Overview
The economic, social, and artistic developments of the nineteenth century are shaped by the Industrial Revolution—the period of transition from manual to mechanical labor, which reaches its midpoint at the turn of the century. The Romantic movement in the arts and literature responds to this and the trend of rationalism fostered during the Enlightenment by rejecting reason in favor of emotion, and exalting the supreme power of nature in an aesthetic known as the Sublime. While industrial progress provides tremendous wealth for the British empire, social ills such as overpopulation, prostitution, child labor, and poverty among the working classes escalate. As movements such as Chartism and the Reform Acts of 1832, 1867, and 1884 aim to resolve these issues, many artists, architects, and writers seek to repair the growing rift between art and craft, and to restore beauty and integrity of design to everyday objects.

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Joslyn Art Museum

TIMELINE – 1800s in Europe

Great Britain and Ireland, 1800–1900 A.D.

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1844. For several years, the completed sculpture (1829–35; plaster model, 1831, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen), depicting the seated poet in contemporary dress, with one foot resting on a Doric column fragment, is denied installation at Westminster Abbey because of Byron's notoriously dissolute lifestyle. In 1845, it is installed in the library at Cambridge, Byron's alma mater. Byron's poetry is greatly admired by contemporary artists, particularly the French painter Eugène Delacroix (1798–1863).

- **1811–20** The period known as the Regency is marked by a flowering of the arts and literature. As the mental illness of George III (r. 1760–1820) makes him unfit for rule, the government is placed in the hands of the prince of Wales, a young man with a fondness for decadence and gaiety (he later rules as George IV, 1820–30). He commissions alterations to the Royal Pavilion at Brighton from John Nash (1752–1835), an architect whose prolific output includes country homes and townhouses, as well as urban plans. Nash designs in both the Neoclassical and Picturesque styles, the latter characterized by asymmetry, purposeful surface irregularities, and the contrived effect of age, often by using medieval elements and motifs. Under Nash's direction, the Neoclassical Royal Pavilion becomes a Mughal-inspired pleasure palace topped with minarets and onion domes (1815–23). Also active at this time is the architect and collector John Soane (1753–1837), whose designs are characterized by a bold manipulation of classical orders and motifs, vastness of scale, and hidden light sources, as seen in his work on the Bank of England (1792–1833). The Regency period marks a pinnacle of Romantic literature in the poetry of Byron, John Keats (1795–1821), and Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822), and the novels of Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). Their works inspire visual artists throughout Europe, from Delacroix, who depicts a dramatic scene from Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1846; MMA 03.30), to John Everett Millais (1829–1896), whose *Isabella* (1849; Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool) relies on Keats' retelling of a tragic tale from Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

- **1812** J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851) exhibits *Snow Storm: Hannibal and His Army Crossing the Alps* (Tate, London) at the Royal Academy, in which he conveys the insignificance of man, powerless against the overwhelming forces of nature. The picture is accompanied by Turner's own verse, describing the crossing of 218 B.C. "While the fierce archer of the downward year / Stains Italy's blanch'd barrier with storms." The subject recalls Napoleon's more recent invasion of Italy via the Alps in 1797.

- **1821** John Constable (1776–1837) paints *The Hay Wain* (National Gallery, London), a view of the rural Suffolk landscape, featuring a horse-drawn cart (the haywain of the picture's title) standing in the winding river Stour, with a cottage on its bank. The work receives little mention at the Royal Academy exhibition of 1821, but its naturalism wins great acclaim at the Paris Salon of 1824, where Constable is awarded a gold medal by Charles X. Constable produces full-scale oil sketches from nature—such as the view of Salisbury Cathedral (MMA 50.145.8)—for paintings that he executes in his studio. Constable's subjective approach to landscape painting echoes the Romantic ideals of individuality and personal feeling.

- **1832** The first Reform Act is passed by Parliament, expanding suffrage and redistributing seats in the House of Commons to account for population shifts in various cities and boroughs as a result of the Industrial Revolution. The densely populated industrial cities of Manchester and Birmingham, along with other working-class communities, are represented in Parliament for the first time.

- **1834** An overheated furnace in the House of Lords starts a fire that rages out of control and, within twenty-four hours, destroys most of Westminster Palace, the seat of the British Parliament. With this disaster, however, comes an opportunity for the redesign of a structure, originally conceived (and used, until 1512) as a royal residence, for the specific needs of the Parliament. Two years later, architect Charles Barry (1795–1860) submits his plan to a design competition for the rebuilding of Westminster Palace and secures the commission; construction begins in 1840. In 1844, Barry is joined by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812–1852). To Barry's architectural designs in the late Perpendicular Gothic style, Pugin adds countless decorative details in the Gothic Revival style. Under his direction, teams of painters, sculptors, tile makers and mosaic artists, woodworkers, and metalworkers aim to create a "new" medieval palace of such splendor to surpass the original.
• 1834 Scientist William Henry Fox Talbot (1800–1877) invents a photographic process known as “photogenic drawing,” five years before the invention of the daguerreotype. He dedicates the rest of his career to developing techniques that dramatically advance the medium of photography.

• 1837 Victoria (1819–1901) ascends the throne of Great Britain, ruling until her death in 1901. Her reign is marked by British commercial, industrial, and political supremacy. In 1840, she marries Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Albert is an avid collector, particularly of early German and Italian Renaissance painting and contemporary art, and encourages Victoria's enthusiasm for patronage. In 1841, Albert is named chairman of the Royal Commission to advise on the decorative program for the new Houses of Parliament at the Palace of Westminster. Victoria and Albert commission a fresco series for their summer house on the Buckingham Palace grounds (destroyed), with scenes from Sir Walter Scott, Shakespeare, and John Milton, employing artists such as William Dyce (1806–1864), Charles Lock Eastlake (1793–1865), and Edwin Landseer (1802–1873). Landseer, a specialist in landscape and animal paintings, is a favorite of Victoria and Albert, for whom he produces many pictures, including portraits of the royal family—and their pets—such as Windsor Castle in Modern Times (1841–45; Royal Collection, Windsor Castle). They also commission numerous state portraits from German painter Franz Xaver Winterhalter (1805–1873).

• 1838 The National Gallery opens in Trafalgar Square, London. Thirty-eight pictures, purchased in 1824 by the House of Commons from banker John Julius Angerstein (1735–1823), form the core of the collection; they are displayed at Angerstein's house in Pall Mall until a new gallery building, designed by William Wilkins (1778–1839), is complete. Trafalgar Square, at the time considered the very center of London, is chosen as the gallery site, as it is accessible to all members of London society, from the wealthy elite of the West End to the working classes of the East End.

• 1842 onward Major excavations in northern Iraq, then part of the Ottoman Turkish empire, are undertaken by French and British diplomats and adventurers. Many of the monumental stone sculptures and reliefs discovered within ancient Assyrian royal palaces (dating from the ninth to seventh century B.C.) are shipped to London and Paris, prompting a vogue for all things Assyrian. Many architects and artists are influenced by the discoveries and an Assyrian Revival style flourishes in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

• 1848 It is the Year of Revolutions in Continental Europe, while in England a political reform group known as the Chartists stages a major uprising (ultimately unsuccessful) in London. Seven rebellious young artists, including William Holman Hunt (1827–1910), John Everett Millais (1829–1896), and Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), form a secret society with the aim of reforming the art of painting in Britain. Calling themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, these artists also have revolutionary aims: emulating the art of late medieval and early Renaissance Europe until the time of Raphael, they attempt to restore emotional purity and fidelity to nature to the visual arts. In this respect, they are strongly influenced by the Nazarene movement, which emerged in Germany and Rome earlier in the century. The Pre-Raphaelites often choose biblical and medieval subjects, or take up contemporary social issues such as the plight of the poor and prostitution—as in Hunt's Awakening Conscience (1853; Tate, London), depicting a kept woman in her opulent interior as she is moved by music to recognize the error of her ways. By the mid-1850s, the Brotherhood dissolves as its members pursue individual identities and separate artistic goals.

• 1849 John Ruskin (1819–1900) publishes The Seven Lamps of Architecture, his first major work of art criticism. In it, he praises the union of architectural aesthetics and spirituality in the Gothic style. He follows this with The Stones of Venice (1851–53), comparing the Venetian Gothic and Renaissance with the ideals of national and domestic virtue embodied in the former, and the vices of corruption and dissolution in the latter. Ruskin is an ardent defender of the reformist goals of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and a lifelong admirer and collector of Turner, whom he extols in a volume of his Modern Painters (1843–60).
• **1851** The first world’s fair, called the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, opens in London. Its chief proponent is Albert (1819–1861), prince consort of Victoria, who envisions the fair as "a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived ... and a new starting point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions." The Great Exhibition, as it is popularly known, is housed in Hyde Park in the massive Crystal Palace (damaged by fire in 1936, and demolished in 1941) designed by Sir Joseph Paxton (1803–1865). Paxton describes the structure as "the simplest—the merest mechanical building that could be made"; composed entirely of glass and cast iron, it is in itself a monument to the achievements of the Industrial Revolution, and its sheer vastness astounds visitors to the exhibition. Along with industrial exhibits are diverse examples of industrial and applied arts, musical instruments, textiles, and jewelry—from the Indian Koh-i-noor diamond in its original setting, to the gilt bronze and malachite desk set by British jeweler Charles Asprey (MMA 1982.88.1–8). No paintings are shown, as they are not considered products of mechanical achievement. Works purchased from the Great Exhibition form the nucleus of the South Kensington Museum, established in 1852 by Henry Cole (1808–1882) and later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum.

• **1856** Five years after his death, J. M. W. Turner's will is settled by a decree giving all original works in the artist's possession—about 300 oil paintings and more than 20,000 drawings—to the National Gallery in London. Divided for four decades among various exhibition venues, the Turner Bequest is permanently reunited at the opening of the National Gallery of British Art (now Tate Britain) in 1897.

• **1857** John Sheepshanks (1787–1863) donates his collection of 233 paintings and 289 drawings to the British nation, with the idea of establishing a National Gallery of British Art. The works are installed in the South Kensington Museum (renamed Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899).

• **1857** Encouraged by its affluent citizens to foster culture in a center of industry, the city of Manchester holds the Art–Treasures Exhibition. England’s first blockbuster exhibition, it includes paintings from English private collections by masters such as Gainsborough, Titian, and Correggio, as well as many works now in the Metropolitan Museum. These include paintings by Perugino (11.65), Carlo Crivelli (13.178), Raphael (32.130.1), Annibale Carracci (1971.155), Guido Reni (59.32), Murillo (43.13), Lawrence (50.135.5), and oil sketches by Rubens (37.160.12; 42.187).

• **early 1860s** The concept of "art for art's sake" is introduced to Britain by the painters Frederic Leighton (1830–1896) and James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), and the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909). Originating as a literary term in France, l'art pour l'art, in the 1830s, promoted by writer Théophile Gautier (1811–1872), art for art’s sake asserts that a work’s formal properties—its organization, composition, coloring, and surface details—are more important than its subject, subverting meaning in favor of beauty. This notion gives rise to the Aesthetic movement in the arts and literature in Britain, and its champions, in addition to those above, include the writers Walter Pater (1839–1894) and Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), painter/designers Albert Joseph Moore (1841–1893) and Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), and the Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882). Rossetti’s sensuously modeled female figures, rendered in a rich Venetian palette (see MMA 08.162.1), embody this cult of beauty. Whistler, in the Nocturne in Blue and Gold: Old Battersea Bridge (ca. 1872–75; Tate, London), rejects topographical details in an attempt to achieve "a certain harmony of color." Orientalism and japonisme inspire the Aesthetic movement, particularly in the decorative arts, exemplified in the designs of E. W. Godwin (1833–1886) and in the Holland Park home and studio of Frederic Leighton, where an Arab Hall of polychrome marble, glittering with mosaic tiles collected from Leighton’s journeys to the East, serves as a gathering place for like-minded aesthetes. The Aesthetic movement flourishes in Britain through the 1880s, and influences the later Arts and Crafts movement.

• **1861** William Morris (1834–1896) founds the design firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., employing the artists Ford Madox Brown (1821–1893), Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), and Philip Webb (1831–1915) as designers. In a prospectus, Morris describes his designers as artists who "have felt more than most people the want of some one place, where they could either obtain
or get produced work of a genuine and beautiful character." For the firm, they design and produce mural decorations, architectural carvings, stained glass (see MMA 1998.231), metalwork, jewelry, furniture, embroidered items, and other decorative objects. A painstaking attention to detail, reliance on organic motifs, and a taste for medieval and legendary subjects distinguish handcrafted works by the firm from the mass-produced household objects made widely available by industrial progress.

- **1862** The London International Exhibition is held in South Kensington, giving greater prominence to the fine and applied arts than in the first Great Exhibition of 1851. The exhibition features a display of Japanese crafts and artifacts, as well as a Medieval Court, for which the firm of William Morris (1834–1896) furnishes many objects, including a painted cabinet now in the Metropolitan Museum (26.54).

- **1863** Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878) designs a memorial to Prince Albert (died 1861). Commissioned by Queen Victoria and completed in 1872, the Albert Memorial, erected in Kensington Gardens, features a larger-than-life bronze statue of the prince seated beneath an immense Gothic tabernacle. Irish sculptor John Henry Foley (1818–1874) executes the sculpture of the prince, shown holding a copy of the catalogue from the Great Exhibition of 1851, as well as Asia, one of four marble groups of the Continents at the corners of the memorial. Henry Hugh Armstead (1828–1905) and John Birnie Philip (1824–1875) contribute a sculptural frieze that runs around its base, depicting 169 figures of the greatest composers, painters, architects, and sculptors from antiquity to the present. Called the *Frieze of Parnassus*, it is named after the mountain abode of the Muses and the site of the Oracle at Delphi.

- **1863** Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879) receives a camera from her daughter and son-in-law. She goes on to photograph members of her family and cultural luminaries of her day—many of them close friends: poet laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson, writer Thomas Carlyle, actress Ellen Terry, poet Robert Browning, and Charles Darwin, among others. Her admiration for the appearance and spirituality of fifteenth-century Italian painting informs her idealized photographic portraits, which draw from literary and biblical imagery.

- **1875** William Morris (1834–1896) reorganizes his firm as Morris & Co., with himself as sole proprietor. It is around this time that he begins to design textiles and wall coverings with intricate botanical patterns. In 1890, Morris undertakes his last major business venture: the foundation of Kelmscott Press, which produces fifty-three elaborate handmade books between 1891 and 1898.

- **1877** The Grosvenor Gallery in London holds its first show. Avant-garde artists such as Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903), and Albert Joseph Moore (1841–1893) welcome this alternative to exhibit at the Royal Academy, for which they share a common disdain. Among the most controversial works at the Grosvenor show is Whistler’s *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket* (1875; Detroit Institute of Arts), of which the critic John Ruskin writes, "I never expected to hear a coxcomb ask 200 guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public’s face." Whistler sues Ruskin for libel in 1878; he wins the trial, but his legal costs render him bankrupt, and he departs England for Venice in 1880.

- **1877** Painter Frederic Leighton (1830–1896) exhibits the lifesize bronze sculpture *An Athlete Wrestling with a Python* (1874–77; Tate, London) at the Royal Academy. With its anatomical naturalism and dynamic pose, the work marks the beginning of a movement known by 1894 as the New Sculpture. The individual styles of the New Sculptors represent a radical departure from the conservative Neoclassicism of earlier Victorian sculpture and an attempt to reform sculpture in Britain. Edward Onslow Ford (1852–1901) imbues his figural sculpture with a sensuality that relies more upon naturalism than on traditional canons of beauty. In his memorial to the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822) (ca. 1890; University College, Oxford), the drowned poet is shown nude, having washed ashore. The soft modeling of the recumbent nude emphasizes the poet’s youth, and the languorous pose effects a meditative pathos. Hamo Thornycroft (1850–1925) depicts classical subjects, including *Artemis and Her Hound* (bronze, 1882; Eaton Hall, Cheshire) and *Teucer* (1882; Tate, London), with a vigorous realism, while works such as the
Mower (1888–90; Tate, London) evoke the early Renaissance sculpture of Donatello. Prominent in the work of Alfred Gilbert (1854–1934) is a decorative aesthetic and elements of fantasy, which he uses to explore the Symbolist themes of fate, love, and death. Best known are his Winchester Jubilee Monument to Queen Victoria (1887–1912; Winchester, Great Hall), the memorial to Anthony Ashley-Cooper, earl of Shaftesbury, in the form of a fountain surmounted by the figure of Eros (1885–93; Piccadilly Circus, London), and the polychromed, mixed media tomb of Prince Albert Victor, duke of Clarence (1892–1928; Albert Memorial Chapel, Windsor Castle).

• 1881 Theater impresario Richard D'Oyly Carte (1844–1901) builds the still-extant Savoy Theatre in London for the production of operettas by William S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and Arthur Sullivan (1842–1900). Sullivan's melodic ingenuity and parodical play upon the Italian bel canto style pair with Gilbert's witty libretti, which satirize Victorian culture and its preoccupations—law, the Peerage, naval supremacy, the role of women, Orientalism, and japonisme—in productions such as *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *Iolanthe* (1882), and *The Mikado* (1885).

• 1884 Five architects—Gerald Horsley (1862–1917), William Richard Lethaby (1857–1931), Mervyn Macartney (1853–1932), Ernest Newton (1856–1922), and E. S. Prior (1852–1932)—and a group of artists led by Lewis Foreman Day (1845–1910) and Walter Crane (1845–1915) and known as The Fifteen, form the Art Workers' Guild in London. This guild comprises the core of the Arts and Crafts movement, a term coined by the writer/bookbinder T. J. Cobden-Sanderson (1840–1922). Members of the guild, including Edward Burne-Jones (1833–1898), William Morris (1834–1896), and the architect Edwin Lutyens (1869–1944), profess a unity of the arts, placing as much importance on the design of simple domestic objects as on whole architectural structures. From the seeds planted by the Gothic Revival and Aestheticism, the Arts and Crafts movement represents a flowering of craftsmanship that takes as its chief inspiration the pre-Renaissance tradition of workshop production of objects both useful and beautiful. Other societies associated with this movement are the Home Arts and Industries Association, founded in 1884, which encourages the pursuit of crafts among the urban working classes, and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, founded in 1888. The movement spreads to Ireland, where it becomes a vehicle for nationalism; to Scotland, where a distinct Glasgow Style emerges whose great exponent is the architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh (1868–1928); and to the United States.

• 1886 After his *Portrait de Mme*** (Madame X; MMA 16.53) provokes a scandal at the Paris Salon of 1884, painter John Singer Sargent (1856–1925) settles in England with the aim of escaping an unwelcome notoriety. He works in an Impressionist style nourished by his contact with Claude Monet, whom he visits several times in Giverny, and by the opportunity to sketch *en plein air* during two summers in the Cotswolds village of Broadway, Worcestershire (1885–86). There, in an informal colony that includes American painters Francis Davis Millet and Edwin Austin Abbey, Sargent paints *Carnation, Lily, Lily, Rose* (Tate, London), a lifesize depiction of illustrator Frederick Barnard's daughters lighting Japanese paper lanterns in Millet's garden. The canvas wins great acclaim when it is shown at the Royal Academy in 1887, and is purchased for the British nation. The honor assuages the doubts of critics and potential patrons, and Sargent's portraits—such as the animated likeness of Mrs. Hugh Hammersley (1892; MMA 1998.365), a British banker's wife depicted in an elegant magenta gown and seated on a luxuriously upholstered sofa—are soon sought after on both sides of the Atlantic. The French sculptor Auguste Rodin in 1902 describes Sargent as the "Van Dyck of the era."

• 1886 British artists inspired by contemporary French art found the New English Art Club. The influence of French Salon painters is soon eclipsed by that of the Impressionists, promoted by club member Walter Richard Sickert (1860–1942; see MMA 1979.135.17).
• 1892 J. M. Dent publishes the first installment of an edition of Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*. It features high contrast black-and-white illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898), a young clerk encouraged by Edward Burne-Jones to pursue a career in art. Dent's publications, mass produced using the latest methods of reproduction, allow Beardsley's work to reach a far wider audience than the expensive handmade books produced by William Morris' Kelmscott Press. In 1894, Beardsley assumes the art editorship for the *Yellow Book*, a new quarterly for avant-garde literature and art. In the same year, Oscar Wilde's play *Salome* appears in print, translated from the French by Lord Alfred Douglas, the "Bosie" with whom Wilde is charged in 1895 with engaging in licentious acts. The overt eroticism of the play and its seventeen illustrations by Beardsley cause a scandal, and Beardsley is dismissed from his post. Though markedly influenced by the Aesthetes of the late nineteenth century, the French Rococo, and the aesthetic of Japanese prints, Beardsley's drawings probe new depths of symbolism and evoke a realm of decadence and illicit fantasy. In *The Kiss*, Salome raises the severed head of John the Baptist to her lips, a ribbon of blood flowing into a pool from which a lily blooms.