

**WRITINGS BY & ABOUT  
JAMES ABBOTT  
MCNEILL WHISTLER; A  
BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649080823

Writings by & about James Abbott McNeill Whistler; a bibliography by Don Carlos Seitz

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**DON CARLOS SEITZ**

**WRITINGS BY & ABOUT  
JAMES ABBOTT  
MCNEILL WHISTLER; A  
BIBLIOGRAPHY**



Writings *by & about*  
James Abbott  
McNeill Whistler

THE abundant literature written by and about James Abbott McNeill Whistler, and the widespread interest manifested in the artist and his works by art-lovers, critics, and collectors, provide the excuse for making this little Bibliography. It cannot pretend to be complete in all particulars, but will furnish a ready guide, it is hoped, to the more important writings and to the catalogues of the artist's paintings, etchings, and lithographs.

Besides being a Master of the Brush, Pencil, and Etching Needle, and pretty handy with his Pen, Mr Whistler was a Master of the great art of attracting attention which is given to a carefully selected few of the earth's millions, by some well-planned scheme that accurately gauges the amount the universe can

## Writings by and about

stand. This he cultivated and practised. From the West Point day, when he neglected to recall that silicon was not a gas, to his last hour he made himself the centre of interest in whatever circle he cared to affect until the world was his stage.

Theatrical, eccentric, and quarrelsome according to the common view, he had, on the other hand, a nice idea of the requirements of advertising, and quite upset the ethics of his profession by his assiduity in keeping himself before the public until his merits as an artist were so clearly recognized as no longer to need what might be called the "playing up" of his personality.

Whatever hardships may have attended his long career, they were the results of temperament rather than obscurity. His was no attic genius shivering in the shade. He lived as he pleased, liked and hated as he pleased, through the many-hued years of the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century, and stood long enough on the threshold of the twentieth to be remembered as one of the great figures clustered about its dawn.

The numerous conflicts carried on in the

## James Abbott McNeill Whistler

London press, the art societies, and the courts were summed up for all time in "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies," issued in 1890. Neither the idea nor the title was Whistler's, but the material was, and the book is the true starting-point in Whistler literature.

The alternating remarks of "E." and "J." in the Pennell biography are not always accurate, and their errors concerning the creation of "The Gentle Art" are worthy of correction. This combination of pertness and pasquinade, with clear sense in art, had its origin in the ingenious mind of Mr Sheridan Ford, a talented American journalist, poet, and critic. While in London writing for the *Bachelor Syndicate* in the late eighties, he formed the acquaintance of Whistler, and the fortunes of both being at a low ebb, it occurred to Mr Ford that the letters and talks of the artist might be put together in an interesting book, to their mutual advantage. Mr Whistler showed but languid interest in the work. Mrs Whistler encouraged the editor and finally aroused some attention on the part of the artist. The inevitable break did not come until Mr Whistler, in going over the com-



## Writings by and about

pleted book, ordered a letter from Oscar Wilde, which replied to Whistler's charge of plagiarism (Jan. 9, 1890, page 118, Ford Edition), omitted. It accused the artist in plain terms of lying. Mr Ford thought it unfair to omit the letter, and Whistler's sharp refusal to permit its retention led to a violent quarrel, with threatened fisticuffs, which ended in Mr Ford's departing with the copy, determined to issue it on his own responsibility, though then and there forbidden to do so. It was put into type by Messrs Field & Tuer, of the Leadenhall Press, and plates were made, but no impressions had been taken, when learning that Mr Whistler objected, they declined to proceed with its publication. As it was not legally feasible to publish it in London, Mr Ford took the book in hasty flight to Antwerp. Originally it had borne the commonplace title of "The Correspondence of James McNeill Whistler." The printer, with a keen eye to the merit of the work, objected to so poor a name and was invited by the compiler to pick a better one if he could. This he very promptly did. Pointing to a paragraph in the introduction, written by Mr Ford, reading: "This

## James Abbott McNeill Whistler

collection of letters and miscellany covers something over a quarter of a century, from 1862 to the present year. It illustrates the gentle art of making enemies, and is in part the record of some unpleasantness between the Brush and Pen"—he said: "There's your title. Don't use this other thing." And "there" it was.

Put into type once more, two thousand copies were printed off, when the irate and pursuing artist, with the help of the Procureur du Roi and Sir George Lewis, caused the confiscation of both forms and paper.

Determined not to be thwarted, and burning to defeat his adversary, Mr Ford retreated to Ghent, where he found another English printer who agreed to compose and print the book in three days. The 1000 francs capital brought from London to Antwerp had been exhausted, but Mr Ford's watch and jewelry remained, and a friendly *mont-de-piété* furnished 500 francs, funds enough to insure the printer, and the book came out on time and eluded "Jimmy." It bore this title: "The Gentle Art of Making Enemies. Edited by Sheridan Ford. Paris: Delabrosse & Cie, 1890." It carried this dedication:

## Writings by and about

"To all good comrades who like a fair field and no quarter these pages are peacefully inscribed."

Mr Ford was quite fair in his introductory note, saying amiably: "As custom would sanction, in a work of this character, a complacent boast touching the sometime soulful intimacy between Mr Whistler and myself, I may point out that nothing of the kind existed. The reader might otherwise be pardoned a casual inference that we were on terms of commonplace amity and acquiescence. I commend the book to Mr Whistler's enemies, with the soothing assurance that should each of them purchase a copy the edition will be exhausted in a week."

The little *remò* included 256 pages, and a two-page advertisement of "Art: A Commodity. By Sheridan Ford." It was bound in grey-green paper, with the title but not the imprint on the front cover. Butterflies in silhouette mark the Whistler notes. I have seen but one copy--my own—and have noted but two in the sales. Although 4000 copies were printed, few reached the book-stalls. A supply of sheets bearing the New York imprint of "Frederick Stokes & Brother" was