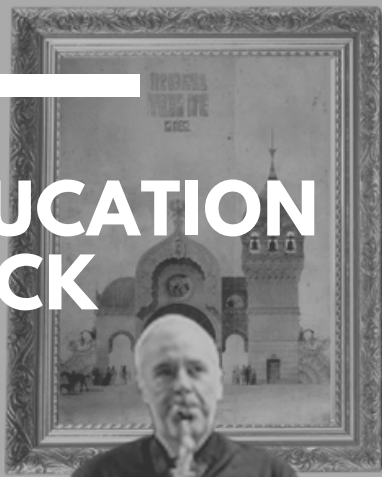


WHISTLEBLAST'S PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

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**WhistleBlast's
Pictures at an Exhibition
by Modest Mussorgsky**

A gripping, dramatic masterpiece through
live music performance and visual art,
arranged by Dr. Ken Edge.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

BY MODEST MUSSORGSKY

The Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky (1839 - 1881) created his work for solo piano 'Pictures at an Exhibition' in 1874. This 40 minute work was composed in 20 days between 2nd and 22nd of June 1874.

The work was composed in commemoration of Mussorgsky's close friend, the painter and architect Viktor Hartmann, who had died the previous year, at the tragically young age of thirty-nine. Mussorgsky composed 'Pictures at an Exhibition' after visiting a memorial exhibit of Hartmann's paintings and drawings in St. Petersburg in June 1874.

The work is a magical sequence of musical imagery, based on ten of Viktor Hartmann's artworks. Only six of these artworks in Mussorgsky's score can nowadays be identified with certainty. Interspersed throughout the work are 'Promenades'. These represent the composer strolling from one painting to the next. Although each 'Promenade' uses the same thematic material, they each convey their own very particular mood.

There's no record of a public performance of Pictures in Mussorgsky's lifetime,



'Pictures at an Exhibition' has become one of the most beloved works in the virtuoso pianist's repertoire and was so admired by the French composer Maurice Ravel that in 1922 he chose to orchestrate it. It is in Ravel's magnificent version for orchestra that Mussorgsky's work is most often performed.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

SEQUENCES OF MUSICAL IMAGERY

Promenade 1

Mussorgsky begins with a promenade, which takes him into the gallery and later accompanies him as he walks around the room, reflecting a change in mood from one picture to another. (Despite his considerable girth, Mussorgsky apparently was a fast walker—the promenade is marked *allegro*, rather than *andante* [Italian for “walking”]—and Mussorgsky was precise in his tempo markings.)

Gnomus. Hartmann’s drawing, which has since been lost, was for a Christmas tree ornament “a kind of nutcracker, a gnome into whose mouth you put a nut to crack,” according to Stassov’s commentary in the catalogue. Mussorgsky’s music, with its awkward leaps, bizarre harmonies, and slippery melodies, suggests the gnome’s “droll movements” and “savage shrieks.”

Promenade 2

The Old Castle. Two drawings of medieval castles are listed in the catalogue, both sketched while Hartmann was in France, just before he met Mussorgsky. The music gives song to the troubadour standing in front of the castle. Mussorgsky’s melody, which Ravel memorably gives to the alto saxophone, is clearly indebted to Russian folk music, despite the provenance of the castle.

Promenade 3

Tuileries: Hartmann lived in Paris long enough to get to know the famous park with its squabbling children and their nurses.

Bydło: Stassov describes a Polish wagon (“bydło” is Polish for cattle) drawn by oxen. Although Mussorgsky wanted the piece to begin *fortissimo* “right between the eyes,” as he told Stassov—Rimsky-Korsakov switched to a *pianissimo* opening followed by a crescendo to create the illusion of the approaching cart and the tread of hooves.

Promenade 4

Ballet of the Chicks in their Shells: Hartmann designed costumes for a ballet, *Trilbi*, in 1871. The music depicts a scene where “a group of little boys and girls, pupils of the Theatre School, dressed as canaries, scampered on the stage. Some of the little birds were wearing over their dresses big eggshells resembling breastplates.”

Samuel Goldenberg and Schmuyle: Mussorgsky owned these two drawings entitled “A Rich Jew in a Fur Hat” and “A Poor Jew,” to which he gave proper names. Hartmann, whose wife was Polish, visited Sandomierz, in southern Poland, in 1868; there he painted scenes and characters in the Jewish ghetto, including these two men, as well as *Bydlo*. Mussorgsky begins with the commanding Goldenberg; Ravel makes Schmuyle’s whining reply wonderfully grating.

The Market Place at Limoges. Hartmann did more than a hundred and fifty watercolours of Limoges in 1866, including many genre pictures. In the margin of his score, Mussorgsky brings the scene to life: “Great news! M. de Puissangeout has just recovered his cow . . . Mme de Remboursac has just acquired a beautiful new set of teeth, while M. de Pantaleon’s nose, which is in his way, is as much as ever the colour of a peony.”

Catacombs: *Sepulcrum romanum*. Hartmann, a friend, and a guide with a lamp explore underground Paris; to their right in Hartmann’s watercolour is a pile of skulls.

Promenade 5: *Con mortuis in lingua mortua*

At the end of Catacombs, Mussorgsky pencilled in his manuscript: “*Con mortuis in lingua mortua*” (With the dead in a dead language), signalling the start of this mournful rendition of the Promenade.

The Hut on Hen’s Legs (Baba-Yaga): Hartmann sketched a clock of bronze and enamel in the shape of the hut of the witch Baba-Yaga. Mussorgsky concentrates not on the clock, but on the child-eating Baba-Yaga herself, who, according to Russian folk literature, lived deep in the woods in a hut on hen’s legs, which allowed her to rotate to confront each approaching victim. (Incidentally, Stassov’s first impression of Hartmann was of him dressed as Baba-Yaga at a masked ball in 1861.)

The Great Gate of Kiev: Hartmann entered this design in a competition for a gateway to Kiev that was ultimately called off for lack of funds. Hartmann modelled his gate on the traditional headdress of Russian women, with the belfry shaped like the helmet of Slavonic warriors. Mussorgsky’s piece, with its magnificent climaxes and pealing bells, finds its ultimate realization in Ravel’s orchestration.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

THE PAINTINGS

The following paintings were chosen from the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin and The National Gallery, London. They were chosen by the WhistleBlast Quartet as part of a live streamed performance from Hugh Lane Gallery in 2021 and were chosen specifically to represent relevant subject matter for each movement of Mussorgsky's Picture at an Exhibition. This was an idea to make the piece accessible to everyone by including fascinating works of art to accompany a unique live music performance; the locations of Victor Hartmann's paintings are unknown.

We have included three images of these paintings in our WhistleBlast's Pictures at an Exhibition 2022 tour poster.

Please both visit the Hugh Lane Gallery and research work of Viktor Hartmann at your own leisure.

During 2021 the WhistleBlast Quartet performed their world premiere of Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition, arranged by Dr. Kenneth Edge at the Hugh Lane Gallery. You can watch the performance [here](#) which includes the chosen Hugh Lane gallery paintings.

Chosen paintings and architecture

Promenade 1

1. THE WIDOW (1882) by Frank Joseph O'Meara.
2. Gnomus IN THE FOREST (1859) by Gustave Courbet.

Promenade 2

3. The Old Castle MARSEILLES:THE OLD PORT (1843) by Jean-Baptiste-Camille-Corot.

Promenade 3

4. Tuileries MUSIC IN THE TUILERIES GARDENS (1862) by Edouard Manet.
5. Bydlo THE DILIGENCE IN THE SNOW (1860) by Gustave Courbet.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

THE PAINTINGS

Chosen paintings and architecture continued

Promenade 4

6. *Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks VENUS AND 2 CUPIDS (1847)* by *Naraisse Virgilie Dia de la Pena.*

7. *Samuel Goldberg and Schmuyle IN THE SPITALFIELD'S SYNAGOGUE (1904)* by *William Rothenstein.*

8. *The Market of Limoges THE FISH MARKET, PATRICK STREET (1893)* by *Walter Frederick Osborne.*

9. *Catacombs THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD (1906)* by *Charles Ricketts.*

Promenade 5 Con mortuis in lingua mortua

10. *The Hut on Chicken's legs-'Baba-Yaga'. THE LOG CARRIERS (1904)* by *George William Russell.*

11. *The Great Gate of Kiev HUGH LANE GALLERY ARCHWAYS*



The Widow

ARTIST: Frank Joseph O'Meara (1853 - 1888)

DATE: 1882

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 152.4 x 101.6 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO.: 247

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery

STATUS: On view

'The Widow' is considered an important transitional picture in O'Meara's development in that the somewhat heavy tones and attention to detail of earlier canvases give way here to a more sparse and sensitive style of painting. The figure of a young widow dressed in contemporary mourning costume is silhouetted against a barren, cold and misty background. The forlorn and mystical mood of the painting is enhanced by the widow's flowing veil and her averted gaze. The whole scene exudes a sense of deep introspection and loss, which is symbolic both of widowhood and of death in nature as represented by autumn and the approach of winter. This painting is probably the first in O'Meara's series of single figures of women set near water which he did in the 1880s and it is one which illustrates the artist's role in disseminating the late 19th century French style of Bastien Lepage, Cazin and Puvis de Chavannes to a younger generation of British and Scandinavian artists. Like the other paintings in this series the setting is Grez-sur-Loing, which was aptly described by the writer Robert Louis Stevenson as 'a pretty and very melancholy village'.

The model for 'the Widow' has since been identified as Mary Isabelle Bowes. The two met on one of Bowes' visits to Grez in 1880 and one of the first paintings for which Bowes modelled is this painting, begun in 1881. Bowes, or 'Belle' as she was known, modelled for other works in this collection including 'Towards Night and Winter' and she was also painted by other visiting artists including Sir John Lavery. While 'Belle' patiently posed for extended periods of time, thus enabling O'Meara to realise his artistic pursuits, O'Meara in turn encouraged 'Belle' to pursue her interest in photography. The two lovers were engaged for many years, and, while both of their families approved of the relationship, the couple were urged to delay the marriage until the artists' financial circumstances improved. The discovery of the model's identity imbues this work with a deep sense of tragic irony as, several years after the artist painted his muse and lover in the role of a young widow, O'Meara contracted malaria and died in his hometown of Co. Carlow, thus leaving 'Belle' behind to take on the role of widow, once more.

The backdrop for this study is the artist's colony of Grez sur Loing. Several artists including John Lavery and William Stott of Oldham spent time at Grez but O'Meara spent by far the longest amount of time in the area - from c. 1875- 1888- only returning to his native co. Carlow at the end of his young life. The landscapes and atmosphere clearly made a lasting impression on the Irish artist, who displayed a predilection for rural landscapes from an early age, as documented in his early sketchbooks of the landscapes in and around co. Carlow.

**In the Forest**

ARTIST: Jean Désiré Gustave Courbet (1819 - 1877)

DATE: 1859

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 80 × 99.1 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 3241

SIGNED: Signed, G. Courbet

CREDIT LINE: Sir Hugh Lane Bequest, 1917, The National Gallery, London. In partnership with Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.

STATUS: Not on view

'The son of a wealthy farmer, Courbet was a committed Republican and had a deep sympathy for the working classes. While he favoured realist subject matter in preference to subjects derived from poetry and literature this painting reveals the artist's skill in evoking nature's potential for poetic and artistic inspiration. Amid the cool dark trees of this painting, a deer drinks from a pool in a tranquil clearing while a stag is in the foreground. This work was exhibited in 1863 under the title Amours de Cerfs. (JO'D)



Marseille: The Old Port

ARTIST: Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot (1796 - 1875)

DATE: 1843

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: Framed: 49 x 60 x 9.5 cm 24.1 x 34.9 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 552

SIGNED: Inscribed, lower left, Vente Corot

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery. Donated by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir William Hutcheson-Poe, Sir John Nutting, Bt, Viscount Gough and Mr Charles Martin, 1905

According to Robaut (1905, vol. II, p.160, n°443, repr.), this is a view of the old harbour in Marseille. It is seen from the entrance of the harbour and the blue-green sea in the foreground takes nearly half of the composition. Old buildings and two rows of ships run along each side. In the background is the town and further back in the distance, is the Sainte Beaulieu Mountain, a Marseille landmark.

It is not dated but thanks to annotated drawings we know that when he was on his way to Rome, Corot stayed in Marseille in May 1843. That year, Corot had decided to travel to Italy when his painting, Destruction of Sodom, was not admitted at the Salon; he left France with Brizard, a friend and also a painter. It was his third and last trip to Italy where he stayed until October.

This little canvas, painted outdoors has the harsh light of his first period and his idiosyncratic unity of atmosphere and tone.

Blue-green sea in the centre, small portion of harbour wall to the right; in the background a view of Marseilles with ships bordering the water on either side; on the horizon blue/grey hills. A small boat with a sail middle left.



La Musique aux Tuileries

ARTIST: Douard Manet (1832 - 1883)

DATE: 1862

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 76.2 × 118.1 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 3260

SIGNED: Signed and dated, éd Manet 1862

CREDIT LINE: Sir Hugh Lane Bequest, 1917, The National Gallery, London. In partnership with Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.

STATUS: On view

La Musique aux Tuileries is Manet's first real attempt at capturing contemporary urban life. A crowd of well-to-do Parisian bourgeoisie is gathered in the gardens of the Tuileries Palace to enjoy the twice weekly concert. It was the perfect opportunity for Manet to sketch his literary, artistic and musical friends including his friend the poet Baudelaire whose views on the "heroism" of modernity so encouraged him. When exhibited in 1863 La Musique aux Tuileries with its lack of polish and bold brushwork shocked and infuriated the public.

Manet has depicted himself standing on the extreme left. Next to him is Albert de Balleroy with whom he had shared a studio and just visible between them may be the writer Champfleury. Seated to their right is the sculptor and critic Zacharie Astruc. The two ladies wearing blue bonnets and seated in the foreground may be Madame Loubens (veiled) and Madame Lejosne. Directly behind the latter is the profile of Baudelaire and over his shoulder, facing out, the bearded face of painter Fantin-Latour. The prominent standing figure right of centre is Manet's brother Eugène while the spectacled seated figure to his right is the composer Offenbach. The centrally placed auburn haired child is Leon Leenhoff, Manet's godson and probably also natural son. (CK)



The Diligence in the Snow

ARTIST: Jean Désiré Gustave Courbet (1819 – 1877)

DATE: 1860

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 137.2 x 199.1 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 3242

SIGNED: Signed and dated, lower left, G. Courbet 60

CREDIT LINE: Sir Hugh Lane Bequest, 1917, The National Gallery, London. In partnership with Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.

STATUS: On view

Struggling in the snow is a diligence or French stagecoach pulled here by oxen and horses. Courbet is said to have witnessed a similar accident when on a hunting expedition in the forest of Livier. While it is possible to see far into the distance, Courbet has also paid close attention to the figures in this painting. Originally called *Naufrage dans la Neige with Montagnes du Jura* occasionally added, the current title was also used by the artist. *Naufrage* translates as foundering or is also used to describe a shipwreck. This description is particularly appropriate given Courbet's wave-like depiction of the deep snowdrift. (JO'D)

Courbet was born to affluent parents, but retained an affinity to their rural origins. Defying his family's wishes that he should study law, he moved to Paris aged twenty to become an artist, studying under M Steuben, now obscure, and copying Old Master paintings in the Louvre. From the early 1840s he offended critics by painting genre scenes of contemporary life on the monumental scale then reserved for historical or mythological subjects, and emerged as the head of a new school of painting known as Realism.

Commercial success did not come until the 1860s with more popular, smaller-scale still lifes and nudes, and landscapes such as *The Diligence in the Snow*, thought to derive from an accident he witnessed while on a hunting trip near his birthplace. A 'diligence' was a type of commercial stagecoach; the main form of long-distance transport before the emergence of the railways. Courbet shows the coach overturned in snowdrifts so deep and sculpted that they resemble a stormy sea, the small figures dwarfed by the expansive landscape setting. The brooding sky heightens the sense of drama and the isolation of the struggling group, despite the presence of the dwelling in the middle distance.



Venus and Two Cupids (The Offspring of Love)

ARTIST: Narcisse Virgile Diaz de la Peña (1807 - 1876)

DATE: 1847

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas mounted on wood

DIMENSIONS: 33.7 × 20.6 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 3246

SIGNED: Signed and dated, N. Diaz 47

CREDIT LINE: Sir Hugh Lane Bequest, 1917, The National Gallery, London. In partnership with Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.

STATUS: Not on view

Born in Bordeaux of Spanish parents, Diaz gained a good reputation from a number of history paintings he exhibited at the Salon, the official platform for the exhibiting of new work. This work, showing Venus with two amorini, is painted with luminous impasto oil paint. This style of loose and heavy brush stroke was admired by the artist Adolphe Monticelli. (JO'D)

A full length seated figure of a woman (Venus) in a low cut cream dress looks down at a cupid to the right. The cupid at the left looks back towards the viewer.

**In the Spitalfields Synagogue**

ARTIST: William Rothenstein (1872 - 1945)

DATE: 1904

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 76.2 x 96.5 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 283

SIGNED: Inscribed and dated, W.R. 1904

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery. Donated by a Body of Friends, 1905

STATUS: On view

A noted portraitist, Rothenstein belonged to the New English Art Club, a group of artists who promoted French painting in England and which included George Clausen, Philip Wilson Steer and William Orpen. In support of Hugh Lane's project for a gallery of modern art, Rothenstein wrote: 'I am perfectly willing to admit you to be a man of genius. That you have been able to make the most important collection of modern pictures, drawings and sculpture that has yet been brought together...is nothing short of a miracle.' (JO'D)

**The Fishmarket, Patrick Street**

ARTIST: Walter Frederick Osborne (1859 - 1903)

DATE: 1893

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 59.7 x 80 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 23

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery. Lane Gift, 1912

STATUS: On view

The Fishmarket, Patrick Street, a vivid evocation of life in Dublin at the end of the nineteenth century, is one of Osborne's finest genre scenes. Osborne spent much of his time sketching in the markets area around Patrick Street, in the Liberties area of Dublin. Although the style of this painting is Impressionistic, his eye for detail is evident in the beautifully coloured still-life elements on the fish stall in the foreground. A clothes stall, a meat stall with sides of meat hanging, and a stall with hanging baskets are all clearly visible in the background. Osborne empathised with working people and the figure of the woman, engrossed in her work of gutting fish, is beautifully rendered. He excelled at painting children without being overly sentimental. His depiction of the children gathered here with anticipation around a street food vendor, alongside a mother with a baby in her arms, is a sympathetic and realistic portrayal of street life.



The Parable of the Vineyard

ARTIST: Charles de Sousy Ricketts (b. Geneva 1866 - d. London 1931)

DATE: c. 1906

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 73.7 x 63.5 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 258

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery.

STATUS: On view

The Parable of the Vineyard (Mt 21: 33-42) tells the story of an owner of a vineyard who handed it over to tenants and departed for a far country. When the time arrived for it to bear fruits, he sent his servants to collect them, but the tenants beat some and killed others. Finally, the owner sent his son, saying, "Surely they will reverence my son." But this was not the case. The tenants took hold of the son, cast him out, and killed him. This painting shows the tenants beating the son of the owner of the vineyard.



The Log Carriers

ARTIST: George William Russell (Æ) (1867 - 1935)

DATE: c. 1904

MEDIUM: Oil on canvas

DIMENSIONS: 49.5 x 66 cm

CLASSIFICATIONS: Paintings

REG. NO: 31

CREDIT LINE: Collection & image © Hugh Lane Gallery. Lane Gift, 1912

STATUS: Not on view

George Russell outraged many nationalists by his defence of the Dublin workers' cause in 1913. Opposition from some Irish nationalist quarters stemmed from their objection to what they saw as interference from British trade unionism in Irish affairs. However, George Russell was deeply concerned about the poverty and bleak living conditions of the urban poor. He defended the right of workers to join unions in the hope of achieving fairer conditions and he criticised employers' opposition. In this he was joined by such diverse voices as Eamonn Ceannt, Patrick Pearse, Pádraic Colum, George Bernard Shaw, and William Butler Yeats. Through his involvement with the Co-operative movement, and as editor of the Irish Homestead, Russell had actively campaigned for bettering the lives of small farmers and agricultural labourers. The Log Carriers articulates Russell's idealised view of dignified and hardworking labourers working together to eke out a livelihood in a simple landscape setting. (JO'D)

Two women in long dresses walk towards the viewer across a shelly beach, carrying a long log on their shoulders. The colour of the womens' dresses matches their faces, making them look like statues. In the background is a sky covered with white and grey blue clouds.



Hugh Lane Gallery Archways

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

EXTRA ACTIVITIES

Delve deeper into the magical world of Modest Mussorgsky and Viktor Hartmann by:

- Painting to the music
- Holding historical writings and discussion
- Researching Russian and European history
- Exploring costumery
- Creating art including sculpture, sketching, painting and making.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**the
WhistleBlast
Quartet**

