



ARTIST AND MODEL: WHISTLER AND JOANNA HIFFERNAN

JOANNE RHYMER

The Arts Society Fylde
Lowther Pavilion Theatre
1 February at 2.00pm

In normal circumstances, this lecture would have given us a chance to welcome Joanne Rhymer on her first visit to The Arts Society Fylde - sadly, problems with train services mean that we will see and hear Ms Rhymer but not, unfortunately, meet her in person. Her topic is built round Whistler's monumental and enigmatic painting, *Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl* (1862) - a celebrated painting. Although its size recalls traditional portraits of esteemed figures depicted on a grand scale, Whistler's painting technique and treatment of the subject is strikingly modern. His depiction of the face and red hair of the model, Joanna Hiffernan, contrasts dramatically with his depiction of her ethereal clothing and pallid backdrop.

As the lecturer points out, Whistler's treatment disrupts our reading of the painting as a straightforward representation of a young woman. So how can we interpret this painting? Ms Rhymer will consider the role of Joanna Hiffernan in Whistler's art and life. Was she simply the artist's model and lover, appearing in several key works, or was she, in fact, a key collaborator in the development of modern art? Joanne Rhymer will draw on themes in the Royal Academy's exhibition of 2022, *Whistler's Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan*.

JOANNE RHYMER

Jo Rhymer is a history of art lecturer. She has broad experience of working in museum and gallery learning departments and was previously Head of Adult Learning Programmes at the National Gallery. She leads tours in the UK and abroad, is an accredited lecturer for The Arts Society, and lectures for various organisations including the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Wallace Collection. She is also a panel tutor for the Institute of Continuing Education at the University of Cambridge. Her particular interests include 19th-century and early 20th century French art, representations of women and women artists



FURTHER STUDY

Daniel E Sutherland *Whistler: A Life for Art's Sake*, (Yale), 2015

Devon Cox *The Street of Wonderful Possibilities: Whistler, Wilde & Sargent in Tite Street* (Aurum), 2022

Patricia de Montfort *Women in Whistler's Images of Chelsea and the Thames*
issue-22-women-in-whistlers-images-of-chelsea-and-the-thames (britishartstudies.ac.uk)

Margaret F MacDonald et al *Whistler and the Woman in White: Joanna Hiffernan*, (Royal Academy), 2022

Image: Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl, James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903), National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA, (public domain)