

The Weird & Wonderful Aubrey Beardsley (Rosenbach, Spring 2022)

Instructor: Petra Clark

Course Description:

The year 2022 marks the 150th anniversary of Aubrey Beardsley's birth and even after all this time, his work continues to shock, delight, and inspire. Beardsley was only 25 when he died of tuberculosis in 1898, but by then he had already established a reputation as one of the most innovative and controversial illustrators of his day. Despite his brief career, Beardsley produced a large body of work—illustrations, designs, and posters, as well as writings—and his name became synonymous with the eccentric, the grotesque, and the subversive. Today, his art is instantly recognizable for its sinuous lines, striking use of black ink, and erotically-charged subject matter.

In this course, we will get up close and personal with this weird and wonderful creator! You'll get to know Beardsley, his friends and collaborators (including the artist Edward Burne-Jones and writer Oscar Wilde), London in the 1890s, and his wider artistic and social context through various texts—those he illustrated, those he wrote, and those that were written about him. We will also explore some of Beardsley's own influences (Japanese woodcuts, Pre-Raphaelite art, caricature) and those he in turn influenced (turn-of-the-century illustrators, psychedelic artists, 20th-century fashion designers) in order to better appreciate his impact and legacy.

Texts:

All assigned readings/media will be provided by the instructor as links or PDFs except Matthew Sturgis's *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography*. There are several editions of this book, any of which will be fine for the purposes of this course. Please use the ISBN numbers below to locate a copy of this book in a library or to purchase one online:

1st edition, 1999 (hardcover): ISBN 978-0879519100

1st edition, 1999 (paperback): ISBN 978-0006550563

2nd edition, 2011 (paperback): ISBN 978-1843680741

Reading Schedule:

- 1) Beardsley's World (Tuesday, March 8th)
 - Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography*, Introduction & Chapters 1-4
 - "Aubrey Beardsley at Tate Britain – Exhibition Tour" video
- 2) Beardsley's Art (Tuesday, April 5th)
 - Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography*, Chapters 5-6
 - Oscar Wilde, *Salome* (1894 edition)
- 3) Beardsley's Writings (Tuesday, May 3rd)
 - Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography*, Chapters 7-10
 - Aubrey Beardsley, *Under the Hill* (from Vol. 1 & 2 of *The Savoy*, 1896)
- 4) Beardsley's Legacies (Tuesday, May 31st)
 - "Aubrey Beardsley: The Wunderkind of Decadence," *Tate Etc.* issue 48: Spring 2020
 - "Kate Hext: Beardsley at the Cinema" recorded lecture
 - Excerpts from Donald S. Olson's *The Confessions of Aubrey Beardsley: A Novel*