



Artist of Peace

Evelyn De Morgan (1855 – 1919)



DE MORGAN

COLLECTION



Evelyn De Morgan

Born a woman into an aristocratic family, meant Evelyn De Morgan had to battle to become the professional artist she did. Following an education at the Slade School of Art, De Morgan began exhibiting her paintings and successfully selling them when she was just 22 years old.

Her paintings are technically brilliant. Her beautiful drawings indicate how she would labour over ideas for motifs and compositions in pencil and pastel for years before committing them in paint on canvas.

She was a feminist, lending her support to the Suffrage movement, and painting classical myths, legends and works of literature from the woman's perspective.

In 1883, she met the potter William De Morgan, whose mother was a psychic medium. Inspired by this practice, she used her paintings to present her belief in the of resurrection of the mortal human soul after death.

Artist of Peace

De Morgan was born during the Crimean War (1853 – 1856), when the Victorian spirit of progress and industry, sparked colonialism and conflict. De Morgan lived through two Boer Wars (1880 – 1902), which demonstrated to her the huge cost of human life caused by war. The pacifist artist struggled to justify the fighting, instead sympathising with human loss and suffering which she reconciled through her spiritualist paintings such as *In Memoriam* (c.1880).

The outbreak of WWI, which brought daily reports from the frontline and news the huge death toll, deeply affected De Morgan. Her artwork became cathartic, allowing her a platform to present her profound fears. Possessing a strong belief that art should have a moral purpose, De Morgan fashioned an artistic response to war using a deliberate synthesis of academic style, symbol and allegory to convey pacifist meanings and values.





Artist of Hope

Although many paintings in De Morgan's oeuvre concentrate on death and war, they are incredibly hopeful images.

She reconciled her fear and hatred of unnecessary human pain, suffering, and grief with her belief that the human soul was emancipated from the prison of the body after death. Paintings such as *Lux in Tenebris* (1894) show the figure of peace rising out of the gloom of crocodile infested waters, recognising a hopeful end for doomed mankind.

In her later war paintings, she extended her hopeful outlook to consider war as a tool for eventual peace. Her positive approach to the barbaric subject set her aside from other war artists, who depicted the horror of the front line. The resulting pictures are still so striking and sadly relevant today.



De Morgan's Red Cross Exhibition

De Morgan hoped her art would act as pacifist propaganda, but also used it to help practically towards the peaceful side of the war effort, by holding an exhibition at her studio in London in 1916. The purpose of this show was to create and sell pictures, with proceeds going directly to raise funds for the British Red Cross and the Italian Croce Rosa. A highlight was her painting *The Red Cross* (1914).

The result of this exhibition was a body of work which not only acts as a powerful expression of the effects of conflict upon De Morgan and fellow Britons, but can also be understood as a universal statement about the anxiety, grief and abhorrence that accompany any war.

Borrow Artist of Peace

Artist of Peace is a touring exhibition, available for hire by reputable museums and art galleries, for four to six months.

The exhibition fee is £10,000 and includes:

- 25 beautiful preparatory drawings and sketches in pencil and pastel
- 5 full compositional pastel preparatory drawings
- 9 oil paintings
- Evelyn De Morgan's ration book
- All written interpretation in digital format
- Shop stock on an exclusive sale or return basis
- Organisation of logistics, and De Morgan curator as courier
- Condition reports
- Curatorial help and advice
- Curator talk for the events programme

Contact Sarah Hardy
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Founded by Evelyn De Morgan's sister, Wilhelmina Stirling, the De Morgan Collection is the largest and most comprehensive collection of De Morgan artwork in the world. It comprises some 70 oil paintings, 600 drawings and 800 ceramics.

The Collection is run and cared for by the independent charity, the De Morgan Foundation (charity number 310004). It is displayed in long-term loan exhibitions at three partner sites, Cannon Hall in Barnsley, Watts Gallery in Surrey, and Wightwick Manor in Wolverhampton.

www.demorgan.org.uk