | Oil on canvas | Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum, Burnley

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A woman in red raises a blue cup while ships depart in a circular mirror behind her.



Destiny

An open book and globe turn the room into a place where private farewell meets world history. John William Waterhouse painted *Destiny* in 1900 for the Artists' War Fund, a charitable exhibition and auction organised during the Second Boer War.

Its beauty cannot be separated from that imperial conflict. The picture aided people affected on the British military side and translated departure into an idealised female act of valediction. Waterhouse gives no battlefield, enemy or wounded body. War enters through the fund inscription, sailing ships and the knowledge of why the picture was made.

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Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden

1903 in the collection record; first exhibited in 1904 | Oil on canvas | The Harris, Preston, Lancashire



Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A young woman eases open a heavy wooden door and peers into a flowering garden.

Her body remains outside while her face crosses the threshold. John William Waterhouse turns one small movement into a complete drama of desire, hesitation and discovery.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1904, *Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden* draws on the ancient story of Cupid and Psyche without literally illustrating a described incident. Waterhouse invents a threshold through which to concentrate the myth's central tensions: love that cannot yet be fully seen, curiosity that brings both knowledge and loss, and a mortal woman approaching a divine world.

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La Belle Dame sans Merci

1893 | Oil on canvas | Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, Germany

OBJECT IN FOCUS

An armoured knight bends towards a young woman in a dark wood.



La Belle Dame sans Merci

Her long hair loops around his neck and draws their faces together. His metal body should signify protection; her soft gesture controls the encounter. John William Waterhouse paints the moment when attraction becomes binding.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1893, *La Belle Dame sans Merci* interprets John Keats's ballad of a knight enchanted and abandoned by a mysterious "faery's child." Waterhouse does not show the poem's cold aftermath or the dream of death-pale warriors. He chooses the earlier meeting, when danger can still be mistaken for love.

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Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1909)

Signed and dated 1909 | Oil on canvas | Private collection

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Two women bend among flowers under a bright sky.



Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1909)

Their bodies follow the curve of an unusual arched canvas, and nothing visible disturbs the act of gathering. John William Waterhouse's 1909 *Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May* borrows its title from Robert Herrick but has also been read as the beginning of a late Persephone sequence: beauty is most vulnerable at the moment it seems freest.

This is the large outdoor version signed in 1909, not the smaller half-length interior exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1908. Waterhouse reused the title while changing nearly everything else—format, setting, number of figures, original owner and public history.

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The Magic Circle

1886 | Oil paint on canvas | Tate, London



The Magic Circle

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Magic Circle* presents magic as work.

A barefoot woman stands beside a heated cauldron, her body extended through the wand with which she marks a burning boundary on the ground. Smoke rises in a pale, almost vertical column. Ravens, a skull and a small amphibian remain outside the circle, while flowers, fire and the concentrated figure occupy its interior. Nothing in the painting tells us whether the ritual will heal, summon, protect or destroy.

That refusal to specify the spell is central to the picture's fascination. Waterhouse gives the sorceress authority without giving the viewer mastery over her intentions. She is not startled in the act, rescued from danger or defeated by a hero. She controls the space, the implements and the timing. The painting consequently brings together several strands of the artist's developing career: his knowledge of antiquity, his taste for dramatic narrative, his interest in women associated with prophecy or enchantment, and his...

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Miranda - The Tempest

1916 | Oil on canvas | Private collection; documented through its auction and exhibition history



A young woman stands on a rock above a sea that seems to be breaking apart. Wind drives her dress and hair across her body; waves rise against black rocks; a ship heels so sharply in the distance that survival appears impossible. John William Waterhouse's *Miranda - The Tempest* makes the opening disaster of Shakespeare's play immediate, but its true subject is compassion. Miranda cannot yet know who is aboard. She responds to suffering before identity, love or political history can tell her what to feel.

Painted and exhibited in 1916, the canvas belongs to the final year in which Waterhouse showed work at the Royal Academy during his lifetime. It also returns to a Shakespearean heroine he had first painted more than forty years earlier. Between the calm early *Miranda* and this storm-driven late version lies almost the whole of Waterhouse's career.

The ship is distant, but its danger governs every part of the painting. Its masts and hull tilt against the horizon while the sea between vessel and shore becomes a field of broken movement. Waterhouse does not give viewers the deck-level confusion with which Shakespeare opens *The Tempest*. He positions us on the island beside the person who watches from safety and cannot bear what she sees.

Miranda stands close to the foreground, yet she is not turned towards us. Her attention travels across the water, and ours follows it. The body provides the nearest and largest form; the ship supplies the narrative cause. This long diagonal exchange lets Waterhouse bind human sympathy to an event that remains physically remote.

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Ulysses and the Sirens

1891 | Oil on canvas | National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne



John William Waterhouse's *Ulysses and the Sirens* turns a song into a physical assault. Seven bird-bodied creatures with the faces of young women crowd around a long, narrow ship. Sailors pull at the oars while Ulysses stands bound to the mast, exposed to the voices that his companions cannot hear. The danger is invisible in Homer. Waterhouse gives it wings, claws and the force of a siege.

Painted in 1891 and now in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, the picture is one of Waterhouse's boldest confrontations with classical tradition. Homer does not describe the Sirens' bodies, and his two singers remain in a meadow surrounded by the remains of earlier victims. Waterhouse borrowed the ancient bird-woman type from a Greek vase in the British Museum, multiplied the figures and brought them directly to the ship. The result divided critics: some admired his union of archaeology, imagination and colour; others thought predatory bodies destroyed the idea of irresistible music. That argument is still the key to the painting. It asks how a silent image can make us believe in a fatal sound.

The ship runs almost the full width of the canvas. Its long hull supplies a stable horizontal form, but everything around it is unstable: oars strike the water, bodies lean, wings beat and bird-women approach from above and beside the vessel. Waterhouse traps human effort inside a ring of movement.

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Saint Cecilia

1895 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



A sleeping saint, an open music book and two angel musicians occupy a garden above the sea. John William Waterhouse's *Saint Cecilia* of 1895 is not a conventional martyrdom scene. It turns a four-line image in Alfred Tennyson's *The Palace of Art* into one of the artist's largest and most carefully orchestrated visions of earthly and celestial music.

The picture appeared at the Royal Academy in the year Waterhouse became a full Royal Academician. Its scale, ambitious twilight setting and unusually rich exhibition history make it a flagship work of his mature career, even though it remains in a private collection.

Waterhouse spreads the scene across a wide horizontal canvas. At its centre, Cecilia reclines in a carved marble chair. A crimson cushion supports her knees, an illuminated book lies open across her lap and gilded organ pipes rise behind her. Her head has fallen sideways in sleep.

Two youthful angels appear at the right. One plays a bowed stringed instrument and the other accompanies it. They do not wake Cecilia or demand her attention. Their music belongs to a state between external performance and inward dream.

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Ariadne

1898 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



John William Waterhouse's *Ariadne* shows a heroine at the point where abandonment has occurred but consciousness has not yet caught up with it. Ariadne sleeps on a stone terrace above the sea. Theseus's ship moves away in the distance, while two leopards lie close to her body. The departing lover belongs to the disaster she is about to discover; the animals belong to Dionysus, the god whose arrival will change abandonment into another destiny.

Painted in 1898, the work transforms a familiar classical story into a divided instant. Waterhouse does not show Ariadne helping Theseus through the Cretan labyrinth, waking in grief, or meeting Dionysus. He places her between those episodes. Sleep makes her vulnerable, yet the leopards make the scene more than an image of helplessness. Before Ariadne knows that one life has ended, the painting allows the sign of another to enter.

The painting is legible through three separated zones. Ariadne occupies the foreground, asleep and wrapped in warm drapery. The sea and departing vessel carry the action away from her. The leopards rest close by, physically present yet belonging to an arrival the picture withholds.

This is not a general portrait of a classical sleeper. The title and ship identify a precise narrative crisis. Theseus has taken Ariadne from Crete after she helped him survive the labyrinth and kill the Minotaur. On the island usually called Naxos, he abandons her. Waterhouse represents the departure while she remains asleep.

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The Soul of the Rose

1908 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



The Soul of the Rose

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Soul of the Rose* makes a fragrance visible.

A young woman leans towards a rose growing over a tiled garden wall, cups the flower without plucking it and closes her eyes as she breathes. The action is almost nothing, yet the painting gives it the emotional weight of an encounter. Scent, memory and desire occupy the space that a more explicit narrative might have filled.

Painted in 1908, the picture belongs to Waterhouse's mature period and to a sequence of late works in which women, flowers and enclosed gardens replace the public crises of Saint Eulalia, *The Lady of Shalott* or *Ulysses and the Sirens*. Its intimacy should not be mistaken for simplicity. The title opens competing literary routes through Tennyson and medieval courtly love; the enclosed garden can shelter and confine; the woman may remember someone absent, anticipate someone approaching or surrender briefly to...

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A Mermaid

1900 | Oil on canvas | Royal Academy of Arts, London



A Mermaid

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *A Mermaid* is an image of solitude at the sea's edge.

A red-haired mermaid sits upon a rock, combing the long strands that fall across her body while surf breaks beyond her. Pearls lie beside her. Her silver-green tail curves down towards the water, but her face turns away from it, absorbed in a thought the viewer cannot share.

Painted in 1900 and accepted by the Royal Academy in 1901 as Waterhouse's Diploma Work, the picture had an unusually important institutional purpose. It was the work through which he chose to represent his art permanently in the Academy's collection. Yet its meaning is not fixed by a named story. Tennyson's poem *The Mermaid* offers a close verbal and visual parallel, and Waterhouse had explored the subject in studies for years, but the finished painting remains deliberately open: neither innocent sea-creature nor...

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The Crystal Ball

1902 | Oil on canvas | Private collection; shown in 2011 as part of the Pérez Simón Collection, Mexico



The Crystal Ball

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A woman in a deep red dress holds a transparent sphere at eye level.

Around her, arches, columns and patterned stone establish an enclosed Renaissance world. On the table lie a book, a slender wand and a skull. John William Waterhouse offers the apparatus of magic but withholds its result: the crystal reflects light, yet tells viewers nothing certain.

Painted and exhibited in 1902, *The Crystal Ball* is one of Waterhouse's most concentrated images of solitary female knowledge. Its meaning depends upon looking—her gaze into the sphere, our gaze at her, and a former owner's attempt to change what later viewers could see by covering the skull.

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"I Am Half-Sick of Shadows," Said the Lady of Shalott

1915 | Oil on canvas | Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto



"I Am Half-Sick of Shadows," Said the Lady of Shalott

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's late Lady of Shalott has not yet looked directly at the world.

She sits before her loom in a red dress, stretches her arms behind her head and gazes towards a large circular mirror. Within its reflection, two young lovers pass through a sunlit landscape. The Lady can see their life but cannot join it. Her work reproduces the world that excludes her.

Painted in 1915 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1916, "I am half sick of shadows," said The Lady of Shalott returns to Alfred Tennyson's poem almost three decades after Waterhouse's famous 1888 boat scene. Instead of repeating the final voyage, the artist moves backwards. The curse has not fallen, the mirror has not cracked and the web has not flown from the loom. Tragedy exists only as knowledge brought by the title and by Waterhouse's earlier paintings. What the canvas makes present is...

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Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses

1891 | Oil on canvas | Gallery Oldham, Oldham

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse places the viewer where a spell is about to fail.



Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses

Circe sits frontally upon a raised throne and extends a cup into our space. A wand rises in her other hand. Swine-men already transformed by her drugs-remain beside the seat. Behind her, a circular mirror reflects Ulysses approaching the confrontation.

Painted in 1891, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* translates Book 10 of Homer's *Odyssey* into an encounter with female power. Circe appears monumental, self-possessed and certain of success, while Ulysses is distant and enclosed within reflection. Yet readers of Homer know something the painted sorceress does not: Hermes has warned the hero and given him the herb moly, which will protect him. The cup is offered at the instant when visual authority and narrative outcome diverge. Circe controls the picture...

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Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus

1900 | Oil on canvas



Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Two nymphs bend over a dark pool.

Beneath their faces floats the severed head of Orpheus beside his lyre, still beautiful after the violence that destroyed him. John William Waterhouse does not paint the murder. He paints discovery: the instant when looking recognises that a tranquil surface contains death.

Signed in 1900 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1901, *Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus* transforms the end of Ovid's great musician into a scene of quiet shock. The nymphs do not recoil theatrically. They lean closer. Their attention draws the spectator into an image where compassion, horror and aesthetic attraction cannot be separated.

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The Lady Clare

1900 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



The Lady Clare

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A young woman in a russet-red gown walks through a wooded landscape with a white doe beside her and a single rose in her hair.

John William Waterhouse's *The Lady Clare* of 1900 selects the moral turning point in Alfred Tennyson's ballad: Clare has removed the jewels of rank and is going to tell her betrothed that she is not the heiress he believes her to be.

Waterhouse omits Lord Ronald, the nurse Alice and the revelation itself. He turns a rapidly told narrative into an independent image of decision. The painting is less about whether love will reward Clare than about the composure with which she risks title, fortune and marriage before she knows the outcome.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



The Shrine

1895 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



The Shrine

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Shrine* compresses an encounter with beauty into an unusually narrow space.

A young woman bends towards roses arranged in a vessel on a stone ledge. Steps rise behind her through weathered garden architecture. Whether she is smelling an offering, approaching a devotional place, or surrendering privately to fragrance remains uncertain. The title makes the setting sacred; her bodily action makes it sensory.

Painted in 1895, *The Shrine* belongs beside Waterhouse's later flower-women even though it precedes their fullest development by more than a decade. It also preserves a revealing critical dispute. A contemporary reviewer treated the woman's absorption in scent as morally and socially troubling, exposing the assumptions Victorian criticism could attach to class, purity and female pleasure. What now seems an intimate, tranquil scene was not necessarily received as innocent decoration.

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The Enchanted Garden

1916-17 | Oil on canvas | Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool



A winter garden has burst into the colours of May, yet the woman at its centre cannot share the delight around her. John William Waterhouse's *The Enchanted Garden* is a painting about a marvel that creates a moral crisis. Flowers answer an apparently impossible demand; the human figures must decide what honour requires now that the impossible has happened.

Begun in 1916 and left unfinished when Waterhouse died in February 1917, the large canvas draws upon the fifth story of the tenth day of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It was exhibited posthumously at the Royal Academy and later acquired from the artist's widow by William Hesketh Lever. Today it hangs at the Lady Lever Art Gallery beside Waterhouse's *A Tale from the Decameron*.

The first impression is abundance. The wide canvas is filled with flowering plants, graceful bodies and cultivated space. Women bend towards blossoms, gather near one another and move through a garden that seems to offer every pleasure of colour, scent and touch.

The emotional centre is different. A tall woman in a pale rose and gold dress stands near the middle, her head inclined and her expression withdrawn. Her drapery and scale give her prominence, but her stillness separates her from the surrounding enjoyment. Christie's identifies a surviving 1916 head study as preparation for this central figure. The link secures her importance in Waterhouse's design even though the painting itself does not carry written labels naming the characters.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Consulting the Oracle

1884 | Oil paint on canvas | Tate, London



In a dark ancient chamber, a woman leans towards a severed head fixed high upon the wall. Lamps burn beneath it. Behind her, a close crescent of women waits for an answer, their faces registering attention, anxiety and fascination. John William Waterhouse's *Consulting the Oracle* does not show a prophecy clearly delivered. It paints the charged interval in which belief, imagination and silence might become a voice.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1884, the large canvas was one of the works that established Waterhouse as a serious painter of the ancient world. Its subject was strange even by the standards of Victorian history painting. Rather than choosing Delphi or a familiar classical myth, Waterhouse described an "Oracle or Teraph" made from a preserved human head. The picture draws its power from that object, but equally from the people gathered around it: prophecy becomes a collective act of listening.

The first action in *Consulting the Oracle* is not speaking but leaning. At the left, the officiating woman inclines her body towards the head on the wall. At the right, the seated and standing women curve inward. Every posture narrows the distance between silence and possible revelation.

Waterhouse gives the oracle a fixed, elevated position. It cannot approach its listeners, so their bodies must orient themselves around it. The arrangement makes attention visible. Bent heads, widened eyes, clasped bodies and the priestess's diagonal pose turn an invisible sound into a compositional force.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Jason and Medea

1907 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Jason and Medea

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Medea prepares the substance on which Jason's survival will depend.

He sits close beside her in helmet and armour, but the heroic equipment is not enough: before he can yoke the fire-breathing bulls and sow the dragon's teeth, he needs knowledge possessed by the king's daughter.

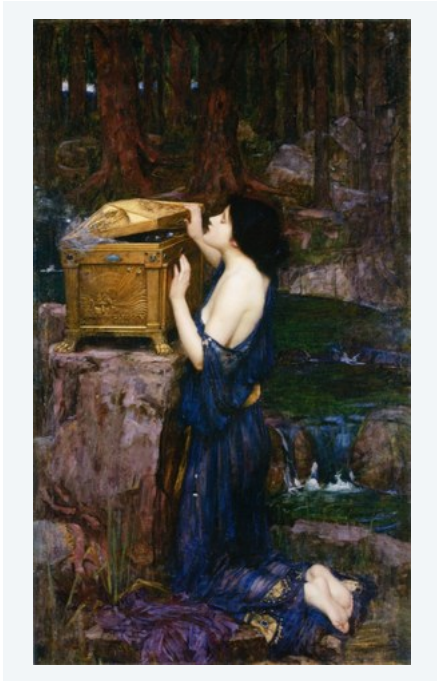
John William Waterhouse's *Jason and Medea* of 1907 turns the quest for the Golden Fleece into an intimate scene of instruction and manufacture. It presents Medea before the infanticide that dominates her later reputation—young, divided in loyalty and indispensable to the celebrated hero's success.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Pandora

1896 | Oil on canvas | Private collection; documented in the Andrew Lloyd Webber collection in 2018



Pandora

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Pandora kneels in a wooded place and raises the lid of an ornate casket.

She has not yet recoiled from what it contains. John William Waterhouse fixes the story at its narrowest point of suspense: the prohibited or dangerous object is open, but the consequences that will alter human life remain invisible.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1896, Pandora transforms Hesiod's huge storage jar into the small precious box familiar from later European retellings. That difference is not incidental. Waterhouse replaces the practical weight of a pithos with an object that can be held, inspected and made the centre of a solitary act of looking.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1908)

Signed and dated 1908 | Oil on canvas | Private collection

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A young woman stands in a dark historic interior and presents a metal bowl filled with flowers.



Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1908)

Light catches her skin, jewellery, pearls, roses and the bottle glass behind her. John William Waterhouse's 1908 *Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May* turns Robert Herrick's famous instruction to seize youth into an image that is sumptuous, self-possessed and shadowed by time.

This is the smaller, single-figure painting exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1908. It must be kept distinct from Waterhouse's larger 1909 composition of two women gathering flowers outdoors. The shared title joins them, but their scale, setting, ownership and narrative possibilities are different.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Tristram and Isolde

1916; signed and dated | Oil on canvas



Tristram and Isolde

OBJECT IN FOCUS

The cup between Tristram and Isolde is small enough to hold in one hand and large enough to redirect two lives.

John William Waterhouse does not paint the lovers' long affair, separation or deaths. He selects the threshold on the ship to Cornwall, when a drink passes between them and duty becomes inseparable from desire.

Painted in 1916 and exhibited posthumously at the Royal Academy in 1917, *Tristram and Isolde* belongs to Waterhouse's last group of Arthurian and literary works. The signed oil shows Isolde in pale drapery offering or holding a chalice beside the armoured Tristram. Their hands and bodies draw close while sea, vessel and destination make the journey visible.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Windflowers

1902 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Windflowers

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A young woman crosses a spring landscape while a gust drives her hair and drapery sideways.

She gathers the flowers against her body as if trying to keep what the wind may scatter. John William Waterhouse's *Windflowers*, painted in 1902 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1903, creates drama without a named story: weather is enough.

The painting is sometimes forced into myths of Persephone or the Lady of Shalott. No secure title, attribute or contemporary record establishes either identity. Its achievement lies in keeping the figure anonymous while turning air, cloth and fragile flowers into a complete subject.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Lamia

1905 | Oil on canvas | Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, New Zealand



Lamia

OBJECT IN FOCUS

A woman kneels at an armoured man's feet in a shadowed wood.

One hand lies over his; the other touches the hard plate at his thigh. Their gaze is so concentrated that the surrounding landscape seems to disappear. Only a lustrous snakeskin beside her dress reveals that this meeting is not what it first appears.

John William Waterhouse's *Lamia* of 1905 transforms John Keats's long narrative poem into a single moment of dangerous recognition. Keats's Lycius meets Lamia after she has exchanged her serpent body for the appearance of a beautiful woman. Waterhouse gives viewers knowledge that the young man lacks, placing the clue to her transformation low in the painting while allowing tenderness to dominate its human drama.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Lamia (1909)

Circa 1909 | Oil on unlined canvas | Private collection



Lamia (1909)

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Lamia sits alone beside a woodland pool, drawing up her long hair as she looks towards the dark water.

No lover bends over her, no philosopher exposes her and no discarded snakeskin proves what she was. John William Waterhouse has removed the narrative triangle that made his 1905 *Lamia* immediately legible and replaced it with solitary self-scrutiny.

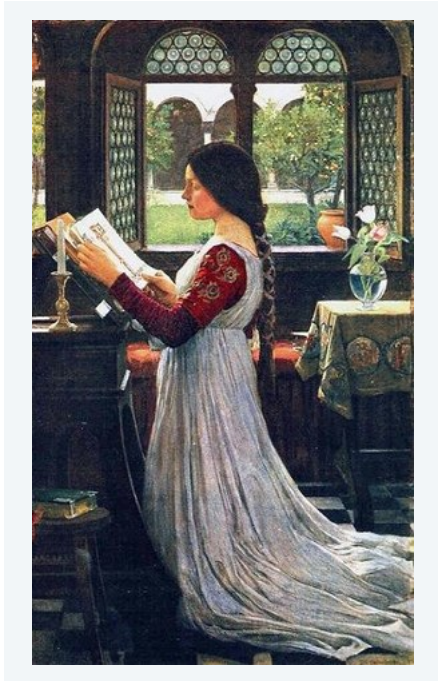
Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1909, the privately owned canvas is Waterhouse's second principal treatment of John Keats's serpent woman. Its quieter image asks a harder question: how can a painting represent transformation when the former body is no longer shown?

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



The Missal

1902 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



The Missal

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Missal* places reading between two kinds of illumination.

A young woman studies a large open book beside a candle, while daylight enters through leaded windows and reveals a garden beyond. The page requires close concentration; the room opens towards leaves, fruit and air. Devotion is therefore both enclosed and connected with the visible world.

Exhibited in 1902 alongside *The Crystal Ball*, the painting forms an instructive pair. One woman looks into an object associated with occult vision; the other reads a Christian liturgical book. Both are absorbed, solitary and framed by historicising interiors. Waterhouse does not reduce either woman to an answer. He paints the act of seeking knowledge-through text in one picture and a reflective sphere in the other-while keeping the content of what is learned beyond the viewer.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Spring Spreads One Green Lap of Flowers

1910 | Oil on canvas | Private collection / privately held

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *Spring Spreads One Green Lap of Flowers* appears at first to celebrate seasonal abundance.



Spring Spreads One Green Lap of Flowers

A young woman kneels low in a wooded meadow, gathering small blossoms into a basket. Her rose-coloured dress emerges from greens, white flowers and broken sunlight. Yet the title comes from Christina Rossetti's "Death-Watches," a poem in which spring's flowered garment is explicitly buried by autumn.

Painted in 1910, the work is therefore not simply "a picture of spring." It joins beauty to duration. The woman gathers what is alive now, while Rossetti's line makes disappearance part of the act. Waterhouse had explored the same tension through Robert Herrick's *Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May*; here the pressure is quieter and more solitary. A season spreads flowers across the earth, and one figure bends close enough to collect them before they pass.

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Ophelia (1910)

1910 | Oil on canvas | Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection / private collection



Ophelia (1910)

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Ophelia has reached the willow beside the brook.

She grips the old trunk with one hand and gathers flowers in the other, looking outward with an intensity absent from John William Waterhouse's earlier versions. Behind her, two women cross a narrow bridge. The world is close enough to witness her and still too distant to intervene.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1910, this is Waterhouse's third completed major Ophelia. It does not show the drowned body. Instead it enlarges the last unstable approach to the place Gertrude will describe after the event.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



The Charmer

1911 | Oil on canvas



The Charmer

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Charmer* shows music crossing the boundary between human and natural worlds.

A young woman sits barefoot on rocks at the edge of a dark pool, playing a small stringed instrument while fish gather or break the surface below. No literary text identifies her, no listener shares the bank, and no explicit spell is visible. The title makes the musical effect magical.

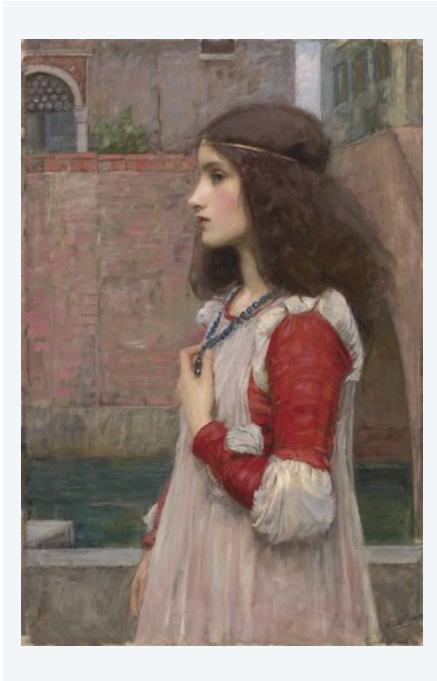
Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1911, the painting belongs to Waterhouse's late Symbolist mode rather than to direct illustration of Homer, Ovid, Shakespeare or Tennyson. Its uncertainty is deliberate in effect. The woman may be a nymph, musician, enchantress or unnamed Arcadian figure; the fish may be charmed, curious or simply arranged as the visible answer to sound. Waterhouse makes an invisible force legible through attention and water.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Juliet

1898 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Juliet

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *Juliet* of 1898 presents Shakespeare's heroine alone beside a river, grasping a blue necklace and glancing sideways as she moves past walls and a bridge.

There is no balcony, no Romeo and no identifiable line from the play. The painting compresses the pressure surrounding Juliet into costume, architecture and one guarded look.

Later sales called the picture *The Blue Necklace*, an alternate title that shifts attention from literary character to visible object. Recovering its original exhibition title restores the dramatic context, but it does not turn the image into a literal illustration of one scene.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Psyche Opening the Golden Box

1903 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Psyche Opening the Golden Box

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Psyche kneels at the edge of a shadowed pool with the forbidden casket open before her.

Her journey to the underworld is already over; the object she was ordered to carry unopened is almost safely home. Waterhouse chooses the instant when exhaustion, curiosity and the desire for beauty overcome obedience.

Painted in 1903, *Psyche Opening the Golden Box* is the darker companion to Waterhouse's *Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden*. One picture approaches a threshold of love; the other shows a transgression that resembles death. Together they reveal how decisively Waterhouse could reshape the same heroine through posture, setting and the meaning of an opened boundary.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Thisbe

1909; signed and dated lower right | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Thisbe

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Thisbe has risen from her loom because a voice is travelling through stone.

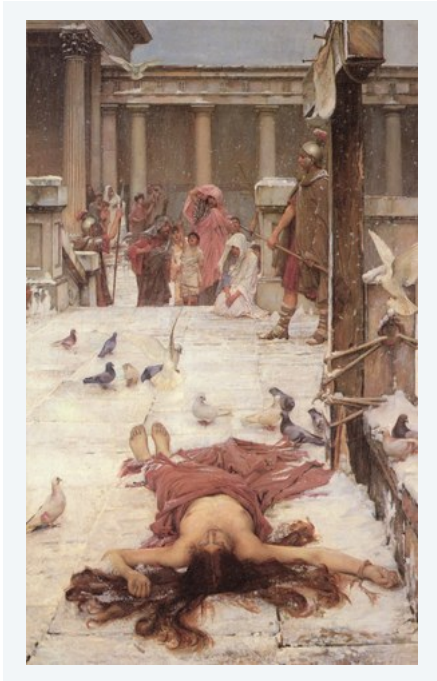
She presses her ear and cheek towards the wall, listening to Pyramus in the adjoining house. The barrier prevents the lovers from touching, yet its smallest crack permits the promises that will lead them beyond the city and towards death.

John William Waterhouse painted *Thisbe* in 1909 and exhibited it at the Royal Academy with *Lamia*. Rather than show the bloodied veil, Pyramus's suicide or the darkening mulberries at the story's end, he selects the private beginning: a woman, a wall and the transformation of sound into action.

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Saint Eulalia

1885 | Oil paint on canvas | Tate, London



Saint Eulalia

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse makes a martyrdom painting out of what comes after violence.

Saint Eulalia lies on a snow-covered pavement in the lower part of the canvas, her body thrust towards the viewer by extreme foreshortening. The men responsible for her death have receded. A small white dove rises into the pale air. Snow descends across a Roman city that seems at once public, indifferent and miraculously transformed.

Exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885, *Saint Eulalia* belongs to the decisive early phase in which Waterhouse established himself through ambitious subjects from antiquity. Yet the picture is unlike a conventional history painting crowded around a climactic action. The execution is over, the central space is largely empty, and the principal figure cannot return our gaze. Waterhouse turns stillness, distance and exposed ground into the sources of drama.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

A Roman Offering

About 1891 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



A Roman Offering

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *A Roman Offering* compresses a complete act of devotion into an exceptionally narrow canvas.

A young woman in classical dress stands before a small shrine, raising flowers towards it with both hands. Nothing spectacular occurs. There is no public procession, no priest and no visible deity answering her gift. The painting's drama lies in the concentration required to make an ordinary object into an offering.

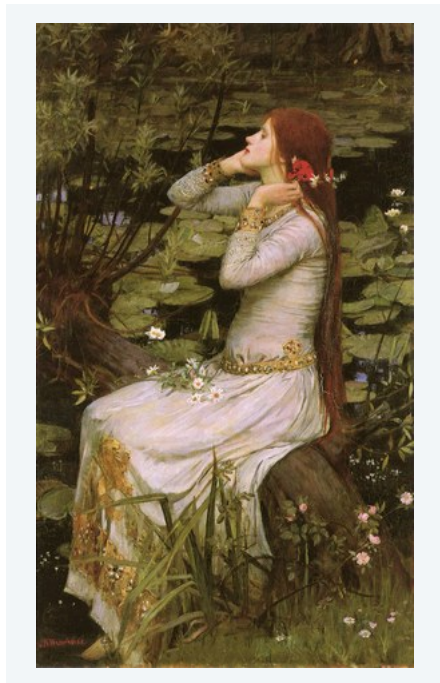
Painted about 1891, the work belongs to Waterhouse's Capri-inspired classical pictures and to a period when naturalist observation was changing his handling of antiquity. The Roman setting matters, but so do the model's physical balance, the weight of the flowers and the close vertical space. The result is neither an archaeological reconstruction nor a vague "classical maiden." It is a carefully staged image of private ritual, poised between ancient subject matter and modern painting.

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Ophelia

1894 | Oil on canvas



Ophelia

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Ophelia sits on a branch above a dark, weed-filled pool.

Flowers lie across her lap and clothing; more grow around the bank. She has not yet fallen into the water, and John William Waterhouse gives no single gesture that tells us whether she is resting, arranging garlands or already moving beyond ordinary awareness. The tragedy is certain because Shakespeare has told it. The painted moment remains open.

Waterhouse completed three major Ophelia paintings, in 1889, 1894 and 1910. The 1894 version, exhibited at the New Gallery, is the quietest of the three and the one most closely balanced between lyrical beauty and approaching death. Its flowers and water do not merely identify Shakespeare's heroine. They create a world in which thought, body and landscape are becoming difficult to separate.

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Penelope and the Suitors

1911-12 | Oil on canvas | Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Penelope sits at her loom while the men who want to replace her absent husband press gifts into the room. They can reach through the opening, crowd her field of vision and consume the household's wealth. They cannot make her turn around.

John William Waterhouse's *Penelope and the Suitors* transforms one of the most famous acts of resistance in Homer's *Odyssey* into a contest over space, time and attention. Painted in 1911-12 and purchased by Aberdeen Art Gallery in 1912, the large late canvas shows Penelope working on the cloth whose completion she has promised will release her to marry again. The work appears calm, but everything in it depends upon delay.

Waterhouse does not show Penelope secretly undoing the web by torchlight. He chooses the public half of her strategy: the hours in which she must appear to advance the work while the suitors watch and wait.

The loom fills much of the left side of the wide canvas. Penelope sits with her back partly turned towards the men, her face close to the threads and her attention directed inward. Her red and rose-coloured clothing makes her the strongest concentration of colour, but her posture refuses the open display that the suitors seek.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

A Tale from the Decameron

1916 | Oil on canvas | Lady Lever Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool



Ten young Florentines have left a city devastated by plague and made a temporary society around conversation. In John William Waterhouse's *A Tale from the Decameron*, danger is not visible. What fills the canvas is the cultural answer Boccaccio's characters devise against it: a garden, an audience and the disciplined pleasure of taking turns to tell stories.

Painted in 1916, the large horizontal work depicts the frame narrative of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* rather than securely illustrating one of its hundred individual tales. A seated young man addresses a semicircle of women while another man listens nearby. Their concentrated exchange makes narration itself the subject.

Waterhouse arranges the group across a wide, shallow space. At the left, a young man sits on a raised stone edge with a lute beside or across him. His torso turns towards the company and his hand opens in a gesture that can be read as speech. The instrument identifies a cultured recreation, but his active hand and the listeners' attention suggest that he is telling rather than merely performing music.

Women occupy most of the canvas. They sit or recline upon the grass in richly coloured gowns, forming an arc that both encloses the speaker and opens towards the viewer. Their bodies overlap without becoming a uniform crowd. One bends forward; another looks across the circle; a figure near the centre turns with quiet concentration. Listening acquires varied physical forms.

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A Naiad

1893 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



A water nymph rises silently from a woodland stream towards a sleeping young man. She has not seized him, and he has not yet seen her. John William Waterhouse's *A Naiad* of 1893 transforms the mythic meeting of human and supernatural into an interval of inspection whose outcome remains uncertain.

The painting is also known as *Hylas with a Nymph*, linking it to the youth later shown facing seven water nymphs in Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs*. Yet the earlier work is not simply a preliminary version. Its long horizontal space, sleeping figure and single emerging naiad create a quieter and more ambiguous encounter.

The canvas opens laterally across stream, bank and wooded enclosure. On one side, the young man lies along the earth. On the other, the naiad emerges from water and vegetation. Their bodies belong to different elements but share the same narrow interval.

The youth appears asleep or deeply at rest. His extended body lacks the alert tension of a traveller surprised by danger. The nymph, by contrast, is awake and observant. She studies him before he can return her gaze.

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Diogenes

1882 | Oil on canvas | Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney



Diogenes

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Three fashionably dressed women pause on marble steps to inspect a man who has rejected almost everything their world values.

He sits in a huge earthenware jar with a scroll, a rough bed and few possessions. They occupy the architecture; he occupies the argument.

John William Waterhouse's *Diogenes* of 1882 turns the Cynic philosopher's radical simplicity into a monumental encounter between wealth and self-sufficiency. The painting belongs to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which purchased it in 1886, and at more than two metres high it is among Waterhouse's imposing early classical subjects.

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Cleopatra

1888 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Cleopatra

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's Cleopatra does not show the Egyptian queen dying, meeting Antony or arriving on her famous barge.

She sits alone, leaning forward from a leopard skin and looking out beneath dark, level brows. Gold, patterned surfaces and loosely draped white fabric establish luxury; her gaze establishes command.

Painted in 1888 for The Graphic Gallery of Shakespeare's Heroines, the work represents Shakespeare's Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra. That commission is essential. Waterhouse was not attempting a documentary likeness of the historical Cleopatra VII. He was inventing a compelling late-Victorian body for a theatrical and literary character whose attraction, political power and refusal to be contained drive Shakespeare's tragedy.

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The Danaïdes

1906 | Oil on canvas | Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

OBJECT IN FOCUS

Seven women carry shining vessels towards a basin that can never be filled.



The Danaïdes

Water pours in bright, repeated streams, but the labour has no result and no end. John William Waterhouse's 1906 *Danaïdes* gives monumental form to an ancient punishment whose horror lies not in sudden violence but in permanent repetition.

The painting in Aberdeen is the later and larger of Waterhouse's two known treatments of the subject. It should not be confused with the five-figure version of 1904 in private ownership. Painted on a canvas more than 1.6 metres high, the Aberdeen work expands a single futile action into a procession.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Ophelia (1889)

1889 | Oil on canvas



Ophelia lies almost flat among meadow flowers while a stream winds through the willow trunks behind her. Daisies crown her loosened hair; buttercups and other wild plants gather in her dress. The water that will define her death is present, but she has not yet entered it.

John William Waterhouse's 1889 *Ophelia* is the earliest of his three completed major treatments of Shakespeare's heroine. Its wide, ground-level composition differs sharply from the seated riverbank figure of 1894 and the upright, distressed Ophelia of 1910. Exhibited at the Royal Academy, it asks viewers to encounter madness before drowning rather than beauty already afloat.

Waterhouse spreads Ophelia's body across a low meadow rather than raising her into a portrait pose. The horizontal canvas makes her nearly parallel to the earth and to the stream behind.

Her pale dress forms an irregular band among green grass and scattered flowers. The figure is visible, but nature does not open into a clear stage around her. Plants touch clothing and hair; the meadow begins to absorb the human outline before the river does.

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Dolce Far Niente (1880)

1880 | Oil on canvas | Fife Council; held at Kirkcaldy Galleries



John William Waterhouse's *Dolce Far Niente* of 1880 presents idleness as an intricately arranged condition. A young woman reclines across a long, low couch in an imagined classical interior. She holds a peacock-feather fan while birds, flowers, patterned fabric and animal skin distribute small visual pleasures around her. Nothing urgent happens, yet the painting is far from empty.

The Italian title means the sweetness or pleasure of doing nothing. Waterhouse had used it one year earlier for a different upright painting, creating an identity problem that follows both works online. This page concerns the wide 1880 canvas in the Fife Council collection at Kirkcaldy Galleries, accession KIRMG:15—not the smaller 1879 picture once miscatalogued as *The White Feather Fan*.

Waterhouse made two very different paintings titled *Dolce Far Niente* in consecutive years. The distinction must be established before interpretation begins.

The 1880 work is a broad horizontal oil measuring 50 by 97 centimetres. It belongs to Fife Council and is associated with Kirkcaldy Galleries under accession number KIRMG:15. Its reclining figure stretches across the composition and holds a peacock-feather fan.

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The Favourites of the Emperor Honorius

c. 1883; the canvas is signed but not dated | Oil on canvas | Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



An emperor sits inside a luxurious palace, feeding birds. Across the room, councillors wait for his attention. John William Waterhouse makes no battle visible in *The Favourites of the Emperor Honorius*, yet the painting is about rule at a moment of crisis. Grain scattered on a carpet, a lowered gaze and a barrier of pigeons become the signs of power turned inward.

Painted around 1883, the picture helped establish Waterhouse's early reputation for subjects from the ancient Roman world. It is sumptuous, humorous and severe. Honorius appears richly enthroned but psychologically unavailable; the ministers have access to his room but not to his mind. The empire's political emergency is expressed as an interruption that never succeeds.

Waterhouse builds the scene around a mismatch of importance. Honorius is the most powerful person present, but his attention is directed towards the smallest and least politically consequential creatures in the room. The men who presumably carry news or seek a decision remain standing at a distance.

The painting does not need to show the contents of their message. Their collective posture establishes urgency, or at least expectation. They have entered the imperial presence and stopped. Honorius has neither dismissed them nor begun to listen.

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Undine

1872 | Oil on canvas | Private collection / current location not publicly established

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's Undine is an early, small painting of a water spirit suspended between fountain and street.



Undine

A pale young woman stands on or beside a stone basin, her hands gathered near her head while water rises behind her. In the distance, figures emerge from a doorway. The setting looks inhabited, yet the central woman appears separate from ordinary life.

Painted in 1872, when Waterhouse began exhibiting with the Society of British Artists, *Undine* predates the classical histories and literary heroines for which he became famous. Its title connects the figure with Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's enormously influential 1811 tale of a water spirit who gains a soul through marriage. The composition, however, does not securely illustrate one identifiable chapter. It is best read as an early experiment in giving supernatural identity to an emotionally ambiguous female figure.

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Miranda (1875)

1875 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



John William Waterhouse's 1875 *Miranda* imagines the heroine of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* before the tempest dominates her world. She sits on a rocky shore in classical dress, looking towards a distant ship beneath gathering clouds. Sea and sky are not yet violent. The drama exists as possibility.

This is the crucial difference from Waterhouse's famous *Miranda - The Tempest* of 1916, where waves smash around a listing vessel and the heroine watches apparent disaster. The 1875 painting is the larger early composition, measuring 76 by 101.5 centimetres, exhibited at the Royal Academy and now privately owned. Its quietness is purposeful: Waterhouse moves back from Shakespeare's opening crisis and gives Miranda a calm she cannot possess once Prospero raises the storm.

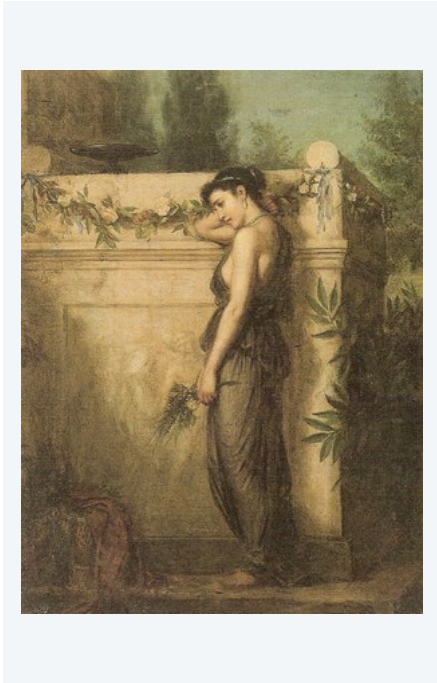
Miranda sits on a rock beside a calm or gently moving sea. Her body turns towards the water, and her gaze follows a ship travelling across the distant horizon. The vessel is small enough to remain secure within the landscape rather than dominate it.

Clouds accumulate behind or above the heroine. Their darkening forms introduce the possibility of change before wind and wave have made that change visible at the shore.

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Gone, But Not Forgotten

1873 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Gone, But Not Forgotten

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *Gone, But Not Forgotten* is a small painting of remembrance without a named dead person or a fully explained ritual.

A young woman in classically styled dress leans against a wall or architectural support. Flowers hang from one hand; a basket and folded fabric occupy the foreground. Her face turns away in subdued concentration.

Painted in 1873 while Waterhouse was still a student at the Royal Academy Schools, the picture was exhibited at the Dudley Gallery that winter. Christie's describes it as an essay in early Aestheticism, made before the influence of Lawrence Alma-Tadema became pronounced in Waterhouse's classical art. Its title directs the scene towards loss, but the painting does not tell us who is gone. That refusal is central to its effect.

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The Unwelcome Companion: A Street Scene in Cairo

About 1872-73 | Oil on canvas | Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum, Burnley



The Unwelcome Companion: A Street Scene in Cairo

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *The Unwelcome Companion: A Street Scene in Cairo* centres on a young woman in richly coloured, Middle Eastern-styled dress.

She occupies a shallow architectural space, her head tilted and her gaze directed beyond the viewer. The title promises an encounter, yet the supposed companion is not clearly present. Narrative pressure falls on someone outside the composition.

Painted about 1872-73 and exhibited by the Society of British Artists in 1873, the work belongs to Waterhouse's earliest professional phase. It is now at Towneley Hall Art Gallery and Museum in Burnley, having entered the collection as a 1951 gift. For years it was misidentified as *Spanish Tambourine Girl* until its original title was recovered. That history makes the painting a valuable lesson in how a title can transform a decorative figure into an unfinished social situation.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



Esther Kenworthy Waterhouse

About 1885 | Oil on board | Sheffield Museums

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's Portrait of the Artist's Wife presents Esther Kenworthy Waterhouse at close range, wearing a dark hat and turning towards the viewer.



Esther Kenworthy Waterhouse

Painted about 1885 in oil on board, it is an intimate object rather than a formal society portrait. Its loose surface and compressed format preserve the sense of one artist looking at another.

Esther should not be introduced only as "Waterhouse's wife." Born Esther Maria Kenworthy in 1857, she exhibited flower paintings at the Royal Academy and other venues before and after their 1883 marriage. Nor should this portrait be confused with William Logsdail's larger image of Esther seated in the Primrose Hill studios. The Sheffield work is by John William Waterhouse; the studio portrait is by his friend Logsdail.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

In the Peristyle

About 1874 | Oil on canvas | Touchstones Rochdale / Rochdale Art Gallery



In the Peristyle

OBJECT IN FOCUS

John William Waterhouse's *In the Peristyle* turns a quiet act of feeding birds into an absorbing study of movement, architecture and light.

A barefoot girl steps across a tiled courtyard, scattering grain from a shallow basket as pigeons gather around her. Columns rise on either side, but the picture never feels static: one arm extends, cloth swings from her body, and startled wings disturb the measured order of the Roman setting.

Painted about 1874, this is an early Waterhouse, made before the Arthurian and mythological heroines that later defined his reputation. It already reveals several enduring interests: a single female figure absorbed in an action, a carefully imagined past, and a threshold between enclosed architecture and living nature. The painting belongs to Touchstones Rochdale, where it has formed part of the public collection since Robert Taylor Heape gave it in 1908.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Sleep and His Half-Brother Death

1874 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



Two young men rest side by side in a shadowed classical room. Their bodies are similar enough to suggest kinship, but light, colour and small objects separate temporary unconsciousness from the stillness that does not end.

Their closeness makes comparison unavoidable. Neither body bears a wound, and neither acts. Waterhouse asks the viewer to distinguish Sleep from Death through degrees rather than events.

John William Waterhouse painted *Sleep and His Half-Brother Death* in 1874, and it became his first accepted exhibit at the Royal Academy. The picture joins Hypnos and Thanatos from Greek myth, but its most important invention lies in the word "half": ancient poets normally make Sleep and Death brothers born of Night. Waterhouse turns that complete kinship into an uneasy resemblance.

The two figures occupy a shared couch or closely joined resting place. One lies in the foreground, chest exposed beneath pale fabric, face relaxed and body open to the light. The second reclines further back, enveloped by darker drapery and shadow.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)



A Sick Child Brought into the Temple of Aesculapius

1877 | Oil on canvas | Private collection / present public location not securely established



In *A Sick Child Brought into the Temple of Aesculapius*, John William Waterhouse imagines a family crossing the boundary between illness and hoped-for cure. A mother supports a pale child on her lap while an officiant in white tends a smoking ritual vessel. Around them, architecture, offerings, laurel and the partly visible statue of the healing god turn private anxiety into a public sacred encounter.

Painted in 1877 and exhibited at the Royal Academy that year, the large canvas belongs to Waterhouse's early classical phase. Its subject is neither a miraculous cure nor a modern medical examination. It is the act of bringing a vulnerable child into a sanctuary where religion, bodily care and communal expectation met. The distinction matters: Waterhouse concentrates on waiting and appeal, leaving the result outside the picture.

The composition unfolds across a broad classical interior. At left, a mother sits on a carved stone bench with the child against her body. A standing youth or attendant is close behind; a bearded man in brown occupies the shadowed middle ground.

The child stretches one arm towards the centre. The gesture links the family group to a white-robed man at right, who stands beside a tall metal support carrying small vessels. Wisps of smoke rise between them.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

The Annunciation

1914 | Oil on canvas | Private collection



John William Waterhouse's *The Annunciation* places a foundational Christian encounter in a garden court alive with roses, lilies, stone, woven cloth and household work. The Archangel Gabriel approaches from the shadowed left bearing white flowers. Mary kneels on patterned cushions beside her yarn and loom, one hand pressed to her chest and the other raised to her head in startled attention.

Painted in 1914, the canvas is a late work by an artist better known for classical myth and English poetry. Waterhouse does not discard those visual habits when he turns to the Gospel of Luke. He uses an enclosed garden, a psychologically absorbed woman and a moment poised between message and response. The result is devotional in subject but characteristically human in its treatment of surprise.

Gabriel stands at left, moving towards Mary across a garden threshold. A dark violet-blue mantle covers much of the angel's body, opening to reveal rose-coloured sleeves. One hand presents a spray of white lilies.

Mary kneels at right on rugs and cushions. Her deep blue garment is bound with red at the waist, and red-orange fabric appears at the sleeves. The complementary colours make her the strongest figure against the pale masonry.

[READ FULL PAGE ONLINE](#)

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 01 - each card links to the full online guide.



La Fileuse

John William Waterhouse's *La Fileuse* presents a young woman pausing at the threshold of a shadowed classical interior. Dressed in yellow and blue, she holds the tools and fibre of hand-spinning while one bare...



The Remorse of the Emperor Nero after the Murder of His Mother

John William Waterhouse's *The Remorse of the Emperor Nero after the Murder of His Mother* shows power collapsing into isolation. Nero lies across a richly covered couch, wrapped in red, his head sunk against...



Study for Dante and Matilda

John William Waterhouse's *Study for Dante and Matilda* imagines the poet's first encounter with a woman gathering flowers in the Earthly Paradise. Matilda stands in white among blossoms on one bank of a stream...



Fair Rosamund

John William Waterhouse's *Fair Rosamund* turns a medieval legend into a scene of devastating dramatic irony. Rosamund kneels at an open window, watching for King Henry II beyond a bridge. Behind her, Queen Eleanor...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 02 - each card links to the full online guide.



The Love Philtre

John William Waterhouse's *The Love Philtre* isolates a woman at the instant of preparation. Bare-shouldered in a green dress, she studies the small vessels in her hands: a cup in one, a blue container...



Circe I (1911)

In John William Waterhouse's *Circe* of about 1911, the enchantress no longer raises a cup against Ulysses or pours poison into Scylla's water. She sits at a table with her hands gathered beneath her...



Circe II: The Sorceress

John William Waterhouse's unfinished *The Sorceress* is more securely understood as a final return to *Circe*. Her name is inscribed on the reverse. She sits at a table with her chin upon her hands...



Listening to My Sweet Pippings

John William Waterhouse's *Listening to My Sweet Pippings* turns a woodland performance into a landscape-wide act of attention. A young pipe player sits beneath trees at the right, watching a reclining woman whose pink...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 03 - each card links to the full online guide.



Vanity

John William Waterhouse's *Vanity* shows a red-haired woman absorbed by her own reflection. Seated against dark foliage and flowers, she holds a small hand mirror while raising a rose towards her hair. Her pale...



Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May II: Study

John William Waterhouse's *Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May II* is a preparatory oil of about 1908 centred on a young woman who faces the viewer while holding gathered flowers. It is neither the...



Study for Medea

John William Waterhouse's *Study for Medea* isolates the dark-haired enchantress who would appear beside Jason in the artist's finished painting of 1907. Painted in oils around 1906-07, the surviving study is not a second...



A Mermaid - 1892 Study

John William Waterhouse's small 1892 oil study shows a red-haired mermaid seated at the edge of the sea, combing salt water from her long hair. Painted eight years before the large *A Mermaid* that...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 04 - each card links to the full online guide.



Head of a Girl I

A red-haired young woman lifts a hand to her hair beside water, rocks and dense growth. John William Waterhouse's Head of a Girl I is a small oil study rather than a named portrait: the...



Head of a Girl II

John William Waterhouse's Head of a Girl II is a small, freely handled oil study of a young woman in left-facing profile. Brown-red hair fills much of the compact composition; a pale blouse and...



Mariana in the South

A woman kneels before a tall mirror in a hot, enclosed room. Letters lie near her, but no correspondent arrives. John William Waterhouse's Mariana in the South of 1897 translates Alfred Tennyson's poem of...



Study for The Lady of Shalott - 1891-94

John William Waterhouse's Falmouth Study for the Lady of Shalott captures the heroine at the instant she turns from her loom towards Lancelot. Tangled in wool and clutching her large scissors, she pitches through...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 05 - each card links to the full online guide.



The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot

The Lady of Shalott has turned from reflection to direct sight. Threads fly loose from the loom and wind around her body; the mirror behind begins to fail; the sunlit world beyond the window...



Isabella and the Pot of Basil

Isabella kneels in a garden and folds herself around a great copper planter. Basil grows above her; beneath the leaves lies the severed head of her murdered lover, Lorenzo. John William Waterhouse does not...



Apollo and Daphne

Daphne's body has begun to become a laurel tree. Leaves rise from her arms while Apollo reaches towards a woman he has pursued but cannot possess. John William Waterhouse's Apollo and Daphne of 1908...



Narcissus

John William Waterhouse's Narcissus is not another painting of the beautiful youth staring into a pool. It shows a young woman stooping among flowers, her pink drapery and pale skin set against a steep...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 06 - each card links to the full online guide.



Gossip (Good Neighbours)

Three young women exchange news across a low, weathered wall while a small child remains beside the seated worker. Laundry hangs behind them, moss softens the yard and every inclined head turns conversation into...



A Song of Springtime

In A Song of Springtime, John William Waterhouse turns the arrival of spring into a gathering of bodies, blossoms and moving colour. A barefoot young woman stands at the centre of a flower-filled orchard...



The Mystic Wood

John William Waterhouse's The Mystic Wood leads a small boy and three women into a dark stand of ancient trees, where a white stag appears like a vision. The large canvas remained unfinished at...



The Awakening of Adonis

Venus bends to kiss a beautiful young man awake while winged children gather flowers and rekindle a torch. John William Waterhouse's The Awakening of Adonis was begun in 1899 and exhibited at the Royal...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 07 - each card links to the full online guide.



Flora and the Zephyrs

Women gather flowers beside a stream when winged winds break into the garden. At the centre of John William Waterhouse's *Flora and the Zephyrs*, the west wind reaches for Flora and encircles her with...



Sweet Summer

John William Waterhouse's *Sweet Summer* shows a young woman reclining beside a rose-covered garden wall and a stone fountain. Wrapped in blue drapery with a red sash, she leans back with eyes closed and...



The Danaïdes - Earlier Five-Figure Version

John William Waterhouse's earlier *Danaïdes* shows five women carrying water towards a vessel that can never be filled. Painted in 1903 or about 1904 and now privately owned, it is a finished composition in...



Mariamne Leaving the Judgement Seat of Herod

Mariamne is already leaving when she turns for one last look. The court that has condemned her rises behind in marble, mosaic and gold. Her husband Herod remains seated, divided between attachment and the...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 08 - each card links to the full online guide.



Phyllis and Demophoon

A flowering almond tree opens around a woman who can no longer return wholly to human life. Below her, the man who broke his promise kneels in remorse. John William Waterhouse's Phyllis and Demophoon...



Spring (The Flower Picker)

A dark-haired woman in blue leans across a low fence or wall into a flowering garden. Her body forms a long diagonal, and the soft background seems to move around the precision of her...



Two Little Italian Girls by a Village

Two girls occupy a steep, sunlit corner of Capri. One stands near a basket of oranges with a mauve kerchief at her neck; the other leans over weathered stone above her. Behind them, trees...



Gathering Summer Flowers in a Devonshire Garden

A woman stands in a bright cottage garden, placing freshly gathered flowers into a basket. Pale dress, sunlit wall and dense growth turn a private Devon visit into one of John William Waterhouse's rare...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 09 - each card links to the full online guide.



Portrait of Miss Claire Kenworthy

John William Waterhouse's Portrait of Miss Claire Kenworthy presents a young woman in a white dress against a dark, loosely described setting. The restrained palette and half-length format make this a quieter work than...



Portrait of Mrs Charles Schreiber

John William Waterhouse's 1912 portrait of Mrs Charles Schreiber places a woman in a black dress within an oval canvas, relieved by pale skin and a single bright flower. Its compressed format and dark...



Miss Betty Pollock

John William Waterhouse painted Elizabeth "Betty" Pollock in 1911, when she was fourteen. Seated in a white dress with a pale blue sash before water and lilies, she occupies the meeting point between commissioned...



A Grecian Flower Market

John William Waterhouse's A Grecian Flower Market, also known as A Flower Stall, presents four women around a shaded display of cut flowers. Painted about 1880, it belongs to the young artist's group of...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 10 - each card links to the full online guide.



The Slave

Painted in 1872, John William Waterhouse's *The Slave* is a large early Orientalist scene centred on an exposed young woman in blue drapery. A turbaned older man sits nearby, apparently engaged in negotiation, while...



After the Dance

John William Waterhouse's *After the Dance* shows two young figures resting on cushions in a classical interior while musicians remain visible in the background. A tambourine lies beside the reclining dancer; another figure sits...



The Bouquet (Study)

A red-haired woman in a green dress holds a mass of pink flowers against dark foliage. In John William Waterhouse's *The Bouquet*, face and upper body are developed with luminous colour while hands, bouquet...



The Rose Bower

A dark-haired woman in a red dress appears close against an arch of leaves and pale roses. John William Waterhouse's *The Rose Bower* is an intimate late oil in which face, flowers and foliage...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 11 - each card links to the full online guide.



Gathering Almond Blossoms

A woman reaches into a flowering tree while a young girl waits beside her with a sprig of blossom. John William Waterhouse's late *Gathering Almond Blossoms* places two generations-or simply two figures of different...



At Capri

Two young women sit in a whitewashed courtyard crowded with vines, palms and potted flowers. One studies a small hand mirror while the other gathers or arranges her long hair. John William Waterhouse's *At...*



Flora

A barefoot young woman sits beside a roadside shrine in a narrow, whitewashed garden. She holds a heart-shaped fan; irises and narcissi have been arranged around a small bronze female statue. John William Waterhouse's...



A Hamadryad

John William Waterhouse's *A Hamadryad* makes a tree nymph almost inseparable from her living home. A pale nude figure extends vertically against a dark trunk while, far below, a young rustic musician sits among...

Further paintings and studies

Catalogue group 12 - each card links to the full online guide.



Dolce Far Niente - 1879 Version

John William Waterhouse's 1879 *Dolce Far Niente* shows a red-haired woman reclining in a small, enclosed classical interior. Dressed in blue and blue-green, she idly releases feathers from a white fan while sunlight strikes...



Study for The Magic Circle

John William Waterhouse's oil *Study for The Magic Circle* establishes nearly the entire drama of his celebrated 1886 Tate painting. A dark-haired sorceress uses her wand to draw a cold blue-yellow circle around a...

Drawings and preparatory studies

Drawing group 01 - existing catalogue images and titles.



The Lady Clare (Study Drawing)



Head of a Girl



Boreas Study Drawing



Study for the Portrait of the Marchioness of Downshire

Drawings and preparatory studies

Drawing group 02 - existing catalogue images and titles.



Study for Circe Invidiosa



Study for a Nymph in Hylas and the Nymphs



Flora



Portrait of a Lady, possibly Mrs Alexander Puleston Henderson

Drawings and preparatory studies

Drawing group 03 - existing catalogue images and titles.



Study for The Rose Bower



Girl's Head and Shoulders



Study for the Figure of Echo in Echo and Narcissus



Study for Psyche Opening the Golden Box

Drawings and preparatory studies

Drawing group 04 - existing catalogue images and titles.



Study for I'm Half Sick of Shadows said The Lady of Shalott



Head Study, Probably for a Tale from the Decameron



Study for Gather Ye Rose Buds While Ye May



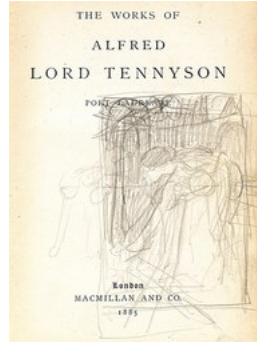
Study for Danaides

Drawings and preparatory studies

Drawing group 05 - existing catalogue images and titles.



Female Head Study for a Nymph in Hylas and the Nymphs



Tennyson and Shelley Illustrated Poetry Books



Recto Study for Consulting the Oracle



Study for St Eulalia

Waterhouse pages online

Directory 01 - select a title to open its completed local-cluster route.

"I Am Half-Sick of Shadows," Said the Lady of Shalott	Boreas
A Grecian Flower Market	Circe I (1911)
A Hamadryad	Circe II: The Sorceress
A Mermaid	Circe Invidiosa
A Mermaid - 1892 Study	Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses
A Naiad	Cleopatra
A Roman Offering	Consulting the Oracle
A Sick Child Brought into the Temple of Aesculapius	Destiny
A Song of Springtime	Diogenes
A Tale from the Decameron	Dolce Far Niente (1880)
After the Dance	Dolce Far Niente - 1879 Version
Apollo and Daphne	Drawings
Ariadne	Echo and Narcissus
At Capri	Esther Kenworthy Waterhouse
Biography	Fair Rosamund

Waterhouse pages online

Directory 02 - select a title to open its completed local-cluster route.

Flora	John William Waterhouse
Flora and the Zephyrs	John William Waterhouse: Contemporary Criticism and Quotations
Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1908)	John William Waterhouse: Exhibitions and International Reception
Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May (1909)	John William Waterhouse: Influences, Reputation and Legacy
Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May II: Study	John William Waterhouse: Models, Sitters and Portraits
Gathering Almond Blossoms	Juliet
Gathering Summer Flowers in a Devonshire Garden	La Belle Dame sans Merci
Gone, But Not Forgotten	La Fileuse
Gossip (Good Neighbours)	Lamia
Head of a Girl I	Lamia (1909)
Head of a Girl II	Listening to My Sweet Piping
Hylas and the Nymphs	Literary and Mythological Sources
In the Peristyle	Mariamne Leaving the Judgement Seat of Herod
Isabella and the Pot of Basil	Mariana in the South
Jason and Medea	Miranda (1875)

Waterhouse pages online

Directory 03 - select a title to open its completed local-cluster route.

Miranda - The Tempest	Saint Cecilia
Miss Betty Pollock	Saint Eulalia
Narcissus	Sleep and His Half-Brother Death
Nymphs Finding the Head of Orpheus	Spring (The Flower Picker)
Ophelia	Spring Spreads One Green Lap of Flowers
Ophelia (1889)	Study for Dante and Matilda
Ophelia (1910)	Study for Medea
Paintings	Study for The Lady of Shalott - 1891-94
Pandora	Study for The Magic Circle
Penelope and the Suitors	Sweet Summer
Phyllis and Demophoon	Technique and Style
Portrait of Miss Claire Kenworthy	The Annunciation
Portrait of Mrs Charles Schreiber	The Awakening of Adonis
Psyche Opening the Door into Cupid's Garden	The Bouquet (Study)
Psyche Opening the Golden Box	The Charmer

Waterhouse pages online

Directory 04 - select a title to open its completed local-cluster route.

The Crystal Ball

The Danaïdes

The Danaïdes - Earlier Five-Figure Version

The Enchanted Garden

The Favourites of the Emperor Honorius

The Lady Clare

The Lady of Shalott

The Lady of Shalott Looking at Lancelot

The Love Philtre

The Magic Circle

The Missal

The Mystic Wood

The Remorse of the Emperor Nero after the Murder of His Mother

The Rose Bower

The Shrine

The Siren

The Slave

The Soul of the Rose

The Unwelcome Companion: A Street Scene in Cairo

Thisbe

Timeline

Tristram and Isolde

Two Little Italian Girls by a Village

Ulysses and the Sirens

Undine

Vanity

Windflowers

Sources and image notes

The online articles remain the detailed source environment for each route.

This guide is a compact companion to the John William Waterhouse section on TheHistoryOfArt.org. Detailed references, object records, source notes and page-specific caveats are maintained on the individual HTML pages.

Artwork images are drawn from the site's existing public-domain working library. No separate image-reference list is needed for those reused local assets; the online pages retain object and context references where relevant.

Published books are listed without URLs. Online collection records and institutional sources are linked from the individual artwork and support pages.

SELECTED FURTHER READING

- Anthony Hobson, J. W. Waterhouse, Phaidon, 1989.
- Peter Trippi, J. W. Waterhouse, Phaidon, 2002.
- Elizabeth Prettejohn et al., J. W. Waterhouse: The Modern Pre-Raphaelite, 2008.
- Aubrey Noakes, Waterhouse, Jupiter Books, 1978.

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