

**Edward Burne-Jones:  
Beauty and Symbolism in his Portrait of  
*Baronne Madeleine Deslandes***

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Fig. 1. Edward Burne-Jones, *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes*,  
1895–96. Oil on canvas, 115.5 x 58.2 cm. NGV.  
Image: Courtesy of NGV.

Sir Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98) was one of the most influential British artists of the late nineteenth century. In 2018-19, Tate Britain held a comprehensive retrospective exhibition of over 150 works from the artist's prolific career.<sup>1</sup> This exhibition was the first solo show of Burne-Jones's work at Tate since 1933.<sup>2</sup> The portrait of *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes* (1895-96), held in the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) (Fig. 1), Melbourne, was the only work drawn from an Australian public collection.<sup>3</sup>

This paper examines the Baronne's portrait and will argue it is a significant example of the artist's distinctive approach to portraiture, female beauty, and the use of symbolic accessories. Prefaced by a description of the portrait, the context of its creation and its reception in 1896, this paper will delve into the symbolic meaning of particular objects in the painting—the crystal globe and laurel leaves—through comparison with other works in Burne-Jones's *oeuvre*. Whilst acknowledging similarities in his use of these motifs across different works, the peculiarities of each example will be explored. It will be argued that Burne-Jones created a mystical world in which these elements did not simply add to a straightforward narrative, but rather served to evoke a mood or concept.

In 1896 Burne-Jones exhibited a portrait of *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes* at the Salon du Champ de Mars in Paris. The sitter, Madeleine Annette Edmé Angélique Vivier-Deslandes (1866–1929), was an accomplished writer, publishing a series of novels from 1892 on.<sup>4</sup> She pursued a scintillating social life in Parisian literary and artistic circles and was the celebrated hostess of a cultured salon that attracted the presence of renowned artists, poets and composers.<sup>5</sup> Burne-Jones depicted Deslandes seated so that her body faces the viewer, and yet her gaze eludes contact with the audience, as her large eyes are directed to the left of the painting. The pale tone of her skin contrasts with her burgundy lips and her “halo” of auburn hair. The pallor of the Baronne's skin, as well as her eyes “bright with black fever,” were emphasised in the memoirs of her friend, Lucie Delarue-Mardrus.<sup>6</sup> She is clothed in an indigo blue dress with three central bows, whose green curving ribbons complement the laurel leaves behind her. The Baronne's unbuttoned sleeves reveal a white undergarment, also visible at the neckline. The artist's pencil study of the sleeves is in the NGV collection (Fig. 2), as is the preliminary sketch of the sitter (Fig. 3). The latter work focuses on the Baronne's dress rather

<sup>1</sup> The exhibition ran from 24 October 2018 to 24 February 2019. See: <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/edward-burne-jones>

<sup>2</sup> A. Smith, ed., *Edward Burne-Jones*, London, Tate, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> There are over fifty works (paintings, works on paper, decorative works) by Burne-Jones in Australia's public art museums, and more in New Zealand collections. See Anne Kirker and Peter Tomory, *British Painting 1800-1990: in Australian and New Zealand public collections*, Sydney, Beagle Press in conjunction with the British Council, 1997. Burne-Jones's works in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria include two major subject paintings, *The Wheel of Fortune* (1871–85), and *The garden of Pan* (1886–87), as well as a coloured embroidery, *Poesis* (1880), and a stained-glass window depicting St. Paul, designed 1892, manufactured 1911, both made after designs by the artist.

<sup>4</sup> Her first novel, published by Alphonse Lemette in 1892, was titled “What's the use?” (*A quoi bon?*). It was a resounding success, being sold in seven editions and receiving notable praise from critics. See H. Buffenoir, *Les Salons de Paris, Grandes Dames Contemporaines: La Baronne Deslandes (Ossit)*, Paris, Librairie du “Mirabeau,” 1895, p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> The columnist, the “Marquise de Fontenoy,” mentioned the Baronne's two failed marriages but emphasised that “her salon has become the rendezvous of much that is witty and brilliant in the literary and artistic world.” See Marquise de Fontenoy, “Ossit,” *The New York Daily Tribune*, 3 August 1908, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> L. Delarue-Mardrus, *Mes Mémoires*, Paris, Gallimard, 1938, p. 164.

than her facial features, and notably absent from the composition are the accessories: central bows, laurel leaves and the crystal sphere that feature in the final portrait.

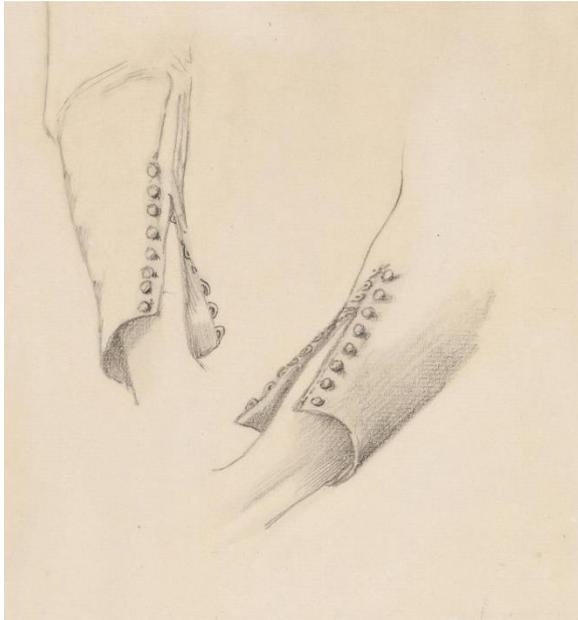


Fig. 2 (above). Edward Burne-Jones, *Study of sleeves for the Portrait of Madeleine Deslandes*, 1896. Pencil, 17.7 x 16.5 cm (sheet). NGV.  
Image: Courtesy of NGV.



Fig. 3 (right). Edward Burne-Jones, *Study for Portrait of Baronne Madeleine Deslandes*, 1896. Pencil, 31.8 x 19.0 cm (sheet). NGV.  
Image: Courtesy of NGV.

Significantly, the mysterious crystal ball is to be found in the sitter's shadowed lap, where it is held by her delicately entwined fingers. The viewer's eyes are drawn by three patches of white paint that noticeably interrupt the smooth, black surface of the globe, implying the reflections of windows. Behind Deslandes, there seems to be a balcony draped with fabric and branches of laurel leaves set against a backdrop of blue curtains. Like the globe, the laurel leaves impart an unobtrusive yet evocative ambience of antiquity and culture that subtly enrich the sitter's presence. The painting's predominant steely blue-green colour palette is typical of the Aesthetic Movement and presumably the sitter's artistic taste. This colour scheme is also evident in *The Wedding of Psyche* (1895), suggesting this tonality may have preoccupied the artist at the time.

On 7 May 1893 the Baronne published an article entirely devoted to the work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones on the front page of the newspaper, *Le Figaro*. Deslandes (using her pseudonym "Ossit") effusively praised Burne-Jones, whom she greatly admired, stating that the work of "this master" was "most curious and special and engaging." At the same time, she maintained that Burne-Jones was "unknown in France."<sup>7</sup> The Baronne's assertion should be read with caution in light of the significant public profile Burne-Jones had attained among French audiences by the early 1890s. Burne-Jones had secured a prominent reputation in France

<sup>7</sup> Ossit, "Edward Burne-Jones," *Le Figaro* [Paris], 7 May 1893, p. 1.

following his success in the 1877 Grosvenor Gallery exhibition, the 1878 Paris Exposition Universelle and the resounding praise that greeted his major painting *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid* (1884) at the 1889 Exposition Universelle. Deslandes's article appears to have functioned not just as a testament to Burne-Jones, but also as a self-serving profession of the Baronne's exclusive artistic taste in order to cultivate her own fame and social status.

In undertaking the research for this article in March 1893, Deslandes had travelled to England to interview the artist. According to a letter she wrote at the time to a friend, it was "love at first sight" for Burne-Jones and his enthusiasm led him to offer to paint her portrait.<sup>8</sup> Modern scholars have argued that the artist's known preference for depicting only family members and close friends makes it more likely that Deslandes solicited him to undertake her portrait, rather than Burne-Jones initiating the commission.<sup>9</sup> Yet Burne-Jones's eminent artistic status would have afforded the artist the independence to decline Deslandes's petition. Something about the Baronne must have made an impression, which in turn made him willing to cast her as a modern sibyl in his idiosyncratic artistic vision. By commissioning Burne-Jones, Deslandes could be seen to be exploiting the artist's popularity in France at the time; as the *Portfolio* magazine stated in July 1893, three months after her visit to the artist's studio, "Paris, in fact, is now ripe for Burne-Jones."<sup>10</sup> There was some delay in commencing the painting and it was not until 12 December 1895 that Burne-Jones's assistant, T. M. Rooke, noted that the artist was working on the dress and background.<sup>11</sup> Within months, the painting was unveiled to the crowds attending the 1896 Paris Salon at the Champ de Mars.

The portrait of *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes* received an adverse reception when it was first exhibited in 1896. According to Paul Adam, reporting for the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, the figure of Deslandes in the painting "seems to be made out of the wax of a church candle. There doesn't seem to be any life in her."<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in *La Revue de Paris* on 15 May 1896, Ary Renan claimed he was troubled by the apparent "lack of personality of the chrysalis that we see."<sup>13</sup> Such criticism centred on the apparent visual contradiction between the artist's mild-eyed, pensive depiction, and the notorious character of this flamboyant French woman. She was a colourful individual with a propensity to dress up and play act in order to amaze and scandalise her visitors—for instance, pretending to feed jewels to a bronze ornamental toad or perching atop a life-size gilded bronze unicorn at her salon.<sup>14</sup> A critic for *L'Art*

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<sup>8</sup> The following is the original French text written to her friend Maurice Barrès, the French writer and politician, cited by Philippe Saunier. "Coup de foudre... pour lui." "Son enthousiasme va même jusqu'à vouloir faire un portrait de moi—ce qui paraît-il est une chose dont je devrais être fière, car il a horreur de faire des portraits." See Philippe Saunier, "Edward Burne-Jones et la France: Madeleine Deslandes, Une Préréphaélite Oubliée," *Revue de L'Art*, 123, 1999, p. 60.

<sup>9</sup> Saunier, *ibid.*, p. 60; Charlotte Gere, "Portraits," in *Edward Burne-Jones*, ed. Alison Smith, London, Tate, 2018, p. 166; Gabriel Naughton, "Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones: Portrait of Baronne Madeleine Deslandes," in *Christie's: Important British & Irish Art, Wednesday 23 November 2005*, London, Christie's, 2005, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> "Art Chronicle," *The Portfolio*, Vol. 24, 1893, p. xv.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Lago, ed., *Burne-Jones Talking: His Conversations 1895-1898 Preserved by His Studio Assistant Thomas Rooke*, London, John Murray, 1982, p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> P. Adam, "Les Salons de 1896," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, Vol. 2, 1896, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Renan quoted in Saunier, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Philippe Jullian, *Prince of Aesthetes: Count Robert de Montesquiou 1855-1921*, trans. John Haylock & Francis King, New York, Viking, 1968, p. 67; Catherine Barjansky, *Portraits with Backgrounds*, New York, Macmillan Co., 1947, pp. 15-16.

*Moderne* summed up the glaring discrepancy between sitter and image by stating irritably that “the portrait is of an impassivity in contradiction with the nature of the model.”<sup>15</sup>

Certainly Burne-Jones’s depiction of the Baronne was in distinct contrast to her usual commissioned portraits, such as those by Paul-César Helleu and Maurice Boutet de Monvel. Both artists convey an atmosphere that is glamorous and fashionable, and depict Deslandes dressed in chic, stylish clothing while gazing out at the viewer in an alluring, self-assured manner.<sup>16</sup> Burne-Jones’s portrait, instead, recasts the Baronne as a pensive beauty in the medieval dream world of his artistic vision, apparently overturning the expectations of the aforementioned critics. English journals and newspapers picked up on these unfavourable comments, or overlooked the portrait entirely; which is not, perhaps, surprising given his highly personal interpretation of portraiture that challenged many of his contemporaries.<sup>17</sup>

During the 1890s, British reviewers were divided in their opinion of Burne-Jones’s portraits. According to Julia Cartwright in *The Art Journal*, Burne-Jones succeeded in rendering the “spiritual charm” and “lovely form” of a face,<sup>18</sup> while *The Magazine of Art* viewed his occasional portraits as “remarkable for [the] sensitive suggestion of character.”<sup>19</sup> Conversely, another writer in *The Graphic* expressed the opinion that portraiture represented the “weakest or least accomplished” field of Burne-Jones’s work.<sup>20</sup> Positive and negative reviews of Burne-Jones’s portraits nonetheless shared a common conclusion. As asserted in *The Times*, the portraits by this artist “do not show his sitters as the world sees them, but as he sees them, and to find portraiture in them one has to see as much as possible with his eyes.”<sup>21</sup>

Contemporary critics saw Burne-Jones’s portraits as depicting “his ideals of beauty” rather than capturing a sitter’s likeness.<sup>22</sup> The portrait of *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes* typifies Edward Burne-Jones’s search for an ideal of female beauty. It shares many similarities with his depictions of women throughout his artistic career.

In fact, the idealised, enigmatic treatment of the portrait of Deslandes can be traced back to the artist’s earlier genre scenes containing “disguised portraits,” often based upon his favourite models. Georgiana Macdonald, whom Burne-Jones married in 1860, was the artist’s

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<sup>15</sup> “Le portrait est d’une impassibilité en contradiction avec la nature du modèle;” See “Le Salon du Champ-de-Mars,” *L’Art Moderne*, 3 May 1896, p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> For details and images of the portraits by Helleu and de Monvel, see E. Wubben, “Artistic Souls: Edward Burne-Jones and his portrait of Baronne Deslandes,” *Art Journal of the National Gallery of Victoria*, Vol. 54, 2016: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/artistic-souls-edward-burne-jones-and-his-portrait-of-baronne-deslandes/>

<sup>17</sup> In *The Athenaeum*, André Michel contended, “the portrait (228) exhibited by Sir E. Burne-Jones will, I fear, be reckoned among the mistakes of a master who on many accounts is dear to us.” See André Michel, “The Paris Salons—III,” *The Athenaeum*, 13 June 1896, p. 784. Similarly, the *Daily News* described the portrait as “a woman by Sir E. Burne-Jones, who is not likely to be such a favourite as last year;” “The Champ de Mars Salon,” *Daily News*, 25 April 1896, p. 6. A sympathetic review appeared in *The Art Journal*, as the painting was described as “killed by bad hanging.” See “The Paris Salons of 1896,” *The Art Journal*, Vol. 58, 1896, p. 196. Elsewhere, in *The Magazine of Art*, *The Pall Mall Gazette* and the *Glasgow Herald*, the portrait was overlooked.

<sup>18</sup> J. Cartwright, “Edward Burne-Jones, A.R.A.,” *Art Journal*, Vol. 55, 1893, p. 248.

<sup>19</sup> “The Chronicle of Art—February,” *Magazine of Art*, Vol. 22, 1899, p. 189.

<sup>20</sup> “Burne-Jones’s Drawings at the Burlington Fine Arts Club,” *Graphic* [London], 14 Jan. 1899, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> “The New Gallery,” *The Times* [London], 28 Apr. 1894, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> “Sir Edward Burne-Jones,” *The Architect and Contract Reporter* [London], 11 Nov. 1898, p. 316.



Fig. 4. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Golden Stairs*, 1880. Oil on canvas, 269.2 x 116.8 cm. Tate. Image: © Tate.

first documented muse.<sup>23</sup> She repeatedly appeared in paintings and drawings by the artist dating from the early to mid-1860s, for example *Cinderella* (1863) and *Green Summer* (1864).<sup>24</sup> However, from the late 1860s through the mid-1870s, Burne-Jones began to focus on another model, as shown by the appearance of Maria Zambaco's likeness in his works. He depicted her either directly in portrait studies or indirectly in "disguised" portraits, such as *The Beguiling of Merlin*.<sup>25</sup> While Zambaco can be identified in the work of Burne-Jones through her distinctive features, including her large, luminous eyes, long nose and pointed chin, at the same time she conformed to his desired image of female beauty, and is shown to be pale and soulful.<sup>26</sup>

*The Golden Stairs* (1880) (Fig. 4) is a fine example of the predominance of Burne-Jones's preferred female type, which overshadows the multiple disguised portraits included in this allegorical subject. The painting depicts "a troop of maidens, all dressed alike in white robes ... garlanded and carrying musical instruments," descending a curved staircase towards an open door.<sup>27</sup> A number of the women are identifiable from the host of preparatory studies by Burne-Jones. For example, the artist's daughter, Margaret, stands in profile at the top of the stairs, and Frances Graham appears at the lower left with cymbals, while behind her is Mary Gladstone, the daughter of influential politician W. E. Gladstone.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, despite this array of seemingly individual figures, who are shown in profile, three-quarter, and frontal view, the

painting presents a particular type of female beauty. In 1880, it was stated in the *Portfolio* that "the types of the figures, the attitudes of a bevy of girls in classic costume, and the

<sup>23</sup> Elisa Korb, "Models, Muses and Burne-Jones's Continuous Quest for the Ideal Female Face," in *Hidden Burne-Jones: Works on Paper by Edward Burne-Jones from Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery*, London, D. Giles Ltd, 2007, p. 28.

<sup>24</sup> For details of *Cinderella* (1863) see Burne-Jones *catalogue raisonné*: <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/NjM3>. Georgiana and her sisters also served as the models for *Green Summer* (1864), in which a group of ladies appear seated in a lush meadow; See Korb, *ibid.*, p. 28; Jan Marsh, "Life, Literature, Art: The Social and Cultural Context of the Pre-Raphaelite Circle," in *Visions of Love and Life: Pre-Raphaelite Art from the Birmingham Collection, England*, ed. S. Wildman, Virginia, Art Services International, 1995, p. 20.

<sup>25</sup> Korb, *ibid.*, p. 29. Indeed, a drawing by Burne-Jones in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, previously titled *A study of a head*, was discovered to be a *Study for Cupid finding Psyche*, and a "disguised portrait" of Zambaco; See Allison Holland, "Edward Burne-Jones, Psyche and The Earthly Paradise," *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, Vol. 49, 2010, p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Korb identified Zambaco's distinguishing features in her discussion of a letter Burne-Jones wrote to Rossetti, in which he marvelled at his model's appearance; Korb, *ibid.*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Cecil Hay, "The Grosvenor Gallery," *The Art Journal*, Vol. 6, 1880, p. 223.

<sup>28</sup> Frances Graham was the daughter of William Graham, a patron of Burne-Jones. See S. Wildman and J. Christian, "Catalogue," in *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer*, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998, p. 248, cat. 109.

draperies, are such as he has repeatedly exhibited.”<sup>29</sup> As a result of this archetypal beauty to which the artist aspired, the faces and figures seem very alike, despite being based upon several individual female socialites of the day. Rather, “every head he paints breathes the same passion,” as stated in the *Portfolio* in 1893.<sup>30</sup> *The Golden Stairs*, with its stylised treatment of women who are still able to be identified, exemplifies the singular type of beauty to which Burne-Jones’s depictions of female subjects conformed.



John Christian has argued that Burne-Jones’s paintings convey a self-absorbed quality, as though these personal visions were painted solely for the artist.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in the 1890s, his work, including his treatment of portraits, demonstrated a distinctive “late style.” Burne-Jones began to adopt a paler toned palette, which can be seen in *Lady Windsor* (1893-95) (Fig. 5), close in date to the portrait of the Baronne. *Lady Windsor* is in uniform grey tones as colour is drained to near monochrome, reinforcing the introspective mood.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the averted gaze of the mild-eyed, pensive female figure precludes direct engagement with the spectator, as in the case of Madeleine Deslandes. Not surprisingly, the subdued atmosphere of Burne-Jones’s late style unsettled contemporary critics, one of whom lamented the grey-ness of colour and the melancholic mood of *Lady Windsor*’s portrait in the New Gallery in 1895. This writer contended that such qualities presented a “world-weariness which would seem to imply that there was no joy left.”<sup>33</sup> Similarly, for Henry James these late paintings were “pictured abstractions” growing “colder and colder ... less and less observed.”<sup>34</sup> Appreciation of the unconventional, restrained beauty that characterised Burne-Jones’s late portraits clearly eluded many contemporary critics.

Fig. 5. Edward Burne-Jones, *Lady Windsor*, 1893-95. Oil on canvas, 199.5 x 95.5 cm. Private Collection Birmingham Museums Trust. On Loan to Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery. Bridgeman Images.

<sup>29</sup> “Art Chronicle,” *The Portfolio*, Vol. 11, 1880, p. 104.

<sup>30</sup> “Art Chronicle,” *The Portfolio*, Vol. 24, 1893, p. iv.

<sup>31</sup> Arts Council of Great Britain, *Burne-Jones: The Paintings, Graphic and Decorative Work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones 1833-98*, exhibition catalogue, London, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1975, p. 64.

<sup>32</sup> Although the painting is signed and dated 1893, Burne-Jones’s work record assigns the completion of the painting to just prior to its display at the New Gallery in 1895; See Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 325, cat. 161.

<sup>33</sup> “The New Gallery (First Article),” *The Times*, 27 April 1895, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Leon Edel, ed., *Henry James Letters, Volume III 1883-1895*, Cambridge, Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1980, p. 147.

*Lady Windsor* was the nearest Burne-Jones came to a major society portrait, which presented a full-length depiction of the sitter.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the work also belongs to the genre of Symbolist portraiture, which Jullian has defined in terms of the “wistfulness of exiles,” following the words of Walter Pater, which he claimed was to be found in the faces depicted by Botticelli.<sup>36</sup> This description can certainly be applied to *Lady Windsor* and to the *Baronne Deslandes*, as can Casteras’s description of Symbolism’s recurrent motifs of languid, world-weary, spiritual and transcendent femininity.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, these portraits point to the affiliation Burne-Jones shared with the work of other Symbolists such as the Belgian artist, Fernand Khnopff. Both artists were known for their intense, ambiguous pictures of introspective, androgynous women.<sup>38</sup> Khnopff himself described his female types as being “dignified or languid in gestures ... pure and gracious and sweet of aspect” with “deep loving-kindness in their limpid gaze.”<sup>39</sup>

The Belgian artist’s earlier portrait of his sister *Marguerite Khnopff* (1887) shares similarities with Burne-Jones’s *Lady Windsor*, as both works depict an expressionless, enigmatic central female figure, standing before a doorframe with eyes averted. The women appear to be immersed in private reverie. The correlation between their depictions of women can be further demonstrated through a comparison of the drawings that these artists exchanged. In 1894, Burne-Jones presented Khnopff with his study *Head of a Woman* (1890), in which the face appears pensive, distracted and lost in contemplation.<sup>40</sup> Two years later, Khnopff sent his British colleague his own *Study of a Woman* (1896).<sup>41</sup> The facial features in this female study are noticeably pronounced, with a long nose, large eyes and broad jaw, also to be found in the study by Burne-Jones. The pensive woman once again appears to be preoccupied by her thoughts, although in this example, she gazes out at the viewer.<sup>42</sup>

Another late portrait inviting comparison to the portrayal of *Deslandes* is Burne-Jones’s depiction of Amy Gaskell (1893) (Fig. 6). This painting presents a young woman in profile, seated with her fingers delicately entwined on her lap. As *The Times* critic observed, Gaskell is shown “in a dark dress painted against a dark background, against which the pale face and hands stand out with singular effectiveness and value.”<sup>43</sup> Like Madeleine *Deslandes*, she appears to loom mysteriously out of the setting, reinforcing the haunting quality of the image.

<sup>35</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 325, cat. 161.

<sup>36</sup> Philippe Jullian, *The Symbolists*, London, Phaidon, 1973, p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> Susan P. Casteras, “Symbolist Debts to Pre-Raphaelitism: A Pan-European Phenomenon,” in *Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism*, ed. T. J. Tobin, New York, State University of New York Press, 2005, p. 137.

<sup>38</sup> Andrew Wilton and Robert Upstone, eds., *The Age of Rossetti, Burne-Jones, & Watts: Symbolism in Britain 1860-1910*, exhibition catalogue, London, Tate Gallery Publishing, Flammarion, 1997, p. 229, cat. 96.

<sup>39</sup> Fernand Khnopff, “In Memoriam. Sir Edward Burne-Jones: A Tribute from Belgium,” *The Magazine of Art*, 22, 1898, p. 524.

<sup>40</sup> Wilton and Upstone, *op. cit.*, p. 229, cat. 96.

<sup>41</sup> Wilton and Upstone, *ibid.*, p. 241, cat. 108.

<sup>42</sup> Wilton and Upstone, *ibid.*, p. 241, cat. 108..

<sup>43</sup> “The New Gallery,” *The Times*, 28 April 1894, p. 10.



Fig. 6 (left). After Edward Burne-Jones (artist) and Berlin Photographic Company (publisher), *Portrait of Amy Gaskell 1893, 1900*. Photogravure on paper, Birmingham Museums. Image: Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0.

Despite the profile view, this portrait also relates to the Baronne's pale, introspective, melancholy appearance and slender fingers, all in keeping with contemporary accounts of the aesthetic woman.<sup>44</sup> Consequently, the portraits of Amy Gaskell and Madeleine Deslandes do not serve as characterised images of individual women, but reflect an ideal of female beauty recast through the eyes of Burne-Jones.

Burne-Jones's portraits of Lady Windsor, Amy Gaskell and Madeleine Deslandes lack grand backgrounds, elaborate clothing, or modern jewels. Contemporary accounts of the Baronne document her costly fashionable taste. Hippolyte Buffenoir, who wrote a society pamphlet about the Baronne, described how her dresses were often embroidered with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, sapphires, and other precious stones.<sup>45</sup> In 1908 the *New York Daily Tribune* deemed it worthy to mention that Burne-Jones depicted her "without any jewels at all," as though expensive accessories were synonymous with her public persona, and their absence was confusing.<sup>46</sup> The Baronne's portrait, and similarly those of Lady Windsor and Amy Gaskell, are not concerned with capturing a modern setting. The paintings are restrained in colour, albeit the blue tonality of the Baronne's portrait is vividly distinct from the silvery grey, brown and deep black palette of the other two portraits. The sparse details and shallow picture planes show the

sitters abstracted from reality and shift contemplation from the everyday life to their inner thoughts, evoking an introspective mood in the spirit of Aestheticism.

The appearance of the crystal globe and laurel leaves in the Baronne's portrait and the possible interpretations these motifs offer expand the reading of the painting from Aestheticism into Symbolism. Burne-Jones evidently found the globe and laurel to be

<sup>44</sup> In his 1882 publication, *The Aesthetic Movement in England*, Walter Hamilton portrayed the female aesthete as "a pale distraught lady with matted dark auburn hair falling in masses over the brow, and shading eyes full of love-lorn languor, or feverish despair; emaciated cheeks and somewhat heavy jaws; protruding upper lip, the lower lip being indrawn, long crane neck, flat breasts, and long thin nervous hands." See Walter Hamilton, *The Aesthetic Movement in England*, London, Reeves & Turner, 1882, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Buffenoir, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> de Fontenoy, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

powerful motifs, as they appear in several works throughout his career, evoking a myriad of thematic and conceptual allusions.

Burne-Jones entered into a long artistic tradition by including laurel leaves in the portrait of the Baronne. Sprays of laurel appear in the background to the left and right of the sitter's shoulders, framing her central position. The foliage invokes a garden in this *mise-en-scène* where blue curtains drape around the leaves in the shallow backdrop. This compositional format—a figure surrounded by laurel branches—can be traced back to Renaissance precedents, such as Palma Vecchio's *Portrait of a Poet* (c. 1516). This painting was bought by the National Gallery of London in 1860 and therefore would have been known to Burne-Jones.<sup>47</sup> It presents a man, perceived to be a poet, in front of a backdrop of laurel leaves, linking the foliage with poetry. Of course, bay, or laurel, had poetic connotations in ancient Greece, when laurel wreaths were bestowed upon the victors in competitions.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, during the Renaissance, crowns of laurel were used in poetical coronation ceremonies and held to typify the ancient love of arts and arms.<sup>49</sup> As Jaffe has explained, from Petrarch onwards, the laurel became the iconographical identification of a poet.<sup>50</sup> For example, it is included in portraits of female poets such as Tullia d'Aragona and Gaspara Stampa.<sup>51</sup> This has led to the modern day understanding of laurel leaves in portraiture implying the sitter is a literary or artistic figure.<sup>52</sup>

In the art of Burne-Jones, the motif of laurel leaves assumed various roles at different points in his career. An early example from the 1860s is a red crayon drawing, *Portrait of Augusta Jones*, in which a half-length female figure wearing a gown with voluminous sleeves gazes out at the viewer, with a lush arrangement of leaves behind her in the shallow background.<sup>53</sup> The foliage serves as a decorative device in an aesthetic design. The foliate setting also adds a mysterious, enigmatic tone. Overlooking the work's instructive portrait title, the undefined scene could be from any time and place, transitioning the work into Burne-Jones's mythological world. Another pertinent but different example of laurel foliage appears in the artist's *A Dream of the Nine Muses* (1871), where the leaves beside the grey fountain in the otherwise austere, barren landscape resemble the symbolic use of foliage in the Baronne's portrait.<sup>54</sup> The association between Deslandes and the role of the artistic muse, which was identified by the contemporary writer de Fontenoy, can be established through this shared iconographic element.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> See National Gallery Collection [London] Online:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/palma-vecchio-portrait-of-a-poet>

<sup>48</sup> J. B. Trapp, "The Owl's Ivy and the Poet's Bays: An Enquiry into Poetic Garlands," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 1958, p. 227.

<sup>49</sup> Trapp, *ibid.*, pp. 242, 247.

<sup>50</sup> Irma B. Jaffe, *Shining Eyes, Cruel Fortune: The Lives and Loves of Italian Renaissance Women Poets*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2002, p. 223.

<sup>51</sup> Jaffe, *ibid.*, p. 223.

<sup>52</sup> James Hall, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art*. 2nd ed., Boulder, Westview, 2008, p. 196.

<sup>53</sup> Refer to Andrew Clayton-Payne for an image of the drawing: <https://www.clayton-payne.com/artworks/9397/>

<sup>54</sup> Colin Harrison and Christopher Newall, *The Pre-Raphaelites and Italy*, exhibition catalogue, Oxford, Ashmolean Museum in association with Lund Humphries, 2010, p. 102, cat. 53. For image, see Burne-Jones *catalogue raisonné*: <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjgyNA==>

<sup>55</sup> de Fontenoy, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Laurel also featured in Burne-Jones's depiction of sibyls: women thought to convey advice or prophecy from the gods in classical antiquity. Michelangelo famously depicted the sibyls on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, which Burne-Jones meticulously studied on his third sojourn in Italy in 1871.<sup>56</sup> Burne-Jones's watercolour *Sibylla Cumana* (1873) (Fig. 7) shows a priestess discerning script from laurel leaves.<sup>57</sup> Partially gowned in transparent cloth, she stands with her body facing the viewer, while she turns her head to gaze at laurel leaves in her right hand, a branch of the same plant clutched in her left hand. The scene is set in a temple, framed by a doorway and a tripod altar burning strongly on the left of the composition.



Fig. 7. Edward Burne-Jones, *Sibylla Cumana*, 1873. Watercolour, 36.5 x 26 cm. AGNSW. Image: Courtesy of AGNSW.

Burne-Jones's oil painting *Sybilla Delphica* (1874-86) similarly shows a priestess studying prophetic writing on laurel leaves, the only alterations being the setting's architecture, complete with marble flooring, and the figure's bright orange classical drapery, topped by a blue headscarf.<sup>58</sup> In these two mythological scenes, laurel functions as a distinct narrative prop. The storyline is nevertheless enigmatic, as the subject of the prophecies inscribed on the laurel is not revealed, and thus remains open to interpretation.

Other suggestive roles of laurel can be found in a large gesso relief memorial tablet in memory of Laura Lyttelton (1886), who died in childbirth in 1886.<sup>59</sup> Burne-Jones described this "eight feet high" tablet as "an effigy of a peacock, which is the symbol of the Resurrection, standing upon a laurel tree and the laurel grows out of the tomb and bursts through the sides of the tomb with a determination to go on living, and refusing to be dead."<sup>60</sup> The laurel in this instance symbolised resurrection, the revival of life, as well as referring to Laura's name.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 176, cat. 69.

<sup>57</sup> According to the ancient Roman poet Virgil, the sybil was believed to write prophecies on leaves and arrange the foliage at the entrance of her cave. See: Art Gallery of New South Wales: <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/sibylla-cumana-sir-edward-burne-jones/DQG2qhPUz9K7Og?hl=en>

<sup>58</sup> This painting is held in the Manchester Art Gallery: <https://manchesterartgallery.org/collections/title/?mag-object-110>

<sup>59</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>60</sup> Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, Vol. II, New York, Macmillan, 1906, p. 166.

<sup>61</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

Another important work for comparison is Burne-Jones's portrait of the American woman Caroline Fitzgerald (1884) (Fig. 8). This young woman, aged sixteen at the time, is wearing a dark-green velvet dress, holding an open book and seated in front of what appears to be a fabric-draped balcony, with branches of laurel leaves emerging from the shallow space behind her. On the occasion of the sitter's engagement to Lord Edward George Fitzmaurice in 1889, several American newspapers provided a description of this "very highly accomplished" woman.<sup>62</sup> These articles noted her intelligence and literary talents, for example, *The Daily Picayune* stated, "she has published several volumes of poems, is a thorough classical scholar and is a member of the American Ornamental Society."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, a New York newspaper disclosed that "she studied Sanscrit under Professor Whitney of Yale."<sup>64</sup> Evidently, Burne-Jones painted a portrait of a woman who, in a similar fashion to Madeleine Deslandes, was a notable literary figure.



Fig. 8. Edward Burne-Jones, *Caroline Fitzgerald*, 1884. Oil on canvas, 82.9 x 52.1 cm. University of Toronto Collection. Image: Courtesy of Art Museum, University of Toronto.

The presence of laurel in the portraits of these two women—framing their head and shoulders—suggests its role in symbolising their literary talents. Overall, the depiction of Fitzgerald, who, like Deslandes, was a foreigner to England and thus similarly outside the artist's preference for portraying family or close friends, was an important precedent to the portrait of the Baronne.

Further instructive examples in the art of Burne-Jones that reinforce the literary associations of laurel include the major painting, *The Wheel of Fortune* (1871-85), where a crown of laurel leaves is used to identify the figure of the poet; and two smaller works, a black, bronze and gold ink drawing of *A Woman Playing a Cithara* (1896) and a design in gouache and gold paint of a *Girl's Head* (1897), in which both female figures are shown wearing a crown of leaves, implying poetic and artistic talent. This allusion to artistic and literary talent is therefore repeated on several occasions. Throughout his career Burne-Jones drew inspiration from his own compositions, reshaping laurel leaves and foliage to suit his particular purpose, evoking traditional meanings with slightly different connotations in the enigmatic spirit of Aestheticism and Symbolism.

Another element that contributes to the enigmatic mood of the Baronne's portrait is the mysterious crystal sphere. Relatively small in size, the sphere rests in the sitter's lap and is obscured by the Baronne's loosely entwined fingers. The sphere's smooth black surface is animated by reflections in the room that further redirect attention away from the mystical orb.

<sup>62</sup> "Cupid's Captures," *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 1 September 1889, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> "Personal and General Notes," *The Daily Picayune*, 17 July 1889, p. 4.

<sup>64</sup> "Personal," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 20 July 1889, p. 10. Although the portrait by Burne-Jones predated these newspaper reports by approximately five years, Fitzgerald's literary and scholarly accomplishments would have been already established, as resulting from prolonged, prior study.

Through its size, partly hidden placement and seemingly indifferent treatment by the sitter, this intriguing accessory is an unobtrusive item that contributes to the painting's introspective tone, but is not the focus. Instead, it subtly enhances the image's power by inviting the viewer's imaginative interpretation.

From the seventeenth century onwards, the globe was understood as an attribute of the allegorical figure of truth.<sup>65</sup> Yet a more specific nineteenth-century documentation of the globe in art can be found in an 1885 article in the *Portfolio* on Edward Burne-Jones, written by F. G. Stephens.<sup>66</sup> Stephens traced the artistic history of the globe in connection with Burne-Jones's highly acclaimed painting *The Days of Creation* (1872-76), depicting six angels, one for each day, holding globes in which the acts of creation are represented.<sup>67</sup> According to Stephens, traditional uses of the globe in art were associated with religious iconography: "early German painters until Durer's time were fond of the Crystal Sphere, and found scriptural authority for its significance and use."<sup>68</sup> He noted that Christ sometimes appears with the globe in early Italian art, in which it held a symbolic tradition in evoking the supernatural mystery of the role of God as the Creator of the world.<sup>69</sup> This is reflected in a design Burne-Jones created for the mosaics to adorn the apse of the American Church in Rome, where *Christ enthroned* (c. 1884) includes a globe of the world held in place by the Saviour's left hand. In further designs for the mosaics, *Uriel, Archangel of the Sun* and *The Archangel Zophiel* hold spheres of the sun and moon respectively, demonstrating Burne-Jones's exploration of spherical symbols in religious art.<sup>70</sup>

Burne-Jones was not alone in his use of the globe in late nineteenth-century art. For example, his brother-in-law Edward Poynter, in his painting *The Fortune Teller* (1877), demonstrates the globe's traditional association with prophecy, which Wildman and Christian also align with the globe and the sprays of laurel in the Baronne's portrait.<sup>71</sup> Similarly, Sir Frank Dicksee's *The Magic Crystal* (1894) links the globe with the art of divination, as noted by contemporaries. For example, a critic for *The Athenaeum* described the female sitter's use of the "oracular sphere" to inquire into the future.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>66</sup> F. G. Stephens was one of the original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He had also served as a critic for *The Athenaeum*; See Elizabeth Prettejohn, "Beautiful Women with Floral Adjuncts," in *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, J. Treuherz, E. Prettejohn and E. Becker, exhibition catalogue, London, Thames & Hudson, 2003, p. 78.

<sup>67</sup> The first angel appears alone, while the subsequent angels are accompanied by those of the previous days of creation.

<sup>68</sup> F. G. Stephens, "Edward Burne-Jones, A.R.A.," *The Portfolio*, Vol. 16, 1885, p. 230.

<sup>69</sup> Stephens, *ibid.*, p. 230. It should be noted that Stephens not only discussed the iconography of the globe in religious imagery but also observed that it could have secular connotations, such as symbolising triumph over the earthly globe or triumph over death through fame. See also Dorothy K. Mercer, "*The Days of Creation*" and *Other Hexaemeral Cycles by Edward Burne-Jones*, Ann Arbor, Mich., UMI, 1989, p. 97.

<sup>70</sup> C. Harrison and C. Newall, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-07.

<sup>71</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>72</sup> The critic gave this painting a most negative review, arguing Dicksee's "life-size damsel in gorgeous array ... does not look as if she saw anything in the crystal or even tried to do so, but only cared to look as if she was looking. The artifice is more transparent than the sphere itself and an offence to art." See "The Royal Academy (Second Notice- Figure Pictures and Portraits)," *The Athenaeum*, 19 May 1894, p. 652.

Dicksee's painting may have provided inspiration for *The Crystal Ball* (1902) by John William Waterhouse, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1902.<sup>73</sup> This painting depicts a young woman gazing into a crystal ball, which she holds in her hands, with a skull and an open book resting on a nearby table cumulatively suggesting witchcraft. Overall, these three contemporary examples demonstrate a consistent, straightforward approach of employing a crystal ball to identify a magic seer in a traditional narrative of prophecy.<sup>74</sup>

Burne-Jones himself created the image of a fortune-teller in his late oil on canvas painting *The Wizard* (c. 1891-98) (Fig. 9). This composition presents an old man revealing to a young woman the image of a shipwreck in a convex mirror, which performs the prophetic role usually ascribed to a crystal globe.<sup>75</sup>

On the other hand, the globe in Burne-Jones's early watercolour painting *Astrologia* (1865) (Fig. 10) is more difficult to define in terms of its suggestive meaning. This work depicts a half-length female figure in profile, examining a crystal globe in her hands. Unlike the direct narratives depicted by Burne-Jones's contemporaries, portraying individual figures practicing magic and foresight, the figure of *Astrologia* is an allegorical woman, personifying astrology, rather than a character in her own right. *The Art Journal* in 1865 reviewed *Astrologia* and Burne-Jones's other four contributions to the Old Water-Colour Society that summer as "a manifestation so unusual" with subjects that possess "originality of thought."<sup>76</sup> A spray of laurel leaves populates the background, and, when combined with the crystal orb, points to the possible inspiration this painting provided Burne-Jones for the portrait of Baronne Deslandes. While *Astrologia* can be read as a prophetic woman sharing the wizard's role as a seer, there is a lingering sense of ambiguity. Burne-Jones depicts the concept of occultism, rather than illustrating a defined narrative, which reflects his mystical approach to art as "a dreamer in the land of mythology, a seer of fairy visions."<sup>77</sup>



Fig. 9. Edward Burne-Jones, *The Wizard*, c. 1891-98. Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 54.0 cm. Birmingham Museums. Image: Birmingham Museums Trust, licensed under CC0.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Morris, *Victorian and Edwardian Paintings in the Lady Lever Art Gallery*, London, HMSO, 1994, pp. 26-7.

<sup>74</sup> An alternative depiction of the globe by another of Burne-Jones's contemporaries can be found in Watts's *The All-Pervading* (1887-c. 1893), exhibited at the New Gallery in 1896. In the preface to the catalogue, Watts explained his artistic vision in which, "the figure with the Globe of the Systems may be called the Spirit that pervades the immeasurable expanse;" Wilton and Upstone, *op. cit.*, p. 268, cat. 125.

<sup>75</sup> According to Korb, the female figure was modelled on Frances Horner. Korb, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>76</sup> "The Society of Painters in Water Colours: The Sixty-First Exhibition," *The Art Journal*, 4 (Earlier Series), 1865, p. 174.

<sup>77</sup> Oscar Wilde, "The Grosvenor Gallery," *The Dublin University Magazine*, Vol. 90, 1877, p. 118.

This quote is taken from Oscar Wilde's review of the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, prior

An even earlier depiction of the globe appears in Burne-Jones's personification of *Art* for the Great Bookcase (c. 1859-62) (Fig. 11), designed by the English architect and designer William Burges. Burne-Jones's painting is housed in the top central aedicule, bordered by Nathaniel Westlake's *Religion*, and *Love*, and portrays a seated female figure in a full-length dress with puffed sleeves, holding a reflective orb in her lap. Moreover, branches of leaves appear behind her head and shoulders, demonstrating the repeated pairing of a globe and foliage seen in *Astrologia* and the portrait of the Baronne. The panels decorating the bookcase are devoted to Christian and pagan themes concerning philosophy, poetry, architecture, music, sculpture and painting.



Fig. 10 (above). Edward Burne-Jones, *Astrologia*, 1865. Pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 53.5 x 45.8 cm. Private collection. Image: © 2019 Christie's Images Limited.

Fig. 11 (left). Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833-98), *Art*, panel in William Burges (designer), *Great bookcase*, 1859-62. Pine, carved, painted and gilded, 317.5 x 173.9 x 49.5 cm. Ashmolean Museum WA1933.26. Image: © Ashmolean Museum.

In this context, shown as an accessory for the personification of *Art*, the mysterious globe could be seen to represent private thoughts and reflection, just as art offers a visual means of exploring one's inner world and imagination. The globe, with its traditional prophetic role, could also be seen to connote future prospects, just as art is open to endless possibilities.<sup>78</sup>

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to which he was already an admirer of Burne-Jones. Wilde's private gallery of photographs in his Oxford rooms included reproductions of *The Beguiling of Merlin*, *The Mirror of Venus* and *The Days of Creation*; see Charlotte Gere and Lesley Hoskins, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior*, Aldershot, Lund Humphries, 2000, p. 20.

<sup>78</sup> Another work, dating from the same period as *Art* in the Great Bookcase, Burne-Jones's *Hope* (1862) depicts a half-length female figure with branches of leaves appearing behind her head and shoulders. In her left hand she holds a ball, inscribed with the thirteenth-century proverb, "if hope were not, heart should break." By describing hope and, therefore, future prospects, a tenuous link could be made between Hope's sphere and Deslandes's crystal ball. For details of *Hope* (1862) see: Arts Council of Great Britain, *op. cit.*, cat. 35, p. 28; Burne-Jones's *catalogue raisonné*: <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/MjMzNQ==>

Another example related to this theme of art and culture is the embroidery *Poesis* (1880) (Fig. 12), also in the collection of the NGV. In this composition, the seated female figure of Poetry is depicted holding a pen poised above an open book resting on her lap, while she gazes into an oval sphere or mirror held up to her view by Cupid.<sup>79</sup> A banner labelled “Poesis” appears above her head and is accompanied by sinuous foliate branches.<sup>80</sup> The spherical mirror and foliage in this portrayal of Poetry prompt comparison with the laurel leaves and the crystal globe in the presentation of Deslandes. As the Baronne was a novelist, these motifs, as found in *Poesis*, imply Burne-Jones’s portrait of this French celebrity symbolically refers to her literary talents.

Perhaps the final significant precedent to the painting of Madeleine Deslandes in Burne-Jones’s work is his striking portrait of his daughter *Margaret Burne-Jones* (1885-86) (Fig. 13). This painting presents the sitter in a vivid blue dress, gazing out of the picture plane and seated in a pose similar to that of Baronne Deslandes, but in this instance with her back close to a convex mirror that reflects the room in which she sits.<sup>81</sup> The convex mirror was a motif often employed in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and was inspired by the mirror in Jan van Eyck’s *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife* (1434) in the National Gallery, London.<sup>82</sup> Examining the motif of the convex mirror is a much larger discussion outside the scope of this paper.<sup>83</sup> Nevertheless, the inclusion of the mirror and the globe in Burne-Jones’s depictions of Margaret and the Baronne respectively demonstrates the overlaps shared between his historical and allegorical imagery and his portraits of real-life figures; that all drew upon shared motifs in his otherworldly vision.



Fig. 12. After Edward Burne-Jones (designer), William Morris (designer) and The Royal School of Art Needlework (manufacturer), *Poesis*, c. 1880. Wool, cotton, 204 x 103.7 cm. NGV. Image: Courtesy of NGV.

<sup>79</sup> William Waters in the Burne-Jones *catalogue raisonné* notes: “Burne-Jones associates Poetry with Love, as he depicts Cupid, who holds a mirror, dictating to the Muse [Poesis], who appear to be writing down his words. The inspiration for the design was heavily reliant upon the illustrations in Francesco Colonna’s *Hyperotomachia Poliphili* of 1499.” See: <https://www.eb-j.org/browse-artwork-detail/OTI4>

<sup>80</sup> The lower tier in the design contains multiple, overlapping figures, in which the leaf-crowned male figure, representing Orpheus, plays his lyre while a group of women turn to watch. Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, pp. 278-80, cat. 129.

<sup>81</sup> The setting reflected in the mirror was Margaret’s room; See Georgiana Burne-Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 160.

<sup>82</sup> Wildman and Christian, *op. cit.*, p. 262, cat. 117.

<sup>83</sup> Refer to Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2017, pp. 58-97. Furthermore, see the National Gallery’s exhibition *Reflections: Van Eyck and the Pre-Raphaelites* (2 October 2017–2 April 2018): <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/past/reflections-van-eyck-and-the-pre-raphaelites>

Clearly, any single interpretation of Burne-Jones's work would belie the artist's power in depicting mysterious, inscrutable scenes that speak to his idiosyncratic artistic vision. What is instructive is the repetition of the globe and suggestive foliage throughout his career, both individually and as an evocative pairing, which points to the important ties the Baronne's portrait shares with works *across* the artist's career, and the portrait's significance *within* the artist's career.



Fig. 13. Edward Burne-Jones. *Portrait of Margaret Burne-Jones, the artist's daughter*, 1885-86. Oil on canvas, 92cm x 66 cm. Private collection, England.

Image: Wikiart.

The portrait of *Baronne Madeleine Deslandes* (1895-96) by Edward Burne-Jones offers insight into the artist's personal approach to portraiture, and his preoccupation with a particular ideal of female beauty. Through the laurel and globe, the image also shares in a wealth of artistic traditions relating to symbolism and allegory. In the *oeuvre* of Burne-Jones, these motifs cumulatively evoke a host of suggestive associations, such as artistic and literary talent, the female muse, prophecy and astrology, and the creation of the world. By repeatedly revisiting the globe and laurel in his work, he demonstrates his interest in the allusive power of these objects, which resonate with his mystical artistic vision. Burne-Jones's portrait of Madeleine Deslandes offers an enigmatic, distinctive portrayal of the sitter that draws upon symbolism used throughout the artist's career, and it will continue to challenge and fascinate future audiences.

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