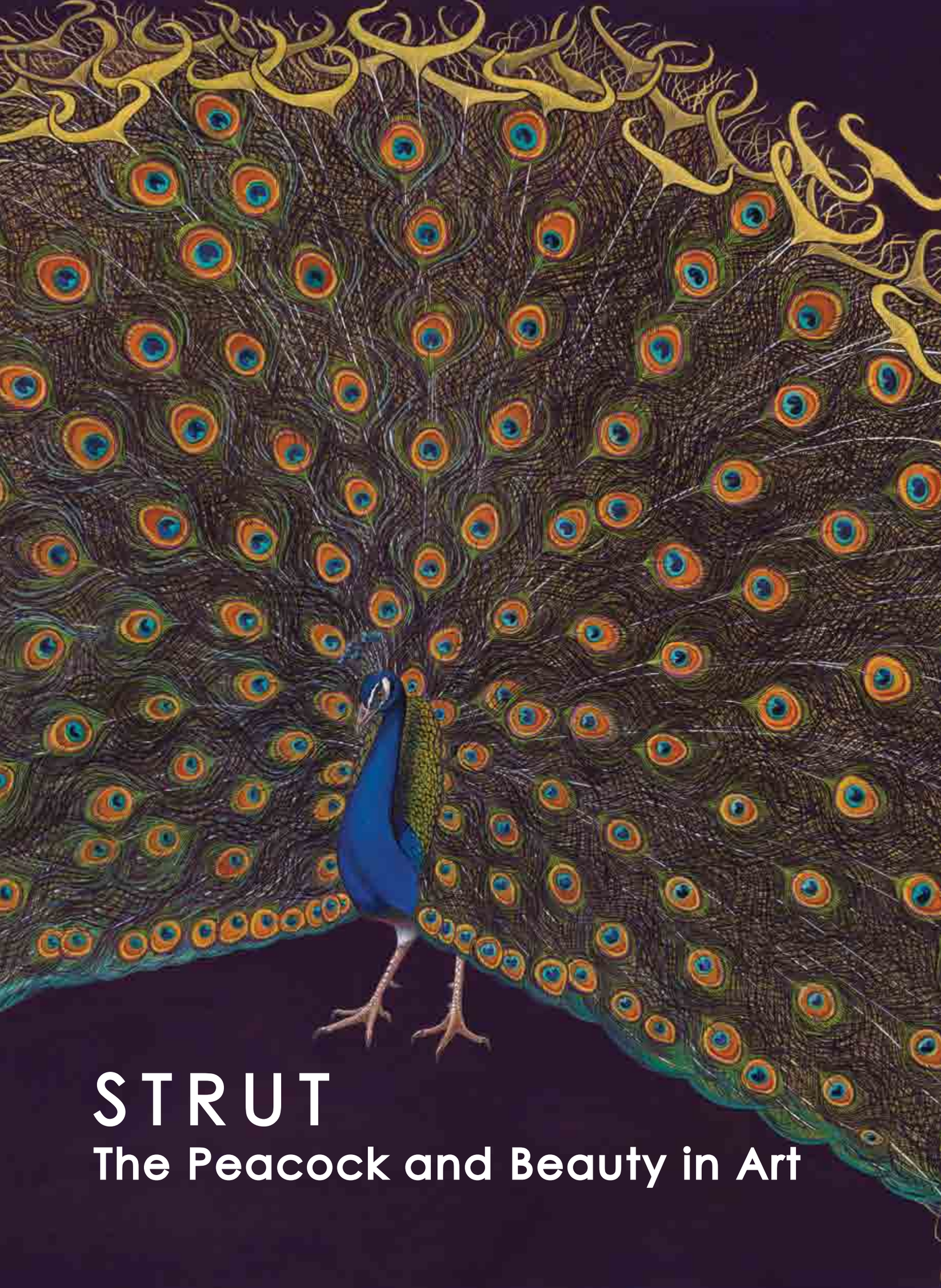
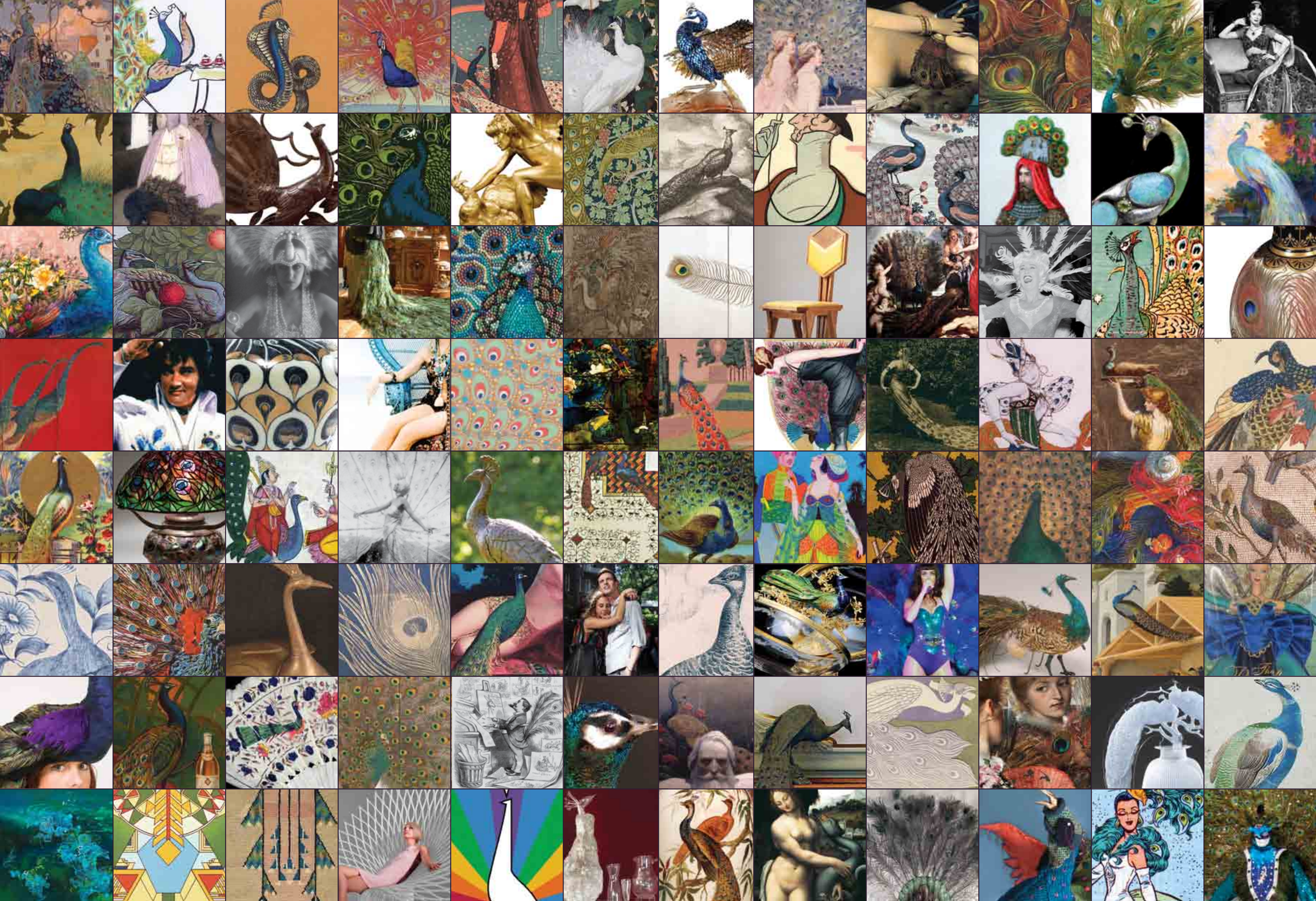


STRUT

The Peacock and Beauty in Art



STRUT

STRUT

The Peacock and Beauty in Art

HUDSON RIVER MUSEUM

FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRIDE

The Peacock, homage to exact

Parades in arrogance of Pride

He clicks his fan-sticks to attract

And courts all glances, Argus-eyed

Serene the Swan glides coldly proud

Convinced of Whiteness here perfected

Not knowing that a Rival Cloud

In Snowy Splendor, lies reflected

Beatrice Gilman
Verses in the Gardens, 1938
Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina

This catalog is published in conjunction with the exhibition *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*, organized by the Hudson River Museum, October 11, 2014 to January 18, 2015.

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Front Cover, detail: James Prosek. PEACOCK AND COBRA, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and Schwartz-Wajahat, New York.
Back Cover, details: Top from left: Wladyslaw Theodor Benda. WOMAN WITH PEACOCK HEADDRESS, 1922. Collection of the Hudson River Museum; Judith Lieber. PEACOCK-SHAPED MULTICOLOR RHINESTONE MINAUDIÈRE, 2004. The Leiber Collection, East Hampton, New York; Jesse Arms Botke. ALBINO PEACOCK AND TWO COCKATOO, c. 1930. Collection of Deborah E. Maloy. Bottom: William Giles. SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI, c. 1924. Private Collection
Opposite page: Roullet et Decamps. "Paon Marchant," c. 1890-1900. Morris Museum, Morristown, New Jersey
Page 2 and 3. Jesse Arms Botke. BLACK PEACOCK, c. 1930. Courtesy of Associated Artists, Southport, Connecticut; ALBINO PEACOCK AND TWO COCKATOO, c. 1930. Page 17. William Seltzer Rice. PRIDE STEPS FORTH, c. 1930. Collection of the Two Red Roses Foundation, Palm Harbor, Florida

Fabrics and altered fabric details in this book, courtesy of the Design Library. New York and London

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

THERE IS A PEACOCK THAT RESIDES in front of the parlor fireplace in Glenview and it provided the germ of the curatorial idea that brings us *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*. The Trevor family, who built and lived in Glenview, the 1876 house that is now part of the Hudson River Museum complex, put this decorative bird in pride-of-place—the center of the room —where it holds court as a fire screen, its open train shortened, to fit the scale of the space, and thickened, to show maximum plumage. The Trevors were not alone among Gilded Age families to decorate their home with a dramatic piece of avian taxidermy. At another significant house on the banks of the Hudson River, Olana, the famed Hudson River School painter Frederic Church kept peacocks roaming the grounds for decorative effect and

Details
Left, GLENVIEW PARLOR PERIOD ROOM at the Hudson River Museum
Top and Bottom, Frank J. Zitz. PEACOCK "Fire Screen," reproduction, 1999 of the original "Fire Screen," c. 1877-1886

placed a large stuffed specimen in his great hall. The peacock was the go-to image of the 19th-century's Aesthetic Movement.

Is there a more transgressive form than that of the peacock? On the evidence of this exhibition and the scholarship in the essays in this book, I think not. We have embraced the peacock and used its shape, form, and color as rhythmic accompaniment to the human female, an extension of her beauty. It is invariably the peacock that is showcased and not the unglamorous peahen, and yet the male of this species comes to the feminine not as Zeus to Leda in his swan form, but as an attribute and celebration of femininity and sexuality.

We put the peacock, again and again, at the center of decorative images and scenes that are incredibly rich, silent, and static. Yet we know it to be an aggressive fowl with a screeching voice. It is the guardian of nations and the very stuff of imperial thrones, yet we know it to be just another colorfully plumed jungle bird. Emblematic in so many different cultures, powerful in its associations, yet we know it almost entirely visually. The peacock has none of the nobility of the eagle, the courage of the hawk, the nurturing nature of the nesting bird. Rarified and regal, how was it so easily transformed in the 20th century into emcee, broadcasting to millions upon millions of America's homes that your nightly sit-com is now coming to you "in living color?"

The peacock has forced its way into its exalted position because it is an extraordinarily successful single-purpose machine constructed, in every sense, to be the center of attention. And so it is. When we have need of this attribute, whether for our thrones, our costumes, our rooms, our dress, our jewelry, or our networks, even the simplest graphic borrowing of its image is deeply encoded with a message—the message of the diva, the star. What is so remarkable is that the peacock's power as a signifier is entirely based on its visual form. The bird, itself, brings no characteristics of domination, power, triumph, wisdom, or sacrifice to the issue. It is the design of the plumage and the presentation of it that drive the symbol and its effect.

The essays that follow explore the rich and complex semiotics of the subject. Each in its own way helps us understand the signs and signification of the peacock. We began this project with an understanding of the peacock from the perspective of the latter part of the 19th century. Laura Vookles takes us from that starting point to the essence of the peacock's visual presence by way of the bird's great and grand feathers. Bartholomew Bland introduces us to the peacock's range of imagery and gives us a deeper appreciation of the way the peacock crosses conventional classifications of beauty, sensuality, and gender. Penelope Fritzer shows how the literary world's rich engagement with the peacock parallels the visual world. Japonism was a powerful force from early to the late 19h century. Ellen Roberts connects East and West and explores how the transfer of the aesthetic from one culture to the other developed. Kirsten Jensen focuses our attention on the imagery of the peacock in its three-dimensional state and explores the relationship of the aesthetic to the object. Melissa Yaverbaum brings us fully into the dialectic of the present showing the peacock, first flourishing as a decorative motif, and today still increasing its power to signify.

This rewarding project would not have been possible without the efforts of a dedicated team—Takako Hara, Registrar, handled the complex details of loans, permissions, and scheduling with her characteristic effectiveness. Jason Weller, Senior Art Technician, has once again brought together all of the elements of an installation perfectly. Linda Locke, Director of Publications, has led us to produce a superb publication. We are very much in the debt of Alexander Stevovich for his brilliant catalog design. Our Co-curators, Laura Vookles, Chief Curator of Collections, and Bartholomew Bland, Director of Curatorial Affairs, have given us an exhibition and catalog that rewards in many ways. This has truly been an inspired effort on their part. And finally, this exhibition and catalog would not have been possible without the generous support of the Mr. and Mrs. Raymond J. Horowitz Foundation.

Michael Botwinick
Director

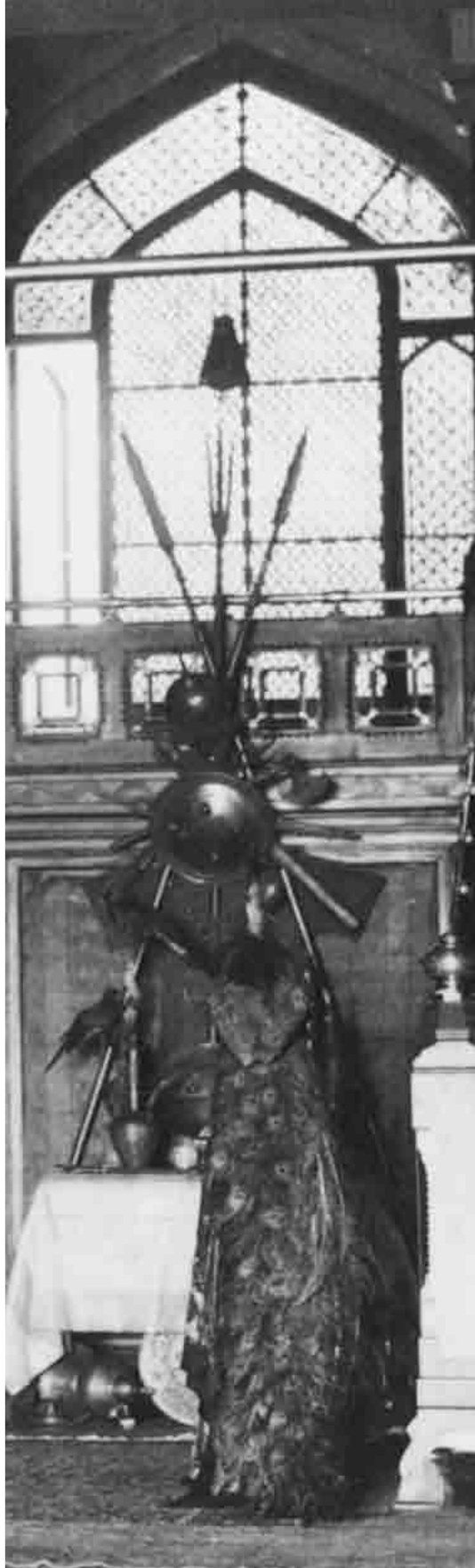

Fig. 0 Unknown photographer. COURT HALL OF THE HOUSE AT OLANA 1880-90, (detail). Albumen print, 6 1/4 x 8 3/8 inches, OL.1993.7

ARTISTS

CONTEMPORARY

Laura Ball
Helen Flockhart
Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag
Richard Haas
Irena Kenny
Joyce Kozloff
Kymara Lonergan
Landon Nordeman
Peter Paone
James Prosek
Rikki Morley Saunders
Brian Keith Stephens
Barbara Takenaga
Federico Uribe
Darren Waterston
Tricia Wright

HISTORICAL

Paintings and Sculpture

Ethel Franklin Betts
Jesse Arms Botke
William Baxter Palmer Closson
Robert Henri
Herman Henstenburgh
Anna Hyatt Huntington
Charles R. Knight
Gaston Lachaise
Paul Manship
Vladimir Pavlovski
Gabriel Schachinger
Abbott Handerson Thayer
Robert Ward Van Boskerck
Julian Alden Weir
Newell Convers Wyeth

Decorative Arts

Eugene-Antoine Aizelin
Robert Winthrop Chanler
Galileo Chini
Christopher Dresser
Araki Kanpo
Suzuki Kōkyū
Max Kuehne

Fashion

Louis Aucoc
Judith Leiber

Toys

John Sterling Lucas

Works on Paper

Léon Bakst
Watson Barratt
Aubrey Beardsley
Wladyslaw Theodor Benda
Edward Bierstadt
Eleanor Vere Boyle
Walter Crane
George Edwards
Edward Mason Eggleston
Helena DeKay Gilder
William Giles
Kate Greenaway
John H. Henrici
Frederick Charles Knight
Orson Lowell
Percy Macquoid
Talwin Morris
Alfredo Müller
Thomas Nast
Fanny Palmer
Coles Phillips
Louis John Rhead
William Seltzer Rice
Edward Linley Sambourne
Lee Thayer
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Theo Van Hoytema
Elihu Vedder
Maurice Pillard Verneuil
Harrison Weir

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Phillips Academy
American Illustrators Gallery
Arader Galleries
Associated Artists
Bronxville Public Library
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The Design Library, New York and London
Diane Birdsall Gallery
Erik Thomsen Gallery
Fred Leighton
William and Abgail Gerdts
Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag
Richard Haas
The Heckscher Museum of Art
Jason Jacques
Rhoda Knight Kalt
Irena Kenny
Lachaise Foundation
The Leiber Collection
Lillian Nassau LLC
Kymara Lonergan
Michael and Marjorie Loeb
Macklowe Gallery
Deborah E. Maloy
Wayne Mason and Cheryl Wolf
Morgan Lehman Gallery
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Smith College Museum of Art
Smithsonian American Art Museum
Two Red Roses Foundation
Staten Island Museum
Deborah Villarreal-Hadley and Mike Hadley
Woodmere Art Museum
Tricia Wright
The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection

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Bartholomew F. Bland Laura Vookles

Fig. 0.10 PEACOCK PIE, A MINIATURE ANTHOLOGY OF GOOD LIVING Illustrated by William Littlewood, Northwood, Middlesex [England]: Knights Press, c. 1945, 7 1/4 x 4 3/8 inches

INTRODUCTION

IF THE PEACOCK WERE ARCHITECTURE, it would be the sweeping staircase on which it is often depicted in paintings, or a blazing chandelier, the cynosure of all eyes. The peacock is designed to make an entrance, to hold court, to have all take notice, to draw the eye from its ugly feet, screeching voice, and awkward flight.

From the tiled mosaics of ancient Rome [Fig. 1] to the handbags of today's fashion icon Judith Leiber [Cat. 145], the elegant form of the peacock is emblazoned on art, decorative objects, fashion, and ephemera—green, blue, and shining, the bird is the image of luxury. The popularity of the peacock waxes and wanes as tastes change but for thousands of years, the peacock has accumulated layers of legend, motivating its admirers to appropriate the bird, its feathers, and the alluring imagery of both to embellish their own appearance and their homes.

Details
Left, Herman Hestenburgh. A PEACOCK, PARROT AND OTHER EXOTIC BIRDS IN A PARK LANDSCAPE, 1694
Top, Henrik Wigstrom. FABERGÉ IMPERIAL PEACOCK EGG, 1908
Bottom, Pieter Claesz. STILL LIFE WITH PEACOCK PIE, 1627

Fig. 1 ROMAN MOSAIC WITH A PEACOCK AND A PIGEON
Early 2nd century A.D., 30 7/10 x 30 7/10 inches
Courtesy of Rupert Wace Ancient Art Ltd, London

Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art offers its own visual delights from the mid-19th century to today, and includes a few earlier art objects that provide historical context. The objects show us the peacock, a gorgeous creature that reflects its beauty onto the artists who revel in the bird's form and create it anew in their work.

The peacock's ornamental train of tail feathers fans out two times its height and is one of the most outlandish and beguiling examples of natural and artistic evolution. Artists transformed the outsized fabulousness of the male's tail into pinnacles of over-the-top mannerism. Spectacular and theatrical, almost grotesque, we delight in the flash and bang of the peacock. To perceive a thing as beautiful may also mean that thing possesses exaggerated proportion, unsettling because unexpected, but certainly a trigger to our visual pleasure. Despite the "S" curves of the peacock's body and its dazzling coloration, the outsized proportions of the bird's tail violate the classical concepts of balance and composition. Like the giraffe's neck and the elephant's trunk, the peacock's tail is both triumph and folly of form.

The modish bird proudly struts the fine line we draw between the gorgeous and the absurd but when the Victorian aesthetic pushed too far towards the lavish, the brocaded and bejeweled was swept away by clean-lined modernism, and the peacock fluttered from its high perch to become, for years, the symbol of hopelessly old-fashioned decadence.

Cat. 145 Judith Leiber. PEACOCK-SHAPED MULTICOLOR RHINESTONE MINAUDIERE, 2004

Enlightenment philosopher Edmund Burke claimed that if an object's beauty depended on its usefulness then the "wedge-like snout of a swine . . . so well adapted to . . . digging and rooting, would be extremely beautiful." [1] The peacock's purpose, though, is not so earthly bound. On its perch it poses, precious. As far back as the time of King Solomon in 931 BC, the peacock impressed: "Once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory and apes, and peacocks," and, so Solomon "exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom." [2]

Artists who personify people through the animals they paint and sculpt are often skeptical about surface beauty—considering it only "skin deep." The peacock, painted, may lack the virtues of other personified birds. It does not possess the nobility of the eagle, the regal distance of the swan, the supposed wisdom of the owl, the melodious voice of the nightingale, or the domestic busyness of the sparrow. Instead, the peacock brings something else to the party—movie star glamour. It sashays onto our stage, fanning a kaleidoscope of feathers.

Cat. 29 Charles R. Knight. BENGAL TIGER AND PEACOCK,1928

Where Struts the Peacock?
A Brief Telling of a Bird's Story

The peacock, imported into the West, belies its humble origins in the jungle. Like the rising parvenu who seems always at home in the glittering drawing room, the peacock looks at ease in cultivated gardens and painted Arcadian idylls. Surely this bird was meant to strut on the velvet lawns of Victorian estates, rather than be devoured by hungry tigers in its native India! [Cat. 29]. There are three kinds of peacocks, the blue, the green, and the much drabber African, all part of the order of *Galliformes*, the family that includes pheasants, quail, grouse, partridge, and turkey. But it is the Indian blue peacock that is most often represented in art and in literature, especially in the West. The blue peacock spread around the world, while the orbit of the green peacock, originating southeast of India and concentrated in Burma and Java, is more limited, perhaps due to its shyness and its aggressiveness towards people and other birds, even those of its own ilk.

Cat. 67 THE GOLDEN, GEM-STUDDED PEACOCK THRONE OF PERSIA
May 1930

The peacock carries positive associations in the land of its birth, where it is linked to Buddha and the Hindu gods. No wonder, then, it is the national bird of India and the guardian of that country's royal personages. Peacocks signified status in Chinese and Mongol cultures and inspired Iran's celebrated "Peacock Throne" [Cat. 67]. Despite mistrust and superstition, Europeans admired the blue peacock for centuries. Donning actual feathers was a way to wear the peacock's colors on a hat or carry in the hand. The feathers brightly accented somber garb and during Europe's chivalrous Middle Ages peacocks provided plumes for armored helmets [Cat. 78].

Cat. 78 Thadé. VLADISLAS, DUC D'OPOLE. . . in *Le Costume* v. VI by Auguste, Racinet, 1888

The intrepid warrior Alexander the Great is credited with bringing the peacock to Europe in about 340 B.C., others look for the bird in Athens even earlier. Essayist Penelope Fritzer discusses the Greek and Roman myth of Juno and Argus as an expression of mixed feelings about beauty, pride, and sexuality. Early Christian theologians associated peacocks with resurrection, not only because their train feathers regenerated but because of the misguided belief that the flesh of a dead peacock did not decay. In the 16th century Pieter Brueghel depicted a displaying peacock in the foreground of his engraving *The Seven Deadly Sins: Pride* [Fig. 2], yet his son Jan, known as "Velvet Bruegel," placed a peacock in the background of his painting *The Five Senses, Allegory of Sight*. The father associates the bird with the sin of pride, while the son prefers to embrace its visual beauty.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, peacocks appear in Dutch and Dutch-influenced Old Master paintings. From estate landscapes to rococo chinoiserie fantasies, and even barnyard scenes, the peacock was shorthand for the Far East—its lands of India and China as well as the spoils of Western imperialism and new trade with Japan. Despite its relatively high visibility and value, still life paintings also depict the roasting of peacocks for consumption, contributing to festive, gustatory decadence. The greater delectability of turkey, once introduced to Europe, reasserted peacocks as primarily decorative [Fig. 3].

The pendulum of the peacock's popularity continued to swing to and

Fig. 2 Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525-1569). THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS OR THE SEVEN VICES - PRIDE, 1558
Engraving, 10 1/4 x 13 9/16 inches. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

fro. Fine art painters in the early days of the 19th-century were less drawn to, even shying from, the unsubtle peacock. Instead, the peacock found a dominant place in the commercial art produced to sell commodities, where its form lent practicality. From fine art to popular culture, the feather was seen in textiles, wallpaper, stained glass, book covers, and advertising. Laura Vookles in her essay "The Perfect Plume" discusses the peacock feather, one of the most popular design motifs during the Gilded Age from the 1870s to 1900.

Ellen Roberts, in "The Japanesque Peacock: A Cross-cultural Sign," studies the decorative arts of the late 19th century from another perspective—the influence of Japan on the art of the West when, in 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry reopened trade between the United States and this island nation of East Asia.

The peacock was adopted into a range of decorative arts and adornment that aimed to surround you with beauty, escalating in fin-de-siècle French and other European Art Nouveau from a small Fabergé egg [Fig. 4] with a miniature mechanical peacock inside to Boutique Fouquet, an entire Parisian jewelry store, designed by the quintessential Art Nouveau artist Alphonse Mucha as a fantastical temple to peacocks [Fig. 5]. The sinuous luxury of Art Nouveau segued into the Art Deco of the Roaring Twenties, which Kirsten Jensen traces in the essay "Beauty and Function: The Peacock in Art Deco." Some artists, such as Jesse Botke in the 1920s and 1930s, made their careers by devoting themselves to

Fig. 3 Pieter Claesz (1596-97-1660). STILL LIFE WITH PEACOCK PIE, 1627. Oil on canvas, 30 1/2 × 50 3/4 inches
Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Juliet and Lee Folger/ The Folger Fund

the beautiful peacock. But the notion of beauty for its own sake was quelled by the Great Depression in 1929 and the pressures it brought for art to serve a greater social good. Modernism gave rise to the ethos of "less is more," until rationing at the home front in the 1940s during World War II stimulated, once again, the craving for luxury symbolized and satisfied by a plethora of peacocks. Melissa Martens Yaverbaum "In Living Color" shows how this same popular peacock, overused, came to embody visual excess.

20th-Century Paeans to the Peacock

The bird now appeared on promotions for tobacco cards, cognac, even dress shields, and by 1956 achieved multi-media stardom as NBC's iconic peacock. In ads or fine art, in fashion or household goods, the presence of the peacock is seldom without suggestive meanings of beauty or pride. The peacock mirrors the viewer's complex feelings about the nature and purpose of beauty and adornment and does so today in the work of contemporary artists profiled in this book.

Left in less capable hands, the peacock can veer from beauty toward candy-box prettiness. Like a solicitous hostess readying for an event, the peacock appears on the cover of a thousand biscuit tins. As a visual trope, it shines in domesticated landscapes next to classical pillars, rose bushes in bloom, or sparkling fountains. In the same way, peacocks are linked to female beauty in

Fig. 4 Henrik Wigstrom. FABERGE IMPERIAL PEACOCK EGG, TO DOWAGER EMPRESS MARIA, 1908.
6 inches H. Sandoz Foundation, Pully, Switzerland
Photography: R. Sterchi

Fig. 5 Alphonse Mucha (1860-1939). BOUTIQUE FOUQUET, 1900 Period Room Installation
Musée Carnavelet, Paris. Photography: Joseph Weston

Cat. 41 William Giles. SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI, c. 1924

fashion millinery and dresses and in paintings and illustrations that pair women with the bird and its feathers. Women could buy beaded purses showing the peacock in a garden or follow patterns to knit themselves similar designs at home [Cat. 137]. It takes artists and designers of some skill to lift the bird from the realm of the tasteless to high art. Bartholomew Bland addresses gender and beauty in "Peacocks, People, and the Sexual Masquerade," as he explores the visual and associative connections between a beautiful woman and the splendid peacock, ironically the male of the species. Depicting the peacock must pose the question of sexual role reversal. The peacock in its masculinity became a stand-in for the male admirer of the female form, but women themselves assume the flaunting theatrical beauty of the peacock.

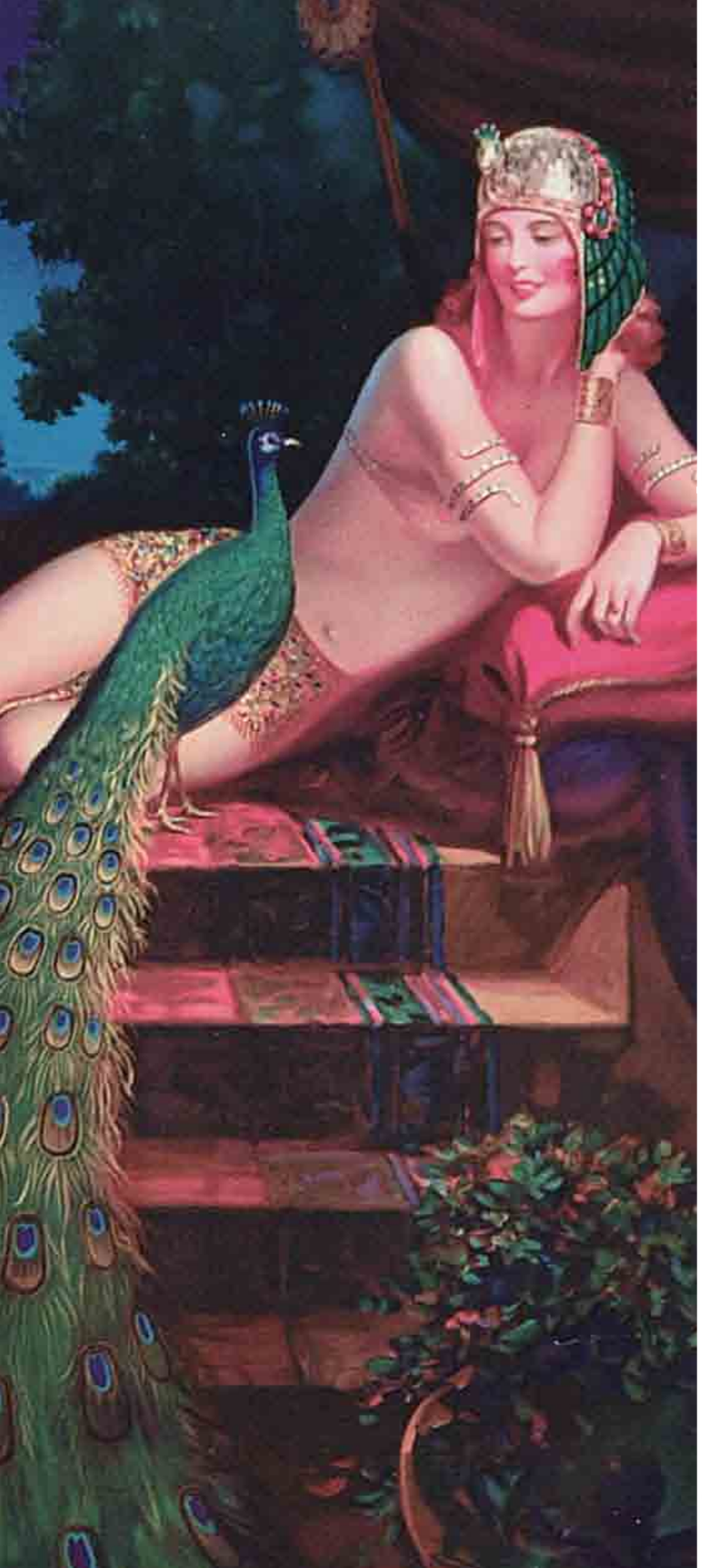
If every virtue has a corresponding vice, the peacock's are obvious that it lacks beauty of voice but the ugliness of its squawks is striking relief to its visual appeal. Blatant beauty in art is always suspect—it's too easy, even dangerous. Poet Charles Godfery Leland wrote, "To Paradise, the Arabs say, Satan could never find the way until the peacock led him in."[3]

Over one-hundred-and-fifty objects in *Strut* show that no artist was enthralled with the peacock's plain and sturdy mate the peahen. Among the artistic visions of strutting males are those with tail fanned fully open and, then, others trailing a train of "eyed" feathers, spread "like the heavens strewed with stars," that tantalize artists and viewers to anticipate the tension of the coming moment—the unfurling of the peacock's giant pinwheel of a tail. We hope the same anticipation is yours as you experience *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*.

Bartholomew F. Bland and Laura Vookles

NOTES

1 Edmund Burke, "On the Sublime and Beautiful," in *The Works of Edmund Burke*, v. I, (London: George Bell & Sons), 1880, 125.
2 *The Holy Bible*, King James Version, 1 Kings 10:22-23.
3 Charles Godfrey Leland, "The Peacock," in *The Music-lesson of Confucius, and other Poems*. (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company,1872), 69.



PEACOCKS, PEOPLE, AND THE SEXUAL MASQUERADE

Bartholomew F. Bland

THE PEACOCK IS A SEX BOMB. In the bird kingdom, the male—taunting, performing, and timing the moment of his shameless "big reveal"—pays frantic court to his multiple mates with varying degrees of success. Let the dove symbolize romance, the swan love—in art, the peacock will brook no sentimental notions. Staring at their strutting and seemingly well-choreographed routines, it is tempting for anyone who isn't a trained ornithologist to personify these swaggering birds. The rituals of the peacock mating dance have all the drama that one would find in a late-night strip club.

A long kick-line of glamorous, fantasy women have assumed the "role" of the strutting male peacock, bedecking themselves with his dazzling plumage to entice. The bird itself frequently appears in images with women, sidling next to an unclad leg, and preening in colorful plumage like his female compatriots. The peacock acts as a stand-in for the penetrating "male gaze," often discussed in art history as a source of objectification. The personification of symbolic sex swirling around the peacock has as its source a long line of visual artistic cues.

Details
Left, Edward Mason Eggleston. CLEOPATRA, 1934
Top, S. Anargyros Cigarette Advertisement. MURAD, THE TURKISH CIGARETTE, 1918
Bottom, Emmanuel Fremiet. AMOR ULTOR (Avenging Cupid), c. 1900

Cat. 26 Robert Henri. RUTH ST. DENIS IN THE PEACOCK DANCE, 1919

he Roman myth of Juno, Jupiter, and Io is at its essentials a tale of sexual jealousy. Juno's watchful servant, the hundred-eyed Argus, fell asleep and was slain while guarding the maiden Io, whom Juno's errant husband, Jupiter, attempted to conceal from her. The goddess unexpectedly gifts the peacock his glory—the "eyes" of Argus to decorate his feathered tail, not because of his own efforts but as the result of a murder. The myth enforces the idea that beauty is skin-deep and that a gift received, without moral or physical exertion is unearned and undeserved.

The Peacock Dances

This borrowed gift of the peacock's beauty is used to triumphant effect in the public sphere. Three well-known women who brilliantly understood how to harness the peacock's potent appeal provide a window onto the bird's eroticism. The dancer Ruth St. Denis, the stripper par excellence Gypsy Rose Lee, and the singer Katy Perry—their careers neatly spanning a century—are performers who revel in the performance. Each woman harnessed the visual imagery of the male peacock for her own intensely theatrical purposes.

An important pioneer of modern dance in the early 20th century, Ruth St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn, whom she married in 1914, were well known for exotically "orientalist" dances, among them *The Cobra, Incense, and The Yogi*. The Ashcan painter Robert Henri, seeking to document one of her most brilliant performances painted *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* in 1919 at the height of her fame [Cat. 26]. Best known for his scenes of urban life, the artist developed a broad interest in theater, performers and dancers, and determined to capture on canvas signature images of dancers in their greatest roles. Ruth St. Denis is from his series of monumental canvases, each smoldering with the erotic exoticism of the "other," which also included paintings devoted to the dancers Roshanara and Betalo Rubino[1] [Fig. 6]. Henri shows all three dancers alone and in costume against backdrops that suggest the artistic influence of 17th-century Spanish painter Diego Velazquez on him.

Fig. 6 Robert Henri (1865-1929)
BETALO RUBINO, DRAMATIC DANCER, 1916
Oil on canvas
77 1/4 x 37 1/4 inches, Collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum
Museum purchase, 841:1920

St. Denis first debuted her solo dance *The Legend of the Peacock* in 1914, appearing as the favored dancing girl of a wealthy rajah, doomed by the curse of an envious wife to appear as a strutting, dancing peacock.[2] Movies of St. Denis's performances later in her career in the 1950s show her still supple and able to produce the distinctive rippling arm movements so reminiscent of the wings on the avian body. Period photographs of St. Denis in costume [Fig. 7] show her proudly striding figure, arms out and in command, a quite different pose from the more plaintive air she assumes in Henri's painting. Other photographs from her performance show her considerably more clothed than Henri depicts her. In one she is fully bundled and enveloped in shawls, only her distinctive face visible, and she holds a large, round peacock feather fan to signal her eventual transformation into the bird [Fig. 8].

Henri was entranced by St. Denis's performance, which would become a famous routine at New York's Palace vaudeville house, and the artist requested that she pose for him, which he aptly predicted would be "a mighty propaganda."[3] If propaganda was indeed Henri's intent, he succeeded. His painting, more than seven feet high, presents St. Denis, the dancer, a singular and monumental personage. Henri, the artist, in turn, glories in the lusciousness of her figure and shows her pale skin against a dark background to best advantage. The tight costume worn by

Fig. 7 RUTH ST. DENIS IN THE PEACOCK, c. 1914
Photograph. Collection of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Jerome Robbins Dance Division
Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Fig. 7A RUTH ST. DENIS IN LEGEND OF THE PEACOCK, 1914
Photograph. Collection of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives
Becket, Massachusetts

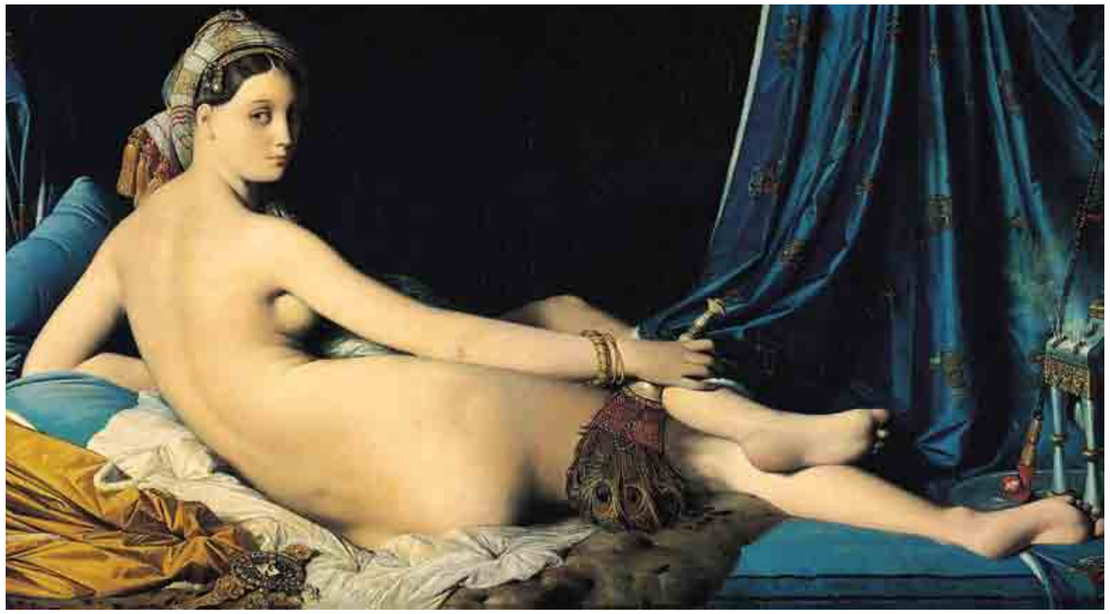
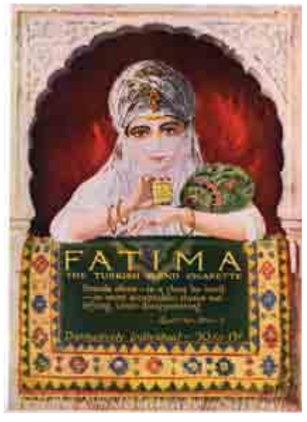


Fig. 8 Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780-1867). LA GRANDE ODALISQUE, 1814. Oil on canvas, 35 × 64 inches
Collection of Louvre, Paris, France

St. Denis hugs the s-curves of her body and presents her peacock-feather skirt as a kind of avian mermaid tail. St. Denis does not engage with the viewer. Rather, she presents her body for delectation in a way that shocked the polite society of her time.

St. Denis poses with her arms clasped demurely behind her back, and although she presents her form to the viewer, her suggestiveness is mitigated by her lack of engagement. Moon-shaped, her face in blank stare is an ambiguous mask that shields her thoughts from us. Is she in sentimental reverie or daydreaming about a future erotic encounter?

By Henri's time art claimed a long tradition of eroticizing of the foreign, the "exotic." In the early 19th century, the French Neoclassical painter Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres caused a storm of controversy with the dramatically elongated back of his naked Turkish concubine *La Grande Odalisque* (1814) [Fig. 9], whose peacock feather fan is an attribute of both her origin and her purpose. Ingres underscores her sexuality—painting the fan's silky feathers to symbolically brush up against her thigh and suggestively positioning its handle at a phallic angle. Despite the sensuality of her moving dance, St. Denis appears more delicate and refined than Ingres's blatantly beckoning creation on canvas.



Cat. 86 Liggett & Myers Tobacco Advertisment. FATIMA, the Turkish blend ...in a class by itself, March 1915

The Turkish harems and the peacock feathers that are the attributes of the "decadent" (to Western eyes) women who inhabit them, are an artistic trope from Ingres's masterpiece *Odalesque* to advertisements for Fatima cigarettes [Cat. 86]. In the early 20th century, tobacco companies trying to encourage women to smoke sought to present cigarettes as daring and exciting. From the pages of magazines, veiled, exotic women, with a smile and the wave of a feather fan, became sloe-eyed vamps.

Juno has never taken a more lively form than that of entertainer Gypsy Rose Lee. The famous stripper adorned herself with the attributes of the goddess, appearing in a halo of glittering peacock feathers [Fig. 9]. The photograph of Lee, shot fairly late in her performing career when she was nearing fifty years, creates the illusion of the risqué without actually revealing much. Unlike St. Denis's sultry midriff-bearing ensemble of long skirt worn over pants that hide her legs, Lee exposes only her shapely legs—ironically the one part of the body which the actual peacock is personified as being ashamed of, its legs leading

Fig. 9 GYPSY ROSE LEE PERFORMS AS JUNO ("Juno and the Peacock") AFTER MIDNIGHT at the Imperial Ball at the Hotel Astor November 4, 1958. Photography: Al Pucci, Collection of *NY Daily News* Archive/ Getty Images Editorial number: 97324151

to ugly feet. In fact the society matron in the Lee photograph, with bare shoulders and plunging décolletage and sitting on the left side of the aisle, is actually more exposed in a physical sense than is the diva, but, like the rest of the audience, this mature woman takes on the role of the male gaze, objectifying the parading performer. Tightly corseted, outstretched arms fully sleeved, with an ample train providing reassuring coverage, Lee throws back her head open-mouthed, and presents confidence, humor, and the joy of the strut.

Fig. 9 A KATY PERRY PERFORMS, during the opening night of her *California Dreams* tour at Motor-point Arena, Sheffield, England, October 12, 2011. Photography: Gary Stafford / WENN.com

It is striking how "mainstream" Gypsy Rose Lee became as her fame grew. The 1958 photograph shows Lee performing at the Imperial Ball at the Hotel Astor in New York City, a gala affair attended by Grace Kelly and Prince Rainier, a year after she published her best-selling *Gypsy: A Memoir* that then was turned into a classic musical. Lee's Imperial Ball audience is clearly part of the Establishment and resolutely middle aged. The jeweled ladies coiffed in tightly-curled Mamie Eisenhower perms and gentlemen in white tie and tails appear amused, but utterly safe. They are a million miles from the lowly, rowdy audiences of Lee's youth.

If Lee became famous for her role as a "refined" stripper, singer Katy Perry, in her 2010 dance hit "Peacock," provokes with literal and suggestive lyrics that describe male sex body parts. While Perry has appeared onstage wearing huge glittering peacock-inspired outfits that would not have been out of place in a coy Ziegfeld Follies show of the 1920s [Fig. 9 A], the lyrics she sang were explicit past the point of double entendre to pure blatancy and, for some, jarringly at odds with her sugary pop-goddess image:

> *Are you brave enough to let me see your peacock?*
> *Don't be a chicken boy, stop acting like a bitch*
> *I'm a peace out if you don't give me the payoff*
> *Come on baby let me see*[4]

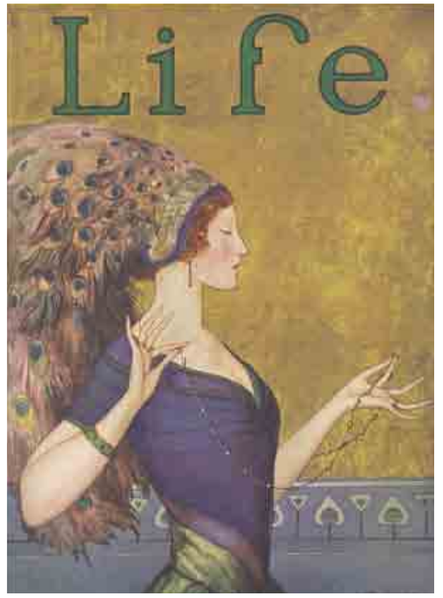
The most interesting aspect of the vulgarity imbued in the gendered lyrics of Perry's song is the sexual role reversal of the female star—it is a kind of drag, as was Marlene Dietrich dressed in a man's tuxedo and famously kissing a woman in the classic 1930 film *Morocco*. Perry, in 2011, dressed in male peacock plumage, becomes the sexual aggressor—demandingly insistent, in quest of satisfaction. Unlike the sentimentality that mitigated the sexuality of St. Denis's performance and the cheerful acknowledgement by Lee that the entire performance was a comedic burlesque, Perry's performance wobbles. Although she is the most explicit of the three women, her routine loses some impact by its very blatancy. A successful mating dance does perhaps require a little subtext to meet its goal of seduction.

Dressing Like a Peacock

If St. Denis, Lee, and Perry all represent varying degrees of female empowerment by inhabiting the role of the male peacock, women were frequently placed in that role by men, who often then charged them with vanity. In 1925 three years before illustrator Rea Irvin created the famous dandy Eustace Tilley for *The New Yorker*'s first issue [Fig. 10], Wladyslaw Theodor Benda presented a distaff version of a similarly arch figure in profile for *Life* magazine. In *Woman with Peacock Headdress* (1922) [Cat. 63], the sinuous lines of the woman's hands and arms are shown in profile—the massive array of feathers make her an emblem of pride. Rather than hold up a monocle like Tilley, she fingers a long slim chain, in form highly similar to the necklaces of delicate glass peacock "eyes" popular at the time [Cat. 140].

A decade before *Life* featured this urbane woman on its cover, the magazine presented an Edwardian version of the well-upholstered female as a preening peacock on the cover of its "Peacock Number" of March 1911 [Cat. 72]. Orson Byron Lowell was a popular illustrator of magazine covers in the first decade of the 20th century and he became well known for his humorous but pointed social messages. Here he shows a woman in a marble-clad interior, flanked by two large paintings of peacocks perched on a

Fig. 10 Rea Irvin (1881-1972). EUSTACE TILLEY. Cover of *The New Yorker*, February 21, 1925



Cat. 63 Wladyslaw Theodor Benda. WOMAN WITH PEACOCK HEADDRESS, June 15, 1922

grand balustrade. As if the similarities between the lady's resplendent feather train and the identical tails of the male birds were not sufficient association for the preening woman, the image is cuttingly captioned "Reversion to Type." Hand elegantly extended, the woman peers transfixed and solipsistic into a round mirror she holds, playing to the idea of narcissism so closely tied to the stereotypical pride of the peacock. Ironically, narcissus of Greek myth was a vain young man but despite historical precedent, it is the women of early 20th-century popular culture who bear this particular charge of vanity. The magazine drips contempt:

> *If we wanted to be real mean about it, we might say that in looking about for some symbol to typify the modesty of the modern woman, we happily lighted upon that circumambient bird, the peacock. . . In accordance with the well-known temperament of this well-known bird, we have spread ourselves in this number. After all, dear madam, when you peruse it, remember, please, that it is not you that we mean; we are always referring to the other lady across the way.*[5]

While *Life* emphasized the vainest elements of the urban woman primping in a peacock gown, the artist George Watson Barratt, in 1921, chose to present an atypically demure but thoroughly lovely version of the peacock-garbed woman who stares out at us with limpid eyes from the cover of *Today's Housewife* [Cat. 62]. Despite her glamorous gown and feather fan, she is the symbol of domesticity. The implication is that she is "well provided for" and well dressed to please an offstage husband, whose presence is perhaps symbolized by the large turquoise statues of peacocks that flank and compliment her. The golden circle on the wall behind her creates a large halo that signals her wifely virtuousness. The cover illustrates the story "The Peacock Robe" by Louise Rand Bascom, a convoluted tale of a young woman of limited means who is unexpectedly given a magnificent gift of a robe of peacock feathers that helps attract a handsome young man. Bascom describes the mesmerizing quality of the distinctive "eyes" of the

Cat. 72 Orson Lowell. REVERSION TO TYPE, March 2, 1911

Cat. 62 Watson Barratt. WOMAN IN A PEACOCK ROBE.
Cover of *Today's Housewife*, May 1921

cloak with care:

> *It was composed of infinite numbers of tiny fans burning with rich color. One consisted of a black edge circled by an inner deposit of antique gold, lighted by a flash of bronze and finished with a center of azure; another was formed by an emerald edge about a heart of metallic copper; still a third was lustrous sapphire outlined in iridescent black.*[6]

The idea of bedecking oneself in the peacock's resplendent plumage to attract attention is a personification of the Aesop fable *Jackdaw and Peacocks* (c. 1878) [Cat. 60], who bedecks himself in the tail feathers the peacock shed in an attempt to win a beauty competition. The contradictory admiring and desiring of the adorned figure, while simultaneously mocking that figure for its own vanity, runs throughout popular culture. An 1892 newspaper article explains the importance of appropriate peacock plumage:

> Now my lady is not at all up to the mode [unless] . . . . she ties the unlucky plumage about her neck for a boa, fringes her garments with the glossy feathers, and even sets them against the warmth of her fair shoulders in the neck of her evening bodice.[7]

Translated to people, the idea of the plainer "bird" cloaking himself in more glamorous plumage conjures elements of both "drag," in the gender playacting that women's adoption of the male's appearance represents and "camp," in exaggerated glitter and outsize movements. The peacock has a long history as an allegory for vanity. Even a century-old *Country Life* article, mostly devoted to analyzing the shape and structure of the animal's tail, managed to get in a jibe:

> *If a ballot were to be taken for the purpose of determining which was the most beautiful of the birds, the peacock would undoubtedly hold one of the highest places on the list. But this fame has bought a rather unenviable reputation for vanity, resting, it must be admitted, on a good foundation.*[8]

Images of the demure woman adorned in peacock feathers are scarce. Kate Greenaway's *The Peacock Girl* (1905) [Cat. 68] is surprising precisely because the girl's deep sense of modesty contrasts with the luxuriousness of her garb. Shown in profile, she turns downcast eyes away from the viewer, and presents a mien that seems designed to tug at the heartstrings—she is the well-dressed version of Charles Dickens's sympathetic heroine "Little" Nell Trent.

But on the whole, the idea of borrowing finery from the avian kingdom to enhance the flamboyant female is inculcated early, and with considerably more flamboyance and less modesty than shown by the girl portrayed by Greenaway. And as Katy Perry shows, the concept continues to have cultural currency: peacock vanity appeared even in toys when Mattel produced a *Peacock Barbie* (1998) [Cat. 147] as part of its *Birds of Beauty* Collection, which also included *Swan Barbie* and *Flamingo Barbie*. Tellingly, Barbie dolls, decked in spangles, are the toy most closely associated with archetypal femininity in post-World War II America.

Cat. 147 Mattel, Inc. PEACOCK BARBIE, 1998

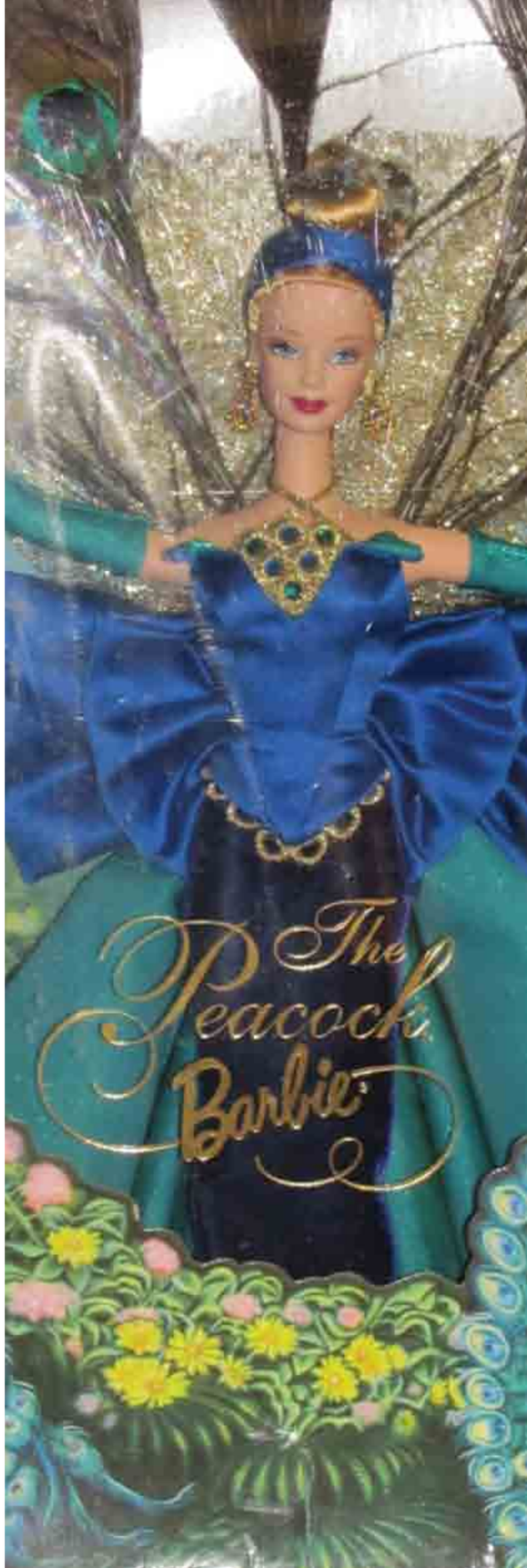


Fig. 11 GLORIA SWANSON AS LADY LASENBY. Promotional photograph made for the film *Male and Female*, 1919, directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Courtesy of Paramount Pictures/Photofest © Paramount Pictures

Fig. 12 Gabriel von Max (1840-1915). THE LION'S BRIDE, color print supplement to *New York Sunday American*, Jan. 26, 1908 9 x 11 1/2 inches (originally painted c. 1875)

With all their showy bravado, it is easy to forget that in the jungles of the peacock's native India, it has a predator in the tiger. Artist Charles R. Knight, best known for his diorama murals for the American Museum of Natural History, is one of the few artists who have painted the peacock as victim of its natural enemy in his large canvas *Bengal Tiger and Peacock* (1928) [Cat. 29]. This scene of nature strikingly resembles a scene in Gloria Swanson's *Male and Female* (1919) [Fig. 11], a film that deals with relations between the sexes and implies that a woman who struts too boldly in her finery will meet an untimely demise. Near the end of the film, during a fantasy sequence, Swanson appears dressed as a white peacock with elaborate headdress, and is ordered sacrificed to a lion who slays her. The shot was directly inspired by Gabriel von Max's famous Victorian painting *The Lion's Bride*, which Swanson probably saw in a widely distributed 1908 color reproduction [Fig. 12]. Although Swanson filmed with a live lion, the movie still depicts her posed near an animal that looks decidedly stuffed.

The Fighting Peacock

Although in the natural world, it is the more aggressive (and rarely depicted) green peacock that frequently kills rival males (and occasionally even peahens), blue peacocks do engage in spectacular attacks as they compete for mates. The violence associated with these demonstrations fascinates artists, and a number have engaged with fighting peacock imagery and the aggression that is driven by the sex impulse. Sculptor Anna Hyatt Huntington in her *Peacocks Fighting* (1934) [Cat. 28] successfully captures the coiled energy and aggression of the birds. Huntington was fond of portraying pairs of animals in dynamic movement within a single sculpture, and here she shows the moment of attack in which the long train of the flying peacock, seemingly suspended in mid-air, functions cleverly as a structural support.

Cat. 28 Anna Hyatt Huntington. PEACOCKS FIGHTING, 1934

Cat. 25 William Baxter Palmer Closson. FIGHTING PEACOCKS, c. 1898

Cat. 24 William Baxter Palmer Closson
FEEDING THE PEACOCKS, by 1910

Contemporary artist Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag takes this same theatrical moment and makes it life-size in his textile installation *Fighting Peacocks* (2014) [Cat. 4]. His pair of peacocks shows two males, one bird with tail arrayed in full "display" on the ground, while the other flaps its wings in flight as it dangles a sinister and phallic snake from its claws over its sparring partner sprawled below. The scene contains an element of homoeroticism, as the male "displaying" bird signals sexual excitement through its open fan in a way that would be unlikely in nature. Goldschlag contrasts the ferocity of the male fowls' actions with the traditionally feminine artistic material of yarn from which he makes the bodies of the birds. Taking artistic license with his birds, he uses the matte yarn to provide a rainbow of hues that expand the bird's traditionally glossy blue and green plumage.

William Palmer Closson's *Fighting Peacocks* (c. 1897) [Cat. 25] depicts a dark, swirling mass of angry birds,

Cat. 4 Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag.
UNTITLED PEACOCKS (Fighting Males), 2014, (detail)

wings spread, sharp beaks pointed. The peacocks appear vengeful and merciless, each seeking to destroy the other in a frantic attempt to mate. In contrast, Closson's *Feeding the Peacocks* (1910) [Cat. 24] is a scene of pastoral harmony. A young woman in a Grecian gown plucks grapes from an arbor to feed a docile group of birds, who look up at her eagerly and patiently, waiting to be fed on a sun-dappled late-summer day. Closson suggests that for a woman to hold a male's attention, perhaps the best way is through his stomach.

The great shift in tone between Closson's two paintings is illustrative: it is the presence of the female which calms and domesticates the male. The two cocks in *Feeding the Peacocks* mingle with a couple of peahens. Tellingly, it is the peahens, distracted by the artist that peer out at the viewer, while the cocks' stare is fixed on the woman and the prospect of food. Looking at the feeding birds, though, can send a shiver up the spine, because the dark curved necks of the thrusting, reaching peacocks are disturbingly snake-like, a jarring note in this Edenic setting. One is reminded that the peacock has never been fully domesticated and so for this grape-plucking Eve, the peacocks' stabbing beaks, symbols of worldly vanity, are a danger.

The Peacock, the Roué

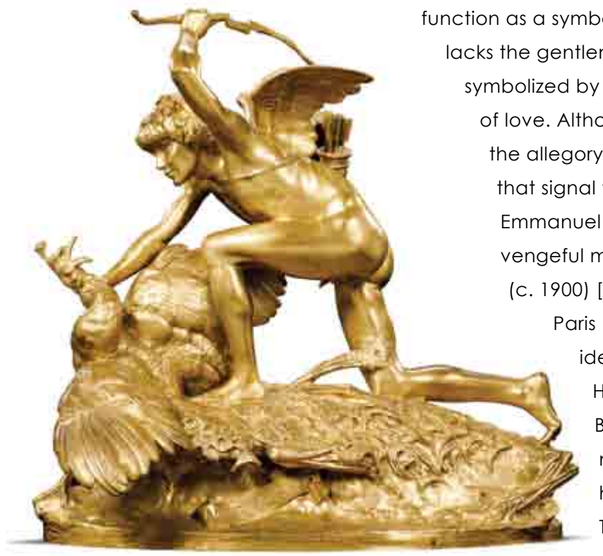


Fig. 13 Emmanuel Fremiet. AMOR ULTOR (Avenging Cupid), c. 1900
16 x 16 3/8 inches, Bronze and gilt patina
Courtesy of Sotheby's Picture Library

If the peacock succeeds as a symbol of narcissistic sexuality, it fails to function as a symbol of love, because, in all its preening display, it lacks the gentleness that is a perquisite to love. In fact, the pride symbolized by the peacock can be considered the antithesis of love. Although the subject is rare, artists have depicted the allegory of Cupid at war with the peacock, two symbols that signal that love detests vanity. The French sculptor Emmanuel Fremiet's unusual subject presents Cupid as a vengeful murderer throttling the errant fowl in *Amor Ultor* (c. 1900) [Fig. 13], a version of which was shown at the Paris Exposition, 1900,[9] and graphically illustrates the idea of pride as love's true enemy.[10] When Mary Haines, the pre-feminist heroine in the Claire Booth Luce play, *The Women*, is asked if she has no pride at all because she took back her errant husband. She baldly replies: "No pride at all. That's a luxury a woman in love can't afford."[11]

Even in the rare image with overtly romantic sentimentality, such as Ethel Franklin Betts' *Couple with Peacocks*, [c. 1904] [Cat. 21], the birds themselves, though grandly depicted, do not enhance the romance in the piece, but rather inject a discordant note of coolness into the scene. The birds are dark, looming, an almost sinister presence, the one in the foreground with an inelegant mass more reminiscent of a turkey. Both birds are utterly disinterested in the spooning of the human couple amid the blossoms of the dogwood tree.

When anthropomorphizing birds, the dove's full breast appears a plush bosom against which to coo and rest one's head and the rounded beak of the swan lends a mien of softness to its otherwise noble features. But the peacock's stabbing beak, darting head, downturned mouth, and screeching voice are off-putting, even as it attracts admiration for its strutting vigor and colorful beauty.

The swan is not only the bird that most closely rivals the peacock in elegance, but has also been linked to the dangerous passions inspired by beauty. In the myth of "Leda and the Swan," Jupiter, in the form of a swan, rapes or seduces Leda, wife of the King of Sparta, causing her to give birth to children born in large eggs. While the peacock's role as a symbol of Juno seems to have precluded Jupiter taking the form of the peacock during one of his many ravishments of mortal women, popular illustrators in the early 20th century subtly (and not so subtly) allow the peacock to usurp the swan's role in the Leda myth.

Fig. 14 Francesco Melzi (1491-1568/1570)
LEDA AND THE SWAN, 1508-1515, after a lost painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)
Oil and resin on panel, 51 1/8 x 30 3/4 inches
Collection of the Uffizi Gallery, Florence Italy

The erotic elements of the Leda myth made it a popular subject during the Renaissance, particularly as an image of private delectation, however the racy subject matter meant a number of versions of the "Leda" were deliberately destroyed by moralists at different times over the centuries.[12] One of the most famous versions was originally by Leonardo da Vinci, today known only in copies [Fig. 14]. The sexuality seen in many artists' "Leda" images is matched by Léon François Comerre in his unusual *Sleeping Woman with a Peacock* (c. 1870s) [Fig. 15], likely a smaller version of a painting shown by the artist at the Salon of 1878.[13] Comerre was fond of racy images of reclining women, including a hypersexual version *Leda and the Swan*, shown in the 1908 Salon. The picture, with its banks of clouds, suggests Juno in an amorous relationship with her peacock, which hovers in full display behind her naked body, a connotation that strays from established mythological narrative. The depiction transforms the episode

Fig. 15 Léon François Comerre (1850-1916)
SLEEPING WOMAN WITH A PEACOCK [JUNO], c. 1870s
Oil on canvas, 15 x 16 1/4 inches. Private Collection

into a distaff version of "Leda and Swan," with Jupiter cuckolded by the peacock.

Artist F. X. Leyendecker, in 1921, created a humorous *Life* magazine cover featuring a peacock, which is a burlesque of the Leda and the Swan motif [Fig. 16]. Despite pointedly being entitled *Rivals*, the supposedly competing showgirl and strutting bird are enraptured and entwined, as the woman strokes the bird's neck. Standing on tiptoe, her hips thrusting outward, the vantage point of the picture allows the showgirl to usurp the bird's train into her own power of display. Leyendecker uses the pink of the showgirl's costume and the blue of the bird to re-enforce gender roles, while the artist's composition and the idea of competition it raises when both male and female simultaneously "display" brings into question the nature of their unseen audience—every exhibitionist needs a voyeur. The scene is charged with an amusing eroticism: even the spewing fountain gargoyle, literally drooling with desire, has his head under the gauzy fabric of the showgirl's skirt.

Fig. 16 Frank Xavier Leyendecker (1877-1924). RIVALS Cover of *Life*, September. 1, 1921

Precariously, yet perfectly balanced, artist Carlee Fernandez's sculpture, *To Xavier, I Love You* [Fig. 17], captures the relationship of form between peacock and swan in a dramatic mid-air collision

Fig. 17 Carlee Fernandez (b. 1973)
TO XAVIAR, I LOVE YOU, 2010. Taxidermy birds, metal stand, 72 x 41 x 80 inches. Courtesy of ACME, Los Angeles, California
Photography: Robert Wedemeyer

of flapping white swan and a black supine swan sandwiching a poised peacock. A small parrot nestles among the three large birds. The sculpture functions as both the mythological tumultuous relationship between Juno and Jupiter and as a symbol of the struggle for supremacy between the natural world's two most stunning species of birds, creating a "merger of exotic beauty with explosive entanglement."[14] The position of the birds is adapted from Dutch "Golden Age" painting, most notably Jan Asselijn's *The Threatened Swan* (c.1650), and the artist describes the beauty of the flapping birds as "a bouquet of flowers" celebrating the birth of her son.[15]

Though the peacock's sexual vanity is derided, painter Paul Cadmus is the rare artist who uses the attributes of the peacock's sexual vanity in a truly repulsive manner. The double-sexed figure in Cadmus's egg tempera painting *Pride* (1945) [Fig. 18] is part of this painter's large series dedicated to the *Seven Deadly Sins* (1945-1949). *Pride shows* a hideous bloated figure clutching cantaloupe breasts, one nipple painted round with a rainbow-colored peacock eye. The creature wears a diadem of peacock feathers and its heavily painted face sneers. Cadmus cleverly places the "eyes" of the peacock's tail feathers over the lids of his gaseous figure bloated with pride. The figure casts a glowing bluish radiance, like the peacock's body, and Lincoln Kirstein points out that the strange power emanating from

Fig. 18 Paul Cadmus (1904-1999). PRIDE, 1945. Egg tempera on gessoed linen over masonite 24 1/8 × 11 7/8 inches. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum. Gift of Lincoln Kirstein, 1993.87.2
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, New York Art © Jon F. Anderson, Estate of Paul Cadmus/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Cat. 83 Coles Phillips. HOLEPROOF HOSIERY Advertisement,1924

this figure is poisonous—it is the power of love's negation.[16] This is pride stripped of the peacock's comedic pomposity and made grotesque.

The mating impulse and the peacock's reputation as a dashing roué and seducer of other birds was daringly and humorously parodied in 1910 in a Paas Dye Co. Easter greeting card titled "When the Rooster Saw the Easter Eggs" [Cat. 54]. On it an incredulously cuckolded rooster glowers at his mate's rainbow nest of eggs, threatening "Wait till I catch that peacock!" as his rival smugly struts out the barnyard door. The dashing peacock's role as stand-in for the swaggering man is overt in Cole Phillips' 1924 advertisement for *Holeproof Hosiery* [Cat. 83]. The woman, clad only in slip and stockings, bends over, admiring and admired by the bird, whose head and beak are aligned suggestively towards her thighs. Perhaps her silk stockings are in danger of holes after all. Despite the woman being scantily clad, in this image the peacock is depicted rather stiffly and appears almost as a heraldic device, a crest that provides a shot of needed "class" to a down-market product. Even more overt, *Dean's Peacock Condoms* were a popular brand during the first half of the 20th century [Fig. 19]. The striking bright yellow circular box from the 1930s features the male bird "displaying" in a stylized Deco-influenced design, an updating of an earlier advertisement that showed the bird parading regally through a colorful garden—but in none of the ads is a peahen in sight!

Fig. 19 PEACOCK RESERVOIR ENDS. Metal condom box. Dean Rubber Mfg., Co., c. 1930s

The male peacock's bravado meets its match in a 1934 calendar illustration of *Cleopatra* [Cat. 40] by artist Edward Mason Eggleston. Suitably cheesecake in style for a calendar, the designs were probably intended to capitalize on the hit Cecil B. De Mille movie *Cleopatra*, starring Claudette Colbert that was released the same year. The picture is a later example of the "Egyptomania," which came from the discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1922 and influenced design and popular culture through the 1920s and into the 30s. Nevertheless, the artist's historic architectural references seem shaky: the distinct onion-shaped domes of the Taj Mahal-like building in the background offer an "exotic" nod to the peacock's Indian origins but negate any suggestions of Ancient Egypt.

Razzle dazzle is raison d'être for Cleopatra, here Art Deco showgirl. The famous queen wears an elaborate bird headdress that overtly suggests the peacock as the right male consort, while he, conveniently and well-positioned in front of her groin, lets his train of feathers serve as her spectacular fig leaf, a composition also seen in racier versions of *Leda and the Swan*. Here, though, the queen looks bemused and Eggleston's peacock (perhaps due to the artist's limitations) appears stiff and flat.

Contemporary artist Laurel Roth Hope explores the long association between female regality and peacocks in her sculptures, aptly named *Queen* (2013) [Fig. 20] and *La Reina* (2013) [Fig 20 A]. The two sculptures combine dramatically to create a fighting pair, which like Goldschlag's work uses materials long linked to the feminine and now creates a male peacock form. Hope, though, uses the feminine titles of her pieces to twist ideas of gender. Her sculptures combine fake fingernails, false eyelashes, barrettes, and nail polish, suggesting that the telling attributes of constructed femininity lead to a kind of embattled sexual warfare.

Laurel Roth Hope (b. 1973)

Fig. 20 QUEEN, 2013. 58 x 37 x 18 inches
Fig. 20 A LA REINA, 2013. 52 x 30 x 24 inches
Mixed media: fake fingernails, nail polish barrettes, false eyelashes, costume jewelry, walnut, Swarovsky crystals
Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Wendi Norris San Francisco, California

Peacocks signal the vampishness of certain seductresses. Hedy Lamarr makes her grand entrance in Cecil B. De Mille's 1949 sand-and-sandal epic *Samson and Delilah* (1949) [Fig. 21], in a spectacular gown embroidered with peacock feathers (reputedly from a muster of peacocks De Mille kept on his California ranch). Her train fans across the staircase, its thousand peacock eyes signaling to the audience Delilah's vanity and essential untrustworthiness.[17] A century earlier, the English Pre-Raphaelite painter Frederick Sandys had signaled the same suspicion by using a dramatic backdrop of peacock feathers in his depiction of *Vivien* (1863) [Fig. 22], in which the artist depicts the luscious features of his lover Keomi Gray, to portray the femme fatale of Alfred Tennyson's 1859 epic poem *Idylls of the King*. In the story Vivien uses her beauty to seduce Merlin and learn his secrets at the Court of King Arthur.

Another historical woman of dubious morality was Salome, stepdaughter of King Herod, forever associated with the death of John the Baptist. Oscar Wilde, in his play *Salome*, transforms the young girl into a full-blown femme fatale with her dance of the seven veils. The peacock lurks as a sinisterly presence in the background of the ominously titled *Eyes of Herod* (1894) [Cat. 58 B], one of Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations for the English edition of Wilde's play, but it is Salome's disturbing sensuality that is the focus of *The Peacock Skirt* (1894)

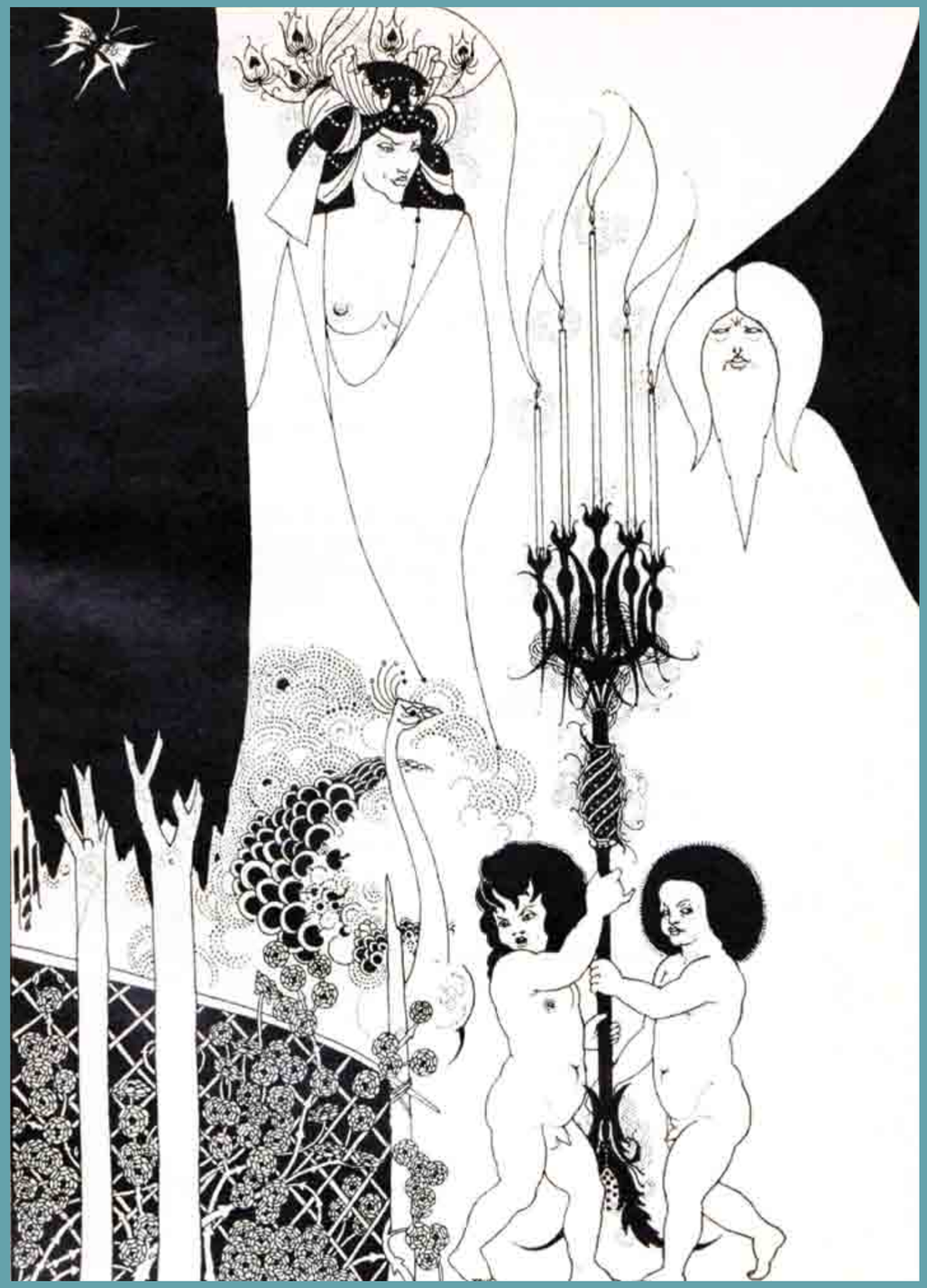
Fig. 21 HEDY LAMARR AS DELILAH. Promtional photograph for the film *Sampson and Delilah*, 1949, directed by Cecil B. DeMille. © Paramount Pictures

Fig. 22 Anthony Frederick Augustus Sandys (1829-1904). VIVIEN, 1863. Oil on canvas 25 1/5 × 20 7/10 inches. Collection of the Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester, England

[Cat. 58 B], from the same set of Beardsley illustrations. The image highlights the quintessential elegance of Beardsley's line, which corresponds to the curves of the peacock's train. Although Wilde's text never directly alludes to Salome's wearing a peacock skirt, Beardsley may have been inspired by later text in the play in which Herod unsuccessfully offers Salome his prized peacocks, if she will rescind her request for John the Baptist's head:

> *Salome, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks . . . Their beaks are gilded with gold and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple . . . There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks . . . I will give them to thee, all."*[18]

Imagery of white peacocks was cresting in popularity as symbols of Art Nouveau in the 1890s, when Wilde was writing, and one critic theorizes that Beardsley's drawing, although not a literal visual translation of Wilde's words, pulls together images and ideas from different parts of the play into a single illustration that gives the image deeper meaning and multiple reference points.[19] In 1894, a reviewer in *The Studio*, discussing Beardsley's drawings for *Salome* and *Le Mort d'Arthur*, characterized his style as "designs which decorate rather than illustrate the text."[20]



Cat. 58 C Aubrey Beardsley. THE EYES OF HEROD, in *Salome* by Oscar Wilde, 1912

Beardsley's peacock drawings were inspiration for famed dancer Loie Fuller, best known in the early 20th century for her dance as a butterfly, achieved by innovative use of long wands attached to lengths of fabric which also transformed her, through colored lights, projections, and imagination into "a peacock, a lily, a conflagration, a cloud."[21] Fuller, who was an artistic inspiration for Ruth St. Denis, performed in *La Tragédie de Salomé*, a balletic adaptation of the story, based not on Wilde's play, but on a poem by Robert d'Humiéres. It premiered at the Comédie Parisienne in 1907, during which Fuller wore a peacock costume for part of the performance to indicate the evilness of Salome's lust and pride.[22]

It is the unexpected sexual role play of the peacock, enacted in not-so-nuanced variations by women and men that fascinates. The sexual role reversal that women have inhabited as alluring symbols of beauty from Eve forward has been attacked as morally suspect, and for many of the artists in *Strut*, the feminine adoption of the peacock's plumage aggravates that supposition. As we have become a society increasingly dominated by visual culture, we are awash in a sea of constantly flashing color images, guiding what is commonly thought sexy and beautiful. As the emphasis on the most blatant elements of sexuality has moved to the forefront, the less flashy characteristics of beauty have been diminished. Attributes previously valued before the arrival of mass-produced color imagery, such as good posture, proud carriage, and a well-modulated voice of dulcet tones, less esteemed in popular culture and the value of the flashy surface beauty of the peacock is more apropos than ever. Perhaps like the peahen, we, the audience that pretends disregard or looks askance at the showy strutting in society all around us, are really playing close attention to the minutest details of the dance, and are drawn like the peahen, inexorably, as the "bee to the blossom, moth to the flame, each to his passion."[23]

NOTES

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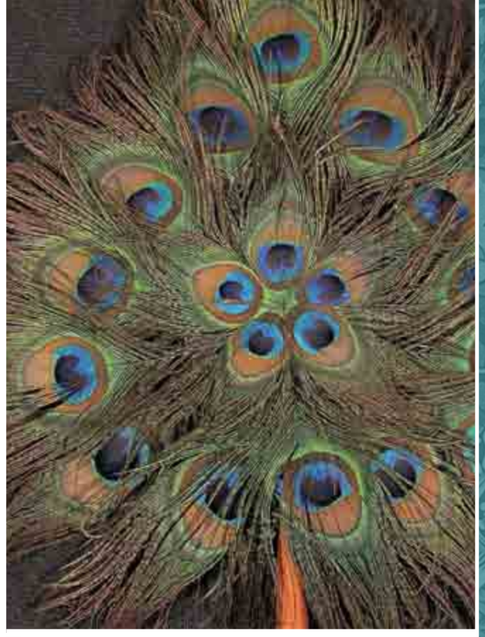


THE PERFECT PLUME

Laura Vookles

NEW YORK PHOTOGRAPHER EDWARD BIERSTADT TRAVELED TO GLENVIEW, the Yonkers river retreat of financier John Bond Trevor and, now, a part of the Hudson River Museum, to complete the book project, *Homes on the Hudson*, published about 1886. When he toured Glenview's parlor, he was probably not surprised to see a peacock standing in full fan before the fireplace. No painted, carved, or embroidered peacock, this was an actual specimen of taxidermy, displaying the train feathers of two peacocks, densely packed and cut from their original five feet to forty-five inches, a height that would not block the attractive sight lines of the room.

Eerie in its freeze frame of life-in-death, the peacock, preserved, signaled consumption and refined taste in the 19th-century home. Fortunately Bierstadt focused his camera on the fireplace and made sure to include the "Glenview parlor peacock" in his view [Cat. 104]. Advertisements for stuffed peacocks in magazines of the day list the peacock as a decorative consumer product—a fire screen, not a hunting trophy. Feathers form a fragile screen that would be purely ornamental to hide an empty, soot-stained hearth,

Details
Left, Gabriel Schachinger. SWEET REFLECTIONS, 1886
Top, PEACOCK FEATHER FAN (Rigid), Late 19th century
Center, Tricia Wright. DOMESTIC ANIMAL, RECUMBENT, 2014
Bottom, PEACOCK FEATHER AND MORNING GLORIES, Late 19th century

Cat. 104 Edward Bierstadt. GLENVIEW PARLOR WITH PEACOCK "FIRE SCREEN," c. 1886

rather than block or focus heat from a lit fire. In 1871, a British household journal listed: "A peacock beautifully mounted, with its tail spread, for a stove ornament or screen, new. Open to good offers."[1] Closer to the date of the Glenview photograph, an editor of the American *Peterson's Magazine* described a peacock screen as an assemblage of parts like the one in Glenview.

> *Peacock's feathers make very elegant screens….One of the most effective screens made of them is a fire-screen, using the head, heart, and feathers and representing the bird standing with outstretched plumage.* [2]

The peacock's feathers with waving barbs and iridescent "eyes" are marvelous in their own right—a scientific wonder, without which the peacock could just be any other colorful bird. With one-hundred-and-fifty or more feathers raised in an arc as he struts his mating dance, the peacock may embody beauty of color, line, drama, and sexuality, or our mixed feelings about beauty, but one thing is clear, the bird owes its beauty to its feathers.[3] Fanned up, flounced down, or saved for decoration, the relation of feather to bird, or part to whole, has a range of expression in the visual arts and varies with the number of feathers and how they are used. With just two Indian blue peacock feathers, Robert Ward Van Boskerck could give graceful curves, color, and class to a simple still life [Cat. 36], whereas a profusion might be as shockingly opulent as the bird itself. The Chinese blue-and-white porcelain plate in his painting leans against the feathers, suggesting his appreciation for Asian art and the exotic beauty of the Far East.

The peacock's train feathers show such complexity of natural structure that 19th-century theorists used them as an argument for intelligent design.[4] In the early 20th century Abbott Thayer painted *Peacock in the Woods* (1907) to illustrate his observation that the peacock's eye-catching plumage serves it well to hide in its original jungle habitat[5] [Cat. 35]. Even Charles Darwin, in *Origin of the Species* (1859), was troubled by the existence of a creature that seemed to represent natural selection of beauty over traits that would ensure survival.[6] Yet the beauty of the cock's tail that indicates health encourages "Sexual Selection," and the survival of this elegant species.

Cat. 36 Robert Ward Van Boskerck. STILL LIFE WITH CERAMIC PLATE AND PEACOCK FEATHERS ON A LEDGE, c. 1907

In some European cultures, the suggestion of many watchful eyes, the *oculi*, on a peacock's feathers inspired superstitious fears of impending bad luck, or even death. A short piece in the January 1892 *Ornithologist* began, "There was a time when peacock feathers were tabooed because considered too unlucky to be admitted to the house. Now my lady is not at all up to the mode if she has no screen of the vain bird's plumage in her boudoir."[7] Yet by December, the same periodical reported, "Peacock feathers are again condemned as unlucky….Daniel Hodnot of Long Branch…brought home a screen made of Peacock feathers. He told his wife…they would disprove the commonly received notion…..Since then … a valuable dog of his died without apparent cause; burglars have entered the place and stolen valuables, and …Mr. Hodnot…died."[8]

Despite such lingering fears, Victorians and Edwardians trimmed their hats with peacock feathers, which are easily available in the fall when peacocks molt after mating season. The woman in Julian Alden Weir's painting *The Peacock Feather* (c.1907-08) [Cat. 37] sports a single plume dangling from a large hat. Her attire and the portrait as well

Cat. 37 Julian Alden Weir. THE PEACOCK FEATHER, c. 1907-08

are nearly monochromatic, except for a bit of pale peacock hue to go with the feather. Weir's choice of title, calling attention to the feather and not to the sitter, belies the apparently casual nature of his visual reference.[9]

People used feathers to make fans for both fashion and comfort before the invention of air conditioning and filled the vases in their parlors with the slim greenish blue feathers. Chic folk loved ostrich plumes for their lush fullness and curl but the peacock's feathers, despite a rather sparse structure, surpassed those of the ostrich in color and, en masse, in the pattern created by multiple eyes. Sportsmen even used the supple barbs of peacock feathers to make fishing lures that resembled live bait. One such insect lending its name to the lures or "fishing flies" is actually called a "peacock fly" because of the circular markings on its tiny wings.

Cat. 75 Thomas Nast. WE ARE NOT PROUD. DIDN'T I TOLD YOU SO?, June 19, 1875

A Peacock is Never Just a Bird
A Peacock Feather is Never Just a Feather

The peacock's train feathers are so associated with its beauty as to convey associations for the entire bird, but its loose feathers also carry their own traditional narrative allusions. One of the most ancient tales about peacock feathers is Aesop's fable "The Vain Jackdaw." The small black-and-grey bird, with an unfortunate but decided resemblance to a carrion crow, "imagined that all he needed to make himself fit for the society of peacocks was a dress like theirs." He hung the peacock's feathers about his own frame and "strutted loftily among the birds of his own kind." But he was soon found out and punished by both the peacocks and birds of his own feather. The ancient Greek Aesop's stern moral—"borrowed feathers do not make fine birds"—probably resonated in an era of shifting class structures.[10] Educated Victorians also understood the tale as a warning against "presumptive ignorance." Painter and educator James D. Harding used it as an analogy for the importance of art study: "To wear the character of boldness without the authority of knowledge [is] an ample illustration of the jackdaw in the plumage of the peacock."[11]

Legendary American illustrator Thomas Nast alluded to the same interpretation of Aesop's Jackdaw fable in a *Harper's Weekly* self-portrait of himself at his easel [Cat. 75]. He captioned the cartoon "We are not Proud," but slyly proved his modesty false with the subtitle, "Didn't I told you so?" with three peacock feathers sticking out the back of his suit. Nast shows himself surrounded by cartoons related to President Ulysses S. Grant's policies and actions in articles debating Grant's possible run for a third term in the White House. By alluding to Aesop, he makes fun at his own expense, hinting that his pride may be mere vanity.

Apart from any suggestions from story or myth, the bright colors of peacock feathers make them highly prized acquisitions for their purely visual appeal. Before artificial dyes were invented in the 1850s, bird plumage was a natural source of brilliant color. The Victorians in England or the United States were also fascinated by preserved nature—skeletonized leaves, pressed flowers, taxidermy, and feathers. References to decorating with peacock feathers in vases appear as early as 1840, when a writer in London's *Mirror of Literature* commented:

> *From whatever circumstances the reverence for peacock's feathers originated, it is not, even yet, quite exploded. In some countries, we cannot enter a farm-house where the mantelpiece in the parlour is not decorated with a diadem of peacock's feathers, which are carefully dusted and preserved; and even in houses of more presuming pretensions, the same custom frequently prevails.* [12]

Forty years later Mrs. Burton Harrison drew a small Chinese vase of three peacock feathers in her illustration for a "Cretonnne Drapery for Mantel-piece"and also describes making a wall plaque out of an artist's palette and sticking some peacock feathers through the thumb hole.[13] In 1892 the home decoration editor, "Salome," not only praised "a slender necked vase with a bunch of peacock feathers, which always adds to the coloring of a room," but also enthused, "They can be put anywhere—tacked on the wall, pinned on a screen, or fastened over a picture, and always look well."[14]

Artistic Houses, a publication now regarded as an invaluable record of Gilded Age taste, provides photographic evidence of some uses for peacocks

Fig. 23 PEACOCK AND VASE OF FLOWERS IN THE DRAWING ROOM, FEDERICK F. THOMPSON HOUSE, (detail). Plate 63 from *Artistic Houses: Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States*... by George William Sheldon. D. Appleton & Co., 1883

Cat. 90 Christopher Dresser. PEACOCK VASE (FOR FEATHERS), c.1896

in the sumptuous American interiors of the 1880s. One was the New York City apartment of artist and decorator Louis Comfort Tiffany, known for his enthusiastic appropriation of peacock motifs in stained glass windows, lamps, and favrile glass vases.[15] Tiffany, obviously not concerned with the superstition of never bringing the feathers inside, filled a vase with loose feathers in the corner of his library. Later he kept live peacocks at his Long Island estate, Laurelton Hall, and in 1914 even recreated a medieval roasted peacock feast with "peacocks carried on the shoulders of young women in the classic costumes of ancient Greeks.... [and] Miss Phyllis de Kay... leading a stately peacock, appeared as Juno."[16]

Artistic Houses featured "The Drawing Room, Frederick F. Thompson House," which has both a vase of feathers and an entire peacock on the mantel [Fig. 23]. Three other homes have peacocks mounted on open staircases. Unlike the Glenview fire screen, the feathered trains of these specimens of taxidermy drape like waterfalls over bannisters.[17] Clearly peacocks—actual birds and feathers, not just artworks depicting them—were a desirable home decoration in the mid-to-late 19th century. Their popularity was mirrored in a proliferation of peacocks that appear in home decoration, commercial graphic arts, and in fashion and personal accessories. Christopher Dresser, known today for Aesthetic Movement art pottery and industrial design, conceived a vase that linked the real bird to the representational [Cat. 90]. The vase, molded into a peacock shape, held the famous peacock tail. Pierced with holes, real peacock feathers could be dropped into the glazed tail and displayed.

The arc of a peacock's train feathers, when in full display, looks like the fans its human admirers used for fashion and comfort. The Hudson River Museum's collection has two types of 19th-century peacock feather fans—one folding and made from pierced sandalwood sticks, and, an earlier type of "stationary" fan, which did not fold [Cat. 142,143]. Peacock plumes added an exotic element to the flirtatious language of fans. In 1886 the drawing of a young woman that Elihu Vedder contributed to *A Book of the Tile Club* [Cat. 80] needed only a small peacock feather fan to evoke her allegorical title, *The Orient*. A contemporary valentine depicts a girl in historicized "Dutch" garb who carries a similar, rigid fan [Cat. 50]. The peacock feathers add color and a sense of luxury to her somber dress. The illustrator knew intimately

Cat. 80 Elihu Vedder, THE ORIENT, 1886

the peacock craze of the 19th-century's Gilded Age, just as he painted the feather fans he saw in Old Master paintings.

Fine art painters abandoned the peacock after it appeared in a number of 18th-century Dutch and English barnyard and park scenes. Perhaps the bird's novelty wore off, but it is also true that elite art circles around 1800 relegated such genre scenes to a lower status. The artistic peacock of the 19th-century persists largely in commercial and craft productions. Manufacturers printed birds and feathers on fabrics for clothes and furnishings. From the 1830s to 1850s, artists were still aiming for a fairly realistic interpretation of the bird and other natural elements, yet some surviving examples show a charming lack of concern for accuracy in scale or inspiration from actual colors. The earth tones in these fabrics reflect fashion and reveal the limitation of natural dyes [Cat. 133]. Starting in the late 1850s, the development of artificial colors, particularly

Cat. 125 PEACOCK FEATHERS AND ROSES, late 19th-early 20th centuries

Cat. 101 VASE WITH PEACOCK FEATHER MOTIF, c.1878-90

Cat. 88 Galileo Chini. PEACOCK PATTERN VASE, c. 1900

chemical aniline dyes, launched a fad for the bright hues they made possible. A later fabric with an intwining peacock feather and floral border owes the intensely teal eyes, pink roses, and chartreuse leaves to these discoveries and exemplifies the rise of the use of the feather alone [Cat. 125].

Beginning in the 1850s, the English Arts and Crafts Movement was a turning point for the peacock in painting, and the decorative and graphic arts. The interest of artists like William Morris and the other pre-Raphaelites in medieval and Japanese art may have brought peacocks to their attention. Many early Christian illuminated manuscripts featured peacocks, but artists in London could also see related decorative arts. With the support of Prince Albert, an exhibition of ancient and medieval art opened in 1850, the year before the Crystal Palace Exhibition. The catalogue preface made its mission clear "… some of the most exquisite specimens of modern manufactures owe their beauty of form and colour to the closeness of their imitation of 'old fashioned' models…." Several items lent incorporated peacocks, such as "a Salver enameled with peacock feathers" and "an Ewer, in which occurs…an enameled portrait, surrounded by a pattern of peacock's feathers."[18]

Whether bird or feather, fanned out or relaxed, the peacock displayed a linearity of form that adapted to the stylization of Morris and followers—winding S-forms, the barbs or fringe of feathers in close detail, the drama of contrast provided by the dark eyes at the tips. An editor of the journal *Painting and Decorating* summed up the era's preference for abstracting natural forms: "A conventionalization of the peacock as a motive produces a more agreeable effect than if the wall was covered with an endless series of natural representations of the bird."[19] Sometimes this pattern subsumed and subdued the flamboyance of the peacock, as in William Morris's *Peacock and Dragon Curtain*, designed in 1878 [Cat. 115]. Both creatures show Morris's interest in Asian art but his adaptation is more in the style of the medieval. Constraining the natural form within dark outlining and solid, flat colors, asserted design as the primary focus. The peacock was understood as a stamp of artistic taste not only for Morris and his elite patrons, but especially for middle-class consumers.

Cat. 96 Tiffany Studios. PEACOCK TABLE LAMP WITH TURTLEBACK GLASS BASE, c. 1900

Less expensive art goods were now in reach and home decorating for people of average means was new; and it was reassuring to think that a peacock or feather in the pattern was a visible signifier of the aesthetic validity of their purchase. In the home, the negative connotations of earlier superstitions were downplayed in favor of aesthetic concerns.

As with textiles, wallpaper provided consumers with opportunities to express tasteful decoration with peacock feathers. An anonymous wallpaper design from the 19th century makes a striking pattern of alternating peacocks—train of feathers up, then, train down against a background of branches and leaves on bright yellow [Cat. 126]. With its train relaxed, the bird seems less aggressively pompous, its feathers cascading into a relaxed S-curve—the line of beauty. Noted English Arts and Crafts designer Edward William Godwin created peacock wallpaper with alternating roundels of the bird's head and a single feather eye, each surrounded by a fanned train.

The peacock feather emerged as a decorative element in the Aesthetic Movement, par excellence. Designers poured artistry into all types three-dimensional decorative arts for the home, not just wallpaper and fabrics. Feathers in size and shape were more malleable than the entire bird. Two vases from the late 19th century illustrate the design potential of the peacock feather, especially on smaller scale objects. A Crown Derby porcelain artist encircled a rounded vase with the rounded form of peacock's feather tips [Cat. 101].

If the feather can stand in for the peacock, it is also true that the feather can be stripped down to nothing but the iconic "eyes," that mark its tail feathers and still strike a chord of recognition for people in many times and places. Twenty years later Italian painter and potter Galileo Chini adapted the same rounded forms when he made his peacock vase [Cat. 88], but he abstracted the peacock eye, painting it in strong colors. His creations seem as much a harbinger of modernism as a wrap up to the curves of Art Nouveau.

The simplified form of the peacock eye also lent itself to the smaller, simpler shape of a lamp, rather than large windows. Lampshades needed to be assembled from glass cut into tiny shapes with clean lines. Louis Comfort Tiffany made two styles of peacock shades both emphasizing the "eyes": one a half globe [Cat. 96], the other a shallower dome bordered by a deep band [Cat. 95]. With their sharp angled pieces

dotted with the eyes, the shades have a fragmented aesthetic reminiscent of crazy quilts, or rather the Japanese "cracked ice" compositions that inspired them. Examples exist paired with several styles of bases, some squat and studded with Tiffany's trademark turtleback glass, the irregularity and roughness of which is reminiscent of the aesthetic of Japanese Raku ware. Later, Tiffany adopted peacock feather forms and eyes in the softer, more sinuous lines for his Favrile glass. Some of these vases and bowls are more literal suggestions of eyes, and others revel in the intense peacock blue hues with faint suggestions of barbs [Cat. 97,98,99].

Cat. 49 Maurice Pillard Verneuil. PAONS ET VIGNE, 1897

But whether realistic or stylized, the bird or the feather, peacocks may be most evident in late 19th and early 20th century graphic arts. American, British, and European artists celebrated the peacock in an array of designs not only for wall coverings and printed textiles, but also in fine art prints, illustrations, book covers, posters, and advertisements. During the Aesthetic Movement, obsession with categorization and the escalation of the modern image revolution motivated some artists to focus on compendiums of design ideas—both their own and researched worldwide. One such publication was Maurice Pillard Verneuil's *L'Animal dans la Décoration* (1897), in which he runs wild with the patterns and decorative possibilities of all sorts of creatures [Cat. 49]. He constrains two peacocks into an arched form—mimicking the shape of a single peacock fan, in which the dominating feature becomes the patterns of the feather eyes.

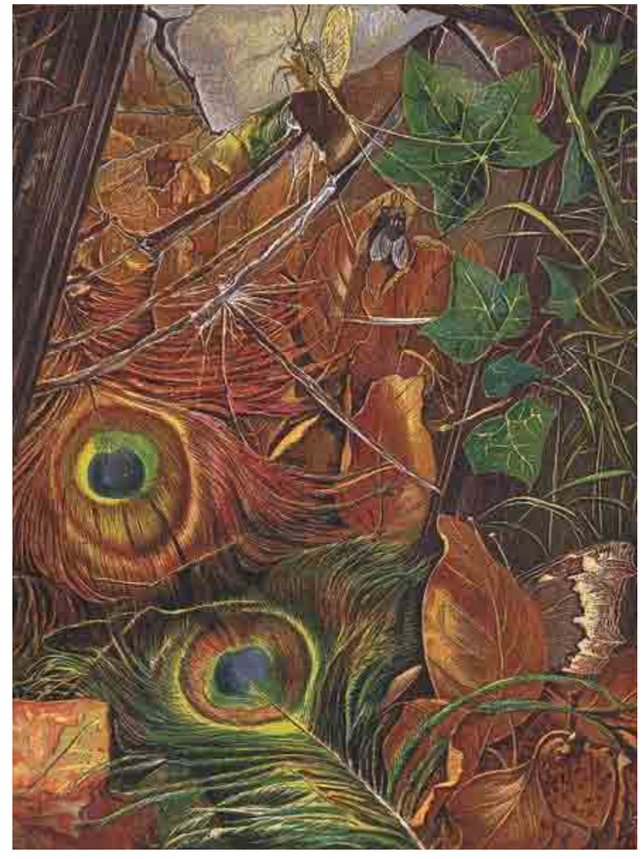
In small-scale print one or two feathers were all that was needed to reference art, beauty, or the more traditional theme associations of the bird. Most depictions concentrated on the feather tips. On an 1880s trade card advertising Stoutenburgh & Co. as "the best place to buy your clothing for the least money" [Cat. 53], the curved and waving feathers tipped with dark "eyes" begin to resemble the flowers and ferns shown with them on the card.

Cat. 53 TRADE CARD OF NEWARK, NEW JERSEY CLOTHIER, c.1880s

One of the most stunning examples of color book illustration is Eleanor Vere Boyle's illustration for *And a Neglected Looking Glass* from the 1868 edition of a popular children's book of the period, *The Story without an End* [Cat. 64]. She takes the opening lines as her starting point:

> *There was once a Child who lived in a little hut, and in the little hut there was nothing but a little bed, and a looking-glass which hung in a dark corner. Now the Child cared nothing at all about the looking-glass, but as soon as … he arose… went out into the green meadow.*[20]

Boyle's composition—with the mirror cracked and forgotten outdoors and reflecting a peacock feather, autumn leaves, ivy, a dragonfly, and even a hidden mouse—is her own interpretation, inspired by later scenes in the woods. The child sees the sky and trees reflected in the surface of a pond and, accompanied by the dragonfly, ponders which is real.[29]



Cat. 64 Eleanor Vere Boyle. AND A NEGLECTED LOOKING GLASS, 1868

Cat. 135 Louis Aucoc. ART NOUVEAU PEACOCK FEATHER BROOCH. c.1900

Fig. 24 Charles Robert Ashbee (1863-1942) GUILD OF HANDICRAFT BROOCH IN THE FORM OF A PEACOCK STANDING ON AN OPAL ORB, c. 1900
Silver, gold, opal, peridot, 3 3/8 x 1 3/4 inches
Courtesy of Tadema Gallery, London

Boyle's addition of the peacock feather, never mentioned in the story, is certainly a reference to the vanity associated with mirrors, and since a cast off, forgotten feather, perhaps also a "vanitas" reference to the futility of trying to hold onto superficial beauty. During this period several painters used peacock feathers juxtaposed with beautiful women to make the same inferences. In *Sweet Reflections* (1886), the German painter Gabriel Schachinger depicts a young woman gazing into the mirror of what seems to be a hall stand [Cat. 34]. He pays exquisite attention to painting the details, colors and textures of the dark ebonized frame contrasted with her white satin skirt, the large bunch of flowers and spray of peacock feathers. Her inscrutable face is seen only in the mirror, revealed by an artful gap in the feathers: the combination suggests that the title "reflections" are bittersweet.

Despite Aesop's warnings about the vanity of donning false plumage in the "Vain Jackdaw," the peacock's colors, exoticism, and stamp of beauty made it immensely appealing to fashion designers and consumers of personal adornment. Jewelry was one obvious way to deck oneself with the image of the peacock, and the delicate and linear feather was well suited to interpretation by jewelers. Tiffany & Co., the New York City store founded by designer Louis Comfort Tiffany's father, displayed a diamond-studded feather at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia; and in 1900 the French firm Mellerio dits Meller displayed twelve peacock jewels in fine metals, diamonds, and enamels at the Paris International Exhibition.

Enameling techniques could capture the vivid intensity of the peacock's colors. Louis Aucoc, president of the Paris expo's jewelry jury, combined an artfully curved enamel feather and diamond-set scrolls with the profile of a woman in a brooch that is a masterpiece of Art Nouveau jewelry [Cat. 135]. Aucoc, like his famous apprentice René Lalique, used the French enamel technique known as plique-à-jour, which as its name ("letting in daylight") implies, is similar to stained glass and adds a unique glow to the jewel. A beautiful woman surrounded by peacock feathers became a clichéd conceit, but in the hands of artists such as Aucoc still had the power to bring us visual joy. English jeweler Charles Robert Ashbee, who founded The Guild of Handicraft and also exhibited at Paris in 1900, favored a more austere line and distilled the S and ovoid forms of the whole bird into a simplified yet equally graceful silver and opal brooch [Fig. 24]. Ashbee designed several peacock jewels, some depicted at the time in the magazine *International Studio* and the book *Modern Design in Jewellery and Fans*.[22]

Besides using the jeweled feather to adorn oneself, there are documented dresses lavished with real feathers, such as the peacock costume worn by Princess Anna Murat to a dress ball in Paris: "... her train being of white tulle covered with peacocks' eyes... peacocks' feathers in her breast and in her hair.... aigrettes of peacocks' plumes ... confined by an immense brooch."[23] But most peacock gowns featured representations of feathers and whole birds—printed, embroidered or beaded. One of the most famous of peacock dresses must be the House of Worth design worn by Lady Curzon in 1903 at the ball after the Delhi Durbar, a festival to proclaim King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra, Emperor and Empress of India [Fig. 25]. Lady Curzon, the American socialite Mary Leiter, moved to India with her husband, Lord Curzon, appointed British Viceroy to the country. She sent Worth a gold fabric embroidered with hundreds of peacock feathers by Indian craftsmen. Popular in Western fashion at the time, the blue indian peacock had special significance to their diplomatic position.[24] Yet when she died with in a few short years after wearing the dress, there was talk that the peacock feathers had brought her bad luck [Cat. 71].

Fig. 25 LADY CURZON WEARING THE FAMOUS WORTH PEACOCK DRESS AT THE 1903 DURBAR FESTIVITIES, c. 1903
detail of a colorized postcard

For all its gold extravagance Lady Curzon's dress is monotonous compared to the vivid color combinations inspired in the early 20th century by Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, which toured sixteen American cities in 1916. His costume designer, Leon Bakst, reveled in peacocks, peacock-eye patterns, and Persian design, and the Ballets Russes galvanized women's fashion [Cat. 61]. Bakst's design for the ballerina's costume in La Péri, composed by Paul Dukas, was pictured in a Metropolitan Opera Company souvenir journal even though the ballet was not part of the tour, which was performed at the Met. In Persian mythology, a peri is a winged being similar to a genie or fairy and in the ballet she guards "the flower of immortality." Bakst covers

Cat. 61 Léon Bakst. THE PERI FROM "PERI," 1916

her small wings with peacock feather eyes and repeats the motif on her headdress, recalling her Persian origin and exoticism.

All this artistic reproduction did not quell the lust for the actual feather, at least not during the Gilded Age, and, as with sunflowers, the peacock feather became so associated with taste and fashion that it was subject to satire. Edward Linley Sambourne, in *Punch*, did this in cartoons. One from 1871 shows "Designs after Nature. Grand Back-Hair Sensation for the coming Season," in which he gently mocks the predilection to cover oneself in plumage—even elements of taxidermy [Cat. 76]. The illustrator imagines a fashion statement with way too much of a good thing—an entire peacock perched on the woman's head, complete with matching parasol. His caption suggests he is comparing the natural covering of birds to that of humans, as if women are taking an animal form. At the time, there was growing activism against the exploitation and killing of birds to obtain their feathers for the fashion industry. Though peacocks molt, their popularity put them in danger when demand outstripped natural availability.

A different Victorian periodical published a humorous conversation between a young boy and a peacock feather.[25] He asked the

Cat. 76 Edward Linley Sambourne
MR. PUNCH'S DESIGNS AFTER NATURE. GRAND BACK-HAIR SENSATION FOR THE COMING SEASON, April 1, 1871

Fig. 26 Janet Fish (b. 1938). PEACOCK FEATHERS, MOON, 2006, Oil on canvas, 48 x 70 inches. Private Collection
Courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York Art © Janet Fish/Licensed by Vaga, New York, NY

feather, decoratively standing in a vase, what its "eye" could see. The feather answered, "Alas! I can not see anything....But...some other people...have eyes and can't see." Its riddle confounded the boy. How we see peacocks and their feathers in art, from paintings to decorative objects to advertisements, says much about prevailing ideas of who and what should be beautiful, and how we see that beauty. Is it a bird, the peacock, with a harsh voice or is it a bird clothed in a glorious fan of feathers? Is beauty a feather fan in the hand of a vain siren or one held by a pure and lovely girl? Does the peacock's feather represent the sin of pride or are its "eyes" the tips of the wings of angels, as they have been depicted from Fra Filippo Lippi in the 1450s to John La Farge in the 1890s?[26] Even today, painter Janet Fish, enamored with color and effects of light, spreads feathers across a still life and, like Julian Alden Weir, makes sure her title tells us the object of her affection: *Peacock Feathers, Moon* (2006) [Fig. 26]. As we look at the shimmering eyes of the peacock's plumes, our narrowed focus allows us to notice some element of beauty we never saw before.

NOTES

1 The *Bazaar, Exchange and Mart,* and *Journal of the Household*, v. 5 (Thomas Davids, 1871), pages 282 (Sep. 13), 337(Sep. 20), 337(Sep. 27), 364 (Oct. 4).
2 *Peterson's Magazine*, v. 79, n. 2, Feb. 1881, 165.
3 In technical terms this "train" is made of upper tail covert feathers, not main tail quill feathers it has evolved to completely hide.
4 James L. Drummond, M.D., *Letters to a Young Naturalist*... (London, 1831). Even a contemporary author – Stuart Burgess, "The Beauty of the Peacock Tail and the Problems with the Theory of Sexual Selection" August 1, 2001 / Accessed 5/17/14, 3:55 PM, Answers in Genesis https://answersingenesis.org/natural-selection/peacock-tail-beauty-and-problems-theory-of-sexual-selection/ Originally published in *Journal of Creation* 15(2): 94-102, August 2001.
5 Gerald H. Thayer, with an introductory essay by Abott H. Thayer, *Concealing-Coloration in the Animal Kingdom, an Exposition of the Laws of Disguise through Color and Pattern: Being a Summary of Abbott H. Thayer's Discoveries*, illustrated by A. H. Thayer, G. H. Thayer, Richard S. Meryman and others (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1909), legend of frontispiece. Though Thayer's theories led to the development of military camouflage, his ideas about peacocks and other creatures with adaptive colors were widely challenged. See, for example: Stephen Jay Gould, *The Hedgehog, the Fox, and the Magister's Pox* (Harvard University Press, 2011), 170-172.
6 Darwin, F., (Ed), Letter to Asa Gray, dated 3 April 1860, The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin, John Murray, London, Vol. 2, p. 296, 1887; 1911 Edition, D. Appleton and Company, New York and London, Vol. 2, pp. 90–91. As sited by Burgess, "The Beauty of the Peacock Tail."
7 "No Longer Tabooed," *Ornithologist and Oologist*, Jan. 1892, 12.
8 "About the Peacock," *Ornithologist and Oologist*, Dec. 1892, 181.
9 The 1908 exhibition of this painting documents "The Peacock Feather" as the original title. The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, Albright Art Gallery, *Catalogue of the Third Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists* (Buffalo: printed for the Academy, 1908), 32, 79 (ill.).
10 "The Vain Jackdaw and his Borrowed Feathers," *The Aesop for Children* (Rand, McNally & Co., 1919), 51.
11 James D. Harding, "Lessons on Art," reprinted in *The Art-Journal*, v. 1 (London, 1849), 207.
12 *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, London, Oct. 17, 1840, pp. 248-249.
13 Mrs. Burton Harrison, *Woman's Handiwork in Modern Homes*, (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1881), 124, 173.
14 Salome, "Charming Rooms" (in the column "Round Table"), *Autumn Leaves*, published for the Youth of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Lamoni, Iowa; later became *Vision: a Magazine for Youth*), March 1892, 141.
15 *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age*, Plate 16: *Vase of Feathers in Library*, Louis C. Tiffany apartment, 48 East 26th Street, New York, NY.
16 "Peacock Bearers Surprise Guests of Mr. Tiffany," *New York Herald*, May 16, 1914.
17 *The Opulent Interiors of the Gilded Age: All 203 Photographs* from *Artistic Houses, with New Text* By Arnold Lewis, James Turner, and Steven McQuillin (Dover Architecture, 1987). A reprint of *Artistic Houses-: Being a Series of Interior Views of a Number of the Most Beautiful and Celebrated Homes in the United States*..., by George William Sheldon, printed for the subscribers by D. Appleton & Co., 1883. See plate 63: *Peacock and Vase of Feathers in Drawing Room, Frederick F. Thompson House*, 1879-81; plate 23: *Peacock in Hall, Frederic W. Stevens House*; plate 39: *Peacock in Hall, Henry M. Flagler House*; plate 182: *Peacock in Hall, C. Oliver Iselin House*; plate 18: *Vase of Feathers in Dining Room, William T. Lusk House*; plate 68: *Two vases of Feathers in Library, William S. Kimball House*.
18 *Catalogue of the works of Ancient and Medieval Art exhibited at the House of the Society of Arts*, (London, 1850), 1, 24, 25.
19 "Wall Paper Interior Decoration," A. Ashmun Kelly, Frederick Maire, Arthur Seymour Jennings, eds., *Painting and Decorating, A Journal Treating of House, Sign, Fresco, Car, and Carriage Painting and of Wall Paper and Decoration* (New York: Trade News Publishing Company), June 1894, 593.
20 Sarah Austin (translated form the German of Carové), *The Story without an End*, (London: Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston, 1868), 1.
21 Austin, *The Story without an End*, 15, 18-20.
22 "Studio Talk," *International Studio* (January 1903), 208-209; Charles Holme, *Modern Design in Jewellery and Fans* (London, Paris, New York, 1902), 3-4.
23 Godey's *Lady's Book* (Aug. 1864), 180.
24 Later, India officially declared the peacock its national bird in 1963.
25 Alice Wellington Rollins, "Tommy Interviews a Peacock Feather," *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks*, v. 14, Mar. 1887, 365-366.
26 For example, Fra Filippo Lippi. *The Annunciation*, c. 1450-53, The National Gallery, London, Gift of Sir Charles Eastlake, 1861; John La Farge, *The Angel of the Resurrection*, Susan Watts Street Memorial Window, 1897-98, Church of the Messaiah, Rhinebeck, NY.

THE PEACOCK IN LITERATURE

Penelope Fritzer

THE PEACOCK IS SUCH AN AMAZING LOOKING CREATURE, especially when its bright blue, green, and yellow tail is in full display, that one can well imagine a listener's disbelief hearing the bird described. But describe it we have—in myths and novels, in poems, and in science studies. Thousands of years observing and writing have inspired visual artists of every age and art movement, Old Master, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, and modernism, to create visual proof of the bird's beauty.

The peacock appears in various literatures, earliest and most famously in the Greek myth of Hera and the peacock and then later the Roman myth of Juno [Fig. 27]. There are innumerable versions but a quick telling of the story explains how the peacock got the many "eyes" on its grandiose tail: the fancy of the god Zeus (Jupiter for the Romans) was taken by the maiden Io, whom he quickly changed into a cow to hide her from his wife Hera (Juno for the Romans). Suspicious, Hera ordered her cowherd, Argus of the hundred eyes to watch Io. Sadly Argus, at Zeus's instigation was killed by Hermes, messenger of the gods. Angry

Details
Left and Top, Walter Crane. THE PEACOCK'S COMPLAINT. *Baby's Own Aesop*, 1887
Center, Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi. THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI, c. 1440-1460
Bottom, Wenceslaus Hollar. JUNO AND THE PEACOCK, n.d.

Fig. 27 Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) JUNO AND ARGUS, c. 1610. Oil on canvas
98 x 116 1/2 inches. Collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, Germany
Photography: Rheinisches Bildarchiv Köln

Hera gave tribute to the murdered Argus as the Roman poet Ovid put into verse,

> *Juno retrieved those eyes to set in place among the feathers of her bird and filled his tail with starry jewels.*[1]

Another ancient Greek writer, Aristophanes, briefly mentions peacocks in his play *The Birds*, and Aesop's fable "The Peacock and the Crane" [Cat. 52] that establishes the reputation of the peacock as vain and proud, although those characteristics seem to have been transferred to the raven along with the peacock's feathers in Aesop's later fable "The Vain Jackdaw" [Cat. 52 A].

Farther east, Dharmarakshita authored the Tibetan story "Goldenglow, the Peacock in the Poison Grove," relating the adventures of a peacock king who goes to live at the court of a human king, whose wife attempts to poison the peacock visitor. The peacock, in turn, rebuts the scheming woman, whereupon she fades and dies, and the peacock is revealed as the Buddha.[2]

Fig. 28 GANES-A AND SARASVATI, ACCOMPANIED BY A FEMALE ATTENDANT, c. 1800-1805
Gouache painting on paper, 9 x 14 inches

Early references to the peacock appear in Hindu religion, notably in the story of Sarasvati, the wife of Brahma, who often rode upon a peacock [Fig. 28], as did Karttikeya, the god of war, and Hsi Wang Mu, an important Taoist figure. Naturalist and art historian Christine Jackson says, "To Muslims, the peacock is a cosmic symbol, representing either the whole universe or the full moon or sun, when it spreads its train,"[3] and she states:

> *The great divide between eastern and western philosophies and attitudes is clearly marked in relation to peacocks. Over much of the east, the bird is revered for its beauty and held sacred in association with deities, for which it is an avatar or symbol of some characteristic of the god. The attribute is a positive one, power or beauty being most common. In the west, the peacock is perceived as being vain and proud . . . .* [4]

Author and bird lore enthusiast C. W. Beebe agrees, noting that "In all the literature of the Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Jews, there is nothing but commendation of the peacock and unqualified admiration for its beauty. . . . Silly superstitions of the ill-luck of the evil eye are widespread now in the United States, England, France and Germany".[5] In *Gone with the Wind* [1936], Margaret Mitchell characterizes the O'Hara family slaves as afraid of bad luck from her "beautiful peacock-feather fly-brusher...."[6] The peacock does, however, have many traditional positive aspects in the West, including representing the Holy Spirit, immortality, nobility, guardianship, and love.

The Bible, too, tells stories about the peacock as when Job asks God, "Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacock?" (39:13). Claudius Aelian around 200 A. D. in *On the Nature of Animals* describes the peacock as "haughty" and "the most beautiful of birds," also noting its habit of turning around and around so it can be admired (as author Flannery O'Connor also saw two millennia later). Christian theology links the peacock with resurrection, not only because it regrows its tail feathers, but also because its meat was believed long lasting to the point of incorruptibility. In the 400s A.D. St. Augustine marveled, "For who except God, the Creator of all things, endowed the flesh of the dead peacock with the power of never decaying?"[7] Renaissance painters include peacocks in nativity scenes to symbolize Christ's triumph over death [Fig. 29]; yet in the 1290s Marco Polo tells of St. Thomas praying in the midst of peacocks and getting accidentally shot with arrows intended for them (leading to a death much like that of St. Sebastian).[8]

Fig. 29 Fra Angelico, c. 1395-1455 and Fra Filippo Lippi, c. 1406-1469
THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI, c. 1440-1460. Tempera on panel
54 1/16 inches, diameter. Collection of the National Gallery of Art
Samuel H. Kress Collection, 1952.2.2

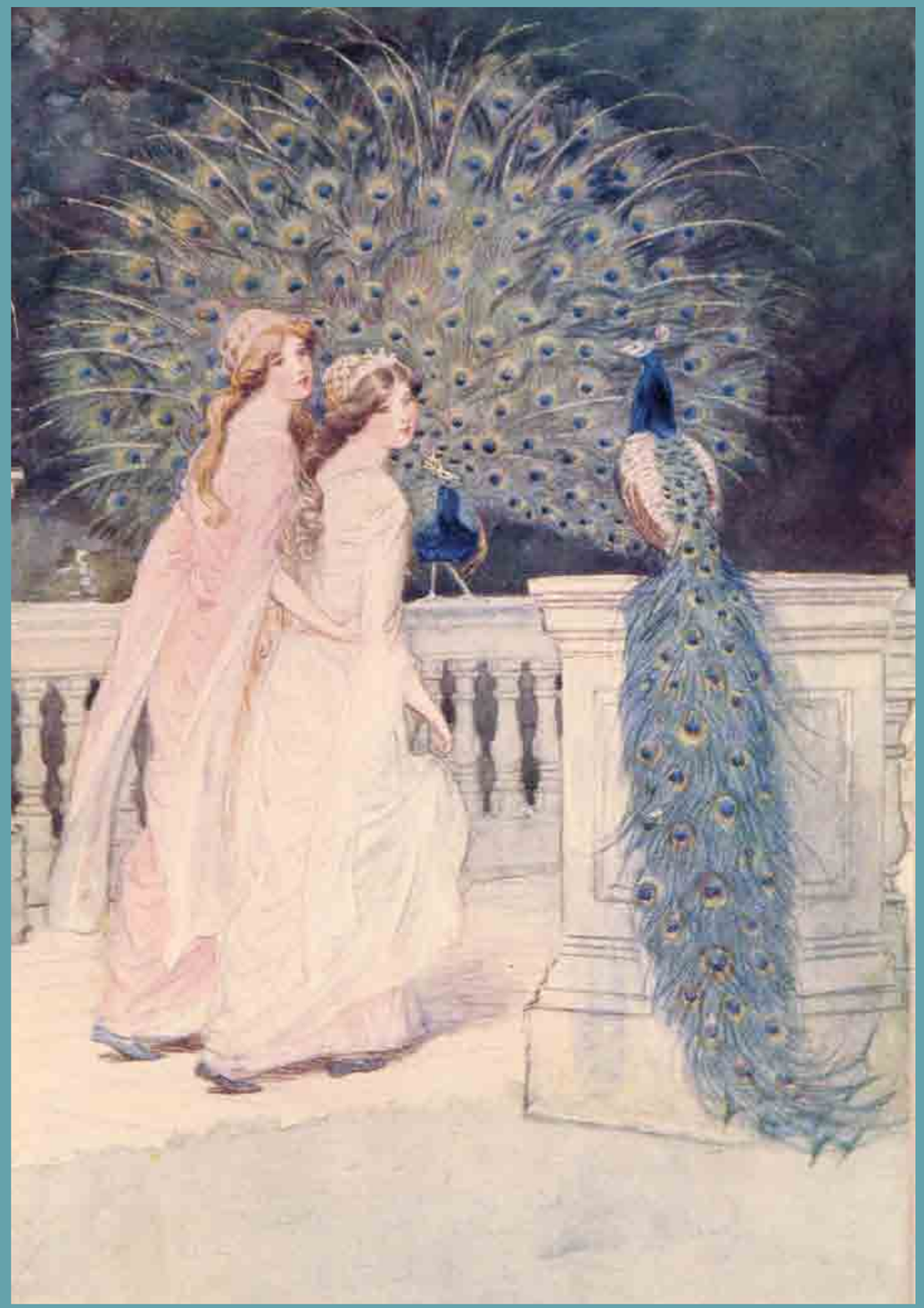
Later in the late 1300s, Geoffrey Chaucer in *Parlement of Foules* refers to "The pecock, with his aungels fethres bright"[9] and describes a yeoman in the "Prologue" to *Canterbury Tales* as having "a sheefe of pecok-arrows,"[10] also labeling the miller of "The Reeve's Tale": "As any pecok he was proud and gay."[11] While in the same period William Langland in *Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman* writes, "As for hus peyntede pennes the pocok is honoured/ More than for hus faire flesh other for hus murye note" (more for his beauty than for his voice).[12] The notoriously political Edmund Spenser cites the peacock in his poem *Muiopotmos*, an allegory about Clarion the Butterfly, of which critic Thomas Herron says, "Clarion's colors outdo those of 'Iunoes bird,' the peacock, a symbol of guardianship associated with the queen of the Olympian gods [Hera], and hence Queen Elizabeth."[13]

Cat. 73 Percy Macquoid, THE CHRISTMAS DINNER. Illustration from *The Graphic Christmas NUMBER*, 1881

A few years after Spenser, John Russell in *A Boke of Nurture* describes recipes for cooking peacocks, as does John Nott in *The Cook's and Confectioner's Dictionary*. Peacocks were still, if rarely, cooked for 19th-century dinners [Cat. 73]. George Washington warns in his 1754 *Rules of Civility*, "Play not the Peacock, looking everywhere about you, to see if you be well deck't,"[14] and in wryer fashion, the poet William Cowper writes in his 1781 poem "Truth" of "The self-applauding bird, the peacock see/Mark what a sumptuous Pharisee is he."[15]

William Shakespeare makes references to peacocks in *Henry VI, Part I*: "Let frantic Talbot triumph for a while and like a peacock sweep along his tail."[16] In 1909, artist Hugh Thomson featured peacocks prominently in an illustration for *Act 1, Scene 3* of *As You Like It*, where Celia says: "And wheresoever we went, like Juno's swans, still we went coupled and inseparable."[17] Commentators before and after have often noted that Shakespeare may have intended to refer to Venus, who is associated with swans. Thomson, certainly familiar with Shakespeare's scene of

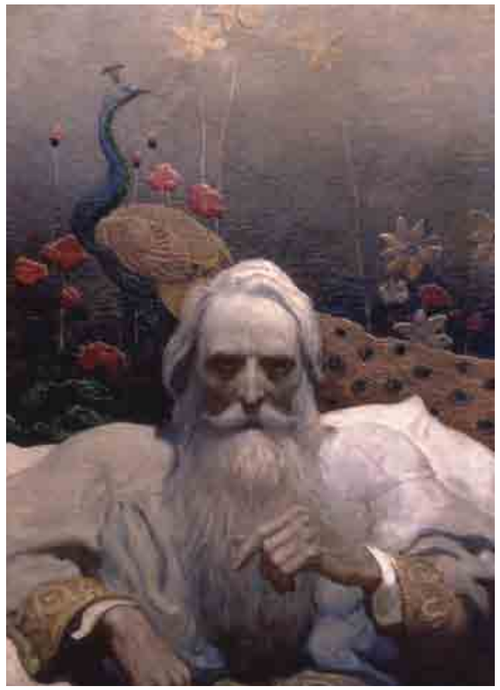
Cat. 65 Walter Crane, Illustration from *The Baby's Own Aesop*, 1887



Cat. 79 Hugh Thomson. Illustration from Shakespeare's comedy *As You Like It*, 1909 Edition

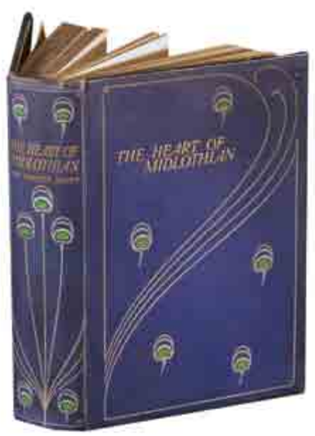
Juno entering the stage from above in his late play, *The Tempest*, may have been thinking the other way around—that Shakespeare did intend to refer to Juno, whose "swans" are "peacocks" [Cat. 79].

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the peacock was a popular motif in the Arts and Crafts Movement. Walter Crane in the late 1800s added artistry to humble book illustration, employing the peacock [Cat. 65]. One of the most charming manifestations of the peacock in literature is not actually in the words of literature, but is, rather, in the art which presents literature. The use of peacock imagery on book covers particularly appears on the book bindings in the Victorian and Edwardian periods. Lee Thayer of the New York firm Decorative Designers used a peacock eye pattern on her 1893 cover of William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, fitting symbolism for a book about vanity and pride [Cat. 59]. Glasgow designer Talwin Morris is also fond of the peacock form, as he uses slim peacock feathers on the binding of the 1900 reprint of Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian* [Cat. 55]. Perhaps his most fitting use is an adaptation of the same cover for Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to symbolize the pride of Mr. Darcy in the first portion of the novel. The peacock also appears in a skirt drawn by Aubrey Beardsley, illustrating Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in 1894 and as a peacock feather pattern on the cover of the 1912 edition [Cat. 58]. A rather less abstract illustration is the full-bodied peacock that N. C. Wyeth illustrated for the 1918 edition of Jules Verne's *The Mysterious Island* [Cat. 38].



Cat. 38 Newell Convers . CAPTAIN NEMO
Illustration for *The Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne, 1918

Cat. 59 Lee Thayer
Book Cover for *Vanity Fair: a Novel without a Hero* by William Makepeace Thackeray, 1893



Cat. 55 Talwin Morris
Book Cover for *The Heart of Midlothian*
by Sir Walter Scott, 1900

Cat. 33 Vladimir Pavlovsky. PEACOCKS, c. 1925

Stepping away from the brilliant blue peacock, the white peacock fascinated 20th-century authors and artists [Cat. 33]. Here in D. H. Lawrence's first novel, *The White Peacock*, the peacock is an unsettling apparition, not the protagonist:

> *. . . the bird lifted its crested head and gave a cry, at the same time turning awkwardly on its ugly legs so that it showed us the full wealth of its tail glimmering like a stream of coloured stars over the sunken face of the angel.*
>
> *'The proud fool!—Look at it! Perched on an angel, too, as if it were a pedestal for vanity. That's the soul of the woman—or it's the devil.'*[18]

The image and symbolism of the peacock are so evocative that writers, filmmakers, and composers, like Lawrence, invoke the bird in the titles of their works to attract attention, though they do not place the bird in their plots. The 1920 German movie *The White Peacock* is not about a peacock but incorporates a "peacock dance."[19] Charles Tomlinson Griffes's 1915 piano opus *The White Peacock* has no lyrics and was only later choreographed as a rather abstract dance.[20] In fact there are myriad peacock names that imply the peacock but curiously enough do not follow through, from the ancient Chinese ballad "Southeast Fly the Peacocks," in which the first line sets the scene for a tragic love story, to Luke B. Higgins's recent essay "Consider the Lilies and the Peacocks: A Theopoetics of Life Between the Folds," in which Ruskin's famous line on beauty is indirectly referenced as a springboard for a philosophical discussion.[21]

Ezra Pound in his *Cantos 1-109*, written from 1924 to 1962, makes several obscure references to peacocks, the wittiest combining his iteration of the Irish accent with an inside joke about W. B. Yeats composing his own poem, "The Peacock":

> *Uncle William*
> *downstairs composing*
> *that had made a great*
> *Peeeeeacock*
> *in the proide ov his oiye/*
> *proide ov his oy-ee*
> *had made a great*
> *peeeeeacock in the. . .*
> *made a great peacock in*
> *the proide of his oyyee.*[22]

Yeats' poem more sedately asks:

> *What's riches to him*
> *That has made a great*
> *peacock*
> *With the pride of his eye? . . .*
> *Adding feather to feather*
> *For the pride of his eye.*[23]

The poet Marianne Moore continues the trope of the peacock as both proud and beautiful. In her poem "Arthur Mitchell," a tribute to the modern dancer, choreographer and founder of the Dance Theater of Harlem, she imagines that "Your jewels of mobility/ reveal and veil/ a peacock-tail."[24] An American mid-20th century writer famously devoted to peacocks was Flannery O' Connor who kept many at her home, Andalusia, in rural Georgia. In 1961 O'Connor wrote "Living with a Peacock" for *Holiday* magazine, renamed "The King of Birds" in her 1969 posthumous collection *Mysteries and Manners*. O'Connor discusses her hobby of raising birds with particular attention to her forty or more (she said she was afraid to count them) peacocks [Fig. 30]. She also includes peacocks in one of her most well-known short stories, "The Displaced Person." David Mayer suggests that the peacock in this tragic story is in a "spiritual test" in relation to the displaced person, a Polish farmhand,[25] while Kathleen Nielsen says that the farm owner, who, by failing to warn of an impending crushing by a tractor, is complicit in the death of the farmhand who was relocated to the rural United States because of the Second World War:

Fig. 30 Flannery O' Connor on crutches, with one of her peacocks in Milledgeville, Georgia, July 1962 © *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* AJCN020-041a *Atlanta Journal-Constitution.* Photographic Archives Special Collections and Archives Georgia State University Library, Photography: Joe McTyre

> *One way to study this story's development is to follow the peacock through it, tracing the various responses to the mysterious beauty this bird displays. The peacock is pervasively there in the background, invading this muddy dairy farm with alien mystery. Perhaps that is what this story is ultimately about: an alien invasion . . .*[26]

The characters show their true selves by their attitudes towards the peacocks on the farm. Father Flynn admires them, reflecting his kindliness and his awe of the birds' Christ-like beauty, while Mrs. McIntyre, the farm owner, says of one, "Just another mouth to feed," which shows her lack of appreciation of beauty. She has starved all but one peacock, which foreshadows her future villainous behavior toward the farmhand.[27]

The peacock is a symbol of love for Raymond Carver in his short story "Feathers," where he describes the peacock, Joey, a pet that plays gently with the family baby, but there is underlying foreboding as in this passage:

> *By this time, the peacock had gathered its courage and was beginning to move slowly, with little swaying and jerking motions, into the kitchen. Its head was erect but at an angle, its red eyes fixed on us. Its crest, a little sprig of feathers, stood a few inches over its head. Plumes rose from its tail. The bird stopped a few feet away from the table and looked us over. . . .*
> *The peacock walked quickly around the table and went for the baby. It ran its long neck across the baby's legs. It pushed its beak under the baby's pajama top and its head back and forth. The baby laughed and kicked its feet. . . .*
> *The peacock kept pushing against the baby, as if it were a game they were playing. . .*[28]

It is, indeed, a game they are playing but one that will end badly, not for the baby, as the reader fears, but for the peacock, as the reader is told, "Joey's out of the picture. He flew into the tree one night and that was it for him. He didn't come down. Then the owls took over."[29] Daniel Lehman says that Joey is discarded when Carver no longer needs him as a symbol of the narrator's desire, since "anything wild or beautiful has long since been squeezed from the narrator's life and marriage by the time he tells the story."[30]

The peacock appears more recently in literature as part of the wedding of Quintana Roo Dunne, the daughter of the writers John Gregory Dunne and his wife Joan Didion, who says in her 2011 memoir *Blue Nights* that, "(The flower) girls followed her out the front doors of the cathedral and around past the peacocks (the two iridescent blue-and-green peacocks, the one white peacock) to the Cathedral house."[31] Later in the book Didion explains the significance of the peacocks as she describes her deceased daughter's memorial service: "I read the poem by Wallace Stevens . . . 'Domination of Black' . . . with which I had put her to sleep when she was a baby. 'Do the peacocks,' she would say once she could talk. . . . I did the peacocks that day at St. Vincent Ferrer."[32]

"Doing the peacocks" may be less enchanting the closer one gets to them. Anyone around peacocks quickly finds their beauty palls as their less enticing habits come to the fore. The worst of these is their unearthly screaming, day and night, described as sounding "like a cat being disemboweled," no

Fig. 31 Wenceslas Hollar (1607-1677). JUNO AND THE PEACOCK (State 1), n.d.
10 x 8 inches. Collection of the University of Toronto, Wenceslaus Hollar Digital Collection

exaggeration, especially when one is trying to sleep. Reading about the frequent use of peacocks as food in the past, one wonders how such a beautiful creature could be harmed . Martial, the Roman poet, mused, "You marvel whenever it opens its spectacular wings, how anyone could be so hardhearted as to give this bird to a cook,"[33] but the answer clearly lies in its annoyance factor as well as in the more frequently reported desire to assume status by eating a luxury item not available to many.

Claudius Aelian wrote when a peacock screams, "bystanders are terrified."[34] A 1601 poem by Robert Chester refers to the bird's horrible voice, "badly he doth sing."[35] Victorians Edward Baker and James Tennent, respectively, call the cry "penetrating and unpleasant"[36] and "so tumultuous and incessant as to banish sleep, and amount to actual inconvenience."[37] The peacock, himself, protested his voice to Juno, queen of Rome's ancient gods. Why, he asked, had he not been given the song of a nightingale? Why was he laughed at as soon as he made the slightest sound? Just as Juno admonishes the peacock to be content with the emerald splendor of his neck and tail "filled with jewels and painted feathers," Aesop, in his fable of Juno and the peacock draws the lesson: "Do not strive for something that was not given to you, lest your disappointed expectations become mired in discontent"[38] [Fig. 31].

Despite her daughter's fondness for peacocks, Didion writes in a different memoir, *My Year of Magical Thinking*, about the death of her husband and of a house in which they lived on the California coast, "This house . . . came equipped with peacocks, which were decorative but devoid of personality. . . . At dusk they would scream . . . just before dawn they would scream again. One dawn I woke to the screaming and looked for John. I found him outside in the dark, tearing unripe peaches from a tree and hurling them at the peacocks. . . ."[39]

Flannery O'Connor, keeper and writer of peacocks, did not object to the cacophony raised by their cry but was rather taken by it—"To the melancholy, this sound is melancholy and to the hysterical it is hysterical. To me it has always sounded like a cheer for an invisible parade," but she also surmises "The peacock perhaps has violent dreams. Often he wakes and screams, 'Help! Help!' and then from the pond and the barn and the trees around the house a chorus of adjuration begins."[40] O'Connor relates the story someone told her about the peacocks he raised—"In the spring, we couldn't hear ourselves think. As soon as you lifted your voice, they lifted their'n, if not before," so the family finally ate them. When she asked how they tasted, he replied, "No better than any other chicken, but I'd a heap rather eat them than hear them." Even O'Connor, the peacock lover, admits, "I am sure that, in the end, the last word will be theirs."[41]

Significant, then, that the poem by Wallace Stevens, which meant so much to Didion's daughter, emphasizes the cry of the peacock rather than its beauty. Unlike authors who focus on the peacock's beauty or pride, Stevens is concerned with the meaning of the cry:

> And I remembered the cry of the peacocks . . .
> I heard them cry—the peacocks.
> Was it a cry against the twilight . . .
> Loud as the hemlocks
> Full of the cry of the peacocks?
> Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?[42]

Between peacock cries and hemlock imagery, a symbol of death since the poisoning of Socrates, the Stevens poem is full of foreboding and terror as he says in the last lines, "I felt afraid. And I remembered the cry of the peacocks," a plaintive and worrying sound.[43] In Didion's telling, the poem and the peacocks are gloomily predictive of her brilliant and beautiful daughter's many problems and early death.

A very recent literary iteration of peacocks appears in Ayelet Waldman's *Love and Treasure* (2014), in which a World War II veteran gives a peacock pendant to his daughter, beginning the real-life tale of the Hungarian Gold Train and its relation to the Holocaust and European Jewry. Ron Charles says, "In Waldman's exceedingly clever treatment, this piece of jewelry is not intrinsically valuable; it accrues value only as it passes from one unlikely hand to another, demonstrating the curious and tragic ways that history binds us together,"[44] while Catherine Taylor emphasizes peacock symbolism: "Crucial to [the] plot is an enameled pendant, intricately worked in the design of a peacock, unusually colored in purple, white and green. Waldman skillfully interweaves this striking and enigmatic object—a symbol, as the book progresses, of fatal bad luck—into an ambitious sweep of history, setting the loss of millions of human lives against the pendant's own poignant, improbable survival."[45] An artifact less central to the book is a mysterious surrealist painting of a woman with a peacock head, both items carrying on the long tradition of peacocks appearing in literature.

The peacock in all its glory is a part of literature across cultures and oceans, far from its original home in India. Its symbolism means various things to various peoples but it is always a commanding figure, dignified and beautiful, despite its less than salubrious voice. From its inception in Greek and Roman mythology to its recent ubiquity in pop culture, the peacock will not be overlooked, and wherever it appears it is the focus of attention for its wild beauty and spirituality.

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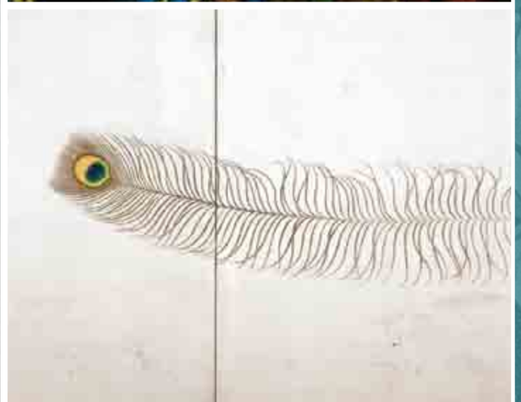


THE JAPANESQUE PEACOCK: A CROSS-CULTURAL SIGN

Ellen E. Roberts

IN LATE 19TH-AND EARLY 20TH-CENTURY EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES, the Japanesque peacock was used widely in art and design. Japanism—or the rage for all things Japanese—swept the West when United States Commodore Matthew Perry forced Japan to recommence international trade in 1854, after over two hundred years of virtual isolation.[1] Peacocks were not native to Japan, but they had long been featured in Japanese art for the same reasons they were admired in the West: because of their splendid form and fascinating foreign origin. Since most late 19th-century Westerners had not been to Japan, they extrapolated their view of the culture from Japanese objects and consequently associated peacocks with the country. Seeking to appeal to Western consumers, the Japanese incorporated increasing numbers of peacocks into the exportware they made for the Western market, further reinforcing this link.

Westerners in the late 19th century found Japanese objects and peacocks attractive for similar reasons—because of their exoticism and because they seemed to embody the visual beauty

Details
Left, Frederick Hurten Rhead. PANEL FOR OVERMANTEL, 1910
Top, PEACOCK SCREEN, c. 1876
Center, John La Farge, PEACOCKS AND PEONIES, 1882
Bottom, Usumi Kihō. THE RAVEN AND THE PEACOCK, 1920

Fig. 32 A THREE-CASE TOGIDASHI MAKI-E INRO WITH PEACOCK, early 19th century. Wood layered with black-and-gold lacquer, mother-of-pearl details. 3 x 2 x 1 inches
Private Collection
Photography: Flying Cranes Antiques, Ltd. New York, New York

that was a primary concern during this period of the Aesthetic Movement, Arts and Crafts Movement, and Art Nouveau. As a result, combining Japanism and peacocks seemed ideal. The Japanesque peacock's typical form emphasized this era's preference for elegant asymmetry and abstraction. In Japan such Japanesque peacocks began to appear not only in exportware but also in art made for the domestic audience, which demonstrated increasing Western inspiration in this period. This cross-cultural popularity of the Japanesque peacock reveals more about this modern culture than it does about any earlier era of Japanese society. Indeed, by the early 20th century, in both Japan and the West, this motif had become a sign of modernity.

As in the West, the peacock was early imported into Japan from its native India to provide an exceptional element in parks and gardens. When peacocks appear in Japanese art of the Edo period before Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853—as they do on a lacquer inro [Fig. 32], for example—they, like peacocks in Western art, were a sign of exoticism. In Edo-period Japan, when the Tokugawa shogunate isolated the country almost entirely from the rest of the world by forbidding nearly all international trade, the peacock design on this inro would have been particularly exciting to its Japanese owner, since it was a rare glimpse into a novel, foreign form.

By 1854, however, the Tokugawa shogunate's power was failing, and so Commodore Perry could force its government to sign a treaty permitting international trade between Japan and the United States. Other Western countries quickly arranged to trade with Japan as well. Ironically, although their treaties were meant to develop the Japanese market for Western goods, the opposite occurred: Japanese objects, which seemed particularly fascinating since they were relatively unknown, were marveled at and collected in great numbers throughout the West. After the consolidation of power in Japan behind the new Emperor Meiji in 1868, the Japanese took advantage of this Japanism, designing exportware particularly for the Western audience

Fig. 33 Pierre-Auguste Renoir (French, 1841–1919). MADAME GEORGES CHARPENTIER AND HER CHILDREN, GEORGETTE-BERTHE AND PAUL-ÉMILE CHARLES, 1878. Oil on canvas, 60 1/2 x 74 7/8 inches, Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Collection, Wolfe Fund, 1907. 07.122

that played into Western fantasies of the country. The screen that appears in the background of Pierre-Auguste Renoir's 1878 portrait *Madame Georges Charpentier and Her Children* [Fig. 33], for instance, is likely an example of such exportware. With the notable exception of certain highly informed collectors such as Christopher Dresser in London or Ernest Fenollosa in Boston, the great majority of Westerners in the late 19th century collected Japanese exportware rather than objects made for the Japanese audience. Knowing that Westerners were in part attracted to their works because they seemed so unusual, the Japanese designers of such exportware often included—as the maker of the screen in Renoir's portrait did—the peacock, the ultimate exotic element, to enhance this aspect of their works.

In fact Japanism was part of a broader Western interest in the world beyond the West in the late 19th century. Western designers had been reviving past historical styles for decades, revisiting classicism, ancient Egypt, the gothic, the Renaissance, and the rococo as the century progressed. By the late 19th century, they were in search of something new, and so they began to look beyond the West. Influential publications such as Owen Jones's *The Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which for the first time included design motifs drawn from non-Western cultures, signaled this new interest.[2] World's Fairs such as the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition in London, the 1862 International Exhibition in London, the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris, and the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia helped expose designers to such non-Western works. Beginning with the 1862 exhibition, all these Fairs included a special Japanese section, and after 1868, the Japanese government used the Fair displays to showcase a wide variety of exportware catering to the Western idea of Japan (see the Japanese display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, for example [Fig. 34]).

Given this new interest in the world beyond the West, the peacock's popularity is not surprising. With its Indian origins, it fit perfectly into the late 19th-century fascination with the exotic. Moreover, the peacock's stunning form made it an ideal exemplar of the period's prioritization of the beautiful above all else. The idea of art for art's sake is most associated with the Aesthetic Movement in Britain and America, but the emphasis on elegant design was broadly influential internationally and on both Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau proponents as well.[3] As a result, in the late 19th century, the peacock became the ultimate exquisite motif. British critic John Ruskin, intellectual forerunner of both the Aesthetic and Arts

Fig. 34 EMPIRE OF JAPAN EXHIBIT, Main Exhibition Hall, Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, 1876. Photograph: Collection of the Free Library of Philadelphia Print and Picture Collection

and Crafts Movements, made this point about peacocks when he wrote in his 1851-53 text *The Stones of Venice*, "Remember that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies, for instance."[4]

Japanese objects were likewise prized by Westerners not only for their intriguing foreign origin but also because they seemed to embody the refined design so valued in this period. Many of the first ardent Western collectors of Japanese objects in the late 1850s were artists and designers in search of such models. At this early stage, shops like Madame Desoye's in Paris sold Japanese objects to French painters including Edouard Manet and Edgar Degas, to French decorative artists such as Felix Bracquemond, and to American artists James McNeill Whistler and John La Farge.

Western Japanophiles romanticized the country that produced such fascinating art. Because the exquisite craftsmanship of Japanese works seemed so superior to contemporary Western mass-produced goods, Japanists compared Japanese artisans to medieval craftspeople, concluding that they shared a pre-industrial mode of production. British designer Walter Crane declared:

> *Japan is, or was, a country very much, as regards its arts and handicrafts with the exception of architecture, in the condition of a European country in the Middle Ages, with wonderfully skilled artists and craftsmen in all manner of work of the decorative kind, who were under the influence of a free and informal naturalism. Here at least was a living art, an art of the people, in which traditions and craftsmanship were unbroken, and the results full of attractive variety, quickness, and naturalistic force. What wonder that it took Western artists by storm, and that its effects have become so patent.*[5]

Crane's Japanesque screen featuring a peacock was widely adapted in this period [Fig. 35]. In this design, he explored both the traditional Japanese form of a wooden screen decorated with designs on a gold background—although here embroidered, not painted—and the underlying Japanese design strategies that particularly fascinated Westerners: asymmetry and compressed pictorial space.[6] Crane knew such characteristics from Japanese screens, such as the example that appears in Renoir's portrait and through *ukiyo-e* prints, like Utagawa Hiroshige's *Peacock Perched on a Maple Tree in Autumn* [Fig. 36]. Unlike Japanese paintings, most woodblock prints were produced in large quantities and were still relatively inexpensive, so Westerners collected them in great numbers. Such prints allowed designers, including Crane, to study how the Japanese artist used the peacock's elongated form to produce a dramatically simplified composition of balanced asymmetry and graphic, two-dimensional pattern. In Crane's screen, the peacock subject similarly enhances the harmonious design, while also combining perfectly with its exotic Japanesque screen form.

The effective asymmetry in Japanese works such as Hiroshige's print became a particularly fascinating characteristic to Westerners and was adopted throughout Western Japanesque design. John La Farge described this design strategy in his influential early discussion of Japanese art, "An Essay on Japanese Art" (1870):

Opposite, Fig. 35
PEACOCK SCREEN, c. 1876
Attributed to the Royal School of Art Needlework, adapted from a design by Walter Crane. Wool thread on bast and cotton in ebonized wood Frame: 68 x 92 x 1 1/4 inches
Collection of Barrie and Deedee Wigmore

Fig. 36 Utagawa Hiroshige (1797–1858)
PEACOCK PERCHED ON A MAPLE TREE IN AUTUMN, c. 1833. Polychrome woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1918. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, New York

Fig. 37 John La Farge (1835-1910)
PEACOCKS AND PEONIES I, 1882
Stained glass window: 112 x 51 1/4 x 6 1/2 inches
Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum
Gift of Henry A. La Farge 1936.12. 1

Fig. 38 Tani Bunchō (Japanese, 1763–1840)
PEACOCKS AND PEONIES, 1820. Hanging scroll;
ink and color on silk 60 1/4 x 34 3/4 inches
Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art
Charles Stewart Smith Collection, Gift of Mrs. Charles Stewart Smith, Charles Stewart Smith Jr., and Howard Caswell Smith, in memory of Charles Stewart Smith, 1914. 14.76.51. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
Image source: Art Resource, New York

> *Japanese composition in ornamental design has developed a principle which separates it technically from all other schools of decoration . . . a principle of irregularity, or apparent chance arrangement: a balancing of equal gravities, not of equal surfaces. A Western designer, in ornamenting a given surface, would look for some fixed points from which to start, and would mark the places where his mind had rested by exact and symmetrical divisions. These would be supposed by a Japanese, and his design would float over them, while they, though invisible, would be felt beneath. Thus a few ornaments—a bird, a flower—on one side of this page would be made by an almost intellectual influence to balance the large unadorned space remaining.*[7]

One of the earliest collectors of Japanese art in Paris in the late 1850s, La Farge was also one of the first Americans to experiment with Japanism in his paintings and decorative commissions in the 1860s.[8] When he began designing stained glass in the late 1870s, he also looked to Japanese models. Thus, in windows such as *Peacocks and Peonies I* [Fig. 37], made for the Frederick Lothrop Ames house in Boston, La Farge emulated both *ukiyo-e* prints and *kakemono*, or painted hanging scrolls, such as Tani Bunchō's *Peacocks and Peonies* (1820) [Fig. 38], in both his subject matter—as this comparison demonstrates—and his composition. In this window, La Farge, like Bunchō, gathered the peacocks and peonies in one corner,

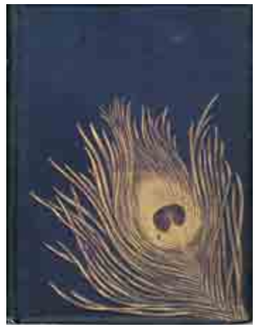
Cat. 113 PAIR OF JAPANESE PEACOCK PANELS, c. 1885

creating an asymmetrical, yet balanced, design. The bold asymmetry and relative simplicity of such designs separates such Japanesque peacocks from the many other peacocks that appear in more opulent designs in this period, such as those in the pair of embroidered silk panels (c. 1885) [Cat. 113] and the silk shawl [Cat. 146], neither of which seem Japanesque.

Yet La Farge also combined these Japanesque aspects with characteristics drawn from other cultures. The transom above the peacocks and peonies in his window evokes Romanesque cathedral architecture, and the panels underneath were inspired by ancient Pompeian sources. Such eclecticism was typical of this early stage of Japanism in the West. *Vase,* designed by Edward Lycett for the Faience Manufacturing Company in Brooklyn (1886–1890) [Cat. 92], demonstrates a similar combination of varied sources: the flattened, elegant Japanesque peacock adorns a fundamentally Western Neoclassical vase form. Aesthetic Movement designers felt free to combine elements from different cultures because they were evaluating them in visual terms, according to their intrinsic beauty rather than their cultural resonances. Lycett, like La Farge in his *Peonies and Peacocks I* window, did combine elements that were united through their pre-modern origins. As it did for Crane, Japanese art fascinated La Farge because it seemed the product of a living, medieval culture,

Cat. 92 Edward Lycett. VASE, 1886-90

Cat. 43 Alfredo Müller (1869-1939). PEACOCK PANEL, 1899



Cat. 56 *The New Day: A Poem in Songs and Sonnets,* 1876
Cover design: Helena de Kay Gilder

and indeed La Farge's pre-industrial sources harmonized perfectly with the medieval stained-glass medium. Like the exotic peacock, for Western designers Japanism offered an alternative and a place of escape from the modern, industrial West.[9]

La Farge helped to spread interest in Japanese art and Japanism in the United States not only through his influential essay and designs but also through his teaching. Encouraged by the older artist, students such as Helena de Kay Gilder became fascinated with Japanese design before Japanism became widely influential in the United States, the result of the Japanese displays at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. In designs such as her Peacock Feather cover for her husband Richard Watson Gilder's 1876 publication *The New Day: A Poem in Songs and Sonnets* [Cat. 56], she experimented with emulating Japanese objects. In this case, the boldly asymmetrical design and gold on a dark color scheme is modeled on Japanese lacquer, such as the inro discussed earlier. Helena Gilder owned at least one piece of Japanese lacquer at this stage, since she reported in her journal that La Farge gave her a Japanese lacquer box as a wedding present.[10] The Gilder home was a center for the New York art world in the 1870s and a major meeting place for American Japanists at this early stage.[11]

Perhaps the most spectacular combination of Japanism with peacocks from this period is James McNeill Whistler's repainting of Thomas Jeckyll's London dining room for Frederick Leyland, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* of 1876-1877 [Fig. 39].[12] Whistler had moved to London in 1859, where his growing collection of and interest in Japanese art helped promote Japanism in the artistic community. By the time he created *The Peacock Room*, Whistler had been studying Japanese objects for twenty years, and he had fully incorporated the design strategies that he admired in them into his work. *The Peacock Room* looks nothing like any kind of traditional Japanese interior, but, with its gold-and-blue palette, does resemble a Japanese textile or a lacquer box turned inside out. Whistler admired the typically limited palette of *ukiyo-e* prints, which were created with a separate block for each color, making the inclusion of many rare hues. He described the success of such simplification in a letter to his friend French painter Henri Fantin-Latour in 1868, writing:

> *This is how it seems to me first of all that, with the canvas as given, the colors should be so to speak* embroidered *on it—in other words the same color reappearing continually here and there like the same thread in an embroidery—and so on with the others—more or less according to their importance—the whole forming in this way an harmonious* pattern*—Look how the Japanese understand this! They never search for contrast, but on the contrary for repetition.*[13]

In fact, although Whistler could not have known it, color woodblock prints in Japan were called *nishiki-e*, or brocade pictures, because of this same connection to the repeated hues of embroidery. By the 1870s Whistler was incorporating such limited palettes into the paintings he called "nocturnes." He admired the unity achieved by such simplified color schemes, and he used this effect in *The Peacock Room*, harmonizing his design further by employing the peacock form as well as its colors throughout. In this space Whistler successfully unified the seemingly opposed ornateness of the peacock with the abstraction of Japanism in a way that no Westerner had done before.

Whistler differed from La Farge and the great majority of Japanists of his generation in that he emulated Japanese sources not because of their apparent pre-industrial origins, but because he felt that they were the proper source for all modern design. This attitude was rare in the 1870s, but by the 1890s and early 20th century was widespread among Arts and Crafts and Art Nouveau Japanists. For these designers, the Japanesque peacock became the ultimate modern motif.[14]

These later artists were less likely to combine Japanesque forms with elements that were derived from other cultures, making their creations more unified. American designer Frederick Hurten Rhead's Arts

Fig. 39 James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). HARMONY IN BLUE AND GOLD: THE PEACOCK ROOM, 1876-77. Oil paint and gold leaf on canvas, leather, and wood. Collection of the Freer Gallery of Art Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C. Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1904.61

Fig. 40 Frederick Hurten Rhead (1880-1942). PANEL FOR OVERMANTEL, 1910. Academy of Fine Arts, People's University, University City, Missouri. 20 3/4 x 20 3/4 inches. Signed: Frederick H. Rhead U.C. 1910. Courtesy of the Two Red Roses Foundation Tarpon Springs, Florida, and the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement, St. Petersburg, Florida

and Crafts tile design *Panel for overmantal* [Fig. 40] for the Academy of Fine Arts at People's University in University City, Missouri, for example, showcased an elegant asymmetrical arrangement of a Japanesque peacock on four tiles.[15] Unlike Lycett's earlier *Vase*, nothing detracts from the Japanesque abstraction of the design. The same is true of prints from this period, such as Franco-Italian painter and printmaker Alfredo Müller's lithograph *Peacock Panel* (1899) [Cat. 43]. Here, Müller experimented with another element that Westerners admired in *ukiyo-e* prints: manipulation of perspective to collapse space. Müller depicted the peacocks in his design from a low vantage point, giving his composition little sense of three-dimensional depth. Frederick Hurten Rhead's uncle, Louis Rhead, used the opposite vantage point in his 1897 lithograph *Peacocks* [Fig. 41], but for the same purpose: his tipped-up, bird's-eye perspective serves to flatten the composition, making it more abstract and Japanesque.

Fig. 41 Louis John Rhead (1857-1926). PEACOCKS, 1897. Color lithograph on paper mounted on Japanese paper-lined canvas, 30 1/2 x 58 3/4 inches. Collection of the Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, Ralph and Barbara Voorhees American Art Fund, 85.055.002.002 Photography: Victor Pustai

As Louis Rhead's lithograph demonstrates, the abstracted, elegantly asymmetrical form of the Japanesque peacock lent itself especially well to Art Nouveau. For Art Nouveau designers, the simplified, flattened aesthetic of *ukiyo-e* prints was attractive because it presented a new way to render form that was radically different from traditional Western academic modes of representation. By emulating these Japanese models, they could signal that their creations were new and modern. In works such as his illustration *The Peacock Skirt*

Fig. 42 William Henry Bradley (1868-1962). THE MODERN POSTER 1895 Commercial lithography (2-color) 19 13/16 x 12 7/16 inches Collection of the Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Fig. 43 A William Henry Bradley. BRADLEY: HIS BOOK, July 1896 Commercial lithography and woodcut. Approx. 16 x 9 inches Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division

Fig. 43 William Henry Bradley. BRADLEY: HIS BOOK, November 1896. Commercial lithography and woodcut. 41 9/16 x 28 7/8 inches. Collection of Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya

for Oscar Wilde's *Salome* (1912) [Cat. 58 B], for example, British designer Aubrey Beardsley abstracted the Japanesque peacock form from *ukiyo-e* prints to emphasize its radically asymmetric, expressive curves. Inspired by Beardsley, American graphic designer Will Bradley also incorporated Japanesque Art Nouveau peacocks into his poster designs—*The Modern Poster* (1895) [Fig. 42], *Bradley: His Book* of July 1896, [Fig. 43A] and *Bradley: His Book* of November 1896 [Fig. 43]. Bradley likely saw his first Japanese art at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.[16] This Fair marked the first time that Japanese objects were exhibited alongside Western art rather than in the ethnographic area, indicating Westerners' growing respect for the country. Europeans and Americans were beginning to view Japan not as a pre-industrial alternative but as the perfect source for modern design.

The elegant asymmetry and abstraction of the Japanesque peacock continued to attract artists into the Art Deco period, as works such as Jesse Arms Botke's painting *Black Peacock* (c. 1930) [Cat. 23] demonstrate. By this time Japanism was so integral to Western modernism that it is impossible to separate the interweaving strands of East Asian and Western influence in these works.

Similarly complex are Japanese works from this same period, created by artists who were finding inspiration in Western art, even as Westerners embraced Japanism.[17] Beginning with the Meiji restoration in 1868, the Japanese began to study the West to emulate its modernization, and many artists followed suit, with some mastering traditional Western techniques such as painting in oil on canvas. Nevertheless, by the late 1870s, respect for traditional Japanese art experienced a resurgence and *nihonga*, or Japanese-style painting, was established as a valid alternative to *yōga*, or Western-style painting.

Some older *nihonga* artists, who had learned to paint before the Meiji era, continued to practice traditional Japanese styles. Araki Kampo, for example, learned to paint in the Araki workshop in Edo (now Tokyo) in the late Edo period. Although he experimented with Western-style painting in oils, he eventually returned to his roots in *nihonga*, as his two-panel folding screen *Peacock Pair by Cliffs* (1907) [Cat. 107] demonstrates. Here, Kampo's peacock is in the traditional Japanese painting style of *bunjinga*, or Chinese-style monochrome ink painting.

Nevertheless, such traditional renderings of peacocks were increasingly rare in modern Japan, even among *nihonga* artists. While they used the conventional Japanese media of ink and colors on silk or paper, most *nihonga* painters defined forms using Western-derived planes of color rather than the outlines typical of pre-modern Japanese art. Usumi Kihō's pair of six-panel screens *The Raven and the Peacock* of the 1910s to 1920s [Fig. 44] showcases this new way of rendering form. Kihō emulated Western sources in his composition as well. His peacock, peacock feather, and raven float on an entirely empty ground. However

Cat. 107 Araki Kanpo. PEACOCK PAIR BY CLIFFS, 1907

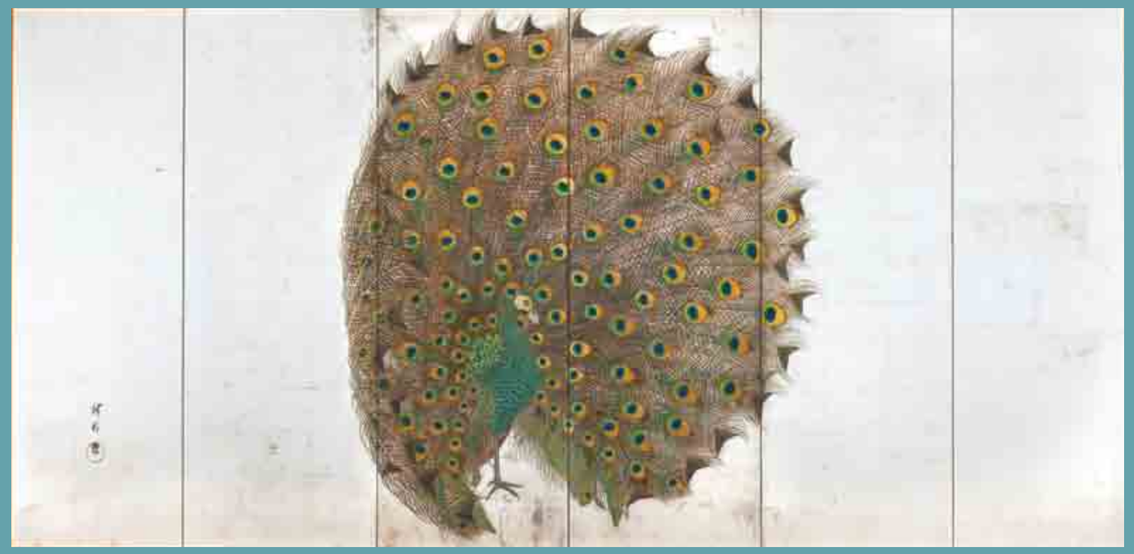


Fig. 44 Usumi Kihō (Japanese, b. 1873) THE RAVEN AND THE PEACOCK, c. 1920
Pair of six-panel folding screens Ink, mineral colors, *gofun*, gold, silver, lacquer and silver leaf on paper
68 9/10 x 136 inches each. Private Collection
Photography: Erik Thomson Gallery, New York, New York

abstracted traditional Japanese paintings were, they would never have been this simplified. Kihō's peacock is a Japanesque one here, inspired by the Western abstraction of traditional Japanese sources. For Kihō, as for Western artists such as Whistler, Beardsley, and Bradley, such a Japanesque peacock was a way to mark his work as modern.

Between the late 19th and early 20th century, then, the Japanesque peacock went from being a symbol of the exotic—and an alternative to the industrial West—to being a sign of modernity. The shifting cross-cultural meaning of this motif reveals both Western and Japanese ambivalence toward their newly modern world at the turn of the 20th century.

NOTES

1 On Japanism, see William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America*, exh. cat. (Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn., 1990); Toshio Watanabe, *High Victorian Japonisme* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1991); Gabriel P. Weisberg, et al., *Japonisme: Japanese Influence on French Art 1854–1910*, exh. cat. (Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975); and Siegfried Wichmann, *Japonisme: The Japanese Influence on Western Art in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, trans. Susan Bruni, et al. (1981; New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999). I would like to thank Samantha Niederman, Administrative Assistant in the American Art department at the Norton Museum of Art, for her research assistance with this essay.
2 Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament* (London: Day and Son, 1856). Since it was published only two years after Japan began trading with the West again, *The Grammar of Ornament* does not include any Japanese motifs.
3 On the Aesthetic Movement, see Doreen Bolger Burke, et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, exh. cat. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1986).
4 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (1851–53; London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1858), 44.
5 Walter Crane, *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* (1896; London: G. Bell, 1972), p. 132.
6 For more on this design, see Carol Irish, "Peacock Screen," in Amelia Peck and Carol Irish, *Candace Wheeler: The Art and Enterprise of American Design, 1875–1900*, exh. cat. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2001), 98–99.
7 John La Farge, "An Essay on Japanese Art," in Raphael Pumpelly, *Across America and Asia* (New York: Leypoldt & Holt, 1870), 197. La Farge, perhaps following the English critic John Leighton, noted that the Japanese did use symmetry in their religious art (La Farge, "Essay on Japanese Art," p. 197; John Leighton, "On Japanese Art," *Journal of the Society of Arts*, 11, no. 557 (July 24, 1863), 597.
8 La Farge acquired a book of sketches by Katsushika Hokusai in Paris as early as 1856–1857. Since his family was French, La Farge visited Paris frequently, and was also kept up to date on developments in French Japonisme by his cousin in Paris, Paul de Saint-Victor, giving him greater access to Japanese art than most Americans at this stage. A native Bostonian, La Farge was close to the circle of Japanists in Boston as well, and in 1860 married Margaret Perry, a great-niece of Commodore Matthew Perry. La Farge experimented with Japanism in his decorative commissions as early as 1860; he later asserted that he painted a bay window ceiling that year in "what I conceived to be a good Japanese style of design and color" (John La Farge to Siegfried Bing, January 2, 1894, John La Farge and La Farge Family Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution). Although it is unclear where this painted ceiling was, La Farge's three painted panels for the Freeland House dining room in Boston, executed in 1865, demonstrate the artist experimenting with the flattened pictorial space, asymmetry, and gold background he admired in Japanese painted screens (see, for example, Hollyhocks and Corn, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston). For La Farge and Japan, see Henry Adams, "John La Farge's Discovery of Japanese Art: A New Perspective on the Origins of Japonisme," *The Art Bulletin*, 67, no. 3 (September 1985), 449–85.
9 On Japanism and antimodernism in this period, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture* (1981; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
10 Helena de Kay Gilder Journal, undated entry, Richard Watson and Helena de Kay Gilder Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, reel 285, frame 8.
11 Richard Watson Gilder was the managing editor of *Scribner's Monthly* and influenced the magazine to publish several articles on Japanese art (see Noah Brooks, "A Fan Study," *Scribner's Monthly*, 6 (September 1873), 616–21; Noah Brooks, "Some Pictures from Japan," *Scribner's Monthly*, 11 (December 1875), 177–93). Helena's brother, Charles de Kay, also wrote an article in the journal on Léon de Rosny's *Anthologie Japonaise poésies anciennes et modernes des insulaires du nippon*, a French translation of a Japanese poetry collection (Charles A. de Kay, "A Bouquet of Japanese Verses," *Scribner's Monthly*, 9 (January 1875), 329–33). On Japanism in the United States before the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, see Christine Wallace Laidlaw, "The American Reaction to Japanese Art, 1853–1876," (Ph.D. dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 1996).
12 On Whistler's Peacock Room, see Linda Merrill, The Peacock Room: *A Cultural Biography* (Washington, D.C. and New Haven: Freer Gallery of Art and Yale University Press, 1998). On Whistler and Japanism, see Ellen E. Roberts, "Japanism and the American Aesthetic Interior, 1867–1892: Case Studies by James McNeill Whistler, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Stanford White, and Frank Lloyd Wright" (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 2010), chapter 1.
13 "Voici comment d'abord il me semble que la toile donnée, les couleurs doivent être pour ainsi dire brodées là dessus—c'est à dire la même couleur reparaître continuellement ça et là comme le même fil dans une broderie—et ainsi avec les autres—plus ou moins selon leur importance—le tout formant de cette façon un patron harmonieux—Regardes les Japonais comme ils comprennent ça!—Ce n'est jamais le contraste qu'ils cherchent, mais au contraire la repetition" (James McNeill Whistler to Henri Fantin-Latour, September 30, 1868, Pennell Whistler Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, published in Nigel Thorp, ed., *Whistler on Art: Selected Letters and Writings 1849–1903 of James McNeill Whistler* (Manchester: Fyfield Books in association with The Centre for Whistler Studies, Glasgow University Library, 1994), 32–39).
14 On the Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau, see Wendy Kaplan, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America: Design for the Modern World*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004); Karen Livingstone and Linda Parry, International Arts and Crafts, exh. cat. (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 2005); and Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Art Nouveau Bing: Paris Style 1900*, exh. cat. (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., 1986). For Japanism and the Arts and Crafts Movement and Art Nouveau, see Ellen E. Roberts, "'The Spell of Japan Was Upon Them': Japanism and the Arts and Crafts Movement," in Judith A. Barter, ed., *Apostles of Beauty: Arts and Crafts from Britain to Chicago*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, and New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), 45–82.
15 For more on Frederick Hurten Rhead's *Panel for Overmantel*, see Susan Montgomery's entry on the work in her forthcoming catalogue of the tiles in the Two Red Roses Foundation collection, opening in 2017 as the Museum of the American Arts and Crafts Movement in St. Petersburg, Florida.
16 Roberta Waddell Wong, *Will Bradley: Exponent of American Decorative Illustration at the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1971), 91.
17 For Japanese painting in Meiji and Taisho eras, see Penelope Mason, *History of Japanese Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Abrams, 2005), 343–382.

BEAUTY AND FUNCTION: THE PEACOCK IN ART DECO

Kirsten M. Jensen

IN PAUL MANSHIP'S SCULPTURE, *THE CRANE AND THE PEACOCK*, two birds celebrated for their aesthetic appeal—the crane for its sinuous and elongated form, the peacock for its lush plumage—debate the merits of beauty and function [Cat. 32]. The peacock boasts that his feathers are bright and beautiful, while the crane counters that her long wings enable her to soar to great heights and see the world. Manship surrounds the crane with delicate curlicue clouds, suggesting buoyancy, while the flightless peacock doomed only to strut about on the ground, is hemmed in by branches of lush but dense foliage. Beauty, the crane demonstrates as she effortlessly flies away, has its limits.

The sculpture, one of six gates commissioned for the William Church Osborne Memorial Playground in Manhattan's Central Park, was completed in 1952. In both design and subject, however, it recalls an earlier era—the 1920s and 1930s, the age of Art Deco—when Manship's career was at its peak. During that time there was increased emphasis placed on the decorative, as the name Art Deco itself implies: sleek geometric forms with surfaces

Details
Left, Louis Comfort Tiffany. DOORS FOR THE "HOUSE OF PEACOCK" AT PALMER HOUSE, CHICAGO, 1927
Top, Robert Winthrop Chanler. FOUR PEACOCKS (*Verso*), 1927
Bottom, Max Kuehne. PEACOCK TABLE, c. 1935

Cat. 32 Paul Manship. OSBORNE GATES—THE CRANE AND THE PEACOCK, 1952, (detail)

covered in bold, exuberant, and gleaming textures and details that are the hallmarks of the era's architecture and design.[1] As a style for a new generation, Art Deco epitomized the glamour of the flapper, Jazz Age hedonism, the luxurious new ocean liner, the towering and terraced skyscrapers in the exciting new metropolis of Manhattan. Eclectic in nature, Art Deco blended modernism and industrial design with more traditional sources of inspiration.[2] Manship was an avid admirer of this tendency toward archaism, finding in its sources a "power of design, feeling for structure in line, harmony in division of spaces and masses" that offered an alternative to the Classical and Renaissance traditions that had influenced sculptors of the previous generation.[3] His smooth and stylized bronze sculptures, symmetrical in profile or silhouette and purged of tactile naturalism, are emblematic of Art Deco. His pieces reflected the technical advancements of the modern era: they were so polished and smooth, so luxuriously stylish and highly engineered, that one admirer remarked, "The elite of this generation almost instantly [recognizes] Mr. Manship to be their sculptor. They get from him what they would get in surgery from the highest priced surgeon of the day, in engineering from the very best engineer, and so on."[4]

Manship's crane and peacock embody the two primary aesthetic concerns of Art Deco: function and beauty. Unlike Aesop's moralizing fable, however, where aesthetics were concerned (and they were a constant concern throughout the period), beauty was an essential quality. Put simply, Deco is modernism beautified. And while both the crane and the peacock were readily adapted throughout the period as

decorative motifs, the peacock, with its link to the exotic and the decorative, was a fitting ornamental counterpoint to the streamlined tendencies of the era. As a motif, the peacock found its way into homes, parks and gardens, hotels, and even films—perhaps most famously as the headdress worn by a regal and exotically beautiful Gloria Swanson in Cecil B. DeMille's 1919 adventure epic, *Male and Female* [Fig. 45].

Early incorporations of the peacock motif in Art Deco focused on its purely decorative qualities, as an added ornamentation to a particular space, rather than as an integral part of a larger decorative program. These motifs are, in many respects, developments upon stylistic approaches seen in earlier uses of the peacock and they remain grounded in a natural environment. The bird's decorative function is reinforced as well as its adaptation as a naturalizing balance to the impersonal and machined smoothness of the objects—increasingly mass-produced—it graced. Among these products was glass, which, through the implementation of new manufacturing techniques, had become one of the most versatile and stylish of modern materials, one that transformed interior spaces when used for walls, lamps, ceilings, tableware, vases, figurines, and even floors.

Fig. 45 GLORIA SWANSON AS LADY LASENBY. Promotional photograph made for the film *Male and Female*, 1919, directed by Cecil B. DeMille. Courtesy of Paramount Pictures/Photofest
© Paramount Pictures

Perhaps the most significant glass designer of the era, one whose work is now synonymous with Art Deco, is the French artist, designer, and inventor, René Lalique. Lalique's search for less expensive materials for his jewelry designs led him to experiment with glass early in the 20th century. By the 1920s, he had transformed the medium, adopting industrial methods to glass manufacture, such as press molding and mechanically blowing air into molds, to create a wide range of decorative objects that were visually appealing and readily affordable to the mass market.[5] Blown, etched, molded, cast, and cut, Lalique's opalescent glass displays caused a sensation when they were exhibited in Paris in 1925 at the Paris Exposition of Modern and Decorative Arts, the first international manifestation of Art Deco.[6]

The peacock, a leitmotif in Lalique's Art Nouveau jewelry designs, continued to feature prominently in his work as a symbol of luxury and beauty in his glass pieces. He created a number of objects incorporating peacock motifs, including an automobile hood ornament featuring a proud cock's head, and various iterations of *plume de paon* (peacock feather) decorative bowls, often with raised feather "eyes" that

Fig. 46 René Jules Lalique (1860- 1945). TWO PEACOCKS: DEUX PAONS, 1920, (designed) Glass Lamp; Glass, press-moulded and mould blown with Bakelite 17 3/4 inches, height. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum Museum number: C.73 to C-1972 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London Rene Lalique: © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

capture rays of light in sparkling pools around the circumference of the bowl. The most striking of his designs, however, was *Deux Paons (Two Peacocks)*, a lamp based on an earlier conception for a perfume bottle, which skillfully blends sleek, Machine Age geometric form and modern technology with more exotic iconography [Fig. 46].

Deux Paons combines two kinds of glass, transparent and opalescent—the latter extremely popular during the Art Deco period—to create a lamp that explored the transformative properties of light. The milky, mold-blown lampshade, shaped in the form of a large garden vase, is decorated with regular vertical grooves, which are echoed in the rings on the base to create rhythmic patterns of light and shadow. Crowning the shade's bell are two peacocks, delicately etched into clear molded glass and perched on a bare and sinuous branch. The birds' resplendent plumage curves down in delicate cascades, gently framing and softening the more rigid, industrial shape of the shade beneath them. Situated in a garden, the peacocks reference Asian influences, such as Japanese prints or Chinese scrolls. This link to the exotic and the foreign, coupled with the peacocks' garden setting and the delicate piece of transparent glass on which they are etched, naturalizes the machined elements of the lamp, lending the mass-produced *objet* the rarified qualities of an art sculpture.

There was no need to display the birds' tail feathers in full spread to give *Deux Paons* its drama, as it harnesses with great effect two other hallmarks of Art Deco—rhythm and light. Seen unlit, the lamp is a masterpiece of architectural glass. When the concealed bulb is switched on, however, (an action perhaps akin to the unfurling of the peacock's tail), it becomes a spectacle radiating a warm glow of glamour on everything it illuminates and creating beautiful patterns—at once abstract and figurative, natural and machine-made—on the walls of the room. Ultimately, the visual power of *Deux Paons* is derived from Lalique's deft combination of elegance and industrial design, one that creates both a striking design and dramatic effect, an aesthetic that epitomizes Jazz Age interiors.[7]

Gaston Lachaise, a sculptor who worked in Lalique's studio before coming to the United States in 1906,[8] similarly blended modernism with traditional motifs in his sculptures of animal subjects, earning him greater success at the time than the larger-than-life female nudes for which he is better known today.[9] Even in the Jazz Age, with its flappers and tendency toward hedonism, many prospective buyers found Lachaise's female nudes offensive (as the flappers themselves were perceived by more traditional-minded folk) but his smaller-scale ornamental sculptures were more accessible as objects of pure beauty. Lachaise made a number of animal sculptures during the period but it was the peacock that figured as a recurring subject in this body of his work.

In 1920 Lachaise received a significant commission from the industrialist James Deering to create a series of eight peacocks that were intended to top four spiral columns on either side of the approach to the Japanese Bridge in the Marine Garden of Deering's Miami estate, Vizcaya. The estate's architect Paul Chalfin wanted the peacock columns to mark the transition from the ordered spaces in the estate's Marine Garden to the less cultivated regions of the Lagoon Gardens—a plan that evoked the bird's symbolic function in Art Deco as a mediator between exotic decorative elements and the more rationalized forms of the surfaces they covered. Chalfin instructed Lachaise to make his design simple and "stoney," inspired by classical Greek and Roman sculpture, rather than the Asian sources that had influenced Lalique in *Deux Paons*.[10]

Lachaise composed a sleekly linear final design, emphasizing the silhouette that characterizes much of his sculpture. Although carved from native coral stone, the peacocks are majestic and smooth, perched atop Solomonic columns, their remoteness and inscrutability recalling the caryatids of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis in Athens [Fig. 47]. The sculptor Lachaise was so pleased with the peacock that he later cast it in highly polished bronze, a medium that not only enhanced the peacocks' beauty, but also, with its smooth surface, enhanced its clean lines and engineered quality [Cat. 31]. Later, he extended the tail of the peacock nearly thirty additional inches to accentuate its streamlined shape [Cat. 30].

Jessie Arms Botke, a painter who took exotic birds as the primary subjects for her large canvases, was equally fascinated by the purely decorative qualities of the peacock, placing them in luxurious environments replete with tropical flowers and plants. Her *Albino Peacock* and

Fig. 47 PEACOCK WALK, south side of bridge, c. 1934
Photograph: Frank Bell Collection, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Archives

Two Cockatoo [Cat. 22] heightens the bird's exoticism by painting it in its more rarified white color, the albino's tail feathers creating a delicate, gauzy spray against a leafy background. Equally preening and aesthetically pleasing is the peacock in Max Keuhne's 1935 design for a table, surrounded by a soft and floral background [Cat. 109].

While Keuhne's *Peacock Table* and Botke's verdant canvases represent traditional approaches to rendering the peacock, some artists found their representations cloying and much too precious. Painter Robert Winthrop Chanler—a flamboyant, larger-than-life figure who also happened to be a member of America's wealthy and historic Astor clan—openly embraced the strange, the exotic, and the fantastic, and chose to upend previous aesthetic qualities and symbolic associations in his paintings of peacocks. Playing with cultural mores and tradition, he turned them on their heads with esoteric references. Placing his subjects in fantastical settings he made them behave in uncharacteristic fashion—such as giraffes standing in a forest of birch trees eating oranges hanging from their branches in his first major work, *Giraffes* [1905] [Musée Luxembourg]. His friend, artist and critic Guy Pène du Bois, remarked that Chanler employed as his subjects a "tumultuous regiment of strange forms: animals, fish, birds, butterflies, rushing galleons, jungles overloaded with vegetation, all the groups of the Arabian Knights and nothing familiar."[11] Influenced by such arcane sources as the Gothic tapestries at the Musée Cluny and Chinese screens, Chanler preferred to work on a large-scale, painting his wild menageries on decorative screens and in mural programs for the houses of his social set, such as Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney or Diana Vreeland's mother, Emily Key Hoffman Dalziel, who loaned a Chanler screen (one of nine) to the Armory Show in 1913.

Cat. 30, 31 Gaston Lachaise.
PEACOCK (long-tail) and (short tail), 1920

Birds from foreign climes, particularly peacocks, were frequent subjects of his paintings, and while the compositions as a whole are visually stunning, the birds themselves usually seem "off," spikey and agitated, rather than serenely beautiful. This is certainly the case with the proud birds on his screen, *Four Peacocks* [Cat. 105]. They are on parade, to be sure, their slender and attenuated blue-green heads held high and their tails on full display in a swirl of gold and green. Something appears to have set them on edge, however, and the birds convey a feeling of unease, a feeling enhanced by the unusual background in which they are placed. All traces of a traditional garden environment have been excised in favor of an undefined space, rendered in a vivid, glaring almost, Chinese red.

The effect Chanler achieves is striking and unnerving, when compared with Botke's painting and Kuehne's table. Denatured, his four peacocks are neither languid nor decorative. They do not bestow an atmosphere of serene beauty to the space they inhabit, but instead are strident and restless, birds of action and purpose. Unhindered by their flightless condition, the peacocks race off the screen itself, running pell-mell into some unknowable and therefore indescribable future—making them, perhaps, more emblematic of the heady and headlong culture of the era than either Botke's and Kuehne's softly preening birds.

Chanler's approach was rather idiosyncratic in its use of the peacock as a decorative element. Like Kuehne and Botke, other artists and designers favored a more measured and traditional approach to the motif. This was particularly true when the peacock was employed in decorative programs for interiors in luxury hotels, such as the Waldorf-Astoria in New York and Palmer House Hotel in Chicago. Both hotels had significant spaces where society figures might parade and display themselves, and both these social stage sets featured the

Cat. 105 Robert Winthrop Chanler. FOUR PEACOCKS, 1927. (*Recto, top; and Verso)*

word “peacock” in their name—Peacock Alley at the Waldorf-Astoria and House of Peacock at the Palmer House—names that embodied the romance and glamour of the era, the hotels, and their wealthy clientele.

At the Waldorf-Astoria, Peacock Alley was initially a space that joined two separate hotels, the Waldorf (1893) and the Astoria (1897), which were located next to each other on Park Avenue. The Alley was a grand, 300-foot long corridor where ladies in their finest *fin de siècle* gowns and jewels could “put on the peacock” and promenade away from the grit of the city’s streets. When the newly combined Waldorf-Astoria was completed in 1931, Peacock Alley remained an integral part of the hotel as an enlarged corridor of lounges and cafes where the glamorous pageant of New York society, including an annual Peacock Ball, could continue to unfold.[12] High above the ball’s attendees, as they milled about the East Foyer next to the Grand Ballroom, were chandeliers, the bases of which were circled by gilded peacocks, serenely surveying the glamorous scene below [Fig. 48].

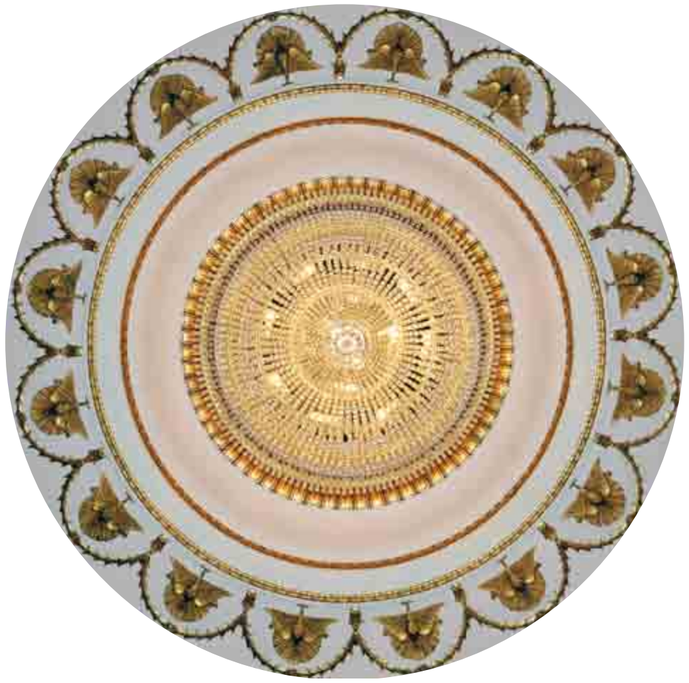


Fig. 48 PEACOCK CHANDELIER ROUNDEL EAST FOYER, adjacent to the Grand Ballroom on Waldorf Astoria 3rd floor, 1930s. Courtesy of The Waldorf Astoria New York Archive

Realized on a much grander scale, peacocks heralded the entrance to the retail emporium, the House of Peacock, located at the corner of State Street and Monroe, in the new Palmer House Hotel in Chicago. The House of Peacock, established in 1837 by the aptly named Elijah Peacock, was known for its fine jewelry and luxury goods and catered to the likes of Cyrus McCormick, George Pullman, Potter Palmer, Marshall Field, and Mary Todd Lincoln.[13] Both the hotel and the store were long-time fixtures in Chicago’s social scene—Palmer House, built by the power-couple Potter and Bertha Honoré Palmer, housed and entertained dignitaries, actresses, musicians, and the upper echelons of society. Naturally, when the hotel was rebuilt in 1925 to meet modern standards and changing tastes, the reconstruction presented an opportune moment for the two establishments to join forces to create a magnificent stage for their shared clientele to purchase splendid jewels and then wear them on parade.[14] The new Palmer House was a lavish affair befitting the glamour of the Jazz Age, with gleaming brass chandeliers and candelabras, grand marble staircases, marble alcoves with brass statues, and a lobby ceiling decorated with murals by the French artist Louis Pierre Rigal. It was one of the finest interiors in the country, filled with beautiful people—flappers, musicians, playboys, and heiresses—having lavish parties and doing beautiful things.

The equally extraordinary, two-floor gallery for the House of Peacock was designed to make even the most jaded of those beautiful people catch their breath, with glittering rooms clad in peacock-green marble and elaborate coffered ceilings from which hung tiered chandeliers. Entrance to this marvelous space from the street was through a set of dazzling brass doors commissioned from the House of Peacock’s New York counterpart, L.C. Tiffany (which also produced etched brass doors on the store’s elevator, and a peacock clock and fans, also in wrought brass, as additional decorations for the store’s exterior) [Fig. 49]. Encased in the same peacock-green marble and surrounded by brass display windows with classical motifs, and crowned with a proud peacock pediment, the Peacock Doors are a masterful marriage of Deco stylization and precision with decorative touches and Machine Age symmetry, its delicate tracery paying homage to the splendor of the Gilded Age. Although the store closed in 1993, the Peacock Doors remain in place today as a lasting reminder of the penultimate in glamour and style of the Art Deco period.

Fig. 49 Louis Comfort Tiffany. DOORS FOR THE HOUSE OF PEACOCK AT PALMER HOUSE, CHICAGO, 1927. Brass. Courtesy of the Palmer House, Chicago, Illinois

The lavish excess that the Peacock Doors represented, however, was relatively short-lived, particularly as interest in pure, unornamented industrial design became more widespread. The 1927 Machine Age Exposition in New York celebrated the clean, engineered lines of a Studebaker crankshaft, the sculpture of Alexander Archipenko, and the Precisionist paintings of Charles Sheeler.[15] Similarly, new modernist trends in architecture and design emphasized pure form—such as the International Style—which began to filter into the cultural landscape, causing architects and designers to disdain the kind of decorative elements that had made the peacock such a prominent symbol. At the same time, the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the subsequent financial crisis made expensive, manually produced decorative details like the Peacock Doors seem just as vain and excessive as the birds that decorated them.

In response to these cultural trends, designers began to seek methods for producing more affordable decorative objects as well as more functional consumer items. The movement away from visible opulence

Fig. 50 Eliel Saarinen (Designer) and Oscar Bach (Fabricator). CRANBROOK SCHOOL PEACOCK GATE, 1928
Wrought iron, 108 x 156 1/4 inches. Courtesy of the Cranbrook Archives. Photography: Jeffrey Welch

Fig. 51 The Metropolitan Museum of Art Special Exhibition:
AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL ART, ELEVENTH ANNUAL EXHIBITION: (February 11-September 2, 1929)
Gallery View: Dining Room, designed by Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950)
Photographed February 1929. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
© The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY

might have sounded the death knell for the peacock, its most recognizable symbol, but designers continued to incorporate the bird into a new class of decorative objects. Their approach was different—while they continued to draw upon the peacock's symbolic association with the exotic and beautiful, they placed greater emphasis on its function as an element essential for overall decorative effect, rather than a signature emblem of luxury.

The designs of the Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen (father of Eero) for the Cranbrook School in Bloomfield, Michigan, are good illustrations of this cultural and aesthetic trend. Saarinen came to the United States in 1922 and in 1925 he became Cranbrook's director and developed the school's architectural plan, designing many of its buildings and decorative elements. Founded by the Detroit newspaper publisher and arts patron George C. Booth, Cranbrook was grounded in the British Arts and Crafts aesthetic, but under Saarinen's direction its campus plan blended tradition with industrial design by incorporating more avant-garde concepts of form, technique, and mass production. The school's official symbol is the crane, and birds are thus an important decorative element throughout the campus.[16] Saarinen often chose the peacock for finishing touches, however, perhaps to balance the strong linear modernist style of the buildings and spaces that he designed as part of the school's overall architectural plan. For example, his final design for the main entrance gate to Cranbrook School, a slender geometric affair topped with two bowing peacocks, represents an early effort to streamline a decorative scheme to support, rather than dominate, the space it occupies. The birds are folkloric fantasies, delicate curlicues of carefully bent iron, but the picturesque is pared to the merest essentials to create an emphatic but elegant statement that combines exuberance with architectonic form[17] [Fig. 50].

In 1929 the Metropolitan Museum of Art named Saarinen the principal designer for an exhibition titled, "The Architect and the Industrial Arts—An Exhibition of Contemporary American Design," for which he designed

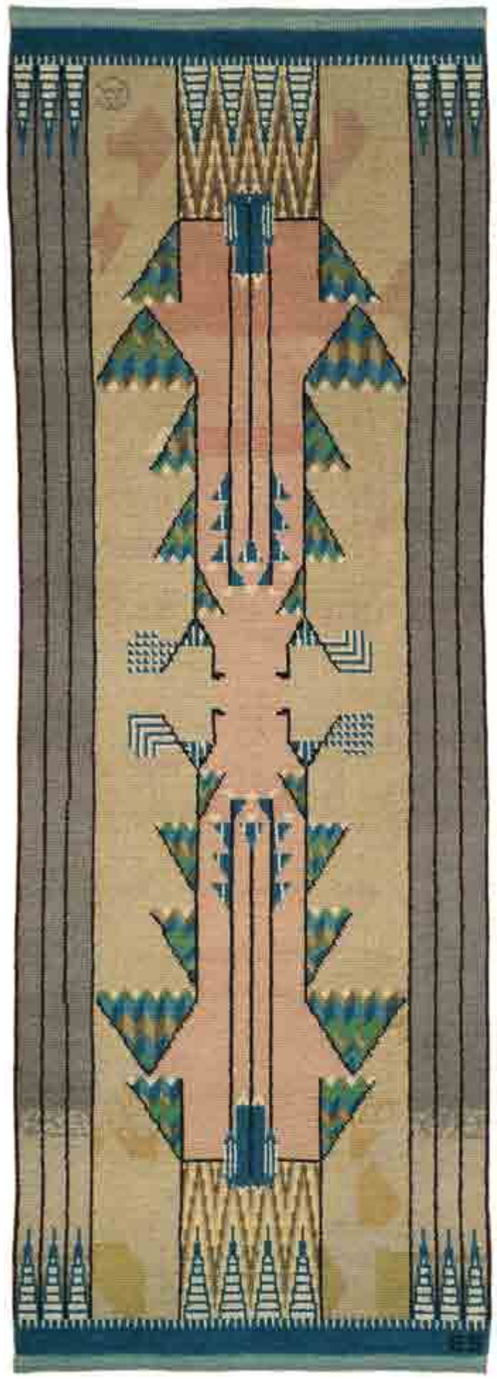


Fig. 52 Loja Saarinen (Finnish, 1870-1968); Eliel Saarinen (Finnish, 1873-1950). Studio Loja Saarinen: Loja Saarinen and Walborg Nordquist Smalley (Weavers) RUG NO. 2, 1928-29. Cotton warp, wool pile; plain weave with ten picks of weft between each row of knots
110 1/2 x 39 inches. Collection of the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan CAM 1955.3

a dining room [Fig. 51]. The room displayed Saarinen's continued interest in the peacock motif in a highly stylized form in the designs of his wife, Loja, and his daughter, Pipsan. Loja's tapestry features the birds in a strong symmetrical arrangement, which she later expanded in another tapestry, *Rug No. 2* [Fig. 52]. Pipsan's equally geometric design for the room's wallpaper may represent a further stylization of the peacock motif with the regulated patterning of the bird's tail feathers. Both designs suggest the ways in which the peacock's magnificent plumage could be simplified to basic linear shapes and patterns that fit into the period's fascination with industrial design and geometry. The motif still lends an aspect of the exotic to the room, but it is exoticism regimented and analyzed and within the rigid parameters of a mathematical grid.

Saarinen later installed portions of the dining room in the living room of his own residence at Cranbrook—Saarinen House. The home features interiors with meticulous details and custom-designed furniture and rugs by Saarinen, his wife Loja, and other Cranbrook craftsmen and is considered one of the most significant private homes constructed in the United States during the Art Deco period.[18] The living room continued to invoke the peacock motif as a decorative element, but instead of Loja's tapestry, two magnificent bronze peacock andirons, which had been produced in the school's metal shop, take its place. Freed from the rigid linearity of the tapestry, the two peacocks are full-bodied versions of those topping the school's gates. Graceful and sleek, they perch on solid architectural bases, strutting their stuff in front of a fireplace surround faced with brown glazed Pewabic tiles edged with silver [Fig. 53]. The strong geometric pattern of the tiles is echoed in both the wall hanging above, and the rug extending from it, two more pieces designed by Loja Saarinen. The blending of curvilinear forms (peacock andirons and lamp shades) with these geometric shapes—and of more traditional or exotic motifs with abstract patterns—creates a synergetic whole: Lalique's lamp, Botke's albino peacock, Keuhne's table, Chanler's screen, and even Lachaise's stony birds would be out of place here. Rather than ornamentation, Saarinen's design employs subdued patterns and colors that create an atmosphere of refined elegance and serenity, one perfectly conceived as a decorative whole, and which includes the peacock primarily for its formal properties.

Saarinen's combination of the decorative with the purely functional in his living room is skillfully conceived and beautifully realized, but the marriage of the two at the end of the Art Deco era was tenuous at best. Artists and designers became increasingly disdainful of ornamentation, and greater emphasis on function and efficiency began to trump the need for the purely decorative in interior design and architecture. Extreme stylization and emphasis on rigid geometry led away from the opulent surface textures of the Chanin or Chrysler Buildings in New York toward the rectilinear grids of Lever House and the Seagram Building—the new style icons of the post-World War II era—and the sleekly beautiful peacocks of Lalique and Lachaise bowed to John J. Graham's highly-stylized and pantone-bright cartoon peacock logo for NBC. Perhaps it was this rationalized atmosphere that inspired sculptor Paul Manship to revisit an earlier era stylistically in his 1952 design *The Crane and the Peacock* with an attempt to re-insert the purely decorative into the aesthetic landscape. Function may always win, Manship avers, but it does not hurt to be beautiful, either.

Opposite, Fig. 53 Eliel Saarinen (Finnish 1873-1950). PEACOCK ANDIRONS FOR SAARINEN HOUSE, 1929. Cast bronze, 22 3/8 x 21 1/4 x 27 1/4 inches (each). Collection of the Cranbrook Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan CAM 1985.2 Photography: Robert Hensleigh

NOTES

1 Patricia Bayer, *Art Deco Architecture: Design, Deocration and Detail from the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1992), 8.
2 Art Deco blended industrial design with European arts and crafts as well as the more exotic cultures of East Asia, Meso-America, and Ancient Egypt, which were receiving renewed attention due to archaeological discoveries like that of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922. Although the style began to evolve around the First World War, it burst onto the international scene at the 1925 Paris Exposition of Modern and Decorative Arts. In America, where engineering and design were more closely twined, Deco quickly surpassed Art Nouveau as a dominant aesthetic. See also Charlotte Benton, Tim Benton, and Ghislaine Wood, eds., *Art Deco 1910-1939*, exh. cat. (Victoria & Albert Museum, 2003), and Norbert Wolf, *Art Deco* (New York: Prestel, 2013).
3 Penelope Curtis, *Sculpture 1900-1945: After Rodin* (New York: Oxford University press, 1999), 219. See also Susan Rather, *Archaism, Modernism, and the Art of Paul Manship* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).
4 As quoted in Curtis, *Sculpture 1900-1945*: After Rodin, 231.
5 See the catalogue entry for Rene Lalique's *Peacock Brooch* (1900), in Katharine Baetjer and James David Draper, eds., *Masterpieces of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Lisbon*, exh. cat. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 152. For brief description of Lalique's glass designs, see Hanna Tachau, "Rene Lalique, the Craftsman," *Country Life*, 37 (Mar. 1920), 108, and Ghislaine Wood, "European Glass," in Benton, et al., *Art Deco*, 214.
6 See Charlotte Benton, "The International Exposition," in in Benton, et al., *Art Deco*, 141-155.
7 Stéphane Laurent, "The Artist Decorator," in in Benton, et al., *Art Deco*, 170.
8 Lachaise worked at Lalique's studios in order to earn money for his passage to Boston in 1906. He also assisted Manship in his New York studio in the 1910s as he worked to establish his own studio and reputation. Curtis, *Sculpture 1900-1945*: After Rodin, 232.
9 Thayer Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art: A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born Between 1865 and 1885* v. 2 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 671.
10 Gina Wouters, *The Academic and the Avant Garde: Artists of the 1913 Armory Show at Vizcaya* (Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, 2013).
11 Guy Péne du Bois, "Robert Winthrop Chanler: The Man: A Normal Exotic," *Arts & Decoration*, 14, n. 3 (Jan. 1921), 192.
12 See James Remington McCarthy and John Rutherford, *Peacock Alley: The Romance of the Waldorf-Astoria* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1931), and Walter Rendell Storey, "Hotel Decoration in the Grand Manner," *New York Times*, Sep. 27, 1931, SM8.
13 Phillip Hampson, "Peacock's Move into New Palmer House," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 16, 1926, B2.
14 There were actually two previous Palmer House hotels, the first, completed in 1871, was destroyed by the Chicago Fire soon after it opened; the hotel was rebuilt in 1875, and it was this building that was demolished for the 1925-27 Palmer House, which still stands today. The new Palmer House Hotel was designed by the architectural firm Holabird & Roche in a Classical Revival style, and is a streamlined, 23-story skyscraper with over 2,000 rooms.
15 Wolf, *Art Deco*, 180.
16 Cranbrook is named for a village in Kent, England, which is, in turn, named after the River Crane that flows through it, Davira S. Taragin, "The History of the Cranbrook Community," *Design in America: The Cranbrook Vision, 1925-1950* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1983), 35.
17 J. David Framer, "Metalworking and Bookbinding," in *Design in America*, 156.
18 R. Craig Miller, "Interior Design and Furniture," in *Design in America,* 93.

IN LIVING COLOR: THE PEACOCK AS ICON IN POPULAR CULTURE

Melissa Martens Yaverbaum

WHEN THE "TOURNAMENT OF ROSES PARADE" LAUNCHED on January 1, 1953, it marked the first color broadcast on television. To accentuate the arrival of color, the National Broadcasting Company premiered a new logo along with the broadcast—an abstracted xylophone in red, green, and blue accompanied by three chimes of sound. With the swift rise of color television in the 1950s, NBC's branding soon gave way to a more vibrant and powerful emblem that would endure for decades: the peacock. Designed by John J. Graham in 1956, his concept for the bird began with a 50s *moderne* flair, using overlapping splashes of color[1] and black-line art not dissimilar from Andy Warhol's whimsical shoe advertisements of the same era. What began as a ladylike wisp of a bird evolved into a strong, abstracted color statement—its eleven delineated feathers vibrating with color [Fig. 54].

The logo's color juxtapositions from opposing ends of the color wheel—reds with greens, blues with oranges, yellows with purples—were certainly intended for the new possibilities of color broadcasting, and created color tensions that allowed even the

Details
Left, ELVIS PRESLEY ON CONCERT TOUR, 1974
Top, David Curtis-Ring. PEACOCK HEADDRESS FOR BRYONY KIMMINGS, 2010
Bottom, Joseph Andrus. MUMMERS's PEACOCK COSTUME, c. 1993

Fig. 54 NBC's first peacock logo to be broadcast on television, 1956
Courtesy logopedia.com

Fig. 55 Herb Ball / NBC JOEY BISHOP POSING FOR THE JOEY BISHOP TV SHOW
Courtesy NBCU Photo Bank via Getty Images, Editorial #138448974

still version of the logo to pulsate with visual tension. The peacock served not only to re-brand NBC via color broadcasting, but helped generate sales of RCA color televisions simultaneously (RCA being a founder and owner of NBC). When the peacock logo made its television premier in the fall of 1956, its use brought with it a novel design icon, yet one embedded with peacock associations Americans had grown to admire since the 19th century - pride, majesty, and flair.

A second version of the logo, released soon after, made even fuller use of the television medium: animating the beast and allowing its tail feathers to evolve gradually from a white latticework fan into a span of blinking colors. The animation's soundtrack was introduced with a cymbal crash (as if echoing the peacock's exotic, eastern origins), followed by the narration, "the following program is brought to you in living color on NBC," and concluding with a musical crescendo of triumphant optimism. NBC's logo served as a symbolic bridge for its viewing public: from the ancient world to the new, from wartime to peacetime prosperity, from black and white to living color.

Perhaps one of the late-20th century's most recognizable logos, the NBC peacock morphed with the moods and motivations of the decades [Fig. 55]. The 1960s rendition saw its tail feathers overlap in an animated kaleidoscopic effect; the 1980s birthed a more corporate rendition—the peacock situated within a capital "N," its head turning forward to the future. Versions in the 1990s played with outline, dimensionality, gimmicks, and gags, while the 2000s saw a return to proud orchestral music and logo variations reflecting shifts in the station's ownership. Yet the peacock motif that anchored the NBC logos remained a recognizable and enduring symbol over the decades, making appearances not only on television but in paper ads, toys, games, cufflinks, and marketing merchandise.

The popularity of the abstracted NBC peacock was partly a reaction to its design and affiliation with the magical machine of color, light, and sound, yet also drew upon the long-standing popular memory of the peacock as an iconic and royal figure. When the Pakistan Television Corporation was founded in 1964, it developed its own (more abstracted) peacock logo, and deployed only gold tones to connote its regal origins. In the case of both logos, the peacock brought with it a healthy dose of pre-recognition, middle- and upper-class connotations, and a factor of popular accessibility. While not quite depicting their natural and Victorian predecessors, these symbols were perfectly understood, even without the expected colors or signature feather markings.

In the earlier decades of the 20th century, the peacock was such a common motif in visual culture that consumers could simply imagine its features and implied meanings, regardless of the actual style of rendering. Frank Lloyd Wright's re-design of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, completed in 1923, made use of particularly abstracted peacock forms early on. His re-design was a nod to both eastern and western architectural styles, and helped embody Japan's modern relationship to the west.[2] World War II damaged portions of the hotel—including its grand Peacock Room—and the hotel was placed under occupation forces and managed by the United States government from 1945 to 1952. American occupiers on the brink of departure held a newsworthy celebration in the hotel's revived peacock room,[3] as did the Japanese owners in 1952 when they reclaimed the property, "celebrating the return of the Imperial to its former owners."[4]

The Peacock Room was one of the noted features of the Imperial Hotel—distinguished by Wright's highly abstracted peacock décor from the architectural details to the furnishings [Fig. 56]. Overhead, its oversized peacock medallions relied on Wright's abstract suggestions of nature. Geometric shapes in bold yellows and greens stood for peacocks, bringing a sense of Art Deco and Arts-and-Crafts style to Tokyo. In contrast to Whistler's Peacock Room of the 1870s [Fig. 57]—a gilded fantasy in rich tones showcasing two fighting peacocks—Wright's room appears streamlined and modern. To imagine the hotel's refined guests dining beneath the buttresses is to connote an audience already in the-peacock-know. Comprehension of Wright's forms certainly relied on earlier imagery, and appreciation of the new peacock forms required a familiarity and acceptance that allowed the imagination to do much of the work.

The Imperial Hotel's peacock chairs [Fig. 58] relied even more heavily on suggestion, their yellow hexagonal backings providing only the slightest reference to a span of feathers. In fact, had Wright's peacock chair not been named as such, it would have never passed for fanciful, bird-inspired décor. Perhaps the delicate chairs were even meant as a contrast to expectations, or as comic foil to the grandeur they implied.

Typically, the adjective "peacock" denoted a dramatic form that called attention to itself and its user. Since the late 1900s, a "peacock chair" was understood to be a broad-backed, throne-esque,

Fig. 56 Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). Design for Peacock Carpet, Imperial Hotel, Tokyo, 1917. Frank Lloyd Wright: IMPERIAL HOTEL PEACOCK CARPET. 1,000-piece jigsaw puzzle, published by Pomegranate Communications, Portland, OR. (www.pomegranate.com) Carpet Design © Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation

woven rattan creation. With its hourglass shape and its tremendous fantail back, the form widely recognized as a peacock chair likely came from the Philippines, making its American debut at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. Its form made a bold decorating statement, and the openwork back simultaneously allowed viewers to glimpse wallpapers, paint colors, and fabrics in the background.[5] The peacock chair introduced a new form into the decorator's repertoire, and complemented the parlor designed to convey both refinement and exotic experimentation. While American homemakers expressed their established class in displays of such material goods, they also strove to communicate a sense of adventure and worldliness through chinoiserie and other imported goods.

Moreover, the ease with which the rattan chairs could be acquired, moved, and maintained was a convenient contrast to the imposing, dark wood furnishings that typically graced the parlor room. Peacock chairs allowed middle-class mistresses a throne of their own, and with relative ease. And while the peacock chair was less than perfect in terms of its ergonomic comforts, it was a perfect partner for those seeking dramatic flair. The chair provided a statement piece to frame the hostess, its wide back offsetting the sitter's head in halo-esque fashion. Whether its owner be Victorian lady—or later a bohemian, mid-century housewife, or starlet—the chair was certainly never intended for wallflowers.

Peacock chairs frequently appeared as the signature prop in photographic portraits of Hollywood glamour girls, including Natalie Wood, Elizabeth Taylor, and Brigitte Bardot [Fig. 59]. The chair's exaggerated proportions seemed custom made for photography, and its throne-like suggestions signaled various readings of the sitter, from excess to irony. Depending on the sitter, the peacock chair might even juxtapose suggestions of the regal with darker elements. As an extension of the silhouette of Morticia Addams on the stage set of the "The Addams Family," it gave an exaggerated (and comical) sense of

Fig. 57 James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). HARMONY IN BLUE AND GOLD: THE PEACOCK ROOM, 1876-77
Oil paint and gold leaf on canvas, leather, and wood
Collection of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
Gift of Charles Lang Freer, F1904.61

the macabre to her demeanor. In the famous 1967 portrait of Black Panther co-founder Huey Newton, the peacock chair sets up an unsettling contrast to the subject—its lacey back framing the sitter with rifle and spear in hand [Fig. 60].[6]

Cycling in and out of fashion with frequency over the decades, the peacock chair has, at different times, punctuated statements of aspiration, glamour, comedy, and kitsch. Its association with the peacock symbol pre-loaded the bird's form with a set of narratives and intentions to be deployed sincerely or in post-modern irony.

In 2014 the store Anthopologie released a nouveau-hip version of the peacock chair for the summer season: the well-known wicker form with a bright coating of paint, an accent of boldness layered onto a retro-ironic design. The recognizable form has gone through multiple identity shifts, and post-war designers played with the shape and materials to amusing effect and with great variety. Frank Lloyd Wright used the peacock association to infuse his hexagonal chairs with an identity from nature; other high-end designers have used the peacock name and shape to riff on the styles of their own times. In 1947,

Hans Wegner re-imagined the Windsor Chair, using blond wood and a wide back to create a Danish-inspired peacock chair. Dror Beshetrit's version in 2009 used a short silhouette, yet distinguished itself as a peacock chair using dramatic folds of felt in a fan shape. The Canadian firm uufie designed a lattice-work version in 2013—its tremendous fan back created from a single sheet of heated plastic [Fig. 61].[7] And while uufie's version is the most literal in its reference to the peacock bird, the 19th-century chair, and even the NBC animated logo of 1957, it is simultaneously the most absurdist, fantastical, and post-modern.

Many of the peacock products of the 20th century relied on an element of fantasy connoted by the peacock itself. If the peacock represented pride, flair, and the exotic East, each object associated with it projected some of the same qualities, at least by affiliation. The fantasy element of the peacock might be relayed through the visual qualities of objects, or might be performative and attitudinal. Once Americans grew accustomed to the peacock's appearance, they also became adept at discussing it as a noun, adjective, or

Fig. 58 Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959). PEACOCK CHAIR FOR THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, TOKYO, designed 1921-1922
Oak, oil cloth, 37 7/8 x 15 1/2 x 19 1/8 inches
Image: Phillips, LondonAuction April 29, 2014

Fig. 59 Ghislain Dussart. BRIGITTE BARDOT ON A BEACH IN THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, 1968. Courtesy of Movie Poster Kings

Fig. 60 Black Panther Party for Self Defence. HUEY NEWTON, 1967. Offset lithograph poster 35 x 23 inches
Courtesy of Danielito San Miguel's blog post "Huey P. Newton, the B.P.P founder and William Lee Brent, the B.P.P member that hijacked a plane to Cuba," April 18, 2012

verb. Consumers, themselves, began to embody the bird through gait, stature, and display of their own fashionable plumage. Men and women aspired to be peacock-esque in their appearance, while the peacock took on some anthropomorphic qualities in advertising [Cat. 82].

The act of "peacock-ing" was a notion that had persisted from earlier trends already set in motion. As early as 1897, The Waldorf Astoria hotel provided a stage set designed for the peacock-like parading

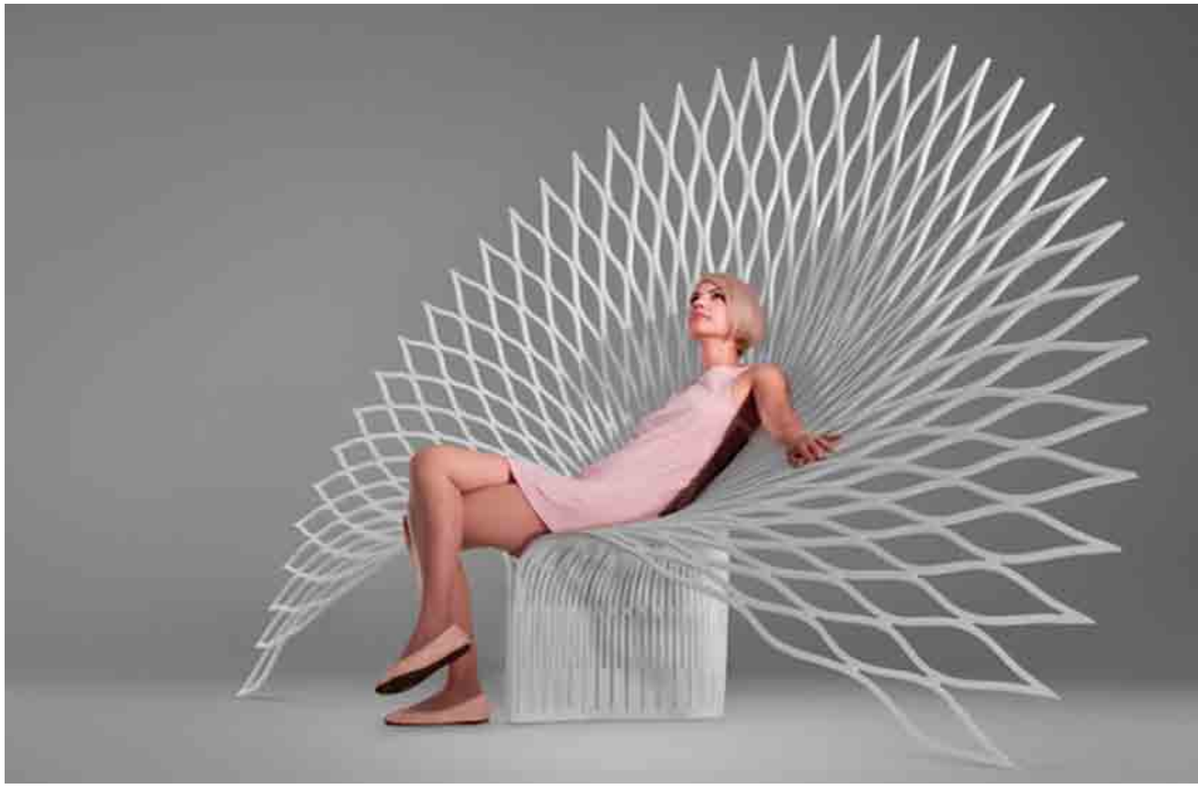
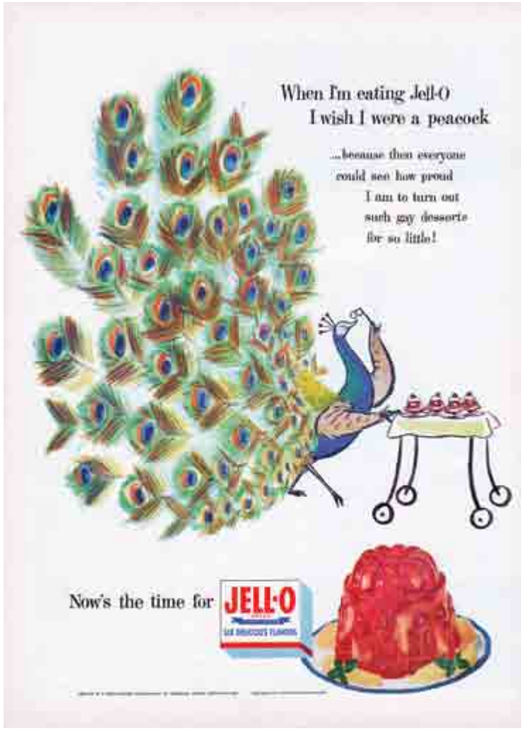


Fig. 61 uufie. PEACOCK CHAIR, 2013. Constructed from a single sheet of DuPon™ Corian® plastic. Photography: Andrew Wilcox

of clothes and status—its Peacock Alley corridor accented with marble surfaces and palm trees. While the Alley was part of the hotel proper, it was a passageway open to visitors, New Yorkers, and socialites looking to strut.[8]

In the decades that followed, other hotels would be eager to create such an opportunity for guests and their (moneyed) associates. Peacock alleys popped up in hotels from Chicago [Fig. 62] to Tokyo, Galveston, San Antonio, Toronto, and State College, Pennsylvania—supplying long corridors for parading, flanked by chairs for discerning observers.



Cat. 82 General Foods Advertisement. "When I'm eating Jell-O, I wish I were a peacock," 1954

In addition to these platforms for performance, peacock-themed environs took other forms as well. Peacock hotels, restaurants, and lounges became part of the indoor leisure circuit, while outdoor attractions used live peacocks to create close-encounter amusements that simulated a visit to an exotic paradise. Live peacocks became a regular feature of warm weather gardens, especially in Florida, including Sarasota's Jungle Gardens, St. Petersburg's Sunken Gardens, Fort Lauderdale's Flamingo Orange Groves [Fig. 63], and the well-known Cyprus Gardens near Winter Haven. Cyprus Gardens featured roaming peacocks as part of its hodge-podge wonderland of southern belles in hoop skirts, water-skiing showgirls, glass-bottomed boats, and peacock-themed topiary. Peacocks bought an element of excess and pseudo-authenticity to outdoor spaces, and as Florida became the "tropical" getaway for middle-class Americans from the northeast in the 1950s, the birds became a regular feature of its entertainment landscapes. While visitors could hardly have expected peacocks to be native to Florida—the state was a new and largely unknown place—its environs seemed so exotic to tourists that they were happy to feed the fantasy that the peacock helped fuel.

In the post-war decades, peacocks would appear in a variety of fantasy environs, for those consumers craving the trans-continental textures of the "Olde Worlde," to those seeking elements of the east, to those who sought a hyper-pigmented pop reality. Reports of millionaires and eccentrics alike accentuated the presence of peacocks as a feature of their estate properties and parties—punctuating already over-the-top atmospheres.

Fig. 62 Sherwood Lithograph Co. CHICAGO PEACOCK ALLEY, CONGRESS HOTEL & ANNEX, CHICAGO. © 1915 Chromolithograph postcard
Courtesy CardCow Vintage Postcards

When the estate of impresario and showman Billy Rose went on the market after his death, its headline advertised, "Billy Rose's Isle of Passionate Peacocks for Sale in Connecticut." Situated on a private island, Rose used the property from 1957 to 1966 for "what he loved most: the weekend gatherings of men

Fig. 63 Florida Natural Color, Inc. FLOYD L. WRAY FLAMINGO ORANGE GROVES AND BOTANIC GARDENS, FORT LAUDERDALE. . . WHERE EAST INDIAN PEACOCKS ROAM FREELY. Postcard. Private Collection

and women who could talk well and had something to say." The peacocks and other imported creatures he added to the property were part of his program to "make nature more theatrical" in outdoor settings that included "colored lights in the trees and the wires that carried Broadway tunes from his hi-fi set to all parts of the Island. . . ."[9] Certainly not the only wealthy person to include live peacocks on his property, Rose's rewriting of nature was his expression of living theater, and live peacocks made the performance that much more convincing.

In 1957 another of America's great showmen would purchase his fantasy home. Though the house was, on its exterior, a Colonial Revival in fieldstone with classical pillars, its interior would come to reflect the colorful image of its 22-year-old rock star owner.

Graceland's reimagination by Elvis Presley in gilt and mirrors would include his additions of a racquetball court, swimming pool, meditation garden, a "Jungle Room" with indoor waterfall, peacock-themed stained glass windows [Fig. 64], and live peacocks on the property. Elvis's taste for peacocks and their conspicuous appearance wasn't limited to décor; by 1974 he sported a jumpsuit on tour called "The Peacock" created by his wardrobe designer Bill Belew [Fig. 65]. The elaborate and detailed pantsuit was his most expensive outfit—costing $10,000 at the time of creation (and selling for $300,000 after his death—the highest price ever paid for an Elvis collectable at auction).[10] With its high collar, plunging V-neck, flared legs, and peacock-patterned embroidery in gold and blue, the suit was perfectly suited to The King's over-the-top image in life and on stage.

By the time Elvis donned his own peacock suit, the peacock's reputation for enhancing male flamboyance had been long established—whether as an articulated motif, a saturated color palette, an enhanced silhouette, or even just a certain *je ne sais qois*. The "Peacock Revolution" of the 1960s and 70s had overhauled the idea that men's clothing was to be understated, and men broke away from the confines of the neutral suit into a new zone of experimentation. Male consumers in England and America came to embrace the art of peacock dressing—through brighter colors in fabric, higher and wider clothing shapes, and variations in texture and pattern.

The revolution in men's clothing started in the 1960s, when, "otherwise sensible men ran around in fat ties, love beads, and battered blue jeans. When they dressed up, they wore Nehru suits or turtlenecks with dinner jackets."[11] Innovations in the shape and look of men's clothing were often subtle, and the term "peacock" denoted gradual shifts (as bold as they seemed at the time) as well as the more notable breakthroughs. By 1967 the *New York Times* noted that the bright colors of summer were, unexpectedly, every bit a feature of "fall's new feathers," while the British-dandy look was also making an appearance

Fig. 64 THE LIVING ROOM AT GRACELAND FEATURES BLUE AND GOLD ACCENTS, INCLUDING A CUSTOM STAINED-GLASS PEACOCK DOORWAY
from "In Defense Of Tackiness: A Trip To Graceland," apartmentdwellerssurvivalguide.com

with its twilled fabrics, citified tweeds, aggressive plaids, and newly shaped silhouettes.[12]

Though the peacock revolution was hardly defined by any singular look—and embraced everything from turtlenecks to Edwardian jackets—the emphasis it placed on the male form and image shifted the gaze (and proportions of disposable income) from one gender to another. "The male is really the peacock. . . . He struts very proudly in his clothing," reported one columnist on the African-American scene in Georgetown.[13] Male consumers and the clothing manufacturers that catered to them re-positioned themselves on the fashion scene, allowing for a break in style and a shift in consumption.

Music icons, including the Beatles and Rolling Stones, furthered the appetite for men's fashion, and had significant

Fig. 65 ELVIS PRESLEY ON CONCERT TOUR WEARING HIS PEACOCK JUMPSUIT, 1974
Photograph: Colorized and restored by Harry Chavez Graphics

influence on the looks of the time. As both adapters and generators of style, male stars became lightning rods for commentary and female adoration. Rock bands, riffing on the looks and sprit of the peacock revolution, blew-out the definitions of what was sexy, masculine, and alluring on stage. For some male performers, the imitation of birds and creatures became a purposeful motif in entertainment. David Bowie used a suggestive vocabulary of insects, angels, and other creatures to transform himself in dramatic fashion over the decades, while others incorporated peacock feathers and motifs directly into costumes, including Jack White in his 2013 performance at the Grammy Awards with his all-girl band *The Peacocks*.

Fig. 66 Joseph Andrus (1927-1998). MUMMER'S PEACOCK COSTUME, c. 1993 Suit: sequined synthetic knit, feathers / Mask: peacock feathers, feathers, plastic / Tail: peacock feathers, sequins 48 x 72 x 12 inches. Collection of Golden Sunrise, Mummers Parade, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The use of peacock feathers as a dramatic extension of costume had seemingly always been a part of entertainment culture. The long feathers allowed for a major shift in scale and proportion, creating entirely different silhouettes for performers, while the naturally iridescent tips drew attention to the outer edges of the costume's frame. At the folk level, peacock feathers and peacock shapes appeared regularly in street parades—from Mardi Gras, to the Philadelphia Mummers Parade [Fig. 66], to the West Indian Carnival in Brooklyn—and with good reason. The peacock shape lent itself to the grand scale of the costumes, and subsequently to the intended overhaul of class and gender norms. While still retaining a nod to royalty and grandeur, the peacock long surpassed absolute sincerity, and was better accepted with an implied wink to the observer. These layers of meaning helped punctuate the social inversions exercised through street parades that re-claimed the place of their (often working class) participants.

Fig. 67 Alfred Cheney Johnston (1885-1971). ROSE DOLORES IN PEACOCK COSTUME, ZIEGFELD FOLLIES MIDNIGHT FROLIC, c. 1920-23 Photograph from the Alfred Cheney Johnston Collection at the Library of Congress

Showgirl costumers since the 1920s deployed peacock feathers to dramatic effect, whether in the early Ziegfeld Follies [Fig. 67] or in later Vegas showcases and Cirque de Soilel spectaculars. Feathered halos of peacock feathers created great contrast to petite female forms, and appeared regularly in costume tails, headdresses, and fans. The neo-burlesque trend of the early 2000s re-purposed many of these costume ideas for performers on the local level and added a layer of irony and female empowerment to the neo-strip scene.

For pop star Katy Perry, her song "Peacock" conjours explicit references to male genitalia, while she dominates the stage with an aggressive stance and a tremendous backpiece of blue and green plumage. In Engand, screwball performance artist Bryony Kimmings dons a peacock hat and other plumage throughout her show "Sex Idiot" as she reexamines embarrassing incidents from her sexual past. In 21st-century performances, the peacock's grandeur pumps up the messaging on female control and the inversion of gender roles.

Fig. 68 David Curtis-Ring (British, b.1985). PEACOCK HEADDRESS FOR BRYONY KIMMINGS, 2010. Papier-mâché, resin, fabric, peacock feathers, Swarovsky crystals. 42 x 27 x 18 inches, approx. Worn by performance artist Bryony Kimmings. Photography: Christa Holka

As Kimmings' hat suggests, the peacock has come back in a more literal form, yet filled with satire and irony. When taxidermy, natural specimens, and cabinets of curiosities re-entered the decorating repertoire in the 21st century, the peacock was a likely object for attention. Clothing stores started selling real taxidermy-topped hats with whole birds making an appearance on the toppers [Fig. 68]. An account of the hottest new spots for "Shopping, Sipping, and Slurping in Bushwick, Brooklyn" in 2014 describes a gastro pub called The Rookery, complete with antique model ships and a stuffed peacock on display in the industrial-styled space. [14]

As the 21st century progresses, the peacock will, no doubt, continue to delight, inspire, confuse, and bemuse. A symbol of transformation, the peacock's place-of-pride in popular culture is assured. While making a strong visual statement, its meanings morph with each decade — highlighting, questioning, and sending-up each object and person associated with it.

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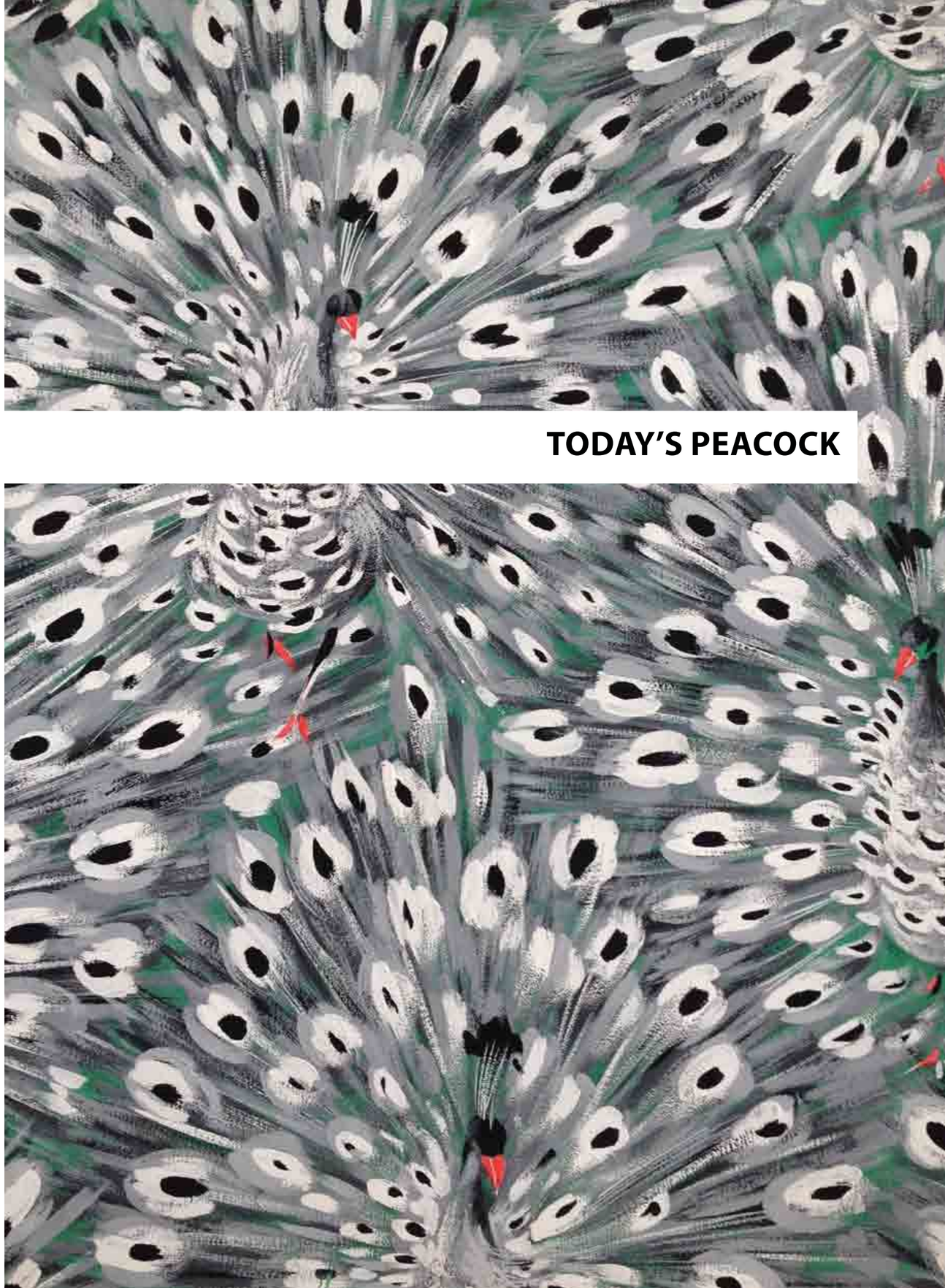
CATALOG OF THE EXHIBITION



TODAY'S PEACOCK

Opposite, Cat. 112 DISPLAYING PEACOCKS DESIGN, c. 1970s

1, 2 Laura Ball

b. 1972

"My interest in the jewel-toned peacock is as multifaceted as a jewel itself. The animals I usually work with are all endangered or extinct, so, quite honestly, I see painting the blue peacock as a bit of an indulgence. On the other hand, the peacocks I often paint are actually 'green peafowl' and listed 'endangered' on the IUNC Redlist. They are sad but beautiful, and they lighten the workload for me because painting them I get to use turquoise and viridian, and totally unearthly colors."

Laura Ball journeys inward in her dreams, crossing boundaries in a mental landscape. Her work is influenced by myths and so it is natural that she would find the peacock, which figures in so many of them. Peacocks, once believed to live forever are linked to the legend of the phoenix, another bird like the peacock reputed to be immortal. Ball who lived in Greece for a time is sensitive to that country's plethora of myths. She thinks of the ancient goddess Hera, whose loyal servant Argus Pantoptes had a hundred eyes but was killed on "guard duty." Salving her loss, Hera placed his eyes on the peacock's tail. Argus-to-peacock is a nice tie-in Ball claims because the peacock has earned the reputation as a good guardian. "As I walked past my neighbor's house in Greece, her peacocks would "call" very loudly, much more loudly than a barking dog. So, they are in my pleasant memories."

GROWTH 8, 2013
Watercolor on paper
20 x 16 inches

For Ball, the artist, the peacock's tail satisfies compositional needs in some of her pieces. "I often have open, white areas between animals or plants to be filled in. I can make large swaths of wet-on-wet watercolor and place bits of color that occur in a peacock tail. Peacock tail feathers are a binding element for her, "I use them the way I use snakes and vines, to bind parts together to make visual connections between pieces, or to leave them hanging delicately into open spaces of white paper. Mixing dreams, myths, and memories as she does paint, Laura Ball finds drawing the lacework of the peacock's feather-eye is "like a meditation."

SANCTUARY #1 AND SANCTUARY #2, 2014
Watercolor and graphite on paper, 30 x 22 inches (each)

Courtesy of the artist and Morgan Lehman Gallery, New York, New York
Photography: Shad Bee, Chrome Digital, San Diego

3 Helen Flockhart

b. 1963

FLOCK, 1997
Oil on canvas, 27 1/2 inches x 39 1/2 inches, Private Collection

Scottish painter Helen Flockart first exhibited her painting, *Flock*, in 1997. When Claire Henry, a *Scotland Herald* critic asked her, "Why a peacock?" the artist answered, "It seems to want to be there." Today thinking back, she adds: "I remember originally being inspired to paint the peacock when I saw the image of *Air*, which Giuseppe Arcimboldo painted about 1566." From Italy to Scotland, from 1566 to 1997, the peacock crosses time and miles, moving from one artist's studio to another, from one canvas to another. Flockhart says, "I have very few tubes: cadmium yellow, red, green, white, and blue." All the better it seems to create her woodland hues that Henry further notes are within a "web of bizarre detail and symbolism, meticulously crafted with layers of glazes."

Fig. 69 Giuseppe Arcimboldo. AIR, *Four Elements Series*, c. 1566
Oil on canvas. 29 1/3 x 22 inches
Private Collection, Basle

As for the peacock, Arcimboldo transforms the bird into the shoulder of a man, the base for a human face he creates by piling together the images of many types of birds. Flockhart, though, lines up her peacock and its attendant birds to look into a distance, oblivious to the young girl behind who strains to join them but cannot cross the barrier of a river. For both the Renaissance and the contemporary painter, the peacock enables their paintings and their messages. For Arcimboldo, caricature, and at times tribute to his royal patrons. For Flockhart, it is transmitting "the experience of being; the feel of claustrophobia, compression, and confinement, conveying that dreamlike inability to move."

At *Flock's* first showing, Flockhart offered the *Herald* these parting words about her intentions: "I hope that my paintings create a feeling of stillness. I want them to suggest a lull, a sense of portent, slowing a moment right down to its core of frozen energy."

4 Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag

b. 1986

Knitting is usually associated with ladies who lunch, itchy sweaters, and kittens batting balls of yarn that dangle from clicking needles. But don't tell that to Dillon Lundeen Goldschlag.

He makes knitting happen, but not in Grandma's parlor. It happens with his truck, the Yarn Bus, which transports eager knitters from Manhattan to Tarrytown and his family's business, the Flying Fingers Yarn Shop.

While helping to run the shop, Dillon has seen it all: the new knitter with the proverbial six-foot scarf that just can't stop and the knitting virtuoso whose troves of grandchildren are wearing sweaters she turns out in a trice and that Bergdorf's would love to sell.

Dillon, though, left sweaters, not to mention scarves, way behind when he turned to the peacock, not one but two, and they are not buddies. The peacocks are fighting fiercely, and in Dillon's creation for this exhibition, the fight is tough. With wire, wax, and thread, he made the protagonist's wings, beaks, eyes, and claws. Then there's location, location. The fight takes place in a forest of leafless cedar trees. Once he peeled the cedar bark off, piece by piece, the straight trunks stood tall, encased in multicolor skeins of wool. Goldschlag, who grew up in Westchester, watched peacocks on family trips to the free-range Catskill Game Farm, and even then he says he saw, "the birds had endless textures."He studied sculpture in various media at Rhode Island School of Design, but now sculpts extensively in wool, bamboo, and even soy fibers.

"For me, knitting is an art, not just a craft," and he adds, "It is handiwork that creates something from nothing, from just a string," be it sweaters or peacocks.

UNTITLED PEACOCKS (Fighting Males), 2014, (detail below)
Yarn, copper, and cedar trees
120 x 120 x 144 inches
Collection of the artist

5 Richard Haas

b. 1936

WILLARD BUILDING, 2008-2014
Watercolor on paper, 16 x 19 inches
Collection of the artist

Twenty perching peacocks in shades of cream, ochre, blue, and green, grace the Willard Building, across from Veterans Memorial Park in Downtown Grand Rapids, Michigan. The building was completed in 1930, just as the nation entered the Great Depression. The terra cotta birds, created in high relief, sit atop architectural piers that separate the storefronts of the "Peacock Building," as the locals call it. Since then, the peacocks have become neighborhood icons and stand for "the last hurrah of elaborate terra cotta ornament in Grand Rapids—a paean to artistry."

Richard Haas, in 2008, created this watercolor to capture the flavor of the Willard Building, while he worked in Grand Rapids on one of his well-known public mural projects that are located in places as far flung as West Virginia, Florida, Chicago's North Side, Yonkers, and St. Louis. In Grand Rapids, he traveled the city searching for architecturally interesting structures and was quickly drawn to the Willard Building, which he found "a quite stunning piece of Art Deco architecture."

As Haas puts it, "I haven't chased a peacock in years" but painting the Grand Rapids birds caused him to remember his dramatic encounters with peacocks, when a boy. Haas grew up near Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright's heralded home in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Wright, the architect who created the Peacock Room for Japan's Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, was also a homeowner who kept peacocks—for him elegant and animated ornaments for his lawn. On occasion the Haas family car would drive slowly up the Wright drive and Richard Haas's father, stopping the car, would leap out and wave his arms to get the peacocks to raise their glorious tails, much to the delight of his son who would later paint them.

6 Irena Kenny

b. 1972

WOUND UP!, 2014
Sharpie, watercolor on paper, 22 x 30 inches
Collection of the artist

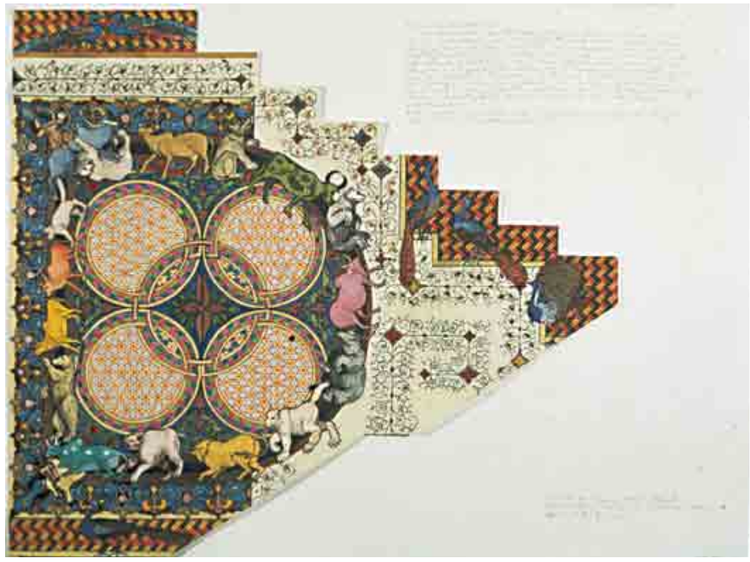
Alone among the contemporary artists in *Strut*, Irena Kenny shows us the quiet peahen, rather than the strutting peacock, even as she takes the artistic liberty of giving her mother bird the considerable flair of a spectacular array of circular and colorful tail feathers. Kenny associates the peacock with luxury and mystery, and remembers a pivotal moment when visiting a zoo she came across a single peacock feather.

Originally from the Czech Republic, Kenny uses different forms of creativity to express herself and to make sense of the confusing world around and within her. After completing six years of art school and moving from London to New York, Kenny became an art therapist. She says, "For me, art represents the mirror of my internal world within the context of my external environment. It is the connection between these two realities that I find magical, freeing, and all-permitting." Kenny believes deeply in art's healing power and realizes that when she is engaging in the soothing, rhythmic, and repetitive markings of pen on paper "I am always looking forward to the surprise that awaits me upon finishing my images."

Kenny, in *Wound Up!*, turns the peahen into an animated form that explores the sometimes anxiety-inducing, sometimes conflicting states of artist and mother. Kenny's bird is stubborn, even as it searches for ways to live her feminine role. She ignores nature's need to subdue the plumage of the female peafowl and spreads her own magnificent tail. What Kenny shows us here is a mother's driving concern to raise young children, needy for her care, while celebrating another impetus—the "what-it-takes," the "wind-up" from the unknown, which provides the key to open the treasure of her eggs and give good mothering to her hatchlings.

7 Joyce Kozloff

b. 1942



DETROIT PROPOSAL, "D" IS FOR DETROIT, 1985
Watercolor and acrylic on paper, 22 x 30 inches
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, New York

"D" is for Detroit, says Joyce Kozloff who made this public art project that is emblematic of others she creates for cities and the organizations that keep them running. Kozloff turns to the history of a place and its culture to springboard her art. She created *"D" is for Detroit* for the Detroit Transport Corporation at the Financial District Station, a neighborhood filled with Art Deco skyscrapers, homes of the The Guardian, Buhl, Ford, and Penobscot buildings, but Kozloff drew her inspiration from a decorative mural created for a London dining room by James McNiell Whistler. Later, American industrialist Charles Lang Freer purchased Whistler's masterpiece, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* as well as the entire room in which the mural stood, transposing them to his Detroit mansion in 1904, where it remained until 1919. Whistler's work made a deep impact on Kozloff, who loved it when she saw it at the Freer Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. For artists like Kozloff, a leader of the Pattern and Decoration Movement in contemporary art, *The Peacock Room* was iconic, a decorated interior, not part of mainstream art history because of its unusual nature, but an important sidestream. Kozloff was determined to put its essence into her art and she maintains her elaborate style in *"D" is for Detroit*, combining a wild array of motifs and influences from medieval, Renaissance, Celtic, and Indian sources. Animals appear in the piece, too, and because financial institutions are headquartered close to her artwork, she experimented with images of bulls and bears that cavort around the D in Detroit. It is, though, the peacock that inspired Whistler's work that holds pride-of-place in the work of Kozloff. Though hard to tell from photographs, the scale of her two peacocks is huge.

Kozloff says, "The peacocks become pterodactyls, harking back to ancient flying reptiles. They're the first thing a traveler sees when he gets off the train."

"D" is for Detroit, installation view, 1985

8 Kymara Lonergan

b. 1959

The opportunity to create the arresting image of a woman who defies the gilded confines of patriarchal life inspired Kymara Lonergan to make a gown installation for the Victoria Mansion in Portland, Maine. Known for her happenings in historically important locations, the artist's installations use the clothing worn by women to show the roles carved for them by the society of their day as well as the views they had of themselves.

Lonergan dresses her creation, *Madame Laurent,* a five-foot mannequin, in a gown drawn from the image of the peacock. It trails a train almost as long as the model is tall and includes, too, the bird's very feathers. She says her fictional Madame Laurent, who we might assume to be cared for and content "represents women who married wealthy merchants, hotel owners and sea captains. They were women of means who traveled with their husbands from lavish property to property up and down the East Coast and throughout Europe." However Madame Laurent illustrates another side of 19th-century domesticity—wives suppressed by a Victorian male-dominated culture. Women, then, could only long for self empowerment and to convey this somber fact she drapes her model in a black Victorian mourning cape. Madame Laurent, though, is capricious and shows ambivalence—the push and pull between assertiveness and flirtatiousness. Her dress decorated with the plumage of a male bird sends a message laden with sexual complexity. A message espoused by the House of Worth, too. Lonergan's dress is patterned on the designs of this famous 19th-century Parisian haute couture emporium.

MADAME LAURENT, 2008
Velvet, Sari brocade fabric, Victorian cape, Peacock and Ostrich feathers, Victorian jewelry, wig, mask, on mannequin base
Manniquin 5 feet H; dress with a 4-foot train
Collection of the artist
Photography: Victorian Mansion, Portland, Maine
John Patriquin/*Portland Press Herald*

Madame Laurent is both a personal and feminist statement for Lonergan who says, "The peacock feathers symbolize seduction and the desire to take flight. Her head is created from pieces of a trove of love letters found in a Hudson Valley estate. She wears a veiled mask made of peacock feathers, symbolizing the masking of emotions, feelings, and speech."

9 Landon Nordeman

b. 1974

ON THE LEDGE, *Heads Up: Peacock! Series,* 2011, New York, New York
Archival Pigment Prints, 1/10, First Edition, 11 x 17 inches (each)
Collection of the artist

Stop! Landon Nordeman called out to the cabbie.

Didja see the peacock?

Stop a cab in the middle of a crowded Delhi street?

No, not Delhi. It's New York City, at Fifth Ave and 79th, where all things are possible—even a peacock perched high on the ledge of a window on a very tall building in the top strata of New York's domicile real estate, and causing a stir among New Yorkers who would not usually permit a smidgeon of curiosity to ruffle them, or else they might as well live in Albuquerque or Iowa City.

Landon Nordeman, photographer of today's culture and its creatures, phone camera always in hand, stared up at the peacock, its fabled tail of blue-green feathers arced against the building's white limestone.

Was it roosting? Laying eggs?

Well, no. For the male of the peafowl species and the present occupier of the window ledge, eggs are not an option. But you can't blame a New Yorker for asking. This isn't Delhi, and who knows from peacocks? Nordeman didn't stare long, jumping into cab #2 to get his real camera.

Nordeman photographs a lot of animals but they don't star alone in his pictures. His animals stand in the sightline of humans, usually at happenings that mix sophisticated people expertise with the emotional hurrah of the animal. "I enjoy the interaction between people and animals—it's the variety," he says.

As for the peacock, it reigned over the Empire City for a day and a night, thought better of it all, and flew back to Central Park Zoo for breakfast, but not before gifting its handholding, finger-pointing, camera-clutching, and camping-out admirers with a glimpse of the gorgeous and a wisp of the exotic.

For a time the peacock glowed, an emerald solitaire, set among the steel spires of the great grey city.

ON THE LEDGE, (detail)

GAWKERS

PHOTOGRAPHERS

DOG WALKER

RUPERT MURDOCH

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

LOVERS

CLAPPER

DRIVE-BY SHOOTERS

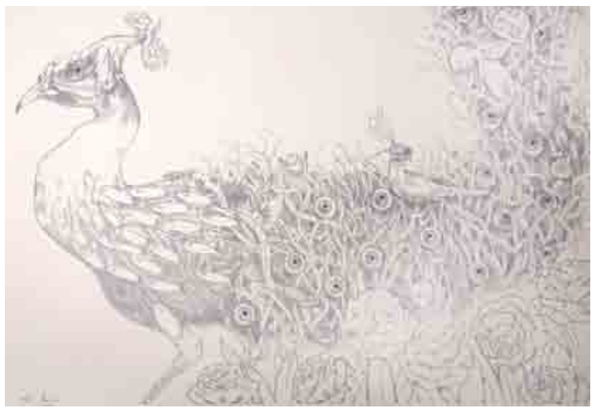
10, 11 Peter Paone

b. 1936

PEACOCK, 2003
Acrylic on panel, 24 x 54 inches
Collection of the artist

Peter Paone grew up in South Philadelphia where there are few flowers and definitely no peacocks. He saw fig trees and vegetables growing in his parents' garden, but it was the sculptural form of the flower that intrigued Paone, "It is a form that lends itself to inventing new forms," he says. *Peacock*, which he painted in 2003, a half century after beginning his work as a mature artist, is laden with flowers. Nary a feather on its long, multi-colored tail, the peacock trails, instead, a pastiche of roses, zinnias, and daisies. Paone reveals own self-portrait within the portrait of the peacock. On the surface his choice is a given— his surname "Paone," at one time spelled "Pavone," means "peacock" in Italian. Look deeper, though, at this peacock for the key to the artist who crowns his bird with thorns, not feathers, a signal of his struggle to get his message both seen and understood. Each flower on the bird's tail stands for an experience, a memory, or an association that we attract as we live and work. The tail, edged with fine-lined roots, is another symbol of our continually growing accumulation, while nestled beneath the flower petals are creatures we meet in nature—birds, fish, and insects. The peacock, linked so often to the supernatural, is here firmly grounded in our earthly journey and the things of the earth.

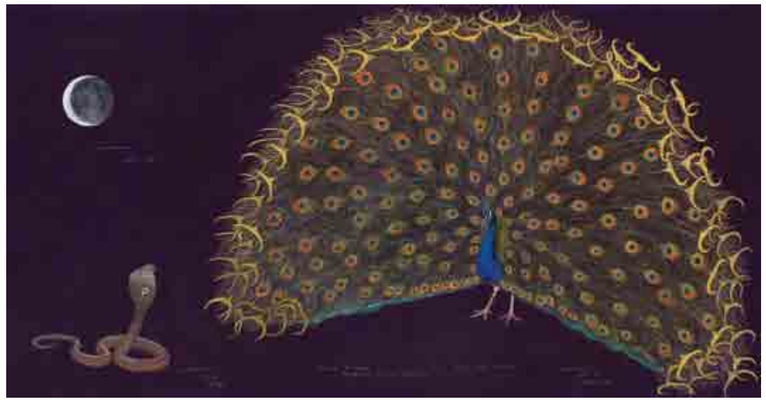
Paone reflects, "It's a challenge to take the peacock, an image of paradise in Catholic liturgy, and transform it into something closer to me and you that tells the real story about life."



PEACOCK, 2013
Lithograph printed in silver ink
on white Arches paper
21 x 30 inches, Edition 21/50
Signed: Paone in pencil lower right
Collection of the artist

12, 13 James Prosek

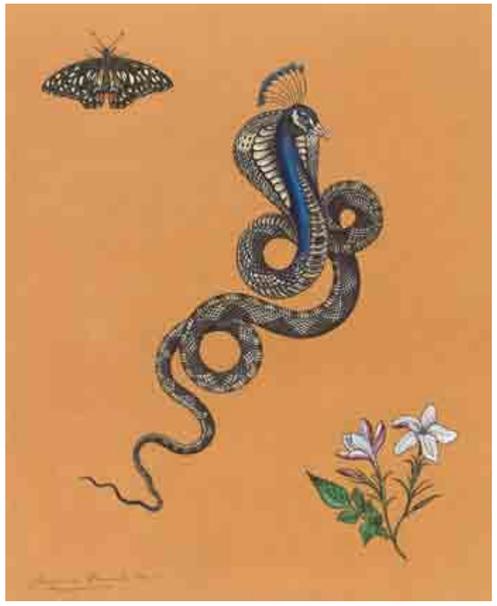
b. 1975



PEACOCK AND COBRA, 2013
Watercolor, gouache, powdered mica, colored pencil, and graphite
on tea-stained paper, 60 x 115 inches

Like most of us, James Prosek, artist, writer, and naturalist, first saw peacocks in petting zoos. "I was always stunned by the poise and posture of this bird when I was a child. I think people take their oddness and beauty for granted because they are so common. If the peacock were rare or endangered, or even extinct, how much greater would our appreciation of this bird be?"

Prosek, as a boy, was fascinated, too, by birds and fish, and at first he drew them faithfully. As his inquiries into human and nature relationships deepened he began making heightened manipulations of things he saw—hybrid creatures appeared and objects that showed a world constantly in motion, moving and morphing. His *Peacock and Cobra* is the bird-star on the cover of this book, dedicated to "the peacock and beauty in art." It shows a peacock and a cobra poised for conflict—an allegory for the colonization of the Indian subcontinent by the British. It was inspired by Prosek's love of the peacock but also South Asian miniature paintings in which peacocks and cobras make frequent appearances. The result of the encounter between the peacock and cobra—India and the imperial nation—is not a clear victory for either, but a mixing of language, religion, and foods, he believes. Prosek shows the hybrid creature created by their union in his second painting in this exhibition *Peacock Cobra II*. The bird and the snake evolved similar body forms—the "S" curve of the peacock's arched neck mimics the snake's sinuously contorted torso and makes the amalgam all the more convincing. The false eyes on the peacock's feathers mimic the false eyes on the cobra's cape that evolved both to deceive and protect. A lot to look at and ponder about the new and old, the real and imagined.



PEACOCK COBRA II, 2013
Watercolor, gouache, powdered mica, colored pencil, and graphite on tea-stained paper
16 13/16 x 13 9/16 inches

Courtesy of the artist and
Schwartz-Wajahat, New York

14, 15 Rikki Morley Saunders

b. 1951

NUREYEV, 2011
Bronze, variegated green and brown patina
49 x 53 x 22 inches; Edition of 7/12

ALEXANDER, 2010
Bronze, variegated green and brown patina
74 x 23 x 17 inches. Edition of 9/9

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse D. Saunders
Photography: Jim Graham

Peacocks are not a sometime thing for Rikki Morley Saunders. Elegant poseurs every day, in bronze they become her arresting sculptures. Saunders declares peacocks funny, mischievous, and joyful. Best of all for her the birds lend color to the winter that descends as regularly as you might expect on her farm in southwest Pennsylvania.

Sasha, Sergio, Alexander, Nureyev, her peacocks' names ring out as do their calls in the early dawn—a scream that startles some but for Saunders is reassuring. Daytime, male peacocks are partial to attacking cars, which often results in more damage to the peacock than the car. Nureyev became a Saunders pet and studio model after she found him on the ground, his leg broken. With his leg soon encased in a splint and hopes high, he was named for Russian dancer Rudolf Nureyev, famed for acrobatic leaps and turns. Nureyev the peacock has not reclaimed the mobile grace of Nureyev the dancer but he enjoys roosting in the farm's crabapple trees, and in the studio moves Saunders to capture his indomitable spirit in her carving.

How do you sculpt the lightness of a feather in bronze? The mysteries of mesh, sodder, and wax, plus Saunders' countless hours observing these birds from life and hearing their language enables her to turn avian energy into art and broadcast her message, "I want others to get joy from my work and to get insight into these magnificent creatures."

16 Brian Keith Stephens

b. 1973

SING SOMETHING HERE, 2014
Oil on canvas, 48 x 64 inches
Courtesy of Diane Birdsall Gallery, Old Lyme, Connecticut

In *sing something here*, Stephens compares a demure boy and a flagrantly strutting bird. The title of his work suggests the boy look up, look out, and strut himself to show his own natural power like a peacock. Despite the somberness of the boy, Stephens's canvas is a study in the brilliant primary colors of red, yellow, and blue as it depicts the peacock, a natural exhibitionist that displays its beauty trailing its fabled feathered tail. Although the boy remains impervious to the bird's charm, the peacock is an example for the boy.

As Diane Birdsall, friend and dealer to Stephens points out, *sing something here* addresses one of Stephens's central themes: the age-old question of "nature verses nurture." At the core of the artist's work is his search for balance between the real and the fanciful and he looks for part of the answer in the kinship humans hold with the spirit of the wild animal. For Stephens a child and an animal are closely linked—both are innocent. The child, though, requires the watching that an animal can give. Fittingly, the peacock has historically been looked to for protection, which has outfitted it grandly as the traditional guardian of royal children, who, in turn, grow up to be guardians of kin and country.

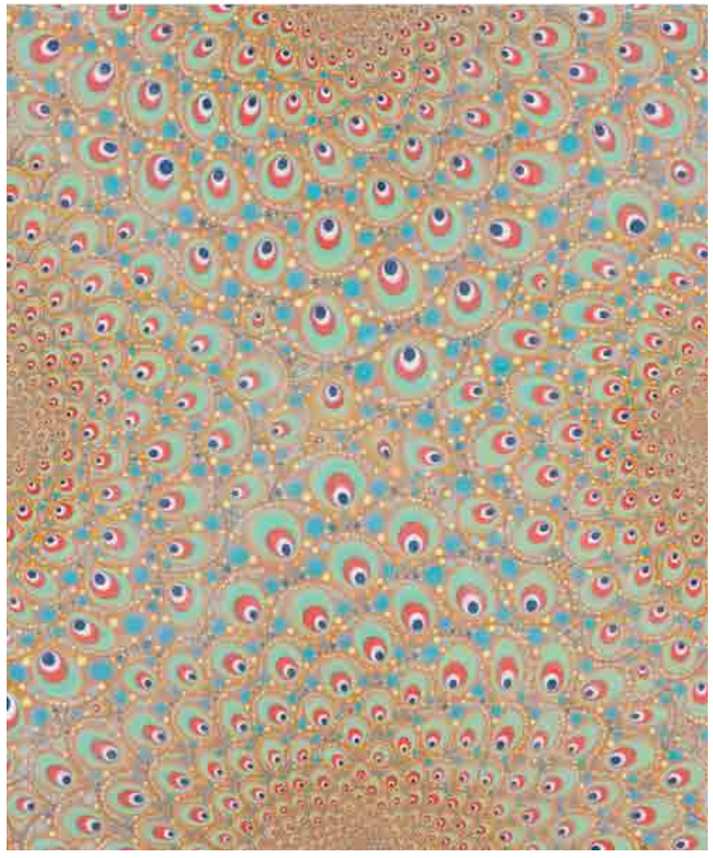
The Connecticut artist's two young sons are often models for his paintings and move him to reflect on the flow of life he sees in them: "Imagination, joy, innocence—an open, mind and spirit." Stephens adds, "As we navigate our daily lives, we must face thoughts, anxieties, joys and emotion. Sometimes seemingly opposite emotions—pride, lust, hatred, desire, love, inhibition exist simultaneously between moments in time. I am captivated by the power of my own emotions, the playful desires and the sometimes dangerous energy that is the essence of the human spirit."

17 Barbara Takenaga

b. 1949

"Peacocks make me think of chandeliers. Chandeliers are so opulent and so much fun but It is very hard to capture their light—they are man-made suns. Peacocks are like chandeliers, gorgeous and grand, and, then sometimes too much."

Takenaga comments on her abstract radial painting, "I've actually done a series of pieces that started from the center and moved outward, and others that started from the edge and moved inward with a radiating symmetry that gives them a Mandala feeling." The peacock is the prime candidate for Takenaga's undulating and radiating line. "I've noticed that when peacocks are fully fanned out they are almost but not quite three quarters of a circle of a radiating thing. For *Peacock Painting*, the picture is small on the edges and gets larger and larger until it comes to its center—a reversal of real radial symmetry. It feels somewhat symmetrical but it isn't. I start these kinds of paintings by beginning at the smallest point and draw freehand with gridded lines [which you see on the canvas], and then place dots to fill in the painting's structure."



PEACOCK PAINTING, 2011
Acrylic on wood panel, 20 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, New York

For Takenaga the peacock's feathers, their color and pattern, are the appeal and call her to the canvas. Inspired by the peacock's naturally iridescent feathers, she achieves that same shimmering look for her peacock by using "interference" colors that change just a bit as you move at different angles around the painting. "The 'eyes' on a real peacock feather are beautiful, but my peacock's feather 'eyes' are not—they are almost comic. They are googly eyes! In my work I like to add humor—the goofy aspect—as a foil for the big issues we look to art to take on, like mortality and beauty.

18 Federico Uribe

b. 1962

DINER, 2014. Mixed media. 64 x 18 x 24 inches
Courtesy of the Adelson Galleries, Boston, Massachusetts

Federico Uribe made a peacock for *Strut* but it is not your everyday blue-green peacock. Uribe's peacock looks white in some lights but it is transparent and plastic, as in plastic forks and spoons and knives, "because it is less obvious, it is unexpected," said the Miami artist, who was born in Columbia. "I didn't like that artists usually show the bird so colorful and open—so I did the peacock white and closed. It was my challenge for the bird." He adds, "It turned out to be much more challenging to do it white and closed —open and colorful is much easier!"

Uribe is known for showing objects new ways by using materials never before linked with the object. As he is memorably quoted, "A screw is a screw and a shoe is a shoe, until it becomes something else," and that goes for plastic tableware too. "I chose clear cutlery because I had it in the studio and tried to do a sculpture with it—first a human being and then a large chandelier—and I thought it would be the perfect material for the glamorous peacock."

Uribe calls his peacock *Diner*, not only because he made it from cutlery but also he thought back to the Museum's historic house, Glenview, and its dining room and parlor in which resides a stuffed peacock. Uribe's work may conjure images of peacock pies carried to the dining table on trays but, here, this bird offers itself to the viewer as something consumable—for the eye, not the tongue. *Diner* is perched on a dinner tray that holds a delicate still life of more plastic objects from which Uribe composed his peacock—beakers, a scissors, and, dining implements, such as tongs and stirrers.

The peacock and the paraphernalia of its creation illustrate Uribe's artistic intent. He says *Diner* might have been built a different way to conceal the peacock's construction but "showing every bolt leaves testimony to my time and energy as a gift to the viewer and that is very important to me."

19 Darren Waterston

b. 1965

PAVO, 2014
Oil on wood panel, 48 x 72 inches
Courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, New York

"My fascination with the peacock as a motif and its historic symbolism is out of a larger project I called *Filthy Lucre* in 2014, an installation that could only come from the story about James McNeill Whistler and his famous *Peacock Room*. That's how the peacock entered my imagination and it's moving my recent work.

The original *Peacock Room* emerged from the tumultuous relationship between Whistler and his client the English shipping magnate Frederick R. Leyland, who never really asked the artist for anything as elaborate as this room. He got it though, and Whistler handed Leyland a big bill and then was offended that Leyland didn't appreciate his work or the bill. Whistler and Leyland were both peacocks in their own right. Maybe they didn't have feathered tails but they had huge egos. Even though they had a falling out, the *Peacock Room*, *the* historic painted room, happened. That's the main thing. It's the story of art and money, and the story of two peacocks fighting over the fodder of excess and patronage. The *Peacock Room* was built during the Gilded Age more than a hundred years ago, and no surprise, we are living another Gilded Age right now, with wealth all around, and terrible hardship along with it. For me, the room is a play of exquisite beauty that falls in on itself, so heavy, so laden with its own excessiveness. The peacock is the perfect motif for what Whistler was getting at in his room.

I ask myself how beauty can so quickly turn into something monstrous and deformed. The exquisite peacock is mean. It's the symbol of capriciousness. The thing luxuriates in its own decadence. The bird is extremely beautiful but there is a violence to its beauty. Is violence the underpinning of beauty? Before working on the *Filthy Lucre* project, I created a portfolio with the poet Mark Doty that drew from medieval bestiary, which, of course, includes the peacock. A bestiary is a sort of moralizing about the human condition through the attributes of animals, so the peacock was fluttering around in my mind.

About *Pavo*, it's the word for the genus that contains the peacock. I set out to paint a very dark rich palette—a kind of homage to Whistler. It's a nocturne of sorts. The foreground and background fuse together in a palette that is "peacock-y" and morphs realism and abstraction. Look and you see suggestions of talons and peacock heads.

It seems like the peacock is painted often as a benign presence, so decorative. I'm looking at the darker side of the bird."

20 Tricia Wright

b. 1962

DOMESTIC ANIMAL, RECUMBENT, 2014
Ceramic, peacock feathers, cast iron, acrylic, wood, 7 x 10 x 12 inches
Collection of the artist

Domestic Animal; Recumbent belongs to a series of small-scale sculptures that Tricia Wright created by combining feathers with materials she gathered from the treasure troves of hardware stores, fabric shops in Manhattan's Garment District, supermarket shelves, and, not least, from her own home. Wright chooses materials often seen in the domestic environment as metaphors for a psychological interior.

A mixed-media artist, Wright explores the relationship between decoration and function, two elements that play strongly in the life of women, who dress themselves and their families and decorate their homes, both functions that are wellsprings for a family's identity. What Wright looks for is the difference between what we see and what is real in the lives of women. She says, "Through strange juxtapositions and unexpected pairings, I create forms that have both decorative and functional elements, and which insist on neutralizing a false dichotomy."

For Wright, the stuff of feathers is a seductive medium for her work. The formal beauty of a feather's shape (decoration) and the attraction a feather stirs (function) are the very qualities long associated with women. Of course it is the peacock feather, which belongs to the male of the species that is most extravagantly ornamental and the ultimate expression of male pride, power, and sexual dominance over the drab female. In *Domestic Animal*, though, the peacock feathers appear placid, the "tail end" or hindmost part of Wright's hybrid sculptural form that mixes the busyness of sexual function with the beauty of decoration. While her exotic peacock feathers lie languid, "recumbent," the cast-iron elbow to which they are affixed reminds us of the mundane practicalities of the human body, while the glazed ceramic teapot lid at the elbow's base evokes the decorative rituals of the home that so often fall to a woman to motivate and maintain.

THE HISTORICAL PEACOCK

Opposite, Cat. 111 DISPLAYING PEACOCK DESIGN, c. 1850-1899

PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE

21

Ethel Franklin Betts (1878-1956)
COUPLE WITH PEACOCKS, c. 1904
Oil on canvas, 22 x 15 inches
Collection of the American Illustrators Gallery
New York, New York
www.AmericanIllustrators.com

Early 20th-century illustrators loved the peacock. Best known for illustrating postcards, Betts created this painting for German postcard manufacturer Max Munk. Like many early 20th-century artists, Betts came from the Golden Age of Pennsylvania-trained illustrators. Through the contacts of another American illustrator Howard Pyle, with whom she studied, Betts was an illustrator for magazines, including, *St. Nicholas, McClure's Magazine*, and *Collier's*.

22

Jesse Arms Botke (1883-1971)
ALBINO PEACOCK AND TWO COCKATOO, c. 1930
Oil on gold leaf on board
39 x 31 1/2 inches
Collection of Deborah E. Maloy

Botke was a key artist who made the peacock a running motif in her work. The white peacock was a prominent image in early 20th-century art, signaling the interest in the post-Victorian period for a luxurious but more restrained coloration. Decorating the home at this time, the same restraint was popularized by decorator Elsie de Wolfe and others. Botke, inspired by Japanese screens, often used gold or silver leaf for the backgrounds of her paintings.

23

Jesse Arms Botke
BLACK PEACOCK, c. 1930
Oil on canvas on board, 32 x 26 inches
Courtesy of Associated Artists, Southport, Connecticut

In 1911 Botke went to work with American artist Albert Herter, assisting him to paint the mural for the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. During this assignment, she determined what would become the main subject of her work—birds—as she was asked to execute all the birds in the mural. In 1929 Botke and her husband settled on a ranch in Santa Paula, California, where she lived for the remainder of her life and kept many birds in aviaries she built there, including the blue peacock, which allowed her to examine its movements and plumage at close range.

24

William Baxter Palmer Closson (1848-1926)
FEEDING THE PEACOCKS, by 1910
Oil on canvas, 46 x 28 inches
Permanent Collection of the National Arts Club
New York, New York

Closson's work, like *Feeding the Peacocks*, incorporates elements of fantasy and contemplation, and, indeed, he was described as "a dreamer of picturesque dreams." Like many of artists of his period, his compositions often included contemplative and decorative female figures and allegorical symbols, such as nymphs, mermaids, and angels.

25

William Baxter Palmer Closson
FIGHTING PEACOCKS, c. 1898
Oil on canvas, 33 3/4 x 23 inches
Collection of Smith College Museum of Art
Northampton, Massachusetts
Gift of Mrs. William Baxter Closson

Originally an engraver, Closson began focusing on painting around 1890. The peacock figured as a subject for many printmakers at that time, and the decorative elements of the bird held special appeal for him. In 1898 he showed the painting *Peacocks Fighting* at the Boston Art Club, believed to be this work. The peacock's iridescent colors posed a challenge as well as an opportunity for the oil painter.

26

Robert Henri (1865-1929)
RUTH ST. DENIS IN THE PEACOCK DANCE, 1919
Oil on canvas, 85 x 49 inches
Courtesy of Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Gift of the Sameric Corporation in memory of Eric Shapiro

Robert Henri was a key artistic figure of the early 20th century, and is best known as a leader of the so-called "Ashcan School," dedicated to depicting the gritty realities of New York street life. Here, late in his career, Henri is seduced by the sensual fantasies of performer Ruth St. Denis and her famous peacock dance. On the eve of Art Deco, the artist returns to a sense of "art for art's sake"—in his lavish portrayal of the sinuous lines of the dancer's body which echo the lines of a perched peacock.

27

Herman Henstenburgh (Dutch, 1667-1726)
A PEACOCK, A PARROT AND OTHER EXOTIC BIRDS
IN A PARK LANDSCAPE, 1694
Gouache on vellum within gilt framing lines
11 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Arader Galleries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Other than early Christian manuscripts, some of the earliest depictions of peacocks in Western art are in Dutch Old Master paintings of estate parks and barnyards. Still under the sway of medieval workshops, Dutch painters frequently employed specialists of various types of detail painting. Hestenburgh was apprenticed in 1683 to Johannes Bronckhorst, who used his apprentice's talent for painting birds, insects, fruits, and flowers. However, Hestenburgh painted small works on vellum such as this, entirely in his own hand.

28

Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973)
PEACOCKS FIGHTING, 1934
Bronze, 21 x 20 x 21 inches
Courtesy New York State Museum, Albany, New York
Catalogue ID: History H-1943-27.2

In 1934 the *Pittsburgh Press* called *Peacocks Fighting*, "a gem in design," and reflected on Huntington's gift for making "superb studies of the fights and frolics of animals." Huntington's father was a paleontology professor at Harvard, giving her proximity to a cornucopia of animals. She was most interested, artistically, in pairs of animals and how they interacted with each other, which she frequently studied at the Bronx Zoo. In 1931, along with her husband, railroad heir Archer Milton Huntington, she opened America's first public outdoor sculpture garden in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, now Brookgreen Gardens.

29

Charles R. Knight (1874-1953)
BENGAL TIGER AND PEACOCK, 1928
Oil on canvas, 45 x 60 inches
Courtesy of Rhoda Knight Kalt

Knight's work is a rare artistic depiction of the peacock as prey to its natural predator, the tiger. He was the most famous artist to paint the animal in its natural environment, whether for a scenic backdrop in a natural history display or a painting. In 1890, J. & R. Lamb, a firm specializing in stained-glass for churches, employed Knight to create animals for its windows. During this period he regularly visited New York's American Museum of Natural History and eventually was hired by the museum to paint scores of backdrops for the animal exhibits, still beloved by visitors today. While not created for the museum, *Bengal Tiger and Peacock* is considered one of Knight's masterpieces.

30

Gaston Lachaise(1882-1935)
PEACOCK (long-tail), 1920
Bronze, 83 x 12 x 15 inches
Courtesy of the Lachaise Foundation
Boston, Massachusetts

31

Gaston Lachaise
PEACOCK (short-tail), 1920
Bronze, 57 x 18 x 19 inches
Courtesy of the Lachaise Foundation
Boston, Massachusetts

An Art Deco master, Lachaise was devoted to peacock imagery. The artist, born in Paris, studied at the Academie National des Beaux-Arts before moving to Boston in his 20s, and then to New York. Before moving to America, Lachaise became the apprentice to decorative artist Rene Lalique, who was interested in peacocks and their organic Art Nouveau lines. Lachaise returned to this avian subject in 1920 with two streamlined versions of a peacock at rest, and explored the subject two years later in a grouping of three peacocks, its central bird's tail fanned.

32

Paul Manship (1885-1966)
DETAIL FROM OSBORNE GATES--THE CRANE
AND THE PEACOCK, 1952
Bronze, 29 x 43 x 3 1/2 inches
Collection of the Smithsonian
American Art Museum
Bequest of Paul Manship, 1966.47.2

Manship was a leading influence in contemporary sculpture from the 1920s to the end of World War II. Entranced by the decorative elements of Art Deco, they remained the consistent style of his work to the end of his career. Between 1909 and 1912, he attended the American Academy in Rome, where he made garden and architectural sculptures and was influenced by classical Greek and Roman art. Manship's later outdoor architectural features, like the Aesop fable *The Crane and the Peacock* reflect his interest in ancient mythological subjects.

PAINTINGS AND SCULPTURE

33

Vladimir Pavlovsky (1884-1944)
PEACOCKS, c. 1925
Oil on canvas, 54 1/4 x 48 inches
Private Collection

Born in Ukraine, Russia, Pavlovsky settled in Boston where he began exhibiting in 1922, particularly at the Doll and Richards gallery. Artists, like Pavlovsky, were fascinated with the white peacock, the seeming antithesis of the colorful bird, and he completed at least three paintings with them, including one that won second prize at a local artist show at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The birds, while lacking pigment, have feather structures that render them iridescent. To capture this effect, artists used great skill and multiple hues to convey the bird's appearance. In 1908, the artist Eleanor Vere Boyle expressed her conviction that the white peacock was the most beautiful when "his white plumes stand up around him arrayed like a circle of the Milky Way, glittering with every movement—a galaxy of silver stars."

34

Gabriel Schachinger (German,1850-1912)
SWEET REFLECTIONS, 1886
Oil on canvas, 51 x 31 inches
Collection of the Woodmere Art Museum
Bequest of Charles Knox Smith

Schachinger, a Munich professor, award-winning artist, and court painter to Bavaria's King Ludwig II, specialized in pictures of young women so beautifully painted as to inspire descriptive rhapsodies from viewers. He remained in Germany but exhibited in the United States in the 1880s and at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. In 1891, the Munich gallery Wimmer & Co. opened a shop in New York that featured his art. The year after he painted *Sweet Reflections*, a French book published another work by him with peacock feathers, *At a Premier*, in which one of the women holds a peacock feather fan.

35

Abbott Handerson Thayer (1849-1921)
PEACOCK IN THE WOODS, Study for the book
Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom, 1907
Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 36 3/8 inches
Collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum
Gift of the heirs of Abbott H. Thayer, 1950.2.11

Charles Darwin long struggled with the evolutionary purpose of the peacock's striking train, which seemed to impede flight and speed, marking him as easy prey in his native jungle habitat. However Thayer believed that even the most brilliantly colored birds, like the peacock, blend into and become camouflaged by their habitats. He artistically explored this idea in his 1909 book, *Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom*. Among the book's wider implications was Thayer's then-radical but well-researched doctrine of concealing coloration adapted to modern military camouflage.

36

Robert Ward Van Boskerck (1855-1932)
STILL LIFE WITH CERAMIC PLATE AND PEACOCK FEATHERS
ON A LEDGE, c. 1907
Oil on canvas, 21 1/4 x 14 1/4 inches
Courtesy of the Post Road Gallery, Larchmont, New York

A prolific landscape painter, Van Boskerck digressed into still life in this simple arrangement, perhaps with items he had close to hand in his studio during winter, the off-season for painting trips. He followed his signature on this painting with a prominent "N.A.," which suggests it may date from the year he attained full membership in the National Academy of Design.

37

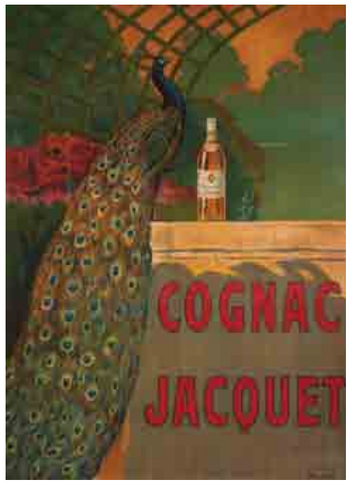
Julian Alden Weir (1852-1919)
THE PEACOCK FEATHER, c. 1907-08
Oil on canvas, 30 1/16 x 25 inches
Collection of the Addison Gallery of American Art
Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts
Gift of anonymous donor, 1931.17

The peacock held appeal for Weir, a key American Impressionist, who juxtaposed women with peacock feathers in at least three of his paintings. This portrait was exhibited in 1908 at the Third Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists at the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (now the Albright-Knox Art Gallery). The next year Weir submitted a work to the same Buffalo exhibition, *Peacock Feathers*, another painting of a woman posing with the feathers of this bird.

38

Newell Convers Wyeth (1882-1945)
CAPTAIN NEMO
Oil on canvas , 40 3/16 x 30 1/8 inches
Illustration for *The Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne
New York: Scribner's, 1918
The Andrew and Betsy Wyeth Collection

N. C. Wyeth and his teacher Howard Pyle mastered the art of painting for color illustration just as the new field of mechanical photo-reproduction emerged, forever changing the American printing industry. Wyeth specialized in dramatic scenes for adventure books, such as *Treasure Island* (1911) and *The Boy's King Arthur* (1922). At the end of *The Mysterious Island,* the stranded characters find they have been secretly watched over by none other than the elderly Captain Nemo from Jules Verne's earlier book *Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Nemo reveals that he was really an Indian prince and recounts the tragic story of his early life. There is no peacock in the tale, but Wyeth surely includes it in his portrait of Nemo as a reference to his Indian past.



39

COGNAC JACQUET
Chromolithograph poster from a design
by Camille Bouchet (French, 1799-1890)
Printed by Vercasson, Paris, c. 1910-20
63 x 47 inches
Collection of Deborah Villarreal-Hadley and Mike Hadley

A large and striking image *Cognac Jacquet* reminds us that the color poster, a type of print that burst upon the scene during the Art Nouveau period, was largely graphic design directed toward promotion. Bouchet's image of a peacock under a gazebo must have spelled success for the cognac's sales because several editions of the poster exist.

40

Edward Mason Eggleston (1882-1941)
CLEOPATRA
From an Art Deco calendar, 12 x 10 inches
Thomas D. Murphy Co., 1934
Private Collection

Eggleston populated his calendar images with Indian, Arabian, and Egyptian maidens as well as pirate girls. The peacock in his Cleopatra illustration is an appropriate symbol for the "pinup calendar girl" and in keeping with his interest in a "candy-box exoticism." During his career he painted calendars for the Thomas Murphy Co., Joseph C. Hoover & Son, and Brown and Bigelow.

41

William Giles (English, 1872-1939)
SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI, c. 1924
Relief etching printed from multiple zinc metal plates
13 3/4 x 18 1/4 inches (sight)
Private Collection
Courtesy of William P. Carl Fine Prints, Durham, North Carolina

Giles was an innovator in British color printmaking during the early 20th century. The subject of the peacock allowed him to highlight a brilliant range of colors that went beyond the realistic hues of the peacock's feathers to something more poetic. *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*, translated as "Thus Passes the Glory of the World," can be taken as a rumination on how quickly the glories of the world pass, and the peacock as a reflection of beauty's temporal nature. Highly regarded as innovative at the time of its creation about 1924, the etching was published in Malcolm Salaman's *Masters of the Color Print* (1928).

42

William Giles
WHEN WINTER WANES, c. 1923
Relief etching printed from multiple zinc metal plates
11 3/4 x 14 inches (sight)
Private Collection
Courtesy of William P. Carl Fine Prints
Durham, North Carolina

43

Alfredo Müller (Italian, 1869-1939)
PEACOCK PANEL, 1899
Chromolithograph, 21x 57 1/2 inches
Private Collection

Using an extended horizontal format, Müller showcases the elegant elongation of the peacock. The two birds in the panel are simultaneously integrated and yet decorously remote as they strut between rows of lush, stylized foliage dotted with orange fruits and red pomegranates. The greenery suggests the simplified vegetation of the "primitive" paintings of French Post-Impressionist, Henri Rousseau, combined with the striking curved lines and swirling patterns of Art Nouveau. The ambitious scale of the print demonstrates Müller's natural flair for complex yet harmonious design.

44

Fanny Palmer (1812-1876)
AMERICAN FARM YARD – MORNING
Two-color lithograph, hand-colored
16 11/16 x 23 7/8 inches (image)
New York, NY: Currier & Ives, 1857
Collection of the Bronxville Public Library
Bronxville, New York

Fanny Palmer created a set of barnyard views idealizing American ownership of land and livestock. In nostalgic pictures like this every detail is an intentional building block to her overall meaning. In this morning scene, pride of ownership extends to a magnificent peacock, positioned as the symbol of a new day. Certainly they were found on some American farms, but as an artist Palmer may also allude to their inclusion in Dutch Old Master paintings of farms and estates.

45

Louis Rhead (1857-1926)
LE FEMME AU PAON (Woman with Peacocks), c. 1897
From an album of original lithographs published by
L'Estampe Moderne, printed by F. Champenois, Paris
9 1/2 x 14 1/2 inches
Private Collection

The appreciation of the color poster, a new art form, is a hallmark of the Art Nouveau period. The year before Rhead made this print he held a one-man show of his posters in London. The English-born artist worked in New York as an illustrator for Appleton's and other publishing houses and studied in Paris. *La Femme au Paon* roughly translates as "Peacock Woman" and Rhead may have considered her a modern-day Juno. Like the goddess she promenades the garden path with her beloved birds, giving Rhead ample excuse to play with the patterns of sinuous curves.

46

William Seltzer Rice (1873-1963)
PRIDE STEPS FORTH, c. 1930
Color woodblock print
14 1/4 x 12 1/4 inches
Collection of the Two Red Roses Foundation
Palm Harbor, Florida

The proud cock who stands chest thrust out, one beady eye fixed on the viewer, is the embodiment of *Pride Steps Forth* in Rice's dazzling tour de force woodblock print. Associated with the Arts and Crafts Movement, Rice studied with famed illustrator Howard Pyle in Pennsylvania. Relocating to California in 1900, he spent his professional career teaching art in the public schools. In 1915 he visited the Panama Pacific International Exposition and was deeply influenced by the Japanese woodblock prints he saw there, adapting them to his own techniques for the rest of his career and publishing several books on the subject.

47

Theo Van Hoytema (Dutch, 1863-1917)
CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR (Kerstnacht & Nieuwjaar), 1894
Lithographs, Rijksmuseum catalogue No. 48 & 49
Edition 100, 17 3/4 x 11 3/8 inches each
Private Collection
Courtesy of William P. Carl Fine Prints, Durham, North Carolina

Van Hoytema was born in the Hague, Amsterdam. His work was inspired by nature and his unique style was a mix of Japanese art and Art Nouveau. He based his work on sketches of the countryside, animals in his home, and at the zoo. In *Christmas*, the owls function as a symbol of the night at the close the old year. In *New Year*, the peacock spreads its fan, a symbol of the rising sun, and joins the cockerel chasing the owls of the old year out of the picture.

48

Theo Van Hoytema
JANUARI 1903
Lithograph calendar page printed in colors, 1903
Rijksmuseum catalogue 145, Edition unknown
17 1/4 x 8 inches (sight)
Private Collection
Courtesy of William P. Carl Fine Prints, Durham, North Carolina

Influenced by Aubrey Beardsley, Van Hoytema became well known for his color-lithographed illustrations of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Ugly Duckling*. He is now best remembered for the series of lithographic calendars he produced from 1902 to 1918. *Januari 1903* shows a peacock, harbinger of the new year.

49

Maurice Pillard Verneuil (French, 1869-1942)
PAONS ET VIGNE (center image)
from *L'Animal dans la Décoration*, 1897
Chromolithograph
11 1/8 x 15 1/2 inches (sight)
Private Collection

Verneuil was assistant to graphic designer Eugene Grasset. Under Grasset he learned the techniques of Japanese printmaking, which influenced his work, along with the broader Art Nouveau style. Verneuil's finest designs, like *Paons et Vigne*, intertwine fauna and flora. Birds and other animals are interwoven with plants and flowers. The dynamic, tension-filled background of stylized shapes is quintessentially Art Nouveau.

50

NOW BY SAINT VALENTINE I LOVE THEE TRUE, c. 1883
Color lithograph greeting card
5 3/8 x 3 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

51

PEACOCK
Chromolithograph
Tobacco Card: *Bird Series*
Issued by Mecca Cigarettes, 1912
2 5/8 x 1 1/2 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Henry S. Hacker, 93.16.75.2

From the 1880s through the 1920s, tobacco manufacturers used illustrated cards to encourage the purchase of their products, especially during times of intense corporate competition. The cards, the premiums of the day, capitalized on the development of color printing and the public's growing appetite for collecting images. Baseball cards may be the most well-known and avidly collected of the cards but manufacturers cast a broad net for colorful, popular images like flowers and birds, that might capture the interest of women.

52

THE PEACOCK AND THE CRANE
Chromolithograph
Tobacco Card: *Fables Series*
Issued by Turkish Trophies, 1910
2 5/8 x 3 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Appealing to the child to sell to the adult is an age-old advertising ploy. A fable is summarized on the back of each tobacco card in the Fables series, with a stress on the moral: *Said the Peacock to the Crane*: "I am beautiful. You are homely." *Said the Crane*: "But I can fly high and see all the beauty of nature, while you can see only your own good looks."

Moral:—Appreciate the good things around you; not merely your own good points.

52 A

THE VAIN JACKDAW
Tobacco Card: *Fables Series*
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

A Jackdaw stole some peacock feathers. Then, thinking himself too beautiful to associate with the Jackdaws he joined the Peacocks. The Peacocks robbed him of his stolen plumes and then cast him out. Nor would the other Jackdaws again associate with the one who had looked down on them.

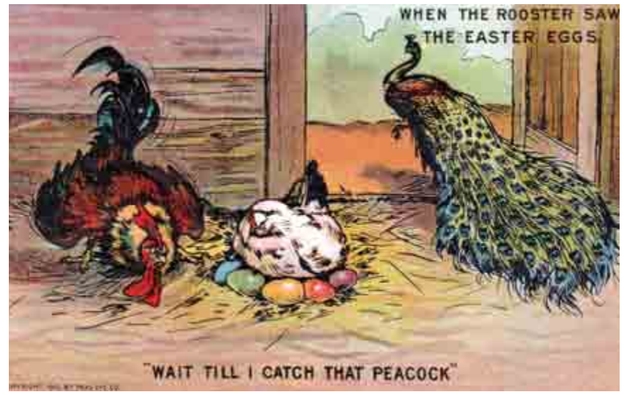
Moral:—If you ape your superiors, both they and your equals will despise you.

53

TRADE CARD FOR A NEW JERSEY CLOTHIER,
c. 1880s. Chromolithograph
2 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches
Newark, NJ: Stoutenburgh & Co.
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

54

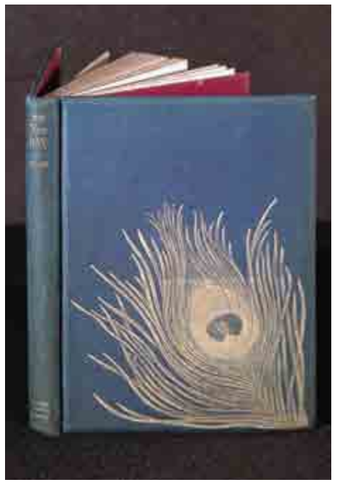
WAIT TILL I CATCH THAT PEACOCK
Paas Dye Co. print process postcard © 1910
3 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum



55

Talwin Morris (1865-1911)
Cover design for *The Heart of Midlothian* by Sir Walter Scott
8 x 5 1/2 inches
London: Gresham Publishing Company, 1900
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

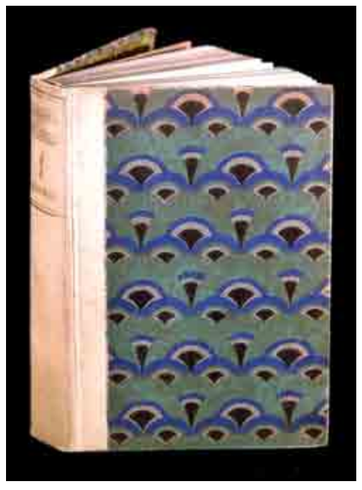
Morris trained as an architect but pursued a career as an art-editor, which allowed him to develop his interests in graphic design. In 1893, he relocated to Scotland and became an art director at Blackie and Son Publishers and associated with Charles Rennie Mackintosh and other artists of the Glasgow School of Art. Morris's streamlined, purely decorative approach bought an Art Nouveau aesthetic to book covers. Designs like these abstract peacock feathers could relate to various titles. Gresham also used this design on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.



56

Helena DeKay Gilder (1848-1916)
Cover design for *The New Day: A Poem in Songs and Sonnets* by Richard Watson Gilder
7 x 5 3/8 inches
New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Company, 1876
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Helena DeKay Gilder studied painting with Winslow Homer and John La Farge, as well as at the Cooper Union Institute and the National Academy of Design. She married Richard Watson Gilder, a poet and editor of *Scribner's* and *Century* magazines, and she designed this striking cover of a single peacock feather for his first poetry book. The peacock feather is an emblem of the Aesthetic movement and this particular feather is frequent illustration for the time.



57

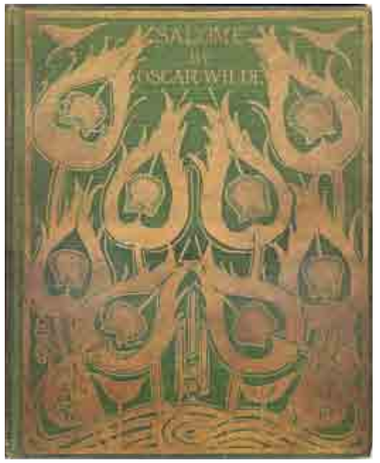
PEACOCK'S FEATHER by George S. Hellman
Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1931
Signed edition, 158/249
Cover design: Braunworth & Co., Brooklyn, New York
8 7/8 x 6 x 1 1/2 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Art Deco absorbed the peacock's feather into the ethos that all objects were considered worthy of being treated as a decorative art, and the peacock eye lends itself to abstraction. The Brooklyn-based Braunworth Company practiced all aspects of the bookmaker's art from printing to binding, here extending to golden interior papers. The Art Deco-influenced feather furthered the goals of the Aesthetic Movement, as it becomes increasingly abstracted and simplified into overall pattern, a comparison that is seen in Beardsley's cover for Wilde's *Salome*.

58

Aubrey Beardsley (English, 1872-1898)
Cover Design for *Salome* by Oscar Wilde
Cloth-bound book with gilt decoration
9 7/8 x 7 1/8 x 5/8 inches
John Lane, London and New York:
John Lane Company, 1912 edition
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Beardsley was a prominent illustrator in the 1890s and his work was important to the development of Art Nouveau. In 1894 he illustrated Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*, which earned him fame mixed with notoriety. Beardsley's designs are characterized by curvilinear style and Japanese-inspired bold design. The peacock skirt Salome wears in the first illustration below is Beardsley's way of connecting events from the play, as later in the text Salome is offered all the "beautiful white peacocks" that belong to Herod.



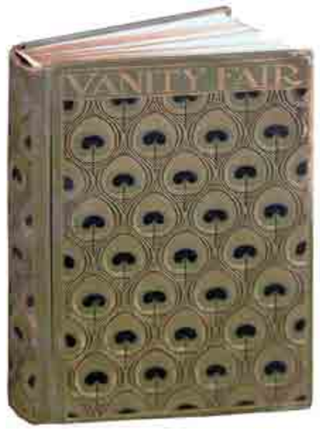
58 A

THE PEACOCK SKIRT in *Salome*
Engraving: Aubrey Beardsley
8 1/2 x 6 5/8 inches

58 B

THE EYES OF HEROD in *Salome*
Engraving: Aubrey Beardsley
8 1/2 x 6 5/8 inches

WORKS ON PAPER **Book Covers**



59

Lee Thayer (1874-1973)
Cover design for Vanity Fair: *a Novel without a Hero*
by William Makepeace Thackeray
8 1/8 x 5 7/8 inches
New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company Publishers, 1893
The Decorative Designers
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Book titles, such as Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, seem tailor made for the imagery of the peacock or its feathers. The "eyes" take on a scale-like pattern on this gilded cover. Emma Redington Lee Thayer and her husband Henry founded The Decorative Designers, a New York firm profiled in the February 1915 issue of *The Printing Art* with images of seventy-one book covers made over two decades. Lee produced most of the cover art, while Henry specialized in decorative lettering.

WORKS ON PAPER **Magazines and Illustrations**

60

C. Atwood (n. d.)
AESOP'S FABLES; JACKDAW AND PEACOCKS, c. 1880
Book illustration, Benday process print
5 1/2 x 8 1/3 inches (image)
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Aesop's ancient tales appeared in scores of editions in the 19th and 20th centuries, and the exact source of this illustration has proved elusive. The text varies from book to book but the message is universal: In the words of an 1881 version, published in New York by William L. Allison: Jupiter determined, it is said, to create a sovereign over the birds, and made proclamation that, on a certain day, they should all present themselves before him, when he would, himself, choose the most beautiful among them to be king. The Jackdaw, knowing his own ugliness, searched through the woods and fields and collected the feathers which had fallen from the wings of his companions, and stuck them in all parts of his body. When the appointed day arrived and the birds assembled before Jupiter, the Jackdaw also made his appearance in his many-feathered finery. On Jupiter proposing to make him king because of the beauty of his plumage, the birds indignantly protested, and each plucking from him his own feathers, the Jackdaw was, again, nothing but a Jackdaw.

Moral: Hope not to succeed in borrowed plumes.

61

Léon Bakst (Russian, 1866-1924)
THE PERI FROM "PERI"
12 x 9 inches
Engraving in *Serge de Diaghileff's Ballet Russe*: *Souvenir*
New York: Metropolitan Ballet Company, Inc., 1916
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

A costume and set designer, Bakst's work amazed audiences who saw Nijinsky and the other dancers perform. Worldwide press coverage and reproduced designs made Bakst a familiar name to fans and detractors who may never have seen a ballet. The fact that "the Peri," with peacock-feather eyes on her wings, was illustrated in this souvenir program. even though the ballet was not part of an American tour, shows his art was appreciated for its exciting coloration and movement.

62

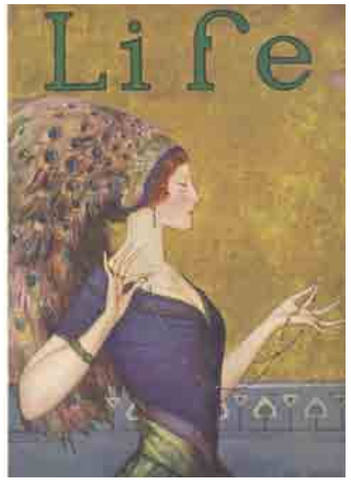
Watson Barratt (1884-1962)
WOMAN IN A PEACOCK ROBE
Cover of *Today's Housewife*, May 1921
15 3/4 x 10 5/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

George Watson Barratt was an illustrator and stage designer for hundreds of Broadway and Off-Broadway shows. Among his teachers was Ashcan painter Robert Henri, and Baratt's *Woman in a Peacock Robe*, showing demure but lush curves of the woman's gown bears the influence of Henri's more overt *Ruth St. Denis* (1919). His work appeared frequently on other magazine covers such as *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

63

Wladyslaw Theodor Benda (1873-1948)
WOMAN WITH PEACOCK HEADDRESS
Cover of *Life*, June 15, 1922
11 1/4 x 8 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

During the "Golden Era" of American illustration, approximately from 1880-1940, the peacock was the darling of commercial artists. Those that used these birds as inspiration read like a Who's Who of American illustrators. Benda was a Polish painter and designer, who moved to the United States in 1898 and became a citizen in 1911. In New York he attended the Art Students League and the William Merritt Chase School, where he studied under Robert Henri and Edward Penfield. During World War I his "Benda Girl" became popular for her modern and elegant qualities.



64

Eleanor Vere Boyle (English, 1825-1916)
AND A NEGLECTED LOOKING GLASS
Chromolithograph from *The Story without an End*
by Sarah Austin
London: Sampson & Low Son, & Marston, 1868
10 x 7 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Boyle was an illustrator and author of children's books and her work was influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites. Most of her illustrations in the 1860s were reproduced photographically and some, like *And a Neglected Looking Glass* were printed in color. In the Prologue to her 1908 book *The Peacock's Pleasaunce*, Boyle described her dream encounter with a peacock: "And there stood a peacock in the dewy grass. And the peacock was so beautiful, so full of grace and color, that I held up my gown in my hand and danced. And the peacock spread up his feathers of green and gold, all eyed with purple, and he too danced a minuet amidst the sparkling dewdrops."

65

Walter Crane (English, 1845-1915)
THE PEACOCK'S COMPLAINT
Color photo etching in *The Baby's Own Aesop*
verse fables by W. J. Linton, 1887, 7 x 7 1/2 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Inspired by the Pre-Raphaelites,Crane,who was a student of art critic John Ruskin, became the most important children's book illustrator of his day. Illustrations like *The Peacock's Complaint* was influenced by Japanese aesthetics visible in his use of bold outlines and flat colors. In the 1880s, influenced by designer William Morris, he became involved in the Socialist movement and worked to make art a part of everyday life for all social classes. Crane began to make more "populist" designs for textiles, wall paper, screens, and other household objects.

66

George Edwards (English, 1694-1773)
THE PEACOCK PHEASANT FROM CHINA
Copper-plate engraving from
A Natural History of Birds, London, 1747
12 1/4 x 9 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Arader Galleries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Edwards is one of the great naturalist illustrators in the time before John James Audubon made his great and lasting impact on the field. Initially studying Dutch art, Edwards traveled to Norway in 1718, where birds nesting in the cliffs shifted his interest from painting to ornithology. His artistic training helped him create realistic renderings of birds for publications, such as *A Natural history of Uncommon Birds* (1743-1751. Later research revealed that peacock-pheasants are not genetically related to pheasants and only distantly to the blue peacock.

67

THE GOLDEN, GEM-STUDDED PEACOCK THRONE OF PERSIA…
Illustration in *Fortune*, May 1930
14 x 11 3/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum Archives

The author, critical of "hoarded gold" valued "for its own sake," rather than kept on the open money market, illustrates the famous Peacock Throne of Persia as the visual expression of perceived excess. The full caption reads: "The golden, gem-studded Peacock Throne of Persia, its history now lost in the confused legends of Dead Dynasties, once more enthroned a King when Riza Khan Pahlavi assumed the Persian crown."

68

Kate Greenaway (English, 1846-1901)
THE PEACOCK GIRL
Three-color process print from Kate Greenaway
by M. H. Spielmann and George Somes Layard
London: Adam and Charles Black, 1905
7 1/16 x 5 5/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Greenaway was an influential children's book illustrator in the late 19th century but this print is a plate from her biography that reproduces a watercolor that had been displayed at the Institute of Painters in Water Colours in 1897 and belonged to her bother. Her first book with the engraver Edmond Evans, *Under the Window*, had been published in 1879. She also created greeting cards, calendars, and book illustrations for Marcus Ward and eventually her work started appearing on wallpapers, plates, scarves, and dolls.

69

ILLUSTRATIONS OF NATURAL HISTORY
Wood engraving, 2 1/2 x 4 1/2 inches (image)
Harper's New Monthly Magazine
February 1857
"Editor's Drawer,"p 429, Vol. 14, No. 81
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

70

Frederick Charles Knight (1898-1979)
COVER OF COUNTRY LIFE IN AMERICA, May, 1921
10 x 14 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum, INV.10705.05

Emblems of elegance as living garden ornaments, peacocks graced the covers of the magazine *County Life in America* on several occasions. Knight grew up and studied in Philadelphia, with its rich traditions of painting and illustration, before moving to New York to work as an art editor at an advertising agency and as a free-lance graphic artist.

71

THE LATE LADY CURZON OF KEDLESTON IN THE FAMOUS PEACOCK-FEATHER DRESS SHE WORE AT THE DELHI DURBAR
Illustration from *The Sketch*, July 25, 1906
13 7/8 x 9 3/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

The extended caption for this engraving expressed age-old fears about peacock feathers: "In view of the untimely death of Lady Curzon...superstitious folk are pointing to the fact that...she wore a dress with a design of the unlucky peacock's feather. Lady Curzon... was a daughter of the late Mr. L. Z. Leiter, the Chicago millionaire."

72

Orson Lowell (1871-1956)
REVERSION TO TYPE
Cover of *Life*, March 2, 1911
11 x 9 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Lowell was well-known for his illustrations with a pointed social message. Comparing this woman's vanity to that of the peacock, *Reversion to Type* effectively skewers the vanity of the emerging urban "New Woman." Lowell attended the Art Institute of Chicago, and then moved to New York in 1893. By 1907, he was regularly illustrating for *Life*.

73

Percy Macquoid (English, 1852-1925)
THE CHRISTMAS DINNER: BRINGING IN THE PEACOCK
Illustration from The *Graphic Christmas Number*
London, 1881
13 1/2 x 11 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

By the 19th century, eating peacocks had been replaced in England by imports of the more tender American turkey, but for ceremonial occasions a peacock could not be topped for drama of presentation, with its plumage reattached to the roast or meat pie. Many illustrated periodicals enticed readers with more elaborate "Christmas Numbers" for the holidays. *The Graphic* was the English equivalent of the American *Harper's Weekly*.

74

Thomas Nast (1840-1902)
CHRISTMAS FLIRTATION, 1882
Wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly*, Supplement
December 23, 1882 (hand-coloring added)
19 x 13 5/8 inches (image)
Courtesy of The Old Print Shop, Inc., New York, New York

Nast specialized in political cartoons but his keen observation and wit made him an excellent illustrator of human interest scenes, such as this woman waiting under the mistletoe with her arms and peacock fan tucked behind her back. Born in Germany, he immigrated to New York with his family as a child and began working as a newspaper illustrator at age fifteen. He is best remembered for his Civil War journalism and his visualization of the "modern" Santa Claus--all engravings for *Harper's Weekly*.

75

Thomas Nast (1840-1902)
WE ARE NOT PROUD. "DIDN'T I TOLD YOU SO?"
Wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly*
Jun. 19, 1875
15 3/4 x 10 5/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

In this political cartoon, Nast alludes to Aesop's fable of the "Vain Jackdaw" by depicting himself bedecked in peacock feathers.

76

Edward Linley Sambourne (English, 1844-1910)
MR. PUNCH'S DESIGNS AFTER NATURE. GRAND BACK-HAIR SENSATION FOR THE COMING SEASON
Wood engraving from *Punch Magazine*, April 1, 1871
7 1/2 x 4 5/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

76 A

Edward Linley Sambourne
AS BIRDS' FEATHERS AND TRAIN DRESSES ARE ALL THE GO, MISS SWELLINGTON ADOPTS ONE OF NATURE'S OWN DESIGNS
Wood engraving from *Punch Magazine*, December 21, 1867
4 1/2 x 5 1/4 inches (image)
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

77

Sheet-music Cover for *Pride Polka* by Francis H. Brown
Lithograph by Eliphalet Brown, Jr., New York
New York: William Hall and Son, 1850
13 x 10 1/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

The first cover of the *Pride Polka* sports a colorful peacock in full display created by the composer's artist brother. By the third edition, Sarony & Major took over production with new artwork of a more sedate bird and gold metallic pigment to suggest the iridescence of the plumage. There was a "polkamania" in the mid-19th century and Francis Brown, a piano teacher, composed several. With its Sarony art, the popular *Pride Polka* reached at least thirty editions and was also included in sheet music collections of favorite polkas.

78

Thadé (French, n.d.)
VLADISLAS, DUC D'OPOLE…PALATIN DE HONGRIE, NEVEU DU ROI LOUIS D'ANJOU…
Figure no. 12 on chromolithograph plate
"Pologne. – XIVe et XVe Siecles"
In Auguste Racinet's *Le costume* v. 6
Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1888
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Racinet's six-volume *Le Costume Historique* is a studious documentation of clothing from antiquity to the 19th century, beautifully illustrated with nearly 500 plates. This Polish knight proudly wears a cockscomb of peacock feathers in his helmet; another with a simpler configuration is on a nearby page.

79

Hugh Thomson (Irish, 1860- 1920)
CELIA. AND WHERESOE'ER WE WENT, LIKE JUNO'S SWANS, STILL WE WENT COUPLED AND INSEPERABLE
Illustration in *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare
London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1909
7 1/8 x 4 3/4 inches (image)
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Thomson was a 14-year-old working in a linen factory, when the owner noticed his artistic talent and gave him the chance to become a commercial artist, first in Belfast and later in London. He was a prolific and highly regarded illustrator, working on new editions of books by Charles Dickens, Jane Austen, and even Shakespeare. Here, the cousins Rosalind and Celia turn together toward the foreground peacock, who seems to mirror their posture as the background peacock's fan creates a halo around all three.

80

Elihu Vedder (1836-1923)
THE ORIENT
Phototype illustration in *A Book of the Tile Club*
Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886
5 3/8 x 6 inches (image)
Collection of William and Abigail Gerdts

The Tile Club was a tight-knit group of New York artists, self-proclaimed bohemians, whose planned activities together were as much social as artistic. Vedder lived in Italy most of his career but was in New York from fall 1881 to spring 1883 and enjoyed their company and support. Later he may have mailed or shipped this work to be included after his return because the inscription at lower left says: "Sketch to go in." It features the classical linearity and draperies that earned him the Tile Club nickname "the Pagan" and seems very close in style to the drawings for his *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, also published in 1886. Like *A Book of the Tile Club*, it was promoted by Houghton, Mifflin as a holiday gift book. Over her sensual bare shoulders you can glimpse her peacock fan.

WORKS ON PAPER **Magazines and Illustrations**

81

Harrison Weir (English, 1824-1906)
PEACOCK
Chromolithograph printed by Leighton Brothers
in The *Poultry Book: Comprising the Breeding and Management of Profitable and Ornamental Poultry*…
by William Bernhard Tegetmeier
London: G. Routledge, 1867
10 1/2 x 7 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Tegetmeier, an English naturalist known for his work with homing pigeons, included a chapter on "The Pea-Fowl" in his book on raising poultry. Harrison Weir specialized in painting animals, especially birds, and his depiction of the peacock on the stone parapet of a park-like setting clearly identifies the peafowl as one of the book's "ornamental" birds.

WORKS ON PAPER **Magazine Advertisements**

82

General Foods Advertisement, 1954
"WHEN I'M EATING JELL-O, I WISH I WERE A PEACOCK"
14 x 10 3/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

In the 1950s Jell-O launched an advertising campaign in which its ads show a variety animals that like the wobbly gelatin creation for reasons that would also appeal to humans—the kangaroo because it has a pouch to hold the money it saves; the elephant because it can eat Jell-O by the trunkful; the leopard because "it hits the spot;" and the prideful peacock because everyone can see "how proud I am to turn out such a gay dessert for so little!"

83

HOLEPROOF HOSIERY ADVERTISEMENT, 1924
From *The Review of Reviews*
9 3/8 x 6 inches
Coles Phillips (1880-1927), illustrator
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Like Norman Rockwell and several other prominent 20th-century illustrators, Coles Phillips moved to the New York City suburb of New Rochelle. He worked as a staff artist at *Life* and in 1908 designed a cover in which the model's dress blends with a white background. He is best remembered for that "Fadeaway Girl" technique, which is still influential. Known for his pin-up art, he created ad campaigns, such as this suggestive woman and peacock, which were considered quite risqué at that time.

84

Honeywell Advertisement
COMPUTER PEACOCK, 1967
12 3/4 x 9 3/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

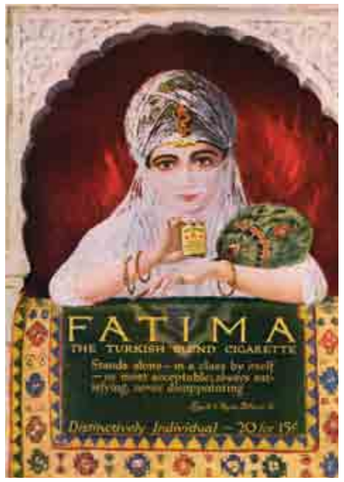
Like the Jell-O ad, Honeywell's peacock was part of a promotional campaign using sculptures of animals concocted from computer wires and other high-tech parts. The fine print reads: "A big flock of businessmen have discovered that the full-family, third generation Series 200 gives them all the computing power they can use….It could be a real feather in your cap."

85

KenFlex Vinyl Tile Floors Advertisement, 1953
COLORFUL AS A PEACOCK
From *Life*, April 13, 1953
14 x 10 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Though the peacock's "eye feathers" are all the same, the use of its fanned train to suggest a broad spectrum of hues, most famously in the NBC logo, has a long history. At the Society of American Artists in 1895, Edward A. Bell displayed an allegorical painting of *Color, Form and Music*, in which *Color* held a peacock as her attribute. Kenflex used the peacock to convey the variety and vividness of its floor tile selection.

WORKS ON PAPER **Magazines Advertisments**



86

Liggett & Myers Tobacco Advertisement, 1915
FATIMA, THE TURKISH BLEND …IN A CLASS BY ITSELF
In *Country Life in America*. March 1915
14 1/4 x 10 1/4 inches
John H. Henrici (1874–1958), illustrator
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

87

S. Anargyros Cigarette Advertisement, 1918
MURAD, THE TURKISH CIGARETTE
P. Lorillard Tobacco Company
Back cover: *Leslie's Illustrated Weekly Newspaper*
June 29, 1918, 16 x 11 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

DECORATIVE ARTS **Ceramics and Glass**

88

Galileo Chini (Italian, 1873-1956)
PEACOCK-PATTERN VASE, c. 1900
Earthenware
5 4/5 inches H
Collection of Jason Jacques

Vases by Chini, a Florentine painter, are ideal examples of the decorative potential of the peacock feather stripped to its essential detail—the "eye" on its feather. In 1897 he turned his attention to ceramics, creating a small art pottery factory, called L'Arte della Ceramica. In 1902 his displays at the First International Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts in Turin, Italy (Prima Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte Decorativa Moderna) earned him international recognition as one of the leading forces in Art Nouveau ceramics.

89

Galileo Chini
VASE: FEATHERS AND BLOOMS, c. 1903
Stoneware
11 3/4 inches H
Collection of Jason Jacques

In 1902, Chini began a new ceramics business with his cousin in Mugello and this vase bears his painted artist's cipher, MUGELLO 2162.

90

Christopher Dresser (English, 1834-1904)
PEACOCK VASE FOR DISPLAYING FEATHERS, c. 1896
Ault Pottery glazed earthenware. 17 inches H
Private Collection

Dresser, one of the first industrial designers in the modern sense of the word, was intensely interested in the way access to Japanese art was invigorating English design. In 1876, he traveled to Japan to study the materials, forms, and techniques at first hand and afterward wrote *Japan: Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures* (1882), in which he illustrated a peacock drawing as "so characteristic of Japan that no one need look at it twice in order to say what people produced it." The Industrial Revolution made it possible for artists like Dresser to create designs for manufacturers to use in making tasteful and affordable household goods for the growing middle class. Perhaps he was thinking of the peacocks he saw in Japan when he later created this unique vase for Ault Pottery. In an 1893 catalogue of British displays at the Chicago Columbian Exposition, William Ault advertised his productions as "Ault Faience, Artistic Pottery, in Rich Colourings, Shadings, and Mottled Effects."

91

Raoul Lachenal (French, 1885-1956)
PEACOCK VASE, c. 1902
Stoneware, 17 3/4 inches H
Private Collection
Courtesy of Jason Jacques Inc., New York, New York

The combination of fluid shapes and mere suggestions of imagery in the decoration, such as the peacock feather "eye" on the shoulder of this vase, are hallmarks of Lachenal's early 20th-century style. Cultivating an aesthetic similar to Japanese Raku and Oribe ceramics, he found beauty in the imperfect, uneven surfaces of his flambé glaze. He was the apprentice of his father Edmond Lachenal (1855-1930), a world-renowned Art Nouveau potter who developed such innovative glazes inspired by his encyclopedic knowledge of ceramic history. In 1904, Raoul displayed under his own name at the Paris Salon of the Société des Artistes Français, but even before that, according to ceramics expert Martin Eidelberg, he was working so closely with his father that some of the push into new stylistic territory may be due to his youthful outlook.

92

Edward Lycett (1833-1910)
VASE, 1886-90
Faience Manufacturing Company, Brooklyn
Cream-colored earthenware, painted over ivory-glazed ground with polychrome enamels, and flat and raised gold paste decoration. 17 1/2 inches H
Collection of Michael and Marjorie Loeb
Photography: Taylor Dabney
Courtesy of University of Richmond Museums
Richmond, Virginia

Edward Lycett creates a lovely correspondence between the slender amphora of this urn shaped vase and the long subtle S-shape of his peacock. In September 1895 *The New England Magazine* published a drawing by Lycett of a fireplace surround showing similar peacocks down the sides and a top section he based on a Walter Crane design for Aesop's "Vain Jackdaw." Lycett began his career in England, where he was an apprentice china painter from the age of twelve. In 1861 he immigrated and worked in Brooklyn, making Greenpoint his base for much of his ceramic work. He taught china painting even after becoming art director of the Faience Manufacturing Company in 1884, where he remained until retiring in 1890. His typical style combines elements of Japanese, Chinese, and Islamic decoration.

93

Phoenix ware PRINCESS ARGUS PITCHER, c. 1900
Thomas Forester & Sons Faìence (English)
12 inches H
Private Collection

Colorful decoration on earthenware like this peacock silhouetted against the sun was called faience or majolica by Victorians because it was imitative of Italian Renaissance pottery. The Staffordshire plant, known as the Phoenix works, started production in 1877 and by 1881 Forester had two hundred employees. In 1925 Ogden's Cigarettes issued a series of tobacco cards, "Modern British Pottery," which included a Forester "Princess Argus" vase with the caption: "This handsome design is produced in a variety of fancy articles, such as vases and flower-pots. The richness and velvety appearance of the colours are produced by special glazes, all colours being underneath the glaze, with the exception of the gold. The conventional sun decoration is carried out in pure gold...."

94

I. Stafford (n.d.)
ART NOUVEAU TRAY, decorated 1911
Tressemann & Vogt, Limoges, France
Glazed and gilded decoration on porcelain
13 5/8 inches diameter
Private Collection

Between 1906 and 1912, *Keramic Studio: A Monthly Magazine for the Potter, Decorator and Craftsman* (Syracuse, NY) published a number of peacock and peacock feather designs, ranging from realistic to the stylized, like this one. Decorating ceramics was its own specialty, practiced not only by professionals employed by factories and working independently, but also by amateurs. In all cases many of these artists were women, as may have been "I. Stafford," whose exact identity has not been discovered. Tressmann & Vogt (in some sources, Tressmanes) exported blank pieces as well as finished porcelain, and many import shops sold "white china for decorating."

95

Tiffany Studios / Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848-1933)
PEACOCK LAMP, 1910
Glass, bronze
24 1/2 x 18 inches, diameter
Courtesy of the Macklowe Gallery, New York, New York

Louis Comfort Tiffany was the son of jewelry store owner Charles Lewis Tiffany, and he began his career as a painter in the 1860s. Tiffany founded his own firm in 1885 and focused on art glass, developing a new glassmaking technique that combined different colors in opalescent glass to create vibrant shades of never before seen color. Tiffany became a supporter of Art Nouveau, as the use of forms from nature became central to his work. He began to design lamps in 1885 so that more people might enjoy art and beauty in their own home, although it was not until 1899 that the lamps were widely sold. Tiffany's best-known lamp forms were inspired by nature, and the names of his designs are indicative: the dragonfly, dogwood, peony, wisteria, poppy, water lily, and the peacock.

96

Tiffany Studios / Louis Comfort Tiffany
PEACOCK TABLE LAMP WITH TURTLEBACK GLASS BASE, c. 1900
Glass, bronze
18 x 16 inches, diameter
Courtesy of Lillian Nassau LLC
New York, New York

97

Tiffany Studios / Louis Comfort Tiffany
PEACOCK COMPOTE, 1921
Favrile glass
2 1/2 x 8 inches, diameter
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Linville, 95.6.1

98

Tiffany Studios / Louis Comfort Tiffany
PEACOCK VASE, c. 1896
Favrile glass, 6 1/2 inches H
Courtesy of Macklowe Gallery
New York, New York

99

Tiffany Studios / Louis Comfort Tiffany
PEACOCK VASE, c. 1921
Signed, 494 V L. C. Tiffany Favrile
Favrile glass, 7 1/4 inches H
Courtesy of Ophir Gallery Inc.
Englewood, New Jersey

100

Tile Picture: PEACOCK SCENE (Dutch), c. 1800
Delft glazed ceramic,15 1/2 x 5 1/8 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

Peacocks, a sign of trade with the Middle and Far East, appear in numerous Dutch Old Master paintings and also on all types of Delft pottery from plates and vases to tiles. Decoration of tiles changed over time and ranged from small, simple designs in the center of a tile to more elaborate scenes such as this, made of multiple joined squares.

101

VASE, WITH PEACOCK FEATHER MOTIF, c. 1878-90
Crown Derby hand-painted porcelain (English)
7 1/4 inches H
Private Collection

On this small bottle vase, the feathery brush strokes used to paint the peacock feather tips contrast with the crisp lines of the gilded design at the neck. A close inspection reveals that the artist included two tiny flying insects, a capricious foil for the shimmering beauty of the peacock. The mark on the base sets the date to the new ownership and modern era of Crown Derby and before Queen Victoria named them "manufacturers of porcelain to Her Majesty," adding Royal to their name.

102

Eugene-Antoine Aizelin (French, 1821-1902), attributed
VASE FROM A MANTEL GARNITURE, c. 1867
Bronze, red marble, 18 3/4 x 9 inches
Barbedienne Foundry, Paris, France
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of James Fearon Brown, 59.10 C (1)

A classical revival urn with the relief decoration of a peacock perched on a sculptural base under a tree, it is part of a mantel set that includes one more urn and a clock topped by a bronze sculpture group by Aizelin. The sculptor may have also provided designs for the urns. The peacock could be an allusion to Greek or Roman imagery but the bird's head turned toward an object tied in the tree suggests the artist may have had a specific story in mind.

103

BETEL BOX IN PEACOCK SHAPE, mid-20th century
Brass (Indian)
12 3/4 x 16 1/2 x 6 1/2 inches
Private Collection

The peacock, native to India, is an appropriate form for the betel box, which holds the ingredients required to make *paan*, a traditional Indian concoction that is similar to chewing tobacco. Styles and shapes vary according to status, wealth, and culture, but all betel boxes contain compartments to carry betel leaves, areca nuts, quicklime paste, and a brown powder paste of katha used to prepare the *paan*. Offering guests paan from the box is a sign of hospitality.

104

Edward Bierstadt (1824-1906)
GLENVIEW PARLOR WITH PEACOCK FIRE SCREEN, c. 1886
Photogravure
10 1/4 x 12 3/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John Bond Trevor, Jr., 73.6.2

An aberrant specimen of peacock taxidermy serves as a fire screen in this image of the Parlor at Glenview, the Yonkers home of the John Bond Trevor family. The fan has extra eye feathers but is also shortened in height. In the mid-1880s, Edward Bierstadt, brother of Hudson River School artist Albert Bierstadt, photographed the Glenview Parlor, Sitting Room, and the home's exterior for his subscription book *Homes on the Hudson: Historical/ Illustrative/ Descriptive* (Artotype Publishing Company). The photos document the decorating tastes of the Trevors and other wealthy people during the 1880s. Though this photogravure did not appear in all editions of the book, it may have been included in the "Yonkers Edition."

105

Robert Winthrop Chanler (1872-1930)
FOUR PEACOCKS, 1927
Canvas-panel screen, oil on linen
70 1/2 x 70 inches (overall)
Private Collection

Chanler was a New York-born artist who received most of his training in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. It was there, in 1905, that he created one of his most famous works, *Giraffes*, later purchased by the French government. He focused on painting screens, often decorated with animals. Here Chanler suggests the frantic avian nature of a muster of peacocks, racing across the tripartite screen, necks dramatically extended with propulsive force. In a charming surprise, both sides of the screen are fully painted, one with the birds' feathers down, the other with feathers in full array. Chanler was well known for his wild parties, which caught the attention of wealthy patrons, and for his townhouse, crammed with cages of monkeys, sloths, ravens, and toucans.

106

FIRE SCREEN, Brass Cutout Panels, c.1890-1910
Walnut, copper panels, glass
34 1/2 x 21 3/4 x 12 1/2 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum,
Gift of Miss Susan D. Bliss, 61.11.8

Two of these pierced and cut-out copper panels are decorated with peacock designs. A style of pierced craftsmanship, it is similar to the metalwork that American painter and decorative artist Lockwood de Forest (1850-1932) commissioned from The Ahmedabad Workshops in India. Examples of that work, which incorporate peacocks, are in the collections of the Hudson River Museum and the Brooklyn Museum.

107

Araki Kanpo (Japanese, 1831-1915)
PEACOCK PAIR BY CLIFFS, 1907
Two-panel folding screen
Ink, colors, gold, and gold-leaf on silk
76 3/4 x 75 3/4 inches
Courtesy of Erik Thomsen Gallery, New York, New York

Kampo specialized in painting flowers and birds, including peacocks. Born in Edo, Japan, he was a youthful apprentice to the Araki Shop and then became the family's head painter. He blended traditional Japanese styles with new techniques from the West, and his participation in World's Fairs —Vienna in 1872, Chicago in 1893, Paris in 1900, and London in 1910—earned him an international reputation. He was the first Japanese artist asked to join the Royal Society of Arts in London. He taught at the Tokyo Art School and won several awards in Japan, where he took part in numerous exhibitions, winning several awards.

DECORATIVE ARTS **Furnishings**

108

Suzuki Kōkyū (Japanese, b. 1888)
BIRDS AROUND A CHERRY TREE IN SPRING, 1930s
Two-panel folding screen
Black ink, mineral colors, and gofun
(white powdered shell) on silk
68 1/4 x 74 1/2 inches
Courtesy of Erik Thomsen Gallery, New York, New York

109

Max Kuehne (1880-1968)
PEACOCK TABLE, c. 1935
Gessoed wood, watercolor, silver-leaf lacquer
15 1/18 x 39 1/4 inches
Collection of The Heckscher Museum of Art
Huntington, New York
Gift of the Baker/Pisano Collection, 2001.9.144

Kuehne was born in Germany and when a teen he and his family moved to Flushing, New York. Primarily known as a painter, he studied under William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri, then went to Europe to study the Old Masters. In 1911 he moved to New York where besides painting, he also made sculptures, decorative screens, and furniture, like his *Peacock Table*, with carved and gilded molding. In the May 1921 issue of *Art and Decoration*, A. E. Gallatin wrote, "Mr. Kuehne has not only produced frames which are true works of art, but he has also executed some very beautiful panels, carved and then colored and gilded."

109 A

PEACOCK UMBRELLA STAND, c. 1900-1920
Pine, 28 1/2 x 11 x 11 inches
Collection of Wayne Mason and Cheryl Wolf

A lotus-shaped Arts & Crafts-era umbrella stand features the incised and two-tone decoration of a peacock directly based on Charles Rennie Mackintosh's design for the Luncheon Room walls in Miss Cranston's Tea Rooms in Glasgow. The cabinetmaker of this stand, probably American, may have seen the Scottish master's peacock illustrated in the art periodical *The Studio* in 1897 and seems to have made at least two stands. Another, almost identical stand was sold by the commercial gallery Associated Artists.

110

"TO MY BEAUTIFUL WIFE – MARY PEACOCK," 1902
Photograph mat: Embroidered silk, with photograph
10 1/4 x 8 inches
Private Collection

DECORATIVE ARTS **Textiles and Decorative Designs**

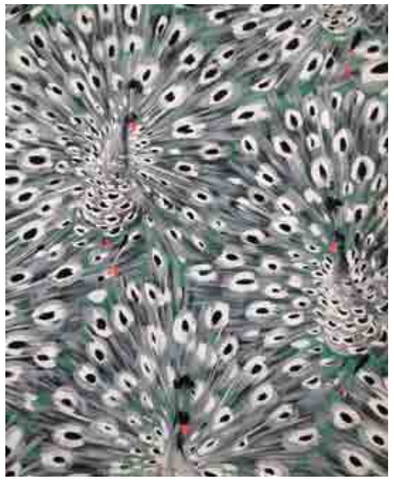
111

Displaying Peacock Design, c. 1850-1899
Painting on paper (English, made for export)
23 x 25 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

112

Displaying Peacocks Design, c. 1970s
Paint on paper
16 1/2 x 20 inches
Kittler Studio, Paris
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

Kittler's work represents a period in textile design that begins during the Art Deco period when large factories contracted with smaller commercial art studios to obtain high-quality designs. Since the painting was contracted, the art varies in style according to the wants of the client. Here, this dynamic painting takes full advantage of the peacock's own patterned plumage.



113

JAPANESE PEACOCK PANELS, details (a pair), 1885
Silk, with silk embroidery,
105 x 33 inches (each)
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of the Estate of the Late Mrs. Joseph F. Daly, via Mrs. Hannah Smith, 35.81 A, B

Japanese artists and craftsmen included a preponderance of peacock imagery in their work for export because they knew the bird was popular with Western consumers, who also associated it with far-off exotic Japan.

114

Arthur Litt (French, 1905-1961)
DESIGN FOR FABRIC, mid-20th century
Painting on paper, 11 x 8 1/2 inches
Dessins Industriels, Paris
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

Litt was a fabric and tapestry designer, who opened his own workshop in the late 1920s—Dessins Industriels, which played a significant role in Parisian fabric design until World War II. His patterns are distinguished by abstract qualities and, here, he pushed the peacock feather in that direction.

115

William Morris (English, 1834-1896)
PEACOCK AND DRAGON CURTAIN
Designed 1878
Hand-loom jacquard-woven woolen twill
105 x 66 inches
Photography: Google Cultural Institute
Exhibition hanging: Collection of R.A. Pesce

William Morris is a widely recognized name of the English Arts and Crafts Movement and *Peacock and Dragon* one of his most famous textile designs. He established his company, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner Co., in 1861, producing a variety of domestic furnishings including furniture, stained glass, tiles, and wallpaper as well as fabrics. Woven work, especially with such a large-scale repeat we see here, was more expensive to make than his printed cottons and thus less economical to produce for a broad base of consumers. Yet, partly due to his admiration for the artisans of medieval England and Europe, Morris regarded the more complex skill of weaving designs as a higher form of art. He took the opportunity to study the historical textile holdings at the South Kensington Museum (the Victoria & Albert). Several Spanish and Sicilian Islamic woven designs inspired his *Peacock and Dragon*.

116

PEACOCK FABRIC, c. 1830
Printed chintz (English or American)
18 x 23 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library,
New York and London

The earliest 19th-century peacock fabrics pre-date Queen Victoria's 1838 coronation and show imagery reminiscent of the peacocks seen in earlier Dutch paintings, such as Herman Henstenburgh's *A Peacock, a Parrot and other exotic birds in a park landscape* [1694] [cat. 27]. Due to technical and economical limitations, the fabrics feature a limited range of colors in the design, such as the brown and blue here.

117

PEACOCK FABRICS, c. 1815-1820
Printed chintz in three color variations (English)
Blue: 38 x 33 inches
Red and maroon: approx. 27 x 24 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

The Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century made modern fabric production possible. Factories could now make and print fabrics in much larger quantities than before because printing inks could be changed to make the same design in different colors, increasing a company's range of inventory. This peacock design exists in at least three variations.

118

PEACOCK FABRIC, 19th century
Printed cotton, 15 x 14 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

119

PEACOCK FABRIC, c. 1867-1906
Warp-printed silk, 16 x 20 inches
Brunet-Lecompt, Devay & Paule
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

In warp printing, only those support threads are printed before the weft is woven through. Effects tended to be blurred and muted: to achieve an image such as this elaborate peacock is a tour de force that may have been for a special display, such as an international exposition. Brunet-Lecomte showed warp-printed silks at the Exposition Universelle, Paris, in 1867, though the company tag attached to this sample bears the name the Lyons firm was using in 1906. At the 1867 expo their warp-printed work was considered to be in the category of hautes nouveautés (high novelty textiles).

120

PEACOCK FABRIC, late 19th century
Printed cotton (American),15 x 21 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library,
New York and London

121

PEACOCK FABRIC, 19th century
Printed cotton (English or American)
26 x 31 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

122

PEACOCK FABRIC, mid-20th century
Printed cotton, 16 x 29 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library
New York and London

123

PEACOCK FEATHER DESIGN, c. 1860s-70s
Conte crayon on paper (French)
12 x 6 1/2 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

124

PEACOCK FEATHER AND MORNING GLORIES DESIGN
late 19th century
Painting on paper
17 x 10 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

125

PEACOCK FEATHERS AND ROSES
late 19th - early 20th centuries
Fabric sample: wool challis, printed with aniline dyes
5 x 10 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

126

PEACOCKS ON BRANCHES DESIGN, c. 1870-90
Painting on paper
24 x 18 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

127

PEONIES AND PEACOCK FEATHERS FABRIC, c. 1900
Printed cotton sateen,18 x 32 inches
Scheurer Lauth, Alsace, France
Courtesy of The Design Library,
New York and London

Dating back to 1813 with a different combination of partners, Scheurer, Lauth & Cie embraced the Art Nouveau of the 1890s with interior decorating fabrics such as this peacock feather sateen. Combining feathers with the peony flower shows the influence of Japanese artists, who often combined them in their paintings.

128

"PILLEMENT-STYLE" FABRIC, late 19th century
Printed linen (French), 34 x 31 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library,
New York and London

A textile design from about 1900, it shows "flowers" formed of butterflies and peacock feathers and was inspired by Jean Pillement, an 18th-century painter and engraver. His chinoiserie and other fantastical designs appealed to late 19th-century artists with Symbolist leanings and he left a legacy of influence for fabric and wallpaper designs

129

RIBBON, 20th century
Silk faille (French), 11 x 5 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

130

RIBBON, 20th century
Warp-face moiré (French), 7 1/2 x 8 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

131

SAMPLE OF FEATHER FABRIC, 20th century
Printed, possibly rayon, 5 x 6 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

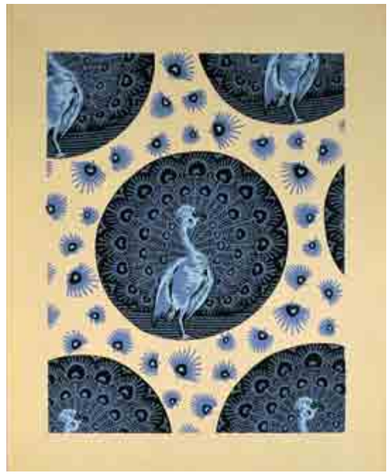
131 A

SAMPLE OF FEATHER FABRIC WITH FAUX MOIRÉ EFFECT
20th century
Printed, possibly rayon, 6 x 5 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

132

Claude Vergély (French)
PEACOCK DESIGN, c. 1965-75
Painting on paper for possible application to textiles
19 x 15 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

In 1973 Vergély patented commercial artwork that included peacocks and feathers, so this design, which includes both, may date from the same period. Jeanine was a "motif of peacocks, butterflies & flowers" to be made into a silkscreened fabric by 5th Avenue Designs, and Regina was a "stylized feather motif" for House 'N Home Fabrics and Draperies.



133

WALL HANGING, c. 1830
Printed cotton fabric, pieced with braid border (English)
54 x 30 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

134

WALLPAPER (English), c. 1900
26 x 19 inches
Courtesy of The Design Library, New York and London

Similar in design to a "Modern European Peacock Paper" that appeared in *The House Beautiful* [1907] in an article by Andrew Jameson on "Pictorial Wall Paper," the wallpaper here features both white and blue peacocks. It is tempting to think that the prevalence of the white peacock in early 20th-century imagery and literature occurred because decorators wished to banish the deep colors so popular in the late Victorian home. The influential Elsie de Wolf, in *The House in Good Taste* [1914] used color but with a lighter touch and plenty of white.

135

Louis Aucoc (French, 1850-1932)
ART NOUVEAU PEACOCK FEATHER BROOCH, c. 1900
Gold, platinum, plique-à-jour enamel
2 1/2 x 1 1/4 inches
Courtesy of Fred Leighton, New York, New York

This woman in profile holds before her a peacock feather plume, which gently brushes the top of her coiffure. Aucoc, president of the "Chambre Syndicale" of the Jewelers and Silversmiths of Paris, represented the jewelry tradition of working in precious metals and cut gems, yet also encouraged new artistic ideas, such as the naturalistic motifs, asymmetry, and non-precious decorative materials associated with the emerging Art Nouveau. From the exquisite curl of the enamel feather to the fanciful winding ribbon, this brooch embodies the new aesthetic, while the inclusion of cut diamonds along the ribbon links Aucoc to his traditional jeweler roots.

136

BEADED HANDBAG, c. 1910
Metal frame; glass beads; thread
12 x 7 inches
Collection of the Staten Island Museum, A1995.5.3

137

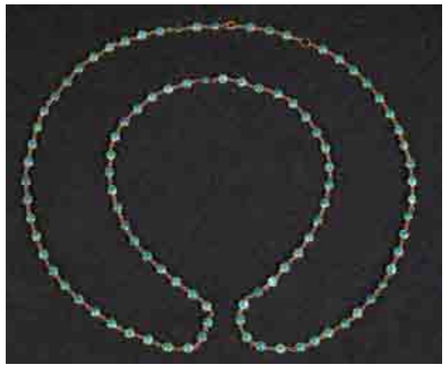
BEADED PURSE WITH PEACOCK AND FRINGE, c. 1900
Metal frame; glass beads; thread
13 x 7 3/4 x 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of the collection of Ellen Cohen Fisher, 2014

138

BEADED PURSE WITH PEACOCK, c. 1985
Velvet with beads and Indian Zardozi embroidery; satin lining; Kane-M snap closure
5 x 7 7/8 x 1 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of collection of Ellen Cohen Fisher, 2014

139

BELT WITH PEACOCK-EYE MEDALLIONS, c. 1897-99
For a Lady's Bodice, Jennings & Co., New York
Navy wool, linen lace, metal and enamel
Medallion: 1 3/4 inches Diameter; Belt: 22 L
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Miss Susan D. Bliss, 37.269 A



140

CHAIN NECKLACE WITH PEACOCK-EYE MEDALLIONS
Early 20th century
Metal, "peacock eye" glass
27 inches L
Private Collection

141

DRESS WITH PEACOCK EMBROIDERY, c. 1911-13
Silk satin, machine-embroidered silk tulle (net) handmade silk lace; under bodice and skirt of cotton tulle and silk
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Mrs. Junius Bird, 70.20.25

The dress, covered with more than two dozen colorful embroidered peacocks, was probably worn by Florence Orth McKelvy (Mrs. Robert), the mother of the donor, Mrs. Junius Bird. The bright color combinations on the dress reflect fashion's response to Léon Bakst's avant-garde dance costumes for the Ballets Russes. News of the costumes in its Parisian performances reached the United States years before it made its 1916 tour here. Part of the Hudson River Museum Collection, the dress was inspiration for the exhibition *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*.

142

FAN (folding), c. 1828
Peacock feathers, wood, silk cord/tassels
17 x 21 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Mrs. Anne Chapman, 28.325

143

FAN (rigid), late 19th century
Peacock feathers, turned wood
17 3/4 x 13 1/4 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum

144

FAN (folding), with Peacock Motif, c. 1870-90
Painted goose feathers; mother of pearl sticks
10 1/2 x 17 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum.
Gift of Alexander Trevor, 2007.06.08

145

Judith Leiber (b. 1921)
PEACOCK-SHAPED MULTICOLOR RHINESTONE MINAUDIÈRE, 2004
Exterior: Goldplated brass, Swarovski crystals, and semi-precious stones, Interior: Gold kidskin
4 1/2 x 5 x 1 3/4 inches
The Leiber Collection, East Hampton, New York
Photography: Gary Mamay

Judith Leiber's rhinestone encrusted handbags are one of fashion's best-known symbols of luxury. Frequently taking the whimsical form of three-dimensional flora and fauna, the accessories have become the objects of intense desire for the fashionistas who collect them. The peacock, symbol of pride, is shown by Leiber in full display. Rarely has the flashy rhinestone found more sympathetic treatment as subject matter. Leiber's bags are now in a number of museum collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

145 A

PURSE WITH PEACOCK FEATHER MOTIF, c. 1920
9 1/4 x 11 1/4 inches
Tapestry with silk lining; metal frame
Collection of the Staten Island Museum
Gift of Mr. C. Otto Kienbusch, A1968.19.22

146

SHAWL WITH PEACOCKS AND FLOWERS, n. d.
Black silk with multicolored embroidery
61 x 75 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Gift of Mrs. Karl Simon, 1971 (INV.0165)

147

PEACOCK BARBIE, 1998
15 5/8 x 10 3/4 x 3 1/4 inches (in original box)
Mattel, Inc.: Birds of Beauty Collection
Private Collection

Peacock Barbie is from the Birds of Beauty Collection, which included three different "Barbies,"wearing outfits inspired by the plumage of what are generally conceded to be nature's most glamorous birds. A special limited collector's edition, it tellingly chose the peacock first for release. Peacock Barbie was soon followed by Flamingo Barbie in 1999 and Swan Barbie in 2000.

148

John Sterling Lucas (n.d.)
KATY KEENE "PROUD AS A PEACOCK" EVENING GOWN, 1980s
Mini-comic book page, 6 5/8 x 4 5/8 inches
Private Collection

Katy Keene, is a cartoon character, published by Archie Comics since 1945. Readers of her comics were encouraged to mail the publisher sketches for outlandish costumes for Keene to wear, then adapted and credited in the publications. Katy Keene has been periodically revived in comic books and sharp-eyed readers noted the frequent similarities between Keene's clothing and the highly stylized stage costumes of pop star Katy Perry, although Perry's peacock stage costumes do vary considerably from the evening gown seen here on Keene.

149

Roullet et Decamps (French)
PAON MARCHANT (Mechanical Clockwork Toy in form of Walking Peacock), c. 1890-1900
Peacock feathers, metals, wood, paint, and glass
Object: 8 x 15 1/2 x 21 inches (at rest/tail down) or 19 3/4 x 20 x 8 1/2 inches (tail-up)
Winding key dimensions: 2 7/8 x 1 1/2 x 1/4 inches
The Murtogh D. Guinness Collection of Automatic Musical Instruments & Automata, Morris Museum, Morristown, New Jersey, ID# 2003.18.11ab

The company Roullet et Decamps was established by Jean Roullet in 1865. The first mechanical model called "Le Petit Jardinier" was of a young gardener pushing a wheelbarrow and it became, and continues to be the logo for the company, now called House Decamps. Mechanical toys and automatons earned the company a bronze medal from the World's Fair in 1867. The sophistication of automatons continued to be refined during the late 19th century and the charming "Paon Marchant" could both walk and open and close its handsome tail feathers.

CONTRIBUTORS

BARTHOLOMEW F. BLAND is Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Hudson River Museum and a Co-curator of *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*. Among the exhibitions with accompanying catalogs he organized for the Museum are *Industrial Sublime: Modernism and the Transformation of New York's Rivers, 1900-1940; The Panoramic River: the Hudson and the Thames; Dutch New York: The Roots of Hudson Valley Culture; Westchester: The American Suburb; Winfred Rembert: Amazing Grace* (traveling exhibition)*; Susan Wides: From Mannahatta to Kaaterskill; Red Grooms: In the Studio; Paintbox Leaves: Autumnal Inspiration from Cole to Wyeth; and I WANT Candy: The Sweet Stuff in American Art* (traveling exhibition). Mr. Bland has produced contemporary art projects for Snug Harbor Cultural Center's Staten Island Museum, the Palazzo Strozzi in Florence, the Ronchini Gallery in London, and the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach, Florida and collaborative exhibitions that include *A Field Guide to Sprawl*, which traveled to Yale University (with Westchester Arts Council).

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LAURA VOOKLES is Chief Curator of Collections at the Hudson River Museum and is a co-curator of *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art*. At the Hudson River Museum, she has focused her attention on Glenview, the Museum's 1877 Hudson River home for which she completed many furnishing, conservation, and interpretation projects. Among the exhibitions she has curated for the Museum are *The Panoramic River: the Hudson and the Thames*; *Elihu Vedder: Voyage on the Nile; The Old Croton Aqueduct: Rural Resources Meet Urban Needs; Next Stop Westchester! People and the Railroad; Westchester: The American Suburb; Dutch New York: the Roots of Hudson Valley Culture*; and, *Paintbox Leaves: Autumnal Inspiration from Cole to Wyeth.*

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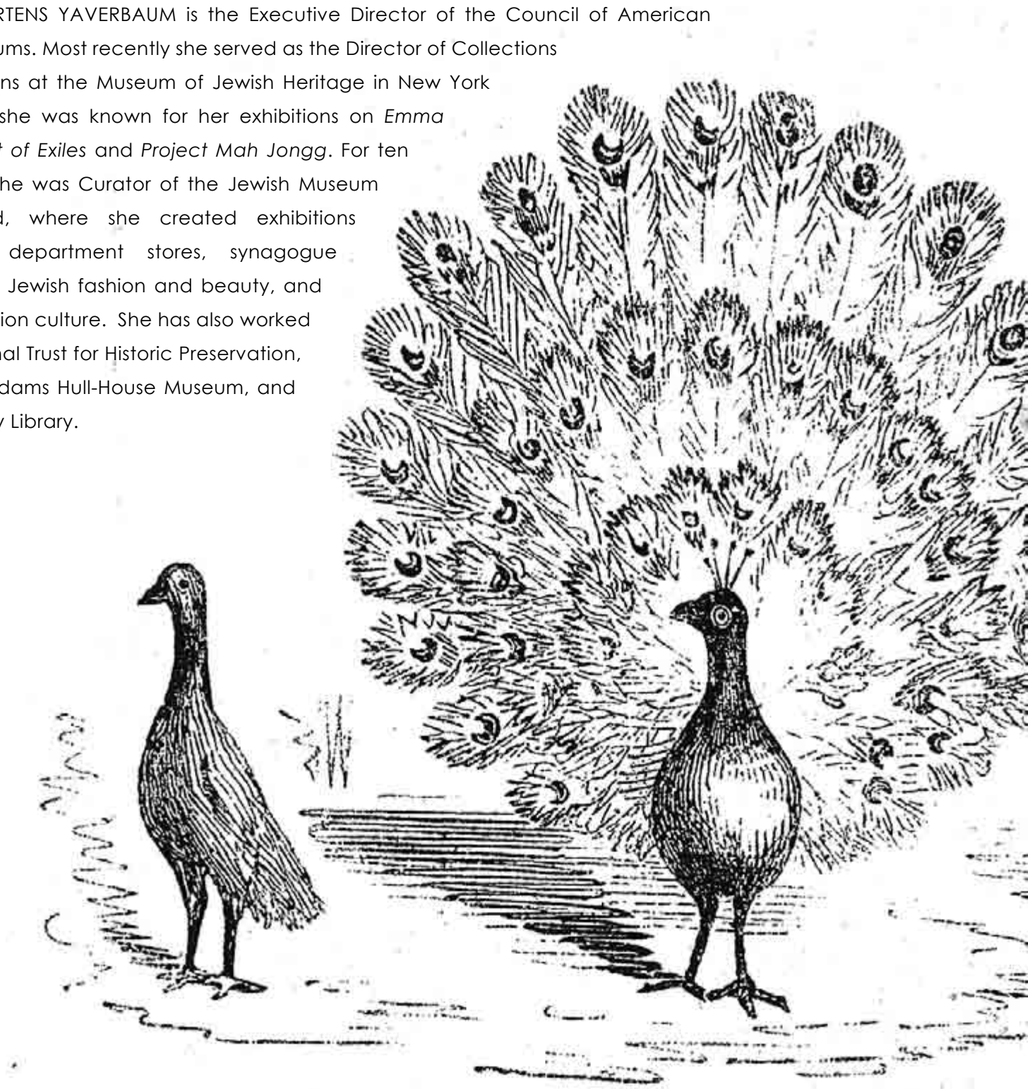

Opposite, Cat. 69 ILLUSTRATIONS OF NATURAL HISTORY, (detail), February 1857

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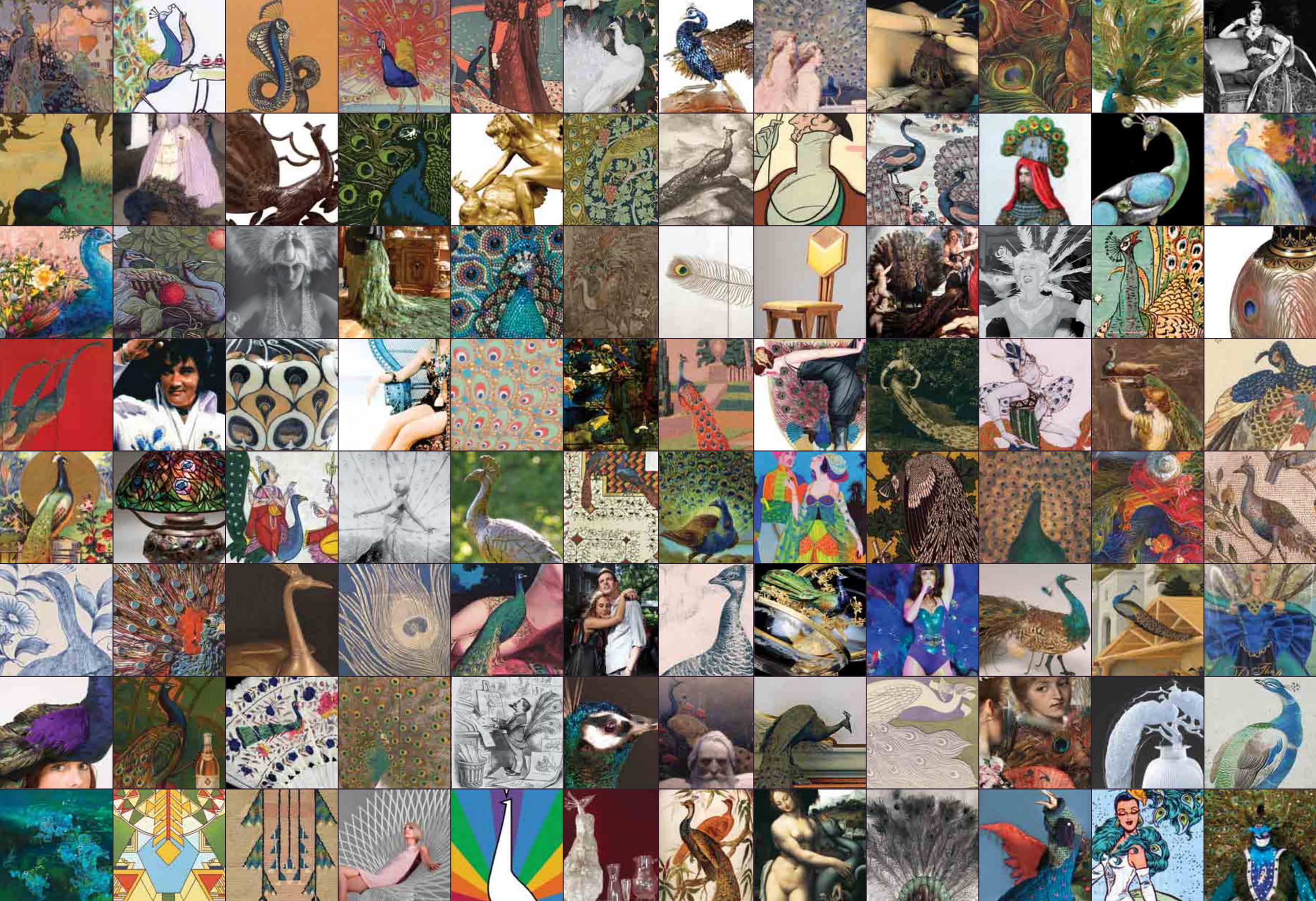
INDEX



THE PEACOCK, A FEATHERED SPLENDOR, bright blue and green, is the touchstone for beauty and a sometime symbol of morality, of life, and of vainglory. Thousands of years observing this creature has inspired ancient myth makers, novelists, poets, and visual artists of every age and art movement—the Old Masters, Art Deco, Art Nouveau, and Modernism—who seek to capture the bird's grace, brilliant color, and not a little of its mystery.

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