

Chivalry is dead?

Mediaeval revivalism, courtly love and faerie dust from the State Art Collection 1516–2023

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Chivalry is dead?: Mediaeval revivalism, courtly love and faerie dust from the State Art Collection 1516–2023

The mediaeval period in European history, also known as the Middle Ages, occurred from 500 to 1500 A.D. While mediaeval culture is incredibly varied, depictions of armoured knights, heroic quests and elegant aristocratic courts are the basis of what is known now as Mediaevalism. Key to this is the ‘chivalric code’ that laid out the standards guiding the behaviour of knights who were most often in positions of significant power within the feudal societies they operated within. Their code espoused ideals of honour, bravery and self-sacrifice that appear noble, but when taken in context (and from our present-day perspective) can be seen to legitimate social imbalances. This display of material from the State Art Collection examines the complexities and contradictions in the representation of these and other themes in several major instances’ of mediaeval revival.

Mediaeval revivalism tends to proliferate in periods of social and technological transition and has flourished in significant moments in the sixteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Contemporary scholars have described visions of the mediaeval as a stand in for the ‘not now’, as an escape from the conditions of a developing modernity in particular. Nowhere was this phenomenon more prominent than in nineteenth-century

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England, a period when artists turned to the Middle Ages in search of artistic and moral purity in response to the industrial era. During the age of Empire, that coincided with industrialisation, British Mediaevalism romanticised a hierarchical past, deploying a fictionalised history in the service of current agendas. This imagery was then to turn up in propaganda during the First World War.

In light of its ideological uses, this display challenges our typical understanding of chivalry as witnessed in the use of phrases such as 'chivalry is dead' when someone is bad mannered. The display also raises the spectre of future or indeed present returns. After all, no sooner had Edmund Burke declared that 'the age of chivalry is gone' (1790) in the aftermath of the French Revolution, than chivalry came back to shape English society until well into the twentieth century. Chivalry might not be dead, might not ever be dead, but has it ever been real?

G F Watts

born 1817 London, England

worked London, Isle of Wight and Surrey, England

died 1904 Guildford, England

Una and the Red Cross Knight

1869

oil on canvas

Purchased, 1959

1959/OP10

This painting was inspired by Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (volumes 1-3 published 1590, volumes 1-6 published 1596), an allegorical tale in praise of Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603). It depicts the Red Cross Knight and Una on a quest to slay a dragon. The knight is a reincarnation of St George, the archetypal Christian knight, and Una is a personification of Truth and the Protestant Church. *Una* is one of G.F. Watts' highly popular chivalric paintings, and the work depicts a moment of quiet solemnity rather than the high drama of the story. Watts believed a painting must be justified by its moral teachings and through the poised yet emotionally charged interaction between the two figures, he creates an occasion to contemplate the tension between personal desire and higher obligations.

The models for the painting were Mary Jackson and Arthur Prinsep, whose uncle Charles Robert Prinsep was a significant early investor supporting the colonisation of Western Australia. The painting was chosen for inclusion

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in the State Art Collection in 1959 by Sir Kenneth Clark, former chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain, conservative art critic and television personality. This work was selected for its fame and combination of aesthetic achievement with spirit of moral worthiness, a fact that underwrites the capacity of chivalric ideals to be turned to a range of ideological uses.

Dante Rossetti

born 1828 London, England

worked London,

died 1882 Kent, England

Lady Lilith

1867

wood engraving on Japanese tissue paper

Gift of Dr Rose Toussaint, 1996

1996/0107

Rossetti was a significant artist involved in the form of mediaeval revivalism associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. *Lady Lilith* is engraved after an oil painting (1866–68, altered 1872–73) now in the Delaware Art Museum, and demonstrates Rossetti's and his period's contradictory (or ambivalent) preoccupation with women; it both celebrates physical allure and channels anxiety around female sexuality.

In Jewish mythology, Lilith is described as Adam's first wife and an enchantress, who fled after refusing subservience. Here, a figure of mythic eroticism is given a nineteenth-century inflection, an earnest representation of narcissistic and commodified beauty, in which Rossetti imagines a legendary temptress as a self-absorbed nineteenth-century femme fatale. Attached to the original frame are lines from Goethe's *Faust* (1808): 'Beware . . . for she excels all women in the magic of her locks, and when she twines them round a young man's neck, she will not ever set him free again.'

Left to right, top to bottom

Hans Burgkmair

born 1473 Augsburg, Germany

worked Augsburg, Germany

died 1531 Augsburg, Germany

Triumphzug Kaiser Maximilians I.: Geschifft Rennen [The Triumphal Procession of Maximilian I: Geschifft Rennen]

1516–18, 1796 {printed}

woodcut

Purchased 1972

1972/0Q57

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Leonhard Beck

born c1475–c1480 Augsburg, Germany

worked Augsburg, Germany

died 1542 Augsburg, Germany

Der “Weißkunig” Kaiser Maximilians I: Totenmesse für die Gemahlin des jungen Weißkunigs [The “White King” Maximilian I: Requiem Mass for the wife of the young Weißkunig]

1514–1526, 1775 {printed}

woodcut

Purchased 1972

1972/0Q58

Der “Weißkunig” Kaiser Maximilians I: Der Verrat der Kaufleute in Rotterdam [The “White King” Emperor Maximilian I: Betrayal of the Merchants in Rotterdam]

1514–16, 1775 {printed}

woodcut

Purchased 1972

1972/0Q59

Woodcutting developed as a printing technique for artists in Europe during the fifteenth century and Emperor

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Maximilian I (1459–1519) from Germany was among the first European rulers to recognise the power of the medium as a tool for shaping his public image. He commissioned a series of ambitious literary and artistic projects, including *Triumphzug* [*The Triumphal Procession*] and *Weißkunig* [*The Wise King*], that celebrated his achievements and presented him as the ideal ruler, guided by the virtues of the mediaeval knight.

Hans Burgkmair was one of the leading artists of these projects. In *Geschifft Rennen* (left), Burgkmair depicts a form of armour created (by Maximilian) for theatrical jousting contests. Designed for spectacle rather than combat, the event reflects Maximilian's fascination with allegorical pageantry. These works looked nostalgically to a chivalric past at a time when knighthood was becoming disconnected from the realities of sixteenth-century warfare that had turned increasingly away from the allegorical pageantry of jousts for military training. With the development of artillery, Renaissance military engineering favoured squat bastions and carefully calibrated sightlines over the domed turrets and pierced battlements of castles.

Käthe Kollwitz

born 1867 Königsberg, Prussia

worked Berlin, Germany

died 1945 Berlin, Germany

Otto Felsing printer

born 1854 Darmstadt, Germany

worked Berlin, Germany

died 1920 Berlin, Germany

Emil Richter publisher

Active Dresden, Germany, 1848–1930

Losbruch [Outbreak]

1902

etching, engraving and aquatint

Purchased 1970

1970/0Q93

Kollwitz was the first and only female faculty member at both the Prussian Art Academy and the Berlin Secession. She was an incredibly popular artist in the early twentieth century and was concerned with the plight of the proletariat of her own time and historically. Her work was frequently gritty and bleak, and *Outbreak* was made with a combination of aquatint and etching to create an earthy texture.

In contrast to the vision of a golden age of chivalry presented in the publications commissioned by Emperor Maximilian I (left), *Outbreak* presents a grittier allegory. The work is from Kollwitz's seven-work cycle *Bauernkrieg*

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[The Peasants' Revolt], which is based on the German Peasant's War of 1522-25 that took place during the Protestant Reformation and was led by the revolutionary figure Black Anna. Kollwitz uses a representation of sixteenth-century European feudalism to illustrate the material reality of German working people caused by the rapid modernisation of the early twentieth century.

Anthony Van Dyck after

born 1599 Antwerp, Belgium

worked Antwerp, Belgium; London, England; Genoa, Italy

died 1641 London, England

Marquis of Spinola

c1620–c1640

oil on canvas

Purchased 1905

1905/00P3

Marchese Ambrogio Spinola (1569–1630) was a highly successful general in the service of Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella of Spain, and doge of Genoa. Here, he is depicted wearing the Order of the Golden Fleece, a fifteenth-century Catholic order of chivalry, to which he was inducted in 1605 for his victory in the Siege of Ostend. The Order was founded in Brugge by Philip the Good to celebrate his political marriage to Isabella of Portugal and became one of the most internationally prestigious orders. It survives to this day.

During the Baroque period in Europe, power was shifting away from the Catholic Church and into royal courts in France, Spain and England. This presented new forms of patronage for artists like van Dyck and a freedom to create portraits in new and expressive ways, depicting the nobility with refined naturalism and humanity.

William Breakspeare

born 1856 Birmingham, England

worked Birmingham and London, England; Paris, France

died 1914 London, England

Le Repos du Model [Model in Repose] (A Corner of the Studio, Langham Sketching Club)

c1875–c1910

oil on canvas

Purchased 1912

1912/00P1

It had been common practice to hang arms and armour in mediaeval castle halls, ready for use, but by the eighteenth century many such collections were removed. Around 1800, owners of armour began to refurbish their collections and make consciously chivalric or antiquarian displays of it in the home. Collecting armour also became increasingly popular among wealthy individuals; the study of armour, heraldry and mediaeval culture was popularised as a serious subject of academic inquiry.

Breakspeare's studio scene demonstrates the spread of chivalric iconography in the nineteenth century. The suit of armour was a prop of a working artist's studio, and its presence served to position the painter, patron or sitter as a person of gentlemanly status, connected to an ancient chivalric lineage.

Charles Keene

born 1823 London, England

worked London, England

died 1891 London, England

Frederick Goulding printer

born 1842 London, England

worked London, England

died 1908 London, England

Lady in Elizabethan dress

c1864

etchings

Purchased 1974

1974/0Q98

A Soldier in Elizabethan Costume, Shot

c1843–c1891

etchings

Purchased 1974

1974/Q103

Left to right

Aubrey Beardsley

born 1872 Brighton, England

worked London, England; Menton, France

died 1898 Menton, France

Design for chapter heading in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le morte Darthur' (book i, chapter iii)

c1893–94

pen and ink over pencil

Purchased 1906

1899/OD13

Design for chapter heading in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le morte Darthur' (book vi, chapter ix)

c1893–94

pen and ink over pencil

Purchased 1906

1899/OD14

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Design for chapter heading in Sir Thomas Malory's 'Le morte Darthur' (book x, chapter lxxi)

c1893–94

pen and ink over pencil

Purchased 1906

1899/OD15

Beardsley was a leading figure in the English Aesthetic movement. He was influenced by Japanese woodcuts, and depicted the grotesque, the decadent and the erotic. These prints are designs Beardsley contributed to Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485), the most significant English version of the legend of King Arthur.

Malory's version came out in regular new editions when first published but after 1634 it was no longer reprinted. Following a 200-year hiatus, *Le Morte d'Arthur* came back into circulation in the nineteenth century, along with many other texts in the genre of Chivalric Romance. *Le Morte* is an exemplar of the genre and of the treatment of 'courtly love', a cornerstone of the mediaeval tradition. It represents a combination of the historical, military, fantastical and otherworldly that became intertwined with English national mythology and history.

John Cross after

born 1819 Tiverton, England

worked London, England

died 1861 London, England

Henry C. Shenton engraver

born 1803 Winchester, England

worked London, England

died 1866 London, England

The Clemency of Coeur-de-Lion

1857

line engraving

Purchased 1990

1990/0360

King Richard the Lionheart (1157–1199) was an immensely popular figure in Victorian-era culture, where he was cast as a romantic hero in novels such as in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* (1819). His statue was placed outside the Houses of Parliament in 1860, and the damage to (but not entire destruction of) the statue during the Blitz in WWII became a symbol of English resilience.

Richard's prominence in English mythology owes much to his participation in the Crusades (1187–92). Chivalry had no more famous expression than the Crusades, which fell out of favour in the popular imagination during the Enlightenment. In the nineteenth century, the Crusades went through a romantic renaissance, as idealised versions were used to support European imperial projects.

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This picture depicts a famous story of Richard's mercy. He lies on his deathbed, offering clemency to his would-be killer, who wounded Richard as he lay siege to his own subjects. After Richard's death, his mercenary captain had the assassin flayed alive and hanged.

Left to right, top to bottom

Colin Lanceley

born 1938 Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand

worked London, England and Warrang/Sydney, Australia

died Warrang / Sydney, Australia

The liberation of the gallery slaves

1972

colour screen-print

Gift of Douglas A Kagi, 1989

1989/0182

An adventure with some windmills

1972

colour screen-print

Gift of Douglas A Kagi, 1989

1989/0185

Don Quixote confined and enchanted

1972

colour screen-print

Gift of Douglas A Kagi, 1989

1989/0184

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The Knight's Penance in the Seirea Morena

1972

lithograph

Purchased 1973

1973/0Q29

These screenprints from the series *Some Adventures of Don Quixote* (1972), demonstrate elements of 'Mid-Century Medieval', a camp and kitschy postwar countercultural aesthetic. Lanceley's palette of bright reds, yellows, greens and blues in these works reflects that of the movement, also known as 'Medieval Revival'. It stands in contrast to the idealised version of Mediaevalism in the nineteenth century and the gritty, realist versions in contemporary film and television.

Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) is considered a prototype of the modern novel and is an early critique of the literary tradition of Chivalric Romance. Cervantes satirises Quixote as viewing himself on a heroic chivalric quest, with a brain addled by reading too many Chivalric Romances. In *Don Quixote*, we see a figure representative of the absurdist nature of the chivalric mythos and dominant chivalric literary tradition.

Frederick Sandys

born 1829 Norwich, England

worked Norwich and London, England

died 1904 London, England

Joseph Swain engraver

born 1820 Oxford, England

worked London, England

died 1909 London, England

Jacques de Caumont

c1849–c1909

wood engraving (book illustration)

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0290

Death of King Warwulf

1862

wood engraving (book illustration)

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0291

This work depicts King Warwulf, or Warwolf, a Norse king, who, feeling death approaching, decided to die in an heroic fashion. He set sail on a ship loaded with dry wood, to which he finally set fire. Here he sits in his ship, holding his sword close to his chest, as flames surround him, consuming his shield and spear.

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The illustration was created for the poem 'The Death of King Warwolf' by George Walter Thornbury, first published in the magazine *Once a Week* (30 August 1862).

Frederick Sandys

born 1829 Norwich, England

worked Norwich and London, England

died 1904 London, England

George Dalziel engraver

born 1815 Wooler, Northumberland, England

worked London, England

died 1902 London, England

Edward Dalziel engraver

born 1817 Wooler, Northumberland, England

worked London, England

died 1905 London, England

Until her death

1862

wood engraving (book illustration)

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0255

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The little mourner

1862

wood engraving (book illustration)

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0284

The advent of winter

1866

wood engraving

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0285

Henry Armstead

born 1828 London, England

worked London, England

died 1905 London, England

George Dalziel engraver

born 1815 Wooler, Northumberland, England

worked London, England

died 1902, London, England

Edward Dalziel engraver

born 1817 Wooler, Northumberland, England

worked London, England

died 1905 London, England

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Sea-weeds

1862

wood engraving (book illustration)

Gift of unknown donor, 1987

1987/0262

Many prominent artists of the Victorian era contributed designs to popular serial moralistic publications such as *Good Words* and *Once a Week*. These artists portrayed Mediaevalist and chivalric imagery in a nostalgic fashion to instil in the broader populace (especially the lower middle class) a unifying set of moral ideals, in part informed by the mediaeval code of chivalry.

Frederick Sandys was associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and had designs published in both *Good Words* and *Once a Week*. Some of his works represent an engagement with a mediaeval text, the *Ars moriendi* [*The Art of Dying*], as a philosophical and spiritual response to Enlightenment-era rationalisation of the world. The *Ars moriendi* belongs to a body of texts from the late Middle Ages that codified the integration into everyday life the teachings of the Church. It presented a dialectical approach to ‘dying well’— with pairs of woodcuts that depicted temptation and spiritual inspiration for the dying person, to a largely illiterate public.

Augustus John

born 1878 Tenby, Wales Great Britain

worked London, Dorset and Liverpool, England;

Provenance, France

died 1961 Hampshire, England

Dawn

1917

black lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/0Q12

Nancy Cones

born 1869, Milan, Ohio, United States of America

worked Loveland, Ohio, United States of America

died 1962 Loveland, Ohio, United States of America

News from the front

1915

gum bichromate

Gift of Patrick Hanrahan through the
Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2020

2020/0236

Walter Crane

born 1845 Liverpool, England

worked London, Manchester and Reading, England;

Venice, Florence and Naples, Italy

died 1915 Horsham, England

Illustration for 'The Yellow Dwarf'

1875

gouache

Purchased 1903

1903/00D2

Left to right, top to bottom

Maurice Greiffenhagen

born 1862 London, England

worked London, England; Glasgow, Scotland

died 1931 London, England

The Restoration of Alsace Lorraine to France

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/00Q4

F. Ernest Jackson

born 1872 Huddersfield, England

worked London, England

died 1945 Oxford, England

United defence against aggression (Eng. & Fr. & Germ)

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/00Q6

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Edmund Sullivan

born 1869 London, England

worked London, England

died 1933 London, England

The Reign of Justice

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/00Q5

Edmund Dulac

born 1882 Toulouse, France

worked Paris, France and London, England

died 1953 London, England

Poland, A Nation

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/00Q8

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Charles Ricketts

born 1866 Geneva, Switzerland

worked London, England

died 1931 London, England

Italia Redenta

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/00Q7

Charles Shannon

born 1863 Sleaford, Lincolnshire, England

worked London, England

died 1937 Kew, Surrey, England

The Rebirth the Arts

1917

colour lithograph

Gift of H.M. Government, 1921

1921/0Q11

The propagandistic nature of chivalric imagery came to the fore during the First World War, demonstrating the capacity of chivalry to be used for political messaging. The concepts of glory and honour espoused by the revived chivalric code and popularised throughout English society in the nineteenth century made war acceptable and desirable. Visions of St George, patron saint of England, and rhetoric and imagery from the Crusades

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were a significant part of the nineteenth-and early twentieth-century British social imaginary as symbols of imperialism.

In these works, Britain is allegorically cast as chivalrous defenders of justice and liberty. They form part of the portfolio *The Great War: Britain's Efforts and Ideals*, commissioned by the Ministry of Information in 1917. Prints such as these were disseminated by the British government in the postwar period to foster a sense of cultural connection between the England and the colonies as the binds of Empire were becoming increasingly tenuous.

John Charles Dollman

born 1851 Brighton, England

worked London and Sussex, England

died 1934 London, England

The Awakening of Titania

1898

oil on canvas

Gift of Captain Guy Dollman, 1937

1937/00P1

Chivalric tales are not just historical in nature, they are frequently fantastical, mythological, magical and absurd. Many Chivalric Romances, such as the tales of King Arthur, blend pagan (faerie) and Christian mythology. The mythological and magical were alternative ways to express moralistic ideals, particularly in Victorian-era England, and the Faerie Queen figure typically represented moral corruption and iniquity in opposition to Christian purity.

Dollman's *The Awakening of Titania* draws on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595–96) reflects the nineteenth-century interest in faerie tales and the otherworldly, and the enormous popularity of one of Shakespeare's most erotic plays in Victorian England. Fascination with Britain's faerie heritage, and the belief in the possibility of faeries co-existing in the British countryside alongside humans, spawned a wave of faerie painting in consolation of the Victorian disquiet at the modern world. For the first time, painters sought to paint

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faeries realistically and accurately, and this implausible combination of reality and fantasy gives Victorian faerie paintings a strange and disturbing intensity.

Charles Douglas Richardson

born 1853 London, England

worked Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria and London, England

died 1932 Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria

Casting the spell

1896

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the
Great Australian Paintings Appeal, 1992

1992/0079

In the mediaeval revival of the nineteenth century, many male artists depicted women as idealised paragons of virtue or as iniquitous sorceresses; representations of witches and visions of women entrapping men spoke to the way the culture considered them as prone to moral failing.

Richardson was informed by Symbolism and international spiritualist trends in the fin de siècle, and interpreted Pre-Raphaelite allegorical themes with a looser style of brushwork derived from the plein-air methods of the Heidelberg School in Melbourne. This work illustrates a scene from H. Rider Haggard's novel *She: A History of Adventure* (1887). Haggard's works formed a part of the Chivalric Romance revival in the late nineteenth century, along with writers such as William Morris, and influenced later authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien and George R.R. Martin. The character *She* in Haggard's novel has been critiqued as a manifestation of male anxieties about female sexuality and changing gender roles with the emergence of the New Woman.

John Charles Dollman

born 1851 Brighton, England

worked London and Sussex, England

died 1934 London, England

The Ride of the Valkyries

1908

oil on canvas

Gift of Captain Guy Dollman, 1936

1936/00P1

Rediscovery of ancient epic poems in the nineteenth century led to renewed interest in Chivalric Romances, as well as Norse mythology. Many Chivalric Romances throughout the Middle Ages drew on tales from Old Norse or Germanic sagas. These stories were sources of inspiration for artists in the nineteenth century, intertwined with chivalric tales and English mythology, such as the legend of King Arthur.

This painting depicts a scene from composer Richard Wagner's *Die Walküre* (first performed 1870) from the *Ring* cycle, which drew on the Germanic epic the *Nibelungenlied* and the Norse *Völsunga Saga*. While Dollman was typically considered one of the best painters of animal life of the time, here he extends his talents to show the Valkyries, daughters of Wotan and Erda, riding through the storm to choose the souls of those slain on a battlefield to ascend to the hall of Valhalla.

Ding Shilun

born 1998 Guangzhou, Guangdong, Peoples' Republic of China

works Guangzhou, Peoples' Republic of China and London, England

The Reflection

2023

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds donated by Danny Yap,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2023.

2023/0112

Ding Shilun creates layered narrative paintings bridging traditional Chinese painting, such as that of Qi Baishi, and European aestheticism, as seen in works of Aubrey Beardsley, with elements of manga, contemporary comics and Surrealism. Ding creates new mythologies grounded in everyday observation of urban environments and social interactions, demonstrating the ability of enchanting Mediaevalism to portray, and provide escape from, the absurdity of contemporary life.

In *The Reflection*, a princely-dressed figure with mechanical wings pulls the body of a slain sun-headed being from a shimmering lake. The relationship between these two magical figures is ambiguous—is he saving a wounded friend or capturing an injured foe? Is this levitating angelic person a hero or is he the monster?

Utagawa (Toyokuni III) Kunisada

born 1786 Edo, Japan

worked Edo, Japan

died 1864 Edo, Japan

Ladies of the court entertaining Lord Genji in the evening

1860

colour woodcut triptych

Purchased 1902

1902/0Q29

This woodcut illustrates a scene from *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*)—a portrait of life in the eleventh century Japanese court written by Lady Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji* was reimagined countless times in the Edo period (1603–1868), echoing the Mediaevalism in Europe happening at the same time.

The revival of this classic tale owed much to the popular serialisation of Ryutei Tanehiko's (1783–1842) illustrated book *False Murasaki and a Rural Genji* (1829–1842). This adaptation wove contemporary culture into the original plot and was illustrated by Utagawa Kunisada, a renowned artist of the time. When European artists discovered examples of Japanese woodcuts (c1865), it was the work of Kunisada that attracted the greatest interest. His use of line, perspective and colour influenced a wide range of artists, including those associated with the Aesthetic movement in England such as Aubrey Beardsley.

Samuel William Reynolds engraver

born 1773 England

worked London, England; Paris, France

died 1835 London, England

Joshua Reynolds after

born 1723 Devon, England

worked London, England; Rome, Italy

died 1792 London, England

Una

c1820–26

stipple engraving, mezzotint, etching

Purchased 1905

1905/0Q24

In the eighteenth century, it was popular to portray young aristocratic ladies in literary, classical or allegorical roles. Here, Miss Elizabeth Beauclerk is depicted as Una from Edmund Spenser's sixteenth-century epic poem *The Faerie Queene* (1590). Spenser's *Faerie Queene* was appropriated during the nineteenth century for a series of moral portraits illustrating virtuous conduct.

In the poem, Una is the young daughter of a royal family who have been imprisoned by a dragon. Una undertakes a quest to save her parents, and on her journey encounters a fierce lion. The lion is captivated by Una's beauty and innocence and abandons his plan to eat her, vowing instead to protect her and become her companion.

J M W Turner after

born 1775 London, England

worked London, England

died 1851 London, England

T Hodgetts engraver

born c1781 London, England

worked London, England

died 1858 London, England

From Spenser's Fairy Queen

1811

etching and mezzotint

Purchased 1966

1966/OQ75

William Morris artist

born 1834 Walthamstow, Essex, England

worked Kent; Bloomsbury; and Kelmscott, Oxfordshire, England

died 1896 Hammersmith, England

Edward Burne-jones illustrator

born 1833, Birmingham, England

worked London, England

died 1898, London, England

William Harcourt Hooper

engraver

born 1834 London, England

worked Hammersmith, London, England

died 1912 London, England

Proof Leaf (4 pages) from the Kelmscott Press edition of “The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer”

1896

wood engraving and type

Gift of Mrs William Morris, 1907

1907/00Q9

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In addition to military prowess and noble birth, one of the central characteristics of chivalric knighthood was courtliness. This aspect of knightly performance was introduced to the European aristocracy in the French Chivalric Romances of the twelfth century, such as Chrétien de Troyes' *Lancelot, The Knight of the Cart*. In the later Middle Ages, stories by Edmund Spenser, Geoffrey Chaucer and Thomas Malory adapted earlier Romances and were highly influential in the spread of the chivalric mythos in England, and understandings of mediaeval life in the nineteenth century. The Kelmscott edition of *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1896) was an icon of the private press movement, the printing revival inspired by William Morris.

With the emergence of the gentry during the Middle Ages, the chivalric ideal came to underpin the English class system; and many of the conceptions of the nineteenth-century Victorian gentleman were based upon a vision of chivalry drawn from the Romance form. Some figures associated with the Mediaevalism of the nineteenth century sought to return to the earlier hierarchy of feudalism; while others, such as the artist and socialist William Morris, looked to the past in search of tools to build a more egalitarian society.

Inge King

born 1915 Berlin, Germany

worked Berlin, Germany; London, England; Glasgow, Scotland; and Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria

died 2016 Naarm/Melbourne, Victoria

Norman keep, maquette

1963–64

bronzed steel

Gift of the artist under the Commonwealth Government's
Cultural Gifts Program, 2015

2015/0075

In the nineteenth century, noble titles were revived and brand-new castles were built. The effects of the French revolution (1787–1799) loomed large in the consciousness of the upper-class and these new monuments were created to evoke authority and tradition against democratic ideals, and to signify a distance from the lower classes. Frequently picturesque and gothic in style, many of these new castles were designed in a fashion completely removed from the former realities of military life, the utilitarian and squat formations of Norman keeps and Romanesque castles.

Inge King, a pioneer of modernist abstract sculpture in Australia, here incorporates the form of a Norman keep into her modernist visual vernacular. Viewing sculpture as movement frozen in time, King was interested in scale and perception, and used industrial techniques in the representation of castles to communicate ideas of monumentality.

Derby Porcelain

established c1750 Derby, England

closed 1848 Derby, England

‘Matrimony and Liberty’ candleholders

c1770

porcelain with underglaze painted decoration

Donated by Dr Harold Schenberg, 1998

1998/0071.1-2

‘Matrimony and Liberty’ pair of candelabra

c1765

porcelain with underglaze painted decoration

Donated by Dr Harold Schenberg, 1996

1996/0096.1-2

Unknown

Germany

Figure group (man, woman and cupid)

c eighteen-century
porcelain

Gift of Mrs May Marland, 1989

1989/0341

Meissen Porcelain Manufactory

established 1710 Meissen, Germany

Wotan and Brunhilde figure group

c eighteen-century

porcelain with overglaze painted decoration

Bequeathed in the names of David and Nancy Englander and daughter Roslyn Seale, 2000

2000/0051

Many of the tales in the Old Norse Sagas are based on adherence to strict codes of honour, mirroring those of the Chivalric code, where minor slights spiral into drastic episodes of violence. Notions of honour and strict adherence to one's word returned to prominence in England in the nineteenth century, having gone out of fashion during the Enlightenment era as naive relics of the Dark and Middle Ages.

The life of a Valkyrie was similarly governed by a strict code of conduct, and if broken, the Valkyrie would be relegated back to the human realm. Here, the god Wotan embraces his daughter, the Valkyrie Brunhilde, farewell before placing her in an enchanted sleep imprisoned by flames, as punishment for breaking that code. The tale is drawn from one of the most common in the Norse and Germanic tradition, that of Siegfried and Brunhilde from the *Nibelungenlied* or *Völsunga saga*, a story based on trickery and deception of Brunhilde by Siegfried.