

Daniel Katz Gallery

ANTIQUITY TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti (London 1828 - Birchington-on-Sea, Kent 1882)

Portrait of Jane Morris

22 x 17 cm (8 ⁵/₁₆ x 6 ³/₁₆ inches)

Signed with monogram and dated 'January 1873' lower right

The accidental meeting in August 1857 of the sitter with the painters Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Edward Burne-Jones changed her life. She began modelling for them and the other artists in their circle, marrying William Morris in 1859. In 1860 they went to live in the Red House outside of London and in 1861 when the design firm Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. was launched, Jane assisted considerably with the design and execution of needlework; she was an accomplished musician and renowned embroiderer.

Jane Morris became the embodiment of Pre-Raphaelite beauty, her striking features shining out of many of Rossetti's more important works, such as *La Donna Della Fiamma* (1870; Manchester City Art Gallery), *Mariana* (1870; Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums), *Proserpine* (1874; Tate, London) and *La Donna Della Finestra* (1879; Fogg Museum of Art, Harvard University). Rossetti developed an overwhelming passion for Jane, as expressed in his 1867 watercolour *Sir Tristram and La Belle Yseult Drinking the Love Potion* (Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, Bedford), and the two were lovers.

Like his brother, William Michael Rossetti was captivated by Jane Morris's beauty whose face he described as "at once tragic, mystic, passionate, calm, beautiful, and gracious, a face for a sculptor, and a face for a painter, a face solitary in England, and not at all like that of an Englishwoman, but rather of an Ionian Greek"[1]. This beguiling drawing of Jane, which captures all of those traits, was executed

in January 1873, almost certainly at Kelmscott Manor, the Morris' residence in Oxfordshire. Whilst there in 1873 Rossetti made a number of studies of Jane of which the present example encapsulates their intimacy and the artist's virtuosity as a draughtsman. Other of his pen and ink portraits of Jane from the same year include one dated 'Feb: 1873'[2], another simply dated 1873[3], as well as a third dated 'Xmas '73', which he gave to the sitter[4].

Following Rossetti's death in 1882 exhibitions were mounted in London and in May 1883 the artist's former housekeeper, model and mistress Fanny Cornforth (1835 – 1906) staged a show at 1a Old Bond Street at what was known as the Rossetti Gallery. She had been given several works by Rossetti and on this occasion the present drawing was shown to the public for the first time. The exhibition at the Rossetti Gallery was relatively small but it included works such as the portraits of the poets Robert Browning and Algernon Charles Swinburne (both now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), another of the art collector Frederick Richard Leyland (1879; Bancroft collection, Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, Delaware) as well as two very fine self-portraits (National Portrait Gallery and Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery).

[1] William Michael Rossetti, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, His Family Letters with a Memoir, vol.I, 1895, p.199

[2] Rossetti's studio sale, May 1883, lot 75; Surtees n. 395

[3] originally owned by Sir Edmund and Lady Gosse; Surtees n. 396

[4] now owned by The Society of Antiquaries at Kelmscott Manor; Surtees n. 397

Provenance

Provenance:

Sarah Schott, better known as Fanny Cornforth

John Hudson and Olivia Poole, California, until 2015

Exhibitions

Exhibited:

London, The Rossetti Gallery, Pictures, drawings, designs and studies by the late Dante Gabriel

Rossetti, 1883, n. 24, titled 'Mrs William Morris'

Literature:

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V. Surtees, The paintings and drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882): A catalogue raisonné, 1971, vol. 1, p. 179, cat. 394,