



DE MORGAN

COLLECTION

Highlights in the
Malthouse Gallery at
Wightwick Manor

PAINTINGS



Evelyn De Morgan, 'Flora' (1894)

Flora is the Roman Goddess of flowers, especially associated with spring, her festival, the Floralia, ran from 28th April to 3rd May. The scroll at the bottom right of the painting is in Italian and translates as follows:

*'I come down from Florence and am Flora,
This city takes its name from flower
Among the flowers I was born and now by a
change of home
I have my dwelling among the mountains of
Scotia
Welcome, and let me treasure amid northern
mists be dear to you.'*

Flora is depicted in front of a Nescola or Loquat tree which bears fruit in the spring. Little birds, such as Goldfinches and Siskins can be identified within the tree. Flora's robe is patterned with Florentine flowers, and blossoms drop from her clasp and lie scattered in front of her feet.

The painting was made entirely in Florence and is a celebration of the city and its Renaissance artists - it is clearly inspired by Botticelli's Primavera.

It was bought by one of Evelyn's few regular patrons, the Scottish ship-owner William Imrie, perhaps attracted by the reference to Scotia. Imrie also commissioned Evelyn's paintings *Cassandra* and *Helen of Troy*, all of which use Jane Hales as the model.

The beautiful frame is made from carved pine with an oil gilded finish. It is based on the 'tondo' frame style of the early Italian Renaissance. It is adorned with a 'ribbon & floral' motif on the 'torus' section of the profile and is probably contemporary with the painting.



Evelyn De Morgan
'The Cadence of Autumn'
(1905)

The adoption of the four seasons to depict the life cycle is a well-rehearsed theme in art. The left hand side of the picture is bright in colour and the young female in her mauve robes depicts spring. The two central figures in the painting, who harvest an abundance of fruit, symbolise summer. Towards the right of the picture the colours become more muted and sombre and these figures depict the autumn of life. A cadence is the close of a musical phrase and in painting this work, Evelyn is depicting autumn as the end of the season of gaiety and plenty and the start of the grey cold winter and towards old age.



Evelyn De Morgan
'Port After Stormy Seas'
(1905)

The title is a quotation from Edmund Spenser's *'The Fairie Queen'*

*'Sleep after toyle,
port after stormy seas,
Ease after Warre,
death after life doe greatly please.'*

The painting indicates that the woman has achieved a peaceful death after a stormy life. She has safely navigated the stormy seas on the right and has reached a safe harbour. The Angel of Death is allowing her a moment of rest and contemplation, before they begin their journey together into the light of the peaceful land behind her. According to Mrs Stirling (Evelyn's younger sister). "The scenery depicted is that of Woolacombe Bay in Devonshire, with the rocks, typical of that part of the coast and Baggy Point in the distance".



Evelyn De Morgan
'The Garden of Opportunity' (1882)

In *The Garden of Opportunity*, we see on the right symbols of learning and wisdom. The bench is decorated with the wise owl and a cornucopia of the wealth of the earth. A book lies discarded on the bench. Behind is a church, the medieval seat of learning. The mill and water wheel behind the bench represent the riches of the earth, harvested for the benefit of humanity. In front of the bench is Wisdom herself, in an attitude of despair, at her feet the discarded riches that she can bring to those who follow her. The central figures are two medieval students, dressed in colourful robes, who have turned their backs on wisdom and learning, and are moving towards Folly, represented by the female figure on the left. She tempts them towards a castle, symbol of transient wealth, holding out to them a silver ball. On one side of this ball (the side they cannot see) is a skull. In her other hand is a branch of henbane – a narcotic and poisonous plant. On the stairway to the Palace of Folly, a little devil peeps out from the banister to see which they will choose.

Mrs Stirling wrote about the devil "the jest about this was always that he was pointed out as a portrait of William De Morgan by Evelyn, as he has the De Morgan piehead!".



Evelyn De Morgan
'Mercury' (c1870s)

Mercury, was the messenger of the gods, the conductor of souls to the lower world and a dangerous foe.

He is depicted here as a young athlete, carrying the caduceus (a rod with twined snakes that possessed magical powers over sleeping, waking and dreams) and wearing winged sandals and a petasus (a winged helmet). The background shows a mountainous scene.

The model for Mercury is Evelyn De Morgan's brother, Spencer Pickering.



Evelyn De Morgan
'The Little Sea Maid' (c.1880s)

Inspired by Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* (1855) the much loved story of the Sea King's daughter who rescues and falls in love with a human prince. The Little Mermaid sells her voice to a Sea Witch in exchange for a human soul and physical human form. Here she is depicted soothing her new found feet in the sea at night. Told by the Witch that she will never be able to return to the sea she looks sadly down.

This is the first in a series of three paintings Evelyn executed on the subject. Seascapes were a pictorial device which Evelyn returned to time and time again. The treatment of the sea here shows Evelyn's masterful technique. The almost geometric pattern made by the waves in the foreground and the application of the paint gives a nod to abstraction and the techniques with which the Cubists experimented some 20 years later.

PAINTING TOOLS



Evelyn De Morgan's artist palette



Evelyn De Morgan's palette knife

Gifted to her by G.F. Watts on 19th September 1898

CERAMICS

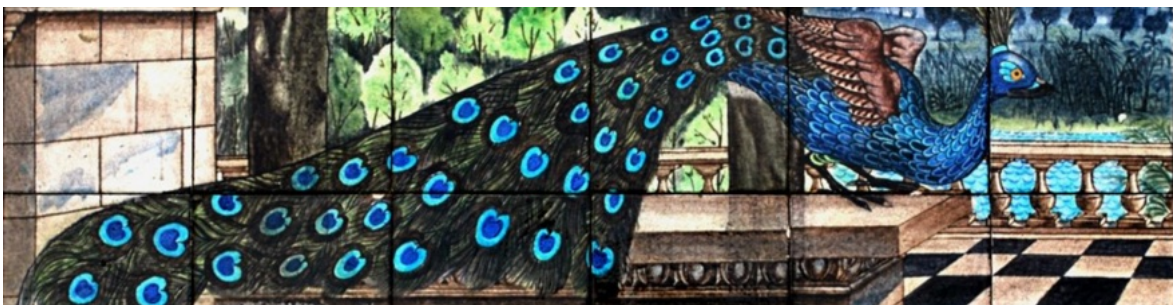


William De Morgan, *Galleon Tile Panel* (1895)

An important tile panel consisting of forty, six inch square tiles and representing a colourful and exotic scene of sailing ships, birds and sea creatures.

De Morgan had a great fondness for the sea and is quoted by his sister-in-law in her 1922 biography '*William De Morgan and His Wife*', as wistfully stating "I should like to be buried at sea during a glorious sunrise off the islands of Majorca and Minorca".

The tiles are marked on the reverse with an early Fulham Period impress stamp - dating the panel to between 1888 and 1897. The scale, subject and quality of this panel suggest that it may well have been designed as part of De Morgan's commissions for P&O, which he undertook between 1882 and 1900. Letters written between De Morgan and his business partner Halsey Ricardo, further place the panel as part of their designs for the S.S. Malta in 1895.



William De Morgan, *Peacock Tile Panel* (c.1872-1907)

Tin glazed earthenware polychrome tile panel of six inch tiles. Decorated with a peacock on a balustraded terrace. Part of a larger tile panel. Stylistically connected to the designs De Morgan created for P&O.



William De Morgan, *Leopard and Stag Dish* (c.1888-1907)

Tin glazed earthenware polychrome dish with a leopard and stag in a field of flowers, at a river bank. Reverse decorated with concentric bands of blue, white and turquoise and a leaf pattern on the rim.

The plate was a wedding gift to Mr and Mrs Stirling by William De Morgan



William De Morgan, *Dish with Herons and Fish* (c.1872-1907)

Tin glazed earthenware polychrome dish with two herons catching fish on a flowered river bank. Reverse decorated with concentric bands of blue, white and turquoise and a leaf pattern on the rim.

Given by William De Morgan to Mr and Mrs Stirling as a Wedding Present.



William De Morgan, *Ruby Lustre Galleon Dish* (c.1888-1907)

Ruby lustre earthenware dish decorated with a Galleon with a figurehead in the shape of a horse's head. On board the ship are sailors and a boathouse. The reverse has alternating ruby lustre and white concentric circles.



William De Morgan, *Galleon Vase* (c.1888-1907)

Tin glazed earthenware polychrome rounded vase with wide neck decorated with galleons on the bowl of the vase and a fish frieze on the neck. Decorated during the Fulham period by Joe Juster, one of De Morgan's most versatile and talented decorators.



William De Morgan, *Lizard Jar* (c.1872-1907)

This lidded earthenware ovoid jar is decorated with gold lustre lizards and ruby lustre leaves on a cream ground. The lid is also decorated with a gold lustre lizard. Such reptilian creatures are a common feature seen on De Morgan's work. The pot was glazed by one of De Morgan's lesser known decorator's James Hersey.



William De Morgan, *Eagle and Carnation Vase* (c.1888-1897)

This inverted pear shaped vase has a flared neck, and is decorated all over with lustre. Gold lustre carnations and eagles sit amongst pink lustre leaves, set on a ruby lustre background. Such a large quantity of lustre has created a vase which captures light at any angle.



William De Morgan, *Ibex Dish* (c.1872-1907)

In the centre of this dish is a regal ibex with deer on the outside rim. Lustre has been used to create a brightly patterned design of brown and cream swirls. The colour palette and swirling decorative elements are Hispano Moeresque inspired. De Morgan's experiments with lustre decoration in the late Victorian period were directly inspired by Hispano Moeresque ceramics from the 13th–15th centuries and Italian Maiolica from the 15th–16th centuries, both of which contained lustrous metallic glazes.



William De Morgan, *Ibex Dish* (c.1888-1907)

Deep earthenware punch bowl standing on flared foot. Decorated with two eagles in the bowl and a repeating swallow pattern on the rim. The exterior decorated with swimming fish.