

Curiosity and Desire in Fin-de-Siècle Art and Literature



Charles Ricketts, Drawing for Arnold Bennett's *Judith* (1909). William Andrews Clark Memorial Library.

11-12 MAY 2018

WILLIAM ANDREWS CLARK MEMORIAL LIBRARY,
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

“Curiosity, and the desire of beauty, have each their place in art, as in all true criticism. When one’s curiosity is deficient, when one is not eager enough for new impressions and new pleasures, one is liable to value mere academical properties too highly, to be satisfied with worn-out or conventional types.”

Walter Pater

“What is termed Sin is an essential element of progress. Without it the world would stagnate, or grow old, or become colourless. By its curiosity Sin increases the experience of the race. Through its intensified assertion of individualism it saves us from monotony of type. In its rejection of the current notions about morality, it is one with the higher ethics.”

Oscar Wilde

Victorian theorists of aesthetics such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde saw curiosity and desire working in tandem in the creation of beauty. And while these two quotations reflect the dissidence across interpretations of aestheticism at the time, they are united in their emphasis on passionate engagement and creativity as necessary elements of academic scholarship itself. We wish to capture this spirited energy by bringing together scholars from around the world to explore the ways in which the fusion of curiosity and desire permeated the art and literature of the British fin de siècle.

This two-day conference is jointly organized by the International Walter Pater Society and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, world-renowned for its holdings of rare and manuscript materials from the period, notably Oscar Wilde, George Egerton, Alfred Douglas, Charles

Ricketts, Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, and the fine presses of the fin de siècle. The conference will include workshops in which groups of scholars will carry on exploratory discussions that relate to the Clark's extensive *fin-de siècle* collections.

We welcome proposals for **either** conference papers **or** workshop contributions.

Conference papers will be twenty minutes in length and should address the conference theme in relation to works by Pater, Wilde, or other figures from this period. We encourage interdisciplinary approaches, linking literature to the visual arts, music, performance, or science, as well as exploring the international dimension of the British fin de siècle. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Critical methods and the critics' desires
- Desire and the senses
- Scientific and literary curiosity
- Tastes and taxonomies
- Empiricism and its discontents
- Textual and material objects
- The bizarre and the grotesque
- Curiosity and the archive
- The collection and the fetish
- Ekphrastic practice
- Different desires

Workshop contributions will consist of pre-circulated papers (circa 2,000 words), which speakers will introduce in five-minute presentations on the day. They should address one of the following three themes:

- Aestheticism, curiosity, and desire
- British aestheticism and French culture
- The aesthetic book: fin-de-siècle printing and publishing

Proposals (300 words) for either papers or workshop contributions should be sent to IWPSClark2018@gmail.com **no later than 1 December 2017**. Conference Organizers: Joseph Bristow, Dennis Denisoff, Stefano Evangelista, and Charlotte Ribeyrol. The conference is cosponsored by the International Walter Pater Society, the UCLA Center for 17th- and 18th-Century Studies, and the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library



UCLA Center for 17th- & 18th-
Century Studies

