
Fantin-Latour family

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French artists. (1) Henri Fantin-Latour painted in a wide variety of genres, from portraits and still-lives to allegorical and mythological works. He also produced lithographs. His wife, (2) Victoria Fantin-Latour, painted some portraits but is best known for her still-lives.

(1) (Ignace-)Henri(-Théodore) Fantin-Latour

(b Grenoble, Jan 14, 1836; d Buré, Orne, Aug 25, 1904).

Painter and printmaker. He studied with his father, Jean-Théodore Fantin-Latour (1805–75), from 1846 and then with Horace Lecoq de Boisbaudran at the Petite Ecole de Dessin in Paris from 1850 to 1856. His apprenticeship was based on copying the Old Masters before beginning to study from nature. He had a growing enthusiasm for the Italian painters, particularly Titian and Veronese, whom he copied in the Louvre, Paris, from 1852. *The Dream* (1854; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble) is one of the first of a series of imaginary scenes in which Fantin-Latour concentrated on the theme of vision, which he later continued in his representations of scenes from various operas. He met François Bonvin and Félix Bracquemond in 1853 and went to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1854, but he left before the end of the year. He began to paint the life around him and did a series of self-portraits from 1854 to 1861, such as *Self-portrait Seated at the Easel* (1858; Berlin, Alte N.G.) and *Self-portrait* (1859; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble). These two directions—Realism and fantasy—were already clearly defined when he met Gustave Courbet in 1859. For several months in 1861 he was a pupil at Courbet's studio, but from the start he tempered the brutal Realism of his master with a discreet intimacy in such works as the *Two Sisters* (1859; St Louis, MO, A. Mus.), *Woman Reading* (1861; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay) and *Reading* (1863; Tournai, Mus. B.-A.). By rejecting the anecdotal aspect of genre, Fantin-Latour heightened the tension inherent in a contrast between the physical proximity of the models and their psychological distance, creating a sense of solitude.

Through James McNeill Whistler, whom he met in 1858, Fantin-Latour made a succession of trips to England (1859, 1861, 1864, 1881). He met Whistler's brother-in-law, Seymour Haden, who taught him to etch; he exhibited at the Royal Academy, London, in 1862; and he sold his first still-lives through the collectors Ruth Edwards (c. 1833–1907) and Edwin Edwards (1823–79), whom he portrayed on several occasions (e.g. 1875; Washington, DC, N.G.A.). Fantin-Latour's commissioned portraits, such as *Mlle Marguerite de Biron* (1868; Paris, priv. col., see 1982–3 exh. cat., p. 112), also date from this period.

Fantin-Latour's aesthetic is not easily defined: his friendship with Edouard Manet, whom he met in 1857, and the future Impressionists led him to exhibit in the Salon des Refusés in 1863; but he refused to exhibit with them at Nadar's studio in 1874. Although he was rejected at the Salon of 1859, he appeared there regularly from 1861 to 1899, and his works were generally well received by the critics.

Like his friends, Fantin-Latour had a taste for modern life and contemporary scenes, while rejecting anecdote; he had the same sensitivity to light effects, although he was not attracted to *plein-air* painting. From 1864, in an evident desire to become better known, he began exhibiting group

portraits, which brought together avant-garde painters and writers: Edouard Manet and Charles Baudelaire in *Homage to Delacroix* (exh. Paris Salon, 1864; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay); Whistler in *The Toast* (exh. Paris Salon, 1865; destr.); Emile Zola, Claude Monet and Auguste Renoir in *Studio in the Batignolles* (exh. Paris Salon, 1870; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay); the 'accursed' poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud in *Corner of the Table* (exh. Paris Salon, 1872); and finally *Around the Piano*, a homage to Richard Wagner (1885; both Paris, Mus. d'Orsay). Fantin-Latour transformed the traditional apotheosis into a bourgeois homage, a friendly gathering even, but the static composition isolates each immobile figure in a monochrome space. This absence of triteness is also typical of his portraits, such as *Edouard Manet* (1867; Chicago, IL, A. Inst.) or *Reading* (1877; Lyon, Mus. B.-A.). Lack of facial expression enhances the rigour of the composition and the austerity of the mourning worn by the *Dubourg Family* (1878; Paris, Mus. d'Orsay).



Henri Fantin-Latour: Pansies, oil on canvas, 9 x 11 1/8 in. (22.9 x 28.3 cm), 1903 (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Paul O. Fabri, 1996, Accession ID:1996.517); photo © The Metropolitan Museum of Art <http://www.metmuseum.org/Collections/search-the-collections/110002440>

Fantin-Latour was similarly far from Impressionism in his still-lives (see fig.). He cut flowers and brought them indoors to paint in the studio (e.g. *Pansies*, 1903 and *Still-life with Pansies*, 1874; both New York, Met.). He studied the relationship of tones and colours in compositions based on a balanced pyramid, as in *Autumn Bouquet* (1862; Philadelphia, PA, Mus. A.). He achieved complete control of the composition in *Double Chrysanthemums and Fruit* (1865; Boston, MA, Mus. F.A.). He was able to link a precise rendering of plants with the objective of the overall pictorial effect in *Primulas, Pears and Pomegranates* (1866; Otterlo, Kröller-Müller Sticht.) and in *Tea Roses and a Blue Glass Carafe* (1889;

Lyon, Mus. B.-A.). In *White Rambler Roses* (1870; Houston, TX, Mus. F.A.) he depicted only flowers, concentrating on the subtle variations of colour. From the late 1870s he and his wife, (2) Victoria Fantin-Latour, spent the summers in Buré, Orne, and vegetation became accordingly more prominent in his paintings (e.g. *Annual Chrysanthemums*, 1889; Kansas City, MO, Nelson-Atkins Mus. A.).

During the Siege of Paris and the Commune (1871), Fantin-Latour gave up portraiture for more literary pursuits, which he had already tried with the lithographs for *Tannhäuser: Venusberg* (1862; Paris, Bib. N., see 1982-3 exh. cat., p. 153), a theme he also painted (1864; Los Angeles, CA, Co. Mus. A.). This allegory of hedonistic love fitted in with a growing interest in 18th-century painting, particularly *fêtes galantes*, a genre taken up again by Narcisse Diaz and Adolphe Monticelli. From 1870 Fantin-Latour's output was punctuated with such mythological scenes as Danae, Auroras, the *Toilet of Venus* (Geneva, Petit Pal.) and nymphs illustrating an edition of poems by André Chénier (Paris, 1902).

Through such friends as Otto Scholderer, a painter and violinist from Frankfurt, Edmond Maître (*d* 1898), a pianist and dilettante, Adolphe Jullien (1840-1932), his biographer, and the judge Antoine Lascoux, Fantin-Latour discovered the contemporary German music of Robert Schumann, Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. He was imbued with the spirit of Romanticism, as underlined by his choices, celebrating in turn Schumann in *Reflections of the Orient* (1864-9; destr.) and Hector Berlioz in *The Birthday* (exh. Paris Salon, 1876; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble). Music provided a reservoir of ideas in which Fantin-Latour's escapism could find imaginative expression; he discovered the dreaming idealistic side of life that he did not find in contemporary society. Using the flexible technique of tracing with lithographic chalk, later reworked by rubbing or scratching the stone, he created the *Witch of the Alps* (1873; see 1982-3 exh. cat., p. 223) after Schumann and the *Trojan Duet* and the *Apparition of Hector* (both 1879) after Berlioz. From Wagner he took the legendary romanticism of the eternal temptations and great myths, illustrating *Tannhäuser* with the *Evening Star* (1884; see 1982-3 exh. cat., p. 299), *Lohengrin* with *Lohengrin's Prelude* (1882; see 1982-3 exh. cat., p. 117), *Parsifal* with the *Evocation of Kundry* (1883) and above all *The Ring* (all Paris, Bib. N., Cab. Est.). He depicted the same scenes several times, and the definitive versions appear in Adolphe Jullien's biographies of *Richard Wagner* (Paris, 1886) and *Hector Berlioz* (Paris, 1888). Fantin-Latour's tastes never evolved; only a single journey to Bayreuth in 1876 allowed him to enrich his sources of inspiration by developing such new themes as *Das Rheingold: Opening Scene* (pastel and charcoal on lithography, 1876-7, Paris, Mus. d'Orsay; painting, 1888, Hamburg, Ksthalle), in which he showed an Impressionist sensitivity to light and the technique of applying colour in broken strokes.

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(2) (Marie-Louise-)Victoria Fantin-Latour [née Dubourg]

(*b* Paris, Dec 1, 1840; *d* Buré, Sept 30, 1926).

Painter, wife of (1) Henri Fantin-Latour. She studied under the portrait painter Fanny Chéron (*b* 1830) and probably met Fantin-Latour at the Louvre, Paris, where they were both copying in the mid-1860s. Around 1867-8 she was associated with the circle of Edouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Fantin-Latour and Edgar Degas; it was at this time that Degas painted a very frank and unflattering portrait of her (Toledo, OH, Mus. A.). While it may be impossible to prove that she was actually a pupil of Fantin-Latour, the early works she exhibited at the Salon are in a style close to his, in particular the portrait of her sister *Charlotte Dubourg* (exh. Paris Salon, 1870; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble). In this intimate indoor portrait the neutral background recalls the austerity of Fantin-Latour's early portraits. The position of the model is a little stiff, and her expression is like that of a spectator. After exhibiting two portraits at the Salons of 1869 and 1870, she showed only still-lives of fruit and flowers, often signed *V. Dubourg* or monogrammed *V. D.* From Fantin-Latour she derived a simplicity of composition, an absence of detail and neutral but vibrant backgrounds; her flowers, grouped in generous bouquets, stand out from backgrounds of sustained greyish scumbling or red-brown tones. Her brushstrokes, in long flecks of colour or in tight scumbling, emphasize the play of light and shade.

Soon after their marriage on 16 November 1876, the Fantin-Latours began each summer to paint still-lives (e.g. 1884; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble) at Buré in Orne. In 1880 they inherited a house there, which Victoria Fantin-Latour depicted in two paintings, the *House at Buré* (Alençon, Mus. B.-A. & Dentelle) and the *Garden at Buré* (Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble). Whereas Henri Fantin-Latour developed a more direct approach to nature in his still-lives from the 1880s, no such change is apparent in the work of Victoria Fantin-Latour. After her husband's death she continued to paint, with a supple, freer brushstroke. Her colours are very lively in such traditional compositions as *Chrysanthemums* (1908; Grenoble, Mus. Grenoble). She compiled *Notes prises par Mme Fantin-Latour du vivant de H. Fantin-Latour, 1836-1860* (Paris, Bib. N. Cab. Est.) and published a catalogue raisonné (Paris, 1911) of her husband's work. In March 1905, in collaboration with the dealer Gustave Tempelaere, she organized a sale of her husband's drawings and prints, and she subsequently gave numerous works to various museums, especially to the Musée de Peinture et de Sculpture, Grenoble, and the Palais du Luxembourg, Paris.

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