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# The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography

*Linda Merrill*

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#346071 in Books 1998-11-10 Original language: English PDF # 1 1.29 x 10.10 x 12.591, 5.67 #File Name: 0300076118408 pages | File size: 16.Mb

**Linda Merrill : The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Peacock Room: A Cultural Biography:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very pleased. By Sidney Book arrived in pristine condition. Very pleased. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Whistler's Peacock Room By Addicted to Text This is a thorough history of the social and cultural influences on James McNeil Whistler's work. The plates of his paintings and of this room are magnificent. 19 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Whistler's Aesthetic Interior By Simulacrum "Remember," wrote the British art critic John Ruskin in 1853, "that the most beautiful things in the world are the most useless; peacocks and lilies for instance." When a peacock unfolds its plumage, the eyespots on its feathers form exact logarithmic spirals, like those in a daisy, a pinecone, and a sunflower. Twenty years later, Ruskin's remark inspired the Aesthetic Movement ("Art for art's sake"), of which the chief proponents were the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde and the American painter James A.M. Whistler. Wilde sometimes wore a sunflower in his lapel; and

Whistler, as is documented in this thoroughly researched and richly illustrated volume (with 250 illustrations, nearly half in color), created an opulent dining room for London businessman Frederick Leyland, with peacocks as the main motif. Completed amid controversy in 1877, *Harmony in Blue and Gold: The Peacock Room* was dismantled and sold after Leyland's death, and, in 1923, reconstructed in the U.S. at the Freer Gallery of Art, a branch of the Smithsonian Institution, where it remains on view. A key event in design history, it was restored physically in 1989 through 1992; and now this book restores it historically, thereby "dispelling some of the myths and misconceptions that had settled over the story like mantles of aging varnish." As a cultural biography, the book's greatest virtue is its breadth of focus: Just as Whistler's interior served as an elaborate setting for Leyland's Chinese porcelain collection, Merrill provides a rich wide factual setting for the Peacock Room. (Copyright by Roy R. Behrens from *Ballast Quarterly Review*, Vol. 14 No. 3, Spring 1999.)

An account of the creation of James McNeill Whistler's Peacock Room, its reception by the artist's patron, subsequent criticism, and ultimate museum installation in 1923. The author also includes details of dinner parties that took place in the room, and attempts to draw out insights into contemporary British culture.