

# Walter Sickert

## *Painting and transgressing*

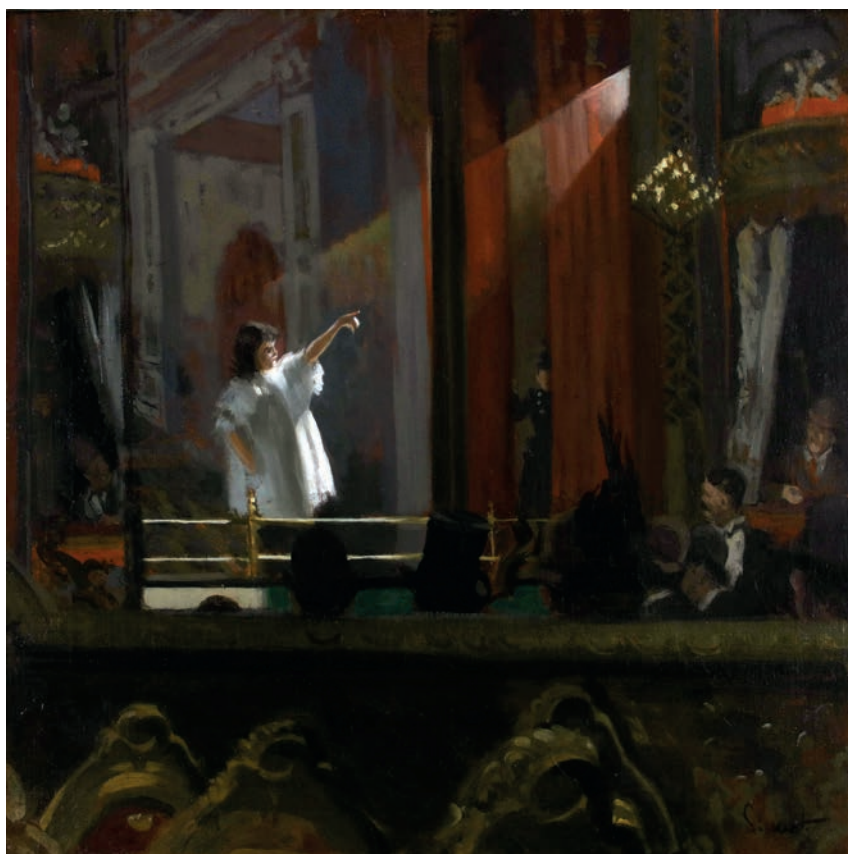
From 14 October 2022 to 29 January 2023



**Petit Palais**  
Musée des Beaux-Arts  
de la Ville de Paris

Tuesday to Sunday from 10:00 a.m to 6:00  
p.m  
Late opening on Friday and Saturday until  
7:00 p.m

Information and booking:  
[petitpalais.paris.fr](http://petitpalais.paris.fr)



Walter Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Old Bedford Hall*,  
c. 1888-1889. Collection particulière  
Photo © James Mann / Collection particulière

The exhibition is organised with Tate Britain



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## Press release

**The Petit Palais has partnered with Tate Britain to present the very first major retrospective in France dedicated to the English painter Walter Sickert.**

**This resolutely modern artist, who chose enigmatic subjects, is poorly represented in French collections. This despite the fact that Sickert forged artistic and personal ties with many French artists and brought to England a manner of painting shaped by the time he spent in Paris. The exhibition is therefore an opportunity to (re)discover a unique artist who had a decisive impact on English figurative painting, notably that of Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon.**



Walter Richard Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Old Bedford Hall*,  
c. 1888-1889, Collection particulière  
Photo © James Mann / Collection particulière

The exhibition follows a chronological order while presenting themes drawn from key subjects in Sickert's painting. The first rooms, dedicated to the artist's debut, present his personality that was at once intriguing, complex and seductive. Very provocative, in the context of a relatively corseted English academic art, Walter Sickert painted unusual subjects such as music hall scenes, or later, de-eroticised nudes stripped of all glamour in poor Camden Town interiors. His contemporaries were struck by the artist's choice of colours - as virtuoso as strange, inherited from training with Whistler - and disconcerting framing.

From 1890, Sickert travelled more regularly to Paris and Dieppe, eventually settling in the seaside resort from 1898 to 1905. He was heavily influenced by the French art scene and became close to Edgar Degas, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Pierre Bonnard, Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro.

He returned to London in 1905, where he diffused his deep knowledge of French painting in England through art critiques, his influence on certain exhibitions, and his teaching. This is when he started the "modern conversation pieces" series, in which he transformed traditional genre scenes of English painting into ambiguous, foreboding, even sordid paintings, the most famous being from the "Camden Town murders" series.

At the end of his career, between the two world wars, Sickert innovated by turning news photographs into paintings, a process largely taken up in the 1950s by artists such as Andy Warhol. While he never crossed the threshold into abstraction, Sickert unceasingly provoked the art world and the public with his iconographic and pictorial inventions. Indeed, the legacy of his art is the lasting mark it left on the work of many artists for generations to come.

The exhibition proposed by the Petit Palais is arranged very much like that of the Tate Britain, the works being largely the same. Aside from a few additional loans, notably from French collections, what makes the Petit Palais exhibition stand out is the exhibition design and cultural mediation. The exhibition design, by Cécile Degos, consists of different coloured and aerated atmospheres, creating perspectives between the rooms. Here and there throughout the exhibition, more immersive designs, like the one dedicated to music halls, brings the space alive. Cultural mediation consists of, on the one hand, audio clips created from archives that bring the voice of Sickert and his contemporaries to the ears of visitors, and on the other hand a screen that allows visitors to experience a projection lantern, a transposition procedure that Sickert claimed to have used.

#### Exhibition curators:

##### Tate Britain

Alex Farquharson, Director, Tate Britain  
Emma Chambers, Curator, Modern British Art, Tate Britain  
Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, Curator of Drawings, Musée d'Orsay and former Curator, British Art, 1850-1915 at Tate Britain  
Thomas Kennedy, Assistant Curator, Modern British Art, Tate Britain

##### Petit Palais

Delphine Lévy, Director of Paris Musées (2013-2020)  
Clara Roca, Curator in charge of 19<sup>th</sup>- and 20<sup>th</sup>-century graphic arts collections and photography at Petit Palais



Walter Sickert, *Blackbird of Paradise*, vers 1892, huile sur toile, Leeds City Art Gallery. Leeds Museums and Galleries, UK. © Bridgeman Images



Walter Sickert, *The Acting Manager*, vers 1885-1886, Londres, Collection particulière © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images



# The exhibition

## Introduction

Walter Sickert (1860-1942) was an eccentric and mysterious figure, as well as a unique artist. His indifference to convention, his constantly evolving pictorial techniques, and his enigmatic and, at times, disturbing subject matter made him a key figure of the British artistic avant-garde for a period of sixty or so years.

He made a name for himself in England in the late 1880s with his paintings of music halls, at a time when these places were deemed unworthy of being painted. He became a scandalous figure at the beginning of the 20th century when he painted a number of dark and troubling nudes in sordid rooms in working-class districts. His work was influenced by the French art scene at the turn of the century, and he played an active role in this milieu. Sickert lived for a long period in France, mainly Dieppe, where he resided from 1899 to 1905, and in Paris, where he exhibited regularly throughout the first decade of the 20th century. His work was shown at the Salon des indépendants and the Salon d'automne, as well as by Parisian art dealers like Durand-Ruel and Bernheim-Jeune. A pivotal figure, he forged artistic connections and strong friendships with numerous French artists, namely with his mentor, Edgar Degas.

After the First World War, he returned definitively to England where he became a renowned and influential artist, whereas in France, he was relatively forgotten. Once again, he challenged the English art scene in the last part of his career, with his strangely-coloured paintings, inspired by press photographs, and bearing witness to a novel concept of the creative process. He continued to reinvent his work and embody a certain form of modernity by altering his themes and ways of painting.

## In memory of Delphine Lévy (1969-2020)

Delphine Lévy was a museum lover and a passionate art historian. At the origin of the creation of the public establishment Paris Musées, she was its first director from 2013 to 2020. Alongside her career as a senior civil servant for the Ville de Paris, she had resumed her studies in art history, becoming the internationally renowned French specialist of Walter Sickert. She invested herself personally in the recognition of his work in France, devoting her two research dissertations to him, a monographic publication entitled *Walter Sickert, l'art de l'énigme*, and a thematic exhibition on the artist at the Château-Musée in Dieppe. At the time of her death, she had just completed a new and impressive book, published posthumously, and had begun preparations for the present exhibition, organized in partnership with Tate Britain and the Petit Palais.

"Walter Sickert is an artist who is not easily understood. His painting mirrors his personality: both provocative and enigmatic. Painter Jacques-Émile Blanche, even after forty years of friendship, evoked 'a haughty discretion, a form of self-defence in his attitude vis-à-vis human interactions—*noli me tangere*... All relationships with Sickert have an extraordinary, mysterious character'." Delphine Lévy. *Sickert. La provocation et l'énigme*, Paris: Cohen & Cohen, 2021, p. 15.



## Section 1 – An Enigmatic Figure

Walter Sickert's origins are somewhat complex. He was born in Munich in 1860 to an artist father of Danish origin and an Anglo-Irish mother raised in Dieppe. He would spend his formative years in England. In addition to this cosmopolitan profile, his was an enigmatic, multi-faceted personality, full of contradictions. After a brief acting career, from which he retained a taste for disguise and acting, Sickert became an artist, painter, and engraver, as well as a critic and teacher. He devoted himself to each of these professions in turn, with the same enthusiasm he afforded all roles.

The self-portraits that he painted all throughout his life capture this changing personality on canvas. He regularly altered his appearance, way of expressing himself, painting technique, and even his opinions. His friend, French painter Jacques-Émile Blanche would say of him: *"Were Sickert to write his reminiscences, they would fill volumes as romantic as Casanova's. We should see this Proteus, this chameleon, passing through various stages in England, at Dieppe, and in Venice [...] changing his garments and his aspect. His genius for camouflage in dress, in the fashion of wearing his hair, and his manner of speaking rival Fregoli's. He could appear outwardly like the Emperor Francis Joseph; he could be as well dressed as a tailor's dummy, as raggedly as a tramp; he could be mistaken for a seaman at Dieppe or a gondolier; but by nature he has always been a distinguished gentleman."*



Walter Sickert, *Self-Portrait*, c. 1896, oil paint on canvas, Leeds Museums and Galleries. Donation of Miss Helen M. Heath, 1942, U.K. / © Bridgeman Images

## Section 2 – The Apprenticeship Years: From Whistler to Degas



Walter Sickert, *Rehearsal, The End of The Act. The Acting Manager*, c. 1885-1886, oil paint on canvas, UK, London, Collection particulière. Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images

After spending a few months at the Slade School of Fine Art, and an apprenticeship under Otto Scholderer (1834-1902), a painter close to his father and to the French School, Sickert began his career as an artist in 1882 in the studio of James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834-1903). Even if this apprenticeship under an American painter close to Symbolism and Impressionism was short-lived, it proved fundamental to the young artist's development. With Whistler, Sickert explored the representation of landscapes, often urban ones. The small painted panels produced by these two artists demonstrate their affinities through the choice of subject and technique, characterized by their virtuoso tonal painting, based on a variation of colours with similar tonalities, and a rapid execution. Sickert also learned etching from Whistler, for whom he printed before making his own etchings early in his career.

In April 1883, Sickert met Degas for the first time, when he travelled to Paris to bring Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1. Portrait of the Artist's Mother* to the Salon of the Society of French Artists. After this first contact, Sickert developed a real bond with Degas during the summer of 1885. The two rubbed shoulders in the intellectual and artistic spheres of Dieppe around painter Jacques-Émile Blanche (1861-1942) and the family of writer and librettist Ludovic Halévy (1834-1908). This circle played an important role in the launch of Sickert's career, as it allowed him to meet other artists,

collectors, and dealers. His long-lasting friendship with Degas, whose influence gradually eclipsed that of Whistler, also had a decisive impact on his painting. From this new mentor, he retained the use of bolder colours, a more constructed composition, and new subject matter.

### Section 3 – The Music Hall: The Artifice of the Stage

Sickert properly launched his career with his paintings of music halls in the late 1880s. He caused a scandal by depicting this subversive and unprecedented subject in England. In France, the subject of café-concerts was already a recurrent motif of modernity, notably thanks to artist Edgar Degas, Sickert's new mentor. The music hall, on the other hand, was a working-class entertainment venue, much decried by good Victorian society. Drinking establishments and linked to prostitution, these venues were prone to increasingly repressive regulations. The choice of such a subject reveals Sickert's penchant for provocation, while lending itself to his desire for visual experimentation. He obsessively explored all its facets, creating more and more sophisticated compositions playing with viewpoints, framing, and reflections. He represented the artists on stage, as well as the audience in the music hall, a spectacle in its own right. These controversial paintings earned him a certain notoriety, but did not guarantee him either recognition on the art market or financial stability.



Walter Sickert, *Brighton Pierrots*, 1915, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate. © 2022 Tate Images



Walter Sickert, *The Cigarette (Jeanne Daurmont)*, 1906, oil paint on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art. Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Image of the MMA

### Section 4 – Painting the Soul

During the 1890s, Sickert developed an activity as a portraitist, seeking to establish a reputation in this particular genre, which interested him until the end of his career. He sketched portraits of artists for newspapers and magazines, and also began painting commissioned portraits. The emergence of this new genre was in response to Sickert's difficult financial situation, deteriorating at the time. He could not live from his art, as his paintings of music halls did not find a market. His situation was further complicated when he was deprived of the support of his wife, Ellen Cobden-Sickert, who left him when she discovered his repeated infidelities. Portrait commissions, a priori more lucrative, seemed to him to be the ideal solution. The painter tried to establish himself as a great portraitist, capable of capturing the soul of his models, even if it meant displeasing them. However, as the satisfaction of the sponsor was never Sickert's primary objective, his commercial strategy was somewhat flawed. His talent was better expressed in his intimate portraits of friends, from English and French artistic and cultural circles, or of anonymous models, captured in their environment.

### Section 5 – Landscapes. Dieppe, Venice, London, and Paris

In the wake of his marital and economic difficulties, and a waning interest in the representation of the human figure, Sickert turned to landscape painting in the late 1890s. His regular stays in Venice between 1894 and 1904, and his increasingly long periods of time spent in Dieppe and its surroundings, where he moved permanently between 1898 and 1905, accompanied this transition.

During his move to Dieppe, he wrote: "I see my line. Not Portraits. Picturesque works." He hoped to be able to sell these picturesque representations of a French seaside resort then at the height of its glory, and those of the mythical City of the Doges. He retained his attachment to landscape painting when he returned to London in 1905. Furthermore, Sickert was convinced that the urban environment was deeply evocative. He had a veritable passion for architecture, whether for important monuments of which he was especially fond, such as St Mark's in Venice and the church of Saint-Jacques in Dieppe, or ordinary streets. Sickert's paintings evolved from small, relatively dark formats to larger, brighter, and more colourful paintings, firstly under the influence of the French Impressionists, Fauvists, and Nabis, and then of the young British generation.



Walter Sickert, *L'Hôtel Royal Dieppe*, 1894, oil paint on canvas, UK, Sheffield, Museums Sheffield, Millenium Gallery. Image © Sheffield Museums / Bridgeman Images



Walter Sickert, *The Iron Bedstead*, c. 1906, oil paint on canvas, Collection particulière – Courtesy Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert. © Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert

## Section 6 – The Modern Nude

From 1902 to 1913, the nude dominated Sickert's work. The latter began to explore this genre in Dieppe, but especially in Venice. His nudes were the opposite of those that could be seen in London at the end of the Victorian era, which retained the pretext of mythological, allegorical, or literary subjects. In France, on the other hand, a rupture had already taken place in the mid-19th century. Courbet, Manet, Degas, and Bonnard had a considerable influence on Sickert who in turn became the pioneer of the modern nude in England. With regard to his paintings of nudes, he spoke of his "French period".

Back in London, between 1905 and 1913, Sickert continued the research begun in Dieppe and Venice. He chose ordinary models, systematically de-eroticized and captured in natural poses. Their facial features were frequently erased, the brushstrokes visible, and the colours muted. The compositions were atypical, voyeuristic, and

sometimes distorted the bodies. They were staged in the intimate decor of working-class bedrooms, carefully selected by Sickert for their lighting and their evocation of contemporary social poverty. While he liked to frequent and represent working-class circles, and his allusion to prostitution veered towards transgression, his nudes were devoid of political and moral undertones.

## Section 7 – The Conversation Pieces: "Scenes of Private Life"

After representing live performances in the 1880s with music halls, and before renewing his ties with theatre in the 1930s, Sickert made his canvas the site of complex performances. The staged productions he created in his studio, particularly during the 1910s, were inspired by the intimate English theatre of the day. Their sober and realistic decor leaves room for the development of the characters' psychology. These paintings have a certain narrative dimension, although this is intentionally open to interpretation.

At the time, Sickert was part of the well-established English tradition of the genre scene and of the conversation piece, in particular. This was a group portrait captured in a form of daily intimacy. Here once again, he sought innovation and appropriated this peaceful and codified genre. He represented ambiguous situations, at times sordid, more often meditative, underlining the complexity of human existence and relationships, especially between men and women.





Virginia Woolf, a lover of Sickert's painting, wrote of *Ennui*, one of his most famous works: "The grimness of that situation lies in the fact that there is no crisis; dull minutes are mounting, old matches are accumulating and dirty glasses and dead cigars."

Walter Richard Sickert, *Ennui*, c. 1914, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate. © 2022 Tate Images

## Section 8.1 – Transposition: The Final Years

From 1914 onwards, Sickert developed what he called "the best way on earth to do a picture". His method consisted of first painting a monochrome delimiting the light and dark areas of the composition, then adding lines, and finally applying the colours. He began to work more and more from photographs and illustrations from press cuttings, which he transposed onto the canvas. This transposition process was coupled with the enlargement of the original image, thereby resulting in much larger formats. The choice of such source material allowed him to cover current events, in particular politics, which he would not have been capable of exploring otherwise, and it also enabled him to return to his passion for the theatre. During the inter-war period, he executed a large number of theatrical paintings, some that he entitled *Echoes*, based on old illustrations, others drawn from photographs he himself or his assistants had taken during rehearsals, and even images found in the press. He espoused the use of pre-existing images, which at the time, was resolutely modern and provocative. This also allowed him to question the role of the artist. He was increasingly aided by assistants and his third wife, Thérèse Lessore. Although he was fully recognized as the artist, Sickert met with violent criticism regarding his paintings produced using this transposition method, before it was trivialized by the artists of the following generations, such as Andy Warhol and Gerhard Richter.

## Section 8.2 – Sickert's methods of transposition

Sickert used methods of transposition and projection throughout his career as a painter. He first used a camera lucida, an optical device that helped him draw the observed subject on a sheet of paper. Despite an initial mistrust, due to the importance he placed on the preparatory drawing and the distancing of reality, he also used photographs very early on. He transposed these to the canvas thanks to a meticulous squaring, a grid technique that he also used to transpose drawings, or later old illustrations serving as the starting point for his paintings. He practiced photography in Venice at the beginning of the century, and then in London in the 1920s. However, he wasn't particularly gifted in this field and turned to professional photographers to provide him with images. Sickert also repeatedly used a projection lantern to project a photograph in the form of a glass plate onto the canvas. This method allowed him to paint directly on the canvas without having to transfer an image by means of squaring. Sickert fully adopted the use of photography instead of preparatory drawing from the mid-1920s onwards. He encouraged young artists to follow suit when he taught classes at the Royal Academy, of which he became a full member in 1934.

## Press visuals



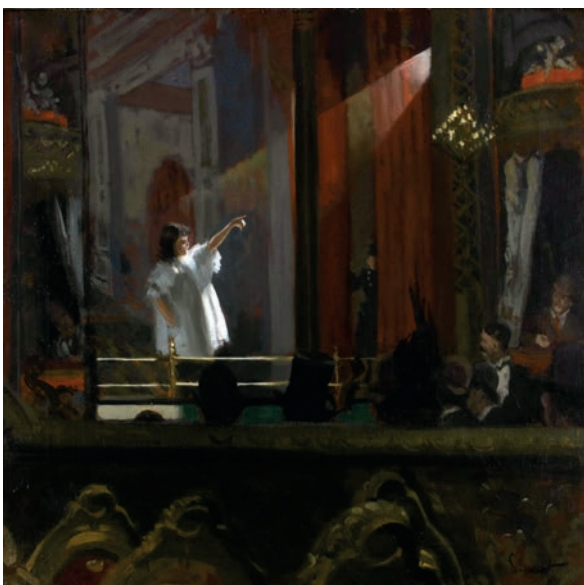
Walter Sickert, *Autoportrait*,  
c. 1896, oil paint on canvas, Leeds, Leeds City Art  
Gallery  
© Leeds Museums and Galleries (Leeds Art Gallery),  
U.K. / Bridgeman Images

With this gloomy self-portrait painted around 1896, Sickert once again cultivates a mysterious air: the artist's face barely emerges from the darkness. He represents himself as a man in turmoil, confronted with artistic, financial, and marital difficulties. He struggled to establish himself as a portrait painter and sell his work. In light of his repeated infidelities, his first wife, Ellen Cobden, separated from him and later divorced him in 1899, thus depriving the artist of financial support.



Walter Sickert, *Rehearsal, The End of The Act. The Acting Manager*,  
c. 1885-1886, oil paint on canvas, UK, London-  
Collection particulière.  
Photo © Christie's Images / Bridgeman Images

This work represents an exhausted woman sitting on a sofa. The model is Helen Couper-Black, the director of a theatre company whom Sickert had already represented in an etching. She oversaw conferences given by speakers in which Whistler often participated. Once again, Sickert employs the tonal harmonies dear to Whistler, but the elaborate composition and choice of subject demonstrate his link with Degas: the world of the spectacle had found a way into his work.



Walter Sickert, *Little Dot Hetherington at the Old Bedford Hall*,  
c. 1888-1889, oil paint on canvas, collection particulière  
Photo © James Mann / Collection particulière

The subject of this painting, a music-hall singer performing on stage at the Old Bedford, pertains to the working-class milieu, but the approach adopted by Sickert is highly sophisticated. Here, he develops a novel and complex composition, thanks to the large mirrors that transfigure this narrow performance hall. The lower section of the painting is occupied by the backs of armchairs seen from the front. Above, a mirror reflects the performance hall, the singer under the spotlights, and the heads of the audience.



Walter Sickert, *The PS Wings in the O.P Mirror*, (1888-1889), oil paint on canvas, Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts  
© C. Lancien, C. Loisel / Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie

Vibrant colours and lights bring the background of this painting to life. They draw the eye to a singer in a red dress, evoking Degas's *Café-Concert des Ambassadeurs*. Curiously, the spectators in the foreground are not looking in the singer's direction, but straight ahead. This is due to the inclusion of a reflection in the painting: the singer is indeed facing the spectators, but the background is the reflection of the scene in a mirror, of which we glimpse the moulded frame.

Walter Sickert, *Minnie Cunningham at the Old Bedford*, 1892, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

Sickert willingly went to see his favourite stars on stage, such as Minnie Cunningham, a successful dancer and actress. He often attended several venues on the same evening as he followed them from performance to performance. The artist also sometimes invited them to his studio for posing sessions, in order to complete the drawings he made of them during their show. Sickert maintained friendly and possibly romantic relationships with several actresses.



Walter Sickert, *Brighton Pierrots*, 1915, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate © 2022 Tate Images

Sickert's infatuation with the entertainment world, which fully absorbed him from 1887 to 1889, did not dwindle thereafter. During the summer of 1915, he stayed in Brighton and went every evening for five weeks to a performance by the Pierrots, which provided him with the material for this important work. The troupe's brightly coloured costumes and tangy late-night sky reflect the evolution of Sickert's palette.





Walter Sickert, *The Trapeze*, 1920, oil paint on canvas © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

This painting reveals Sickert's love of the circus, both as a form of entertainment and as an artistic subject. The canvas of the vast marquee constitutes the background of this painting with a very surprising, almost photographic composition. A powerful low-angle effect gives the impression of being seated on the bleachers, amongst the spectators, with one's head turned upwards to watch the performance of the trapeze artist, ready to begin.



Walter Sickert, *Noctes Ambrosianae*, 1906, oil paint on canvas, Nottingham Castle Museum and Art Gallery. © Nottingham City Museums & Galleries / Bridgeman Images

The emergence of mass leisure and the phenomena of crowds were important at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. Sickert depicted these and in this work, offers a surprising view of spectators heckling in the gallery of Middlesex Music Hall, on the edge of the working-class Camden Town. The lighting makes the gilding of the decor shimmer as much as the faces of the spectators crowded behind the balustrades. Their bodies blend into the shadows of the gallery.





Walter Sickert, *Jacques-Emile Blanche*, c.1910, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate © 2022 Tate Images

The friendship between Sickert and Jacques-Émile Blanche developed over the summer of 1882. In the Dieppe chalet of the French painter and writer, Sickert met his future Parisian gallery representatives, Durand-Ruel and Bernheim-Jeune, and artists such as Auguste Renoir, Claude Monet, and Camille Pissarro. Their relationship was somewhat complicated, but Blanche remained a staunch supporter of Sickert's work. In 1922 and 1923, he donated several works by Sickert to the Musée de Rouen, allowing his work to enter French public collections.



Walter Sickert, *Blackbird of Paradise*, c. 1892, oil paint on canvas, Leeds, Leeds City Art Gallery © Leeds Museums and Galleries, UK / Bridgeman Images

This intense portrait depicts an unidentified model, possibly a singer. The woman's pale face, highlighted by reddish touches, reveals a strange smile. The painting's expressive force is amplified by the long, assured, almost abrupt, brushstrokes. An English critic saw in it "a human type of the most degraded category". The title of the painting, belatedly attributed by Sickert, was inspired by one of his favourite poems, *The Bird of Paradise* by William Henry Davies.



Walter Sickert, *The Cigarette (Jeanne Daurmont)*, 1906, oil paint on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art Photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Image of the MMA

In 1906, in the working-class district of Soho, Sickert met two Belgian sisters, Jeanne and Hélène Daurmont, whom he took as models. Jeanne is portrayed here in a chromatic palette dominated by brown-greys and brown-greens. The painting is brought to life by the red ribbon on the hat and the red cloth under the model's naked body. A preparatory drawing shows that Jeanne was wearing a red dress, which was first painted and then covered over by Sickert, seeking to transform this informal portrait into a nude.



Walter Sickert, *The Façade of St Jacques*,  
c. 1899-1900, oil paint on canvas, Whitworth Art Gallery  
© The Whitworth, The University of Manchester -  
Photography by Michael Pollard

The church of Saint-Jacques was the Dieppe architectural motif to which Sickert was most attached. During his many stays in Dieppe, he produced numerous paintings of it. Even if the facade was his favourite viewpoint, he also painted the south portal, seen from the rue Pecquet. He brought the forecourt to life by adding passers-by, or left it empty, changing the chromatic harmonies, and restoring the effects of the light in a more or less impressionistic fashion.

Walter Sickert, *St Mark's, Venice (Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus)*,  
1896, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

Sickert painted St Mark's Basilica many times. The ensemble evokes the Rouen Cathedrals series by Claude Monet, which he probably saw in Paris in 1895, at Durand-Ruel's, before leaving for Venice. Unlike the French painter, he did not work on the spot. He painted his canvases based on studies, once back in his studio in Venice or even in London. This serial work featuring Sickert's favourite Venetian motif was part of his research into pictorial technique.



Walter Sickert, *L'Hôtel Royal Dieppe*,  
c. 1894, oil paint on canvas, UK, Sheffield, Museums  
Sheffield, Millenium Gallery  
Image © Sheffield Museums / Bridgeman Images

The Dieppe paintings experiment with various techniques and approaches. These canvases, often painted on the spot, offer views of architectural landmarks and scenes of everyday urban life, such as a funfair or street performance, and convivial venues like the Café suisse and Hôtel royal. The latter was a mecca for the seaside tourism that had made Dieppe famous. Here, Sickert represents it with striking colours: the blue-green facade contrasts with the purplish sky.





Walter Sickert, *Bathers, Dieppe*, 1902, oil paint on canvas, Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery, National Museums Liverpool © National Museums Liverpool / Bridgeman Images

This work, painted by Sickert as part of his commission for the Hôtel de la Plage in Dieppe, stands out from the other seafronts of his Whistler period both by its format and pictorial technique. The paint is less diluted, layered in a rich accumulation of blues, greens, purples, whites, and greys. Once again, there is no horizon and the framing is intentionally off-centre, evoking photography.

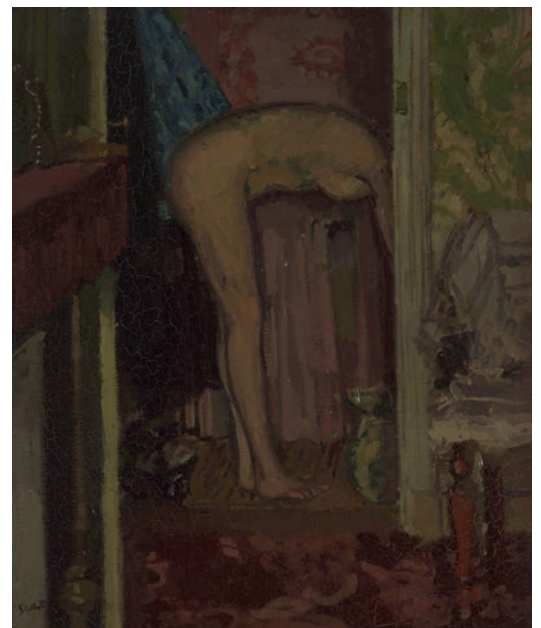


Walter Sickert, *La Vénitienne allongée*, 1903-1904, oil paint on canvas, Rouen, Musée des Beaux-Arts © C. Lancien, C. Loisel / Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie

In September 1903, Sickert went to Venice where he stayed for one year. He painted prostitutes who posed for him, dressed or naked, in the realistic setting of a bedroom. Here, two women are seen on a bed. One is dressed and seated to the left of the painting, and is cut off above the waist. The viewer's gaze therefore focuses on the scarcely covered body of an undressed woman, lying across the bed. The viewpoint is provocative, guiding the eye towards her barely concealed sex.

Walter Sickert, *Woman Washing her Hair*, 1906, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate © 2022 Tate Images

During his stays in Paris, Sickert mainly painted performance halls and nudes characterized by a de-erotized voyeurism. *Woman Washing her Hair*, where the decor is her hotel on the quai Voltaire, echoes works by Degas of women at their toilette. The viewpoint from the level of the lock of the open door suggests that the model is being observed unwittingly. The surprising framing chosen by Sickert conceals the upper part of her body and hides the very subject of the canvas behind a wall.



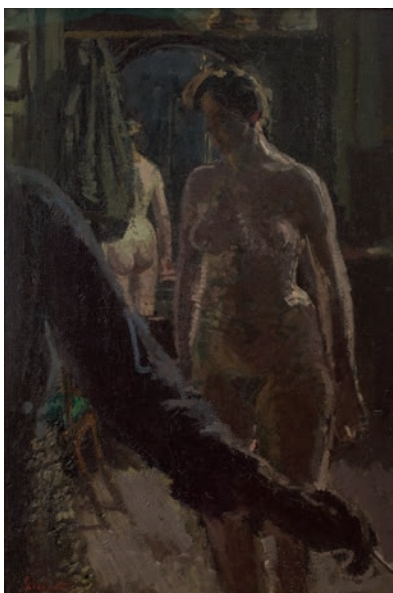


Walter Sickert, *The Iron Bedstead*,  
c. 1906, oil paint on canvas, Collection particulière –  
Courtesy Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert.  
© Hazlitt Holland-Hibbert



Walter Sickert, *La Hollandaise*, c. 1906, oil paint on  
canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

This nude disturbs by its earthy colours, by the brutal treatment of its craftsmanship, and by the physical peculiarities of the model. The light violently illuminates a thigh and breast, while the facial features are erased by the darkness. The body, foreshortened from the foot of the bed, is strangely deformed. The spectator has the impression of breaking into a room and surprising a woman in her intimacy. Indeed, the latter seems to raise herself up on one arm as if to observe the intruder.



Walter Sickert, *The Studio: the Painting of a Nude*,  
c. 1906, oil on canvas, Piano Nobile  
Property of an European Collector. Image courtesy of  
PIANO NOBILE Robert Travers (Works of Art) Ltd.  
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@pianonobilegallery

In this sophisticatedly constructed painting, the foreground is violently blocked by the dark diagonal of the painter's arm holding a brush. In the middle section, behind this fragment of self-portrait, a naked woman, stands in the middle of the studio against the light. In the background, a large mirror reflects the fully illuminated back of her naked body. The brightly-lit back draws attention more to the reflection than to the model, and complicates the reading of the work.





Walter Sickert, *L'affaire de Camden Town*,  
1909, oil paint on canvas  
© Collection particulière

This painting is part of the ensemble inspired by the murder of Emily Dimmock. Despite an allusion to prostitution or a relationship of domination, with this man leaning over a naked woman on a bed, there is no explicit sign of physical violence. With the ambiguity typical of his art, Sickert may also be simply describing the daily life of a couple in a poor district of London. The metal bed, the chamber pot, and the chair with the pile of clothes, all evoke a living space restricted to a single room.

Walter Sickert, *Ennui*,  
c. 1914, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

For this, his most famous work, Sickert had two of his favourite models pose for him: Marie Hayes, a housekeeper, and Hubby, a former delinquent, who both worked for the Sickert couple. The two figures are depicted within the claustrophobic setting of a petty bourgeois living room. They merge together due to an effect of perspective, but this unity of form contrasts with their isolation and obvious sentimental estrangement. The artist depicts loneliness within married life, and more generally the difficulty of communication between beings.

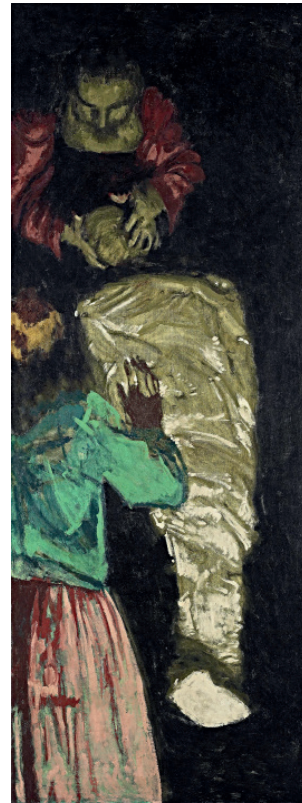


Walter Richard Sickert, *Baccarat - the Fur Cape*,  
1920, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

Sickert spent many evenings in the summer of 1920 at the Moorish casino in Dieppe. This entertainment venue attracted summer visitors, many of whom were English, who travelled to Dieppe by ferry. The artist discreetly sketched casino patrons, and then, in his studio, represented them from behind, or with their faces lowered. Gambling was illegal at that time in England. Sickert, who maintained a keen interest in the scandalous and the immoral, focused especially on baccarat, a game indulged in by the wealthiest members of society.



Walter Sickert, *Pimlico*, c.1937, oil paint on canvas, Aberdeen City Council  
© Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums



Walter Sickert, *The Raising of Lazarus*  
c. 1928-1929, oil paint on canvas, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Felton Bequest, 1947  
This digital record has been made available on NGV Collection Online through the generous support of Digitisation Champion Ms Carol Grigor through Metal Manufactures Limited



Walter Sickert, *Rowlandson House – Sunset*, 1910-1911, oil paint on canvas, London, Tate  
© 2022 Tate Images

Sickert was a charismatic, popular, and controversial teacher. He gave lessons from 1890 onwards and throughout his life dispensed advice to the artists with whom he was close. From 1910 to 1914, he made his studio in Hampstead Road a school of engraving, drawing, and painting, which he named Rowlandson House, in honour of English illustrator and caricaturist Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827). In this view of the school, the dark mass of the building in Camden Town stands out against the vibrant vegetation and skies.

Sickert had the idea for this scene of the resurrection of Lazarus when he received an artist's mannequin in his studio, delivered wrapped in paper, evoking a shroud. He then created a meticulously staged scene. He posed in the role of Christ, at the top of a ladder, and asked his friend Cicely Hey to play Lazarus's sister. The wrapped, harshly lit mannequin appears to float between them. Sickert had this spectacular composition photographed and then transposed it onto the canvas. The work is part of a series of biblical self-portraits that reveal the artist's renewal or innovation of his painting towards the end of his life.



## Biography

### 1860

**31 May:** Sickert is born in Munich. He is the eldest son of Oswald Adalbert Sickert, a painter and illustrator originally from Denmark, and Eleanor Louisa Henry, the illegitimate daughter of an English scientist father, close to the queen, and an Irish dancer mother who immigrated to Australia.

### 1869

The Sickert family moves to London.

### 1882

After a brief acting career, Sickert joins the studio of James McNeill Whistler. During the summer in Dieppe, he becomes friends with painter Jacques-Émile Blanche. The latter introduces him to other artists, collectors, and art dealers.

### 1883

Sickert meets painter Edgar Degas in Paris. Beginning in the summer of 1885, during which they both stay in Dieppe, they develop a close and lasting friendship.

### 1889

Sickert works as an art critic for the London edition of the New York Herald. The collaboration is short-lived, but his vocation as a critic long-lasting.

Participates in the Exposition Universelle in Paris.

Takes the head of the New English Art Club, a society of young artists who studied in Paris.

### 1896

After eleven years together, he separates from his first wife, Ellen Cobden.

### 1898

Sickert exhibits at the New English Art Club, the Royal Society of British Artists, and at the Carfax Gallery who welcome him on numerous occasions.

He lives in Normandy until 1905. In Dieppe, he meets Augustine Villain, doyenne of the fish market, who becomes his companion for several years.

### 1899

In Paris, where he goes every week to teach, Sickert stays with his friend Jacques-Émile Blanche, and rents a studio in Montparnasse in 1902

### 1900

In December, art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel organizes Sickert's first Parisian monographic exhibition.

### 1903

Invited by Blanche, Sickert exhibits with the Société nouvelle des peintres et sculpteurs (New Society of Painters and Sculptors), as well as at Durand-Ruel's, and the Salon des indépendants. His place in the French section of the Glaspalast Exhibition in Munich and the fifth Venice Biennale bears witness to his position within French artistic circles.

In September, he returns to Venice, where he goes regularly from 1895 onwards, and where he stays for the duration of one year.

### 1905

Sickert participates in the Salon d'automne in Paris.

He returns to England at the end of the year and settles in London in the working-class district of Camden Town.





**1908**

Sickert begins working at the Westminster Technical Institute. He teaches classes here for ten years.

**1911**

Sickert is behind the founding of the Camden Town Group, bringing together artists who depict modern life in a Post-Impressionist style.

In July, he marries Christine Angus, a former student of Rowlandson House School.

**1913**

The Sickert couple move to the Villa d'Aumale in Envermeu, on the outskirts of Dieppe.

Sickert participates in the Armory Show in New York, then the exhibition *Post-Impressionist and Futurist* at the Doré Gallery, London, where he is presented as the English equivalent of the French "Intimistes".

**1919**

The Sickert couple, who had returned to England at the beginning of the First World War, return to live for good at Envermeu. However, Christine dies of tuberculosis the following year.

**1922**

Following the death of his mother, Sickert returns to London for good and distances himself from Paris.

Tate Gallery acquires *A Marengo*: his first piece in the British national collections.

**1926**

Sickert marries Thérèse Lessore, a former student and artist, who assists him in his work.

**1928**

Sickert is appointed president of the Royal Society of British Artists, but leaves the position the following year.

**1931**

Now one of the most recognized of England's artists, Sickert enjoys yearly exhibitions up until the time of his death in London galleries like the Leicester Galleries, Redfern Gallery, and Beaux Arts Gallery.

**1932**

First acquisition of a Sickert work for the French public collections: the Louvre purchases *Hamlet*.

**1934**

Friends and admirers of Sickert organize financial support for the artist. The British government takes over in 1940, by providing him with a pension.

**1941**

The National Gallery in London holds a major retrospective of Sickert's work. The artist, in poor health, does not attend, and dies on 22 January 1942 in Bathampton.





## Digital mediation devices

### AN INTERACTIVE AUDIO JOURNEY

#### *WHO ARE YOU MR SICKERT ?*

Walter Sickert, whom you admire, has just died! You are a tempestuous young playwright and seek to honour him by writing a play in his memory. Leading the investigation that attempts to reveal the mysteries of his art, your loyal journalist friend has suggested themes you can choose to include in your play. This immersive experience, incorporating accounts by several of the artist's contemporaries, will plunge you into the enigmatic world of this multi-faceted painter.

Will you be as bold as Walter Sickert and make your play a masterpiece that inscribes your name in the annals of the greats? Or will you make your name as a provocative figure? Only you can decide...

**An interactive audio journey to accompany your visit is available on the Petit Palais mobile app, in both French and English, for iOS and Android.**



### PLAYLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

A selection of songs from the English music-hall repertoire can be heard in this room. This popular form of entertainment, from the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, is emblematic of English culture, and gave birth to a musical genre in its own right. The lyrics of music-hall songs were sentimental, comic, or even bawdy, and were specifically aimed at the working-class audiences who frequented such venues.



### PROJECTION AND TRANSPOSITION LANTERN

#### *Create your own painting in the style of Walter Sickert!*

At the end of his career, Walter Sickert continued to innovate by advocating the use of photography and a projection lantern in his painting. He would sometimes leave traces of the different transposition processes apparent in his works. This device allows you to take inspiration from the artist's technique and to play with his image by creating your own transposition of a photograph to a painting.



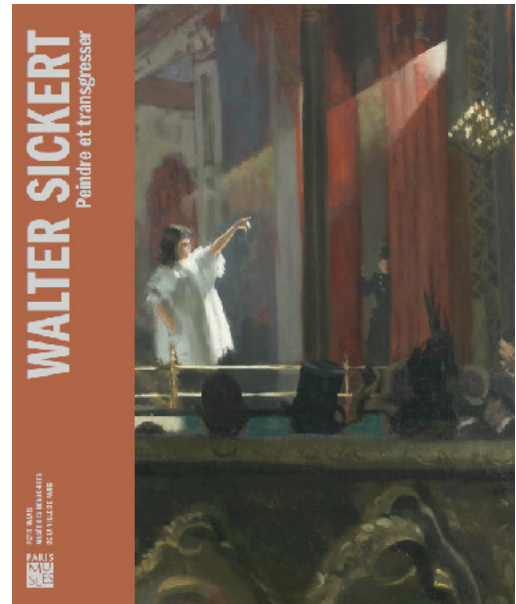
## Walter Sickert Painting and transgressing

Walter Sickert (1860-1942) was one of the pioneers of English modernism, leaving indelible marks on twentieth-century English figurative painting, particularly that of Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon.

From the outset, he dealt with unusual, even risqué themes - music halls, realistic nudes in modest interiors, distressing or ambiguous genre scenes - by means of unexpected framing or strange tonalities.

Close to his mentor Edgar Degas, but also to artists such as Pierre Bonnard, he developed a strong bond with France, which encouraged him to breathe new life into his art.

From the modernization of the traditional genre of the conversation piece to the transposition of images from popular culture, this provocative and fascinating artist never ceased to reinvent himself, pushing the boundary of all conventions.



Edited by Emma Chambers and Clara Roca  
Texts by Wendy Baron, Emma Chambers, Caroline Corbeau-Parsons, Somaya Critchlow, Kaye Donachie, Anna Gruetzner Robins, Martin Hammer, Thomas Kennedy, Patricia de Montfort, Katy Norris, Clara Roca, Sam Rose, Billy Rough and Lisa Tickner

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## Paris Musées A museums network

Administratively grouped together as Paris Musées, the fourteen museums and heritage sites of the City of Paris possess collections that are as exceptional for their diversity as for their quality.

To open up and share this significant cultural heritage, they have adopted a new visitor experience policy, moderated prices for temporary exhibitions, and focus on providing access to members of the public who traditionally lack access to cultural offerings.

Their permanent collections, which are free\*, and the temporary exhibitions and varied cultural programming reached 3 million visitors in 2018.

### Get the Paris Musées card!

A card can be bought from Paris Musées, which gives unlimited access, ahead of the queue, to the temporary exhibitions in all 14 of the museums of Paris\*, as well as special tariffs for activities.

It entitles the holder to reductions in the bookshop-boutiques and the cafe-restaurants, and to receive prior information about events in the museums.

In 2014, the card was bought by 9000 people.

Information is available at the Museum ticket offices or on **parismusees.paris.fr**.



\*Except the archaeological Crypt under the forecourt of l'île de la Cité and the Catacombs.

## The Petit Palais



© C. Fouin

Built for the Exposition Universelle de 1900, the Petit Palais building is a masterpiece by architect Charles Girault. In 1902, it became the City of Paris Museum of Fine Arts and presents a very beautiful collection of paintings, sculptures, furnishings and art objects dating from Antiquity to 1914.

Among the museum treasures are an exceptional collection of Greek vases and a very large group of Flemish and Dutch paintings from the seventeenth century, displayed around the famous *Self-Portrait with Dog* by Rembrandt. A magnificent collection of French paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries includes major works by Fragonard, Greuze, David, Géricault, Delacroix, Courbet, Pissarro, Monet, Sisley, Cézanne and Vuillard. The museum is also very proud of a very beautiful collection of sculptures by Carpeaux, Carriès and Dalou. The collection of decorative art is especially noted for objects from the Renaissance and the 1900s, including glasswork by Gallé, jewelry by Fouquet and Lalique and a dining room designed by Guimard for his private mansion. Finally, the museum has an outstanding graphic arts room featuring complete series of engravings by Dürer, Rembrandt and Callot and a rare collection of Nordic drawings.



© B. Fougérol

Since 2015, the collection presentation has been extensively reworked. It has been enriched by two new galleries on the garden floor level, one of which is dedicated to the Romantic period. In one gallery, restored large-format paintings by Delaroche and Schnetz are surrounded by works of artists such as Ingres, Géricault and Delacroix. In the second gallery, decorative paintings by Maurice Denis are interspersed with works by Cézanne, Bonnard, Maillol and Vallotton. In the fall of 2017, the collection of icons and Eastern Orthodox arts, which is the largest one in France, will benefit from a new museographic presentation. An area will also be dedicated to sketches of the major nineteenth-century Parisian settings. Early in 2018, these new presentations will be complemented in the North Gallery by collections of monumental sculptures from the nineteenth century.



© B. Fougérol

The program of temporary exhibitions at the Petit Palais alternates ambitious major subjects like *Paris romantic*, *Paris 1900*, *Les Bas-fonds du Baroque (Baroque Slums)* and Oscar Wilde with monographs that allow rediscovering forgotten painters such as Anders Zorn, Albert Besnard or George Desvallières. Since 2015, contemporary artists (Thomas Lerooy in 2015, Kehinde Wiley in 2016, Andres Serrano in 2017, Valérie Jouve in 2018, Yan Pei-Ming in 2019, Laurence Aëgerter in 2020 and Jean-Michel Othoniel in 2021) have been invited to exhibit in the Petit Palais permanent collections in order to create a dialog with these paintings and reveal links between their works and those of the museum.

**[petitpalais.paris.fr](http://petitpalais.paris.fr)**





## Information

### Walter Sickert. Painting and transgressing

From 14 October 2022 to 29 January 2023

#### Petit Palais

Avenue Winston-Churchill, 75008 Paris  
+33 (0)1 53 43 40 00  
Accessible to people with disabilities

#### Admission

Full rate : 15 euros  
Reduced rate : 13 euros  
Reservation of a recommended visit time on  
[petitpalais.paris.fr](http://petitpalais.paris.fr)

#### Opening Hours

Tuesday to Sunday, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
Late opening on Friday and Saturday until 7:00 p.m.

#### Access

Metro  
Lines 1 and 13: Champs-Élysées  
Clemenceau  
Line 9: Franklin D. Roosevelt

RER  
Line C: Invalides

Bus  
Lines 28, 42, 72, 73, 83, 93.

Vélib'  
Petit Palais station n°8001

#### Auditorium

Information on [petitpalais.paris.fr](http://petitpalais.paris.fr)

#### Café-restaurant *Le Jardin du Petit Palais*

Open from 10:00 a.m to 5:00 p.m  
Late opening on Friday and Saturday until 7 p.m

#### Bookshop

Open from 10:00 a.m to 6:00 p.m,  
Late closing at 7:00 p.m