



For immediate release

Without Design or Sketch: The Story of The Room

Exhibition organized by Rough Play

September 10 – October 1, 2016

OPENING RECEPTION: Saturday, September 10th, 6-9pm

RSVP Required to: rsvp@launchla.org

In rebellion against the function of art to serve a moral and social purpose in the Victorian period, the Aesthetic movement of late 19th century Britain championed the importance of art divorced from any ulterior motive than its visual beauty.

An expression coined by artist James Abbot McNeill Whistler, "art for art's sake" encompassed the belief that the creation and interpretation of art was the responsibility of the artist, not society, and should be morally disengaged from the outside world. In his book *Ten O'Clock Lecture*, Whistler states, "Nature is very rarely right...", explaining that it is the artist's own vision that must improve upon nature. Championing luxury, exoticism, and sensual experience, Aestheticism formed the foundations of early Modern Art with such movements as Art Nouveau, and deeply impacted the fine and applied arts.

Exemplary of the Aesthetic Movement's philosophies, Whistler's pivotal painting, *La Princesse du pays de la porcelain* (1865) was positioned as a centerpiece of shipping magnate Frederick Leyland's London house dining room. A space originally designed by architect Thomas Jeckyll to showcase Leyland's extensive collection of oriental porcelain, Leyland commissioned Whistler to select a color palette and paint in a specified area of the room that would complement both his existing painting and the blue and white porcelain collection. Both Leyland and the architect, trusting in Whistler's artistic genius, left him unattended to his commissioned task. Excited by the project, the artist went well beyond what was asked of him, transforming the room into an all-encompassing work of art of blue and gold in his patron's absence. "Well, you know, I just painted on. I went on—without design or sketch—putting in every touch with such freedom..." Whistler believed he had created a masterpiece that would thrill and delight his patron, but when Leyland was presented with Whistler's bill, he refused to pay, shocked at an exorbitant amount for work that was never requested. After a battle with the artist, the patron agreed to pay half. Infuriated and insulted, Whistler made one more addition to the room, a mural of two peacocks aggressively confronting each other with coins at their feet, to which he attributed two titles—*Art and Money* or *The Story of the Room*. The dining room achieved its status as a complete work of art and has since been referred to as *Harmony in Blue and Gold: the Peacock Room*.

Without Design or Sketch: The Story of the Room approaches the context of the *Peacock Room* as a platform from which to address a series of issues related to contemporary art practices such as the boundary between art space and living space, the perceptions of decorative and fine art, the value of art and patronage, and art's engagement with social and moral issues versus its purely visual components. The following featured artists engage these concepts within the Launch LA Gallery space and respond to in a dynamic environmental collaboration between artists, ideas, materials, and space. Featuring work by Alex Anderson, Beatriz Cortez, Krysten Cunningham, Ashley Hagen, Carla Jay Harris, Jane Hugentober, Malisa Humphrey, Cole James, Shoshi Kanokohata and Taidgh O'Neill, Annelie McKenzie, Thinh Nguyen, Joel Otterson, Christopher Reynolds, Jackie Rines, Emily Sudd, Christian Tedeschi, Elizabeth Tinglof, Kim Truong, Axel Wilhite, Robert Wilhite, Emily Wiseman, and Kim Ye.

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