

THE DUDLEY GALLERY: WATER COLOUR DRAWINGS EXHIBITIONS 1865-1882

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The first of the two prominent galleries in the vanguard of the Aesthetic Movement, the Dudley Gallery held its first exhibition in April 1865 at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly. Its founder's committee of twenty-six members included artists such as Edward Poynter, Simeon Solomon, and Henry Moore, as well as influential critics and collector/connoisseurs. The initial objective of the gallery was the establishment of a venue exclusively devoted to Drawings, as distinguished from Oil Paintings, and which should not, in its use by exhibitors, involve membership of a Society. In 1867 exhibitions of Cabinet Pictures in Oil were added as well, with these shows being held later in the year. The Dudley Gallery was established in response to the requirements of many artists, and particularly young artists, for a gallery with liberal exhibition policies in which they could display their work. Many of these artists would never have had their works accepted for exhibition at the Royal Academy, which tended to focus on oil paintings, while the exhibitions of the Water Colour Societies were open only to their members. The Dudley Gallery therefore had no regular membership and was open to both professional and amateur artists. It served as a venue for establishing the reputation of many new artists who might otherwise never have come to recognition. The gallery was an instant success and it continued in this format until 1883, when it came under new management and became the Dudley Gallery Art Society.

Exhibitions at the Dudley Gallery tended to be heterogenous in nature, but it was the work of the artists associated with the early Aesthetic Movement that gave the Dudley Gallery its particular character and notoriety (Lanigan). The Dudley Gallery quickly became the main forum for the younger generation of artists associated with the early Aesthetic Movement, and it would remain so until the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877. Works in the characteristic *l'art pour l'art* Dudley style rejected sentiment and morality as subjects and did not attempt to tell a story. These artists were more interested in the love of beauty. Even when some narrative content was retained the emphasis was