

DORIAN

Rereading Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

SYMPOSIUM: Saturday, November 4, PSYCH 105
10:30 am – 3:30 pm, luncheon included, free and public

PUBLIC RECEPTION: Friday, November 3, 5:30 – 7:30 pm



Join artists Eve Fowler and Storm Tharp; writer Sara Jaffe; scholars Daniel Novak and Kimberly Stern; and organizers Jay Dickson and Stephanie Snyder for a public symposium exploring self, soul, representation, and the politics of queer art and language.

Douglas F. Cooley
Memorial Art Gallery,
Reed College
3203 SE Woodstock
Portland, OR 97202
cooley@reed.edu
503-517-7851

*Dorian is on view through
December 10, 2017
Hours: Tuesday – Sunday
noon to 5:00 pm
(closed Mondays)*



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Rereading Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray

November 3 – December 10, 2017

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College

PUBLIC RECEPTION

Friday, November 3rd, 5:00 pm – 7:30 pm at the Cooley

Artists: Robert Blanchon, Jim Dine, Eve Fowler, & Storm Tharp

Authors: Oscar Wilde & Sara Jaffe

Scholars: Jay Dickson, Daniel A. Novak, & Kimberly J. Stern

Exhibition curator: Stephanie Snyder

PUBLIC SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, November 4, 10:30 am – 3:30 pm

Psychology Bldg. room 105

Luncheon provided, no reservations required

Presentations by: Artists **Eve Fowler & Storm Tharp**;

writer **Sara Jaffe**; & scholars **Daniel A. Novak & Kimberly J. Stern**

Facilitators: **Jay Dickson & Stephanie Snyder**



Oscar Wilde's 1890 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a rare work that chronicles an Orphic descent into art's symbolic "soul," examining the nature of human-object relations with fearless imagination and fantasy. Written during the waning of the Victorian era, the novel presents a morbid case study of "Art for Art's Sake," the mantra of Aestheticism articulated by Walter Pater in the late 1860s.

In keeping with Wilde's philosophical, social, and aesthetic critique, the artists in the exhibition examine art's capacity to figure and expand the representation and expression of the self—through art, and *as* art—in response to moral and political issues as critical today as they were in Wilde's time. The larger exhibition project assembles artists, writers, and scholars for a public conversation with symposium attendees. A commissioned work of fiction by writer Sara Jaffe accompanies the exhibition.

The first edition of *Dorian Gray* was published in London in 1890 in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. In Victorian England, the work's portrayal of same-sex desire caused a swift and angry response—so much so that Wilde was forced to significantly alter the work before it could be released in book form in 1891. Eventually, the novel was used against Wilde during two of his three trials for "gross indecency." On May 25, 1895 Wilde was convicted and sentenced to two years of hard labor at Reading Gaol, where he wrote one of his greatest works—*De Profundis*—an epistolary reflection on his relationship with Lord Alfred Douglas. Weakened by prison and penniless, Wilde died of meningitis in 1900 at forty-six, a victim of social and legal prejudice.

The Picture of Dorian Gray's titular protagonist is a bewitching young Londoner who sits for a portrait by artist Basil Hayward. The completed painting is deemed a "masterpiece" by Hayward and his friend Lord Henry Wotton—a wealthy and narcissistic aesthete. Under Wotton's corrupting influence, Dorian begins to covet his portrait's arrested vision of youthful beauty and charisma. In a fit of despair Dorian implores: ". . . I shall grow old and horrid and dreadful . . . if it was only the other way!

If it was I who were to be always young, and the picture that were to grow old! For this I would give everything!" Mysteriously, Dorian's wish comes true, and under the influence of Wotton, his life turns to hedonism. As Dorian's behavior becomes increasingly violent and sadistic—breaking hearts, committing murder—the portrait transforms into a bloodied and smirking phantasm. Dorian confines the portrait to his attic, obsessed with its presence and consumed by fits of guilt. In a violent act of iconoclasm, Dorian destroys his debased image by slicing it with a knife, assuming that it is the work of art that must pay for his inhumanity. But it is Dorian who dies from the painting's wounds, and the portrait returns to its original state having shed its human baggage.

During the Cooley's November 4th symposium, Portland-based artist Storm Tharp and writer Sara Jaffe will present their work alongside: Eve Fowler, Los Angeles-based artist; Daniel A. Novak, Associate Professor of English, University of Mississippi; and Kimberly J. Stern, Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The symposium is organized by Jay Dickson, Professor of English and Humanities, Reed College; and Stephanie Snyder, John and Anne Hauberg Director and Curator, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College.

The symposium is generously supported by the Department of English, and the Office of the Dean of the Faculty. *Dorian* is curated by Stephanie Snyder.

Image:

Caricature of Oscar Wilde as Narcissus, ca. 1893
Unknown magazine



Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College
In the Reed College library

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