

Topic Page: [Ensor, James \(1860 – 1949\)](#)

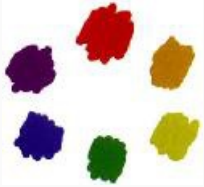


Image from: [Color Systems in Computer Graphics Companion](#)

Summary Article: **Ensor, James Ensor Baron**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(jěms äNsôr'), 1860–1949, Belgian painter and etcher. Ensor's imagery reflected one of the most bizarre and powerful visions of his era. He left his native Ostend to study painting (1877–80) at the Académie de Bruxelles. In Brussels he became one of the original members of “Les XX,” a group of avant-garde, politically and aesthetically progressive artists, writers, and musicians. Ensor exhibited with them regularly until 1888, when his pictures, particularly the *Entry of Christ into Brussels*, (1888, J. Paul Getty Mus., Los Angeles) were rejected as scandalous. While the public and press were at first hostile to his work, his paintings continued to be exhibited, and he gradually won worldwide acclaim. In 1929, Ensor was made a baron by King Albert. His home in Ostend became a museum after his death.

Ensor's early style of painting is characterized by somber color, thick impasto, and an earthy realism with some elements of the fantastic. Toward 1883 his palette lightened, and by 1887 his paintings were flooded with intense light and strong color. From the 1880s to 1900 he produced his most inventive and original work. Ensor's sources included the grotesque fantasies of Bosch, Bruegel, and Callot. He portrayed a fractured world, filled with leering masks, clowns, skulls and skeletons, and carnivallike scenes as well as scathingly satirical tableaux of doctors, clergy, lawyers, politicians, and other emblems of respectable society. Among his masterpieces is *The Temptation of St. Anthony* (1887, Mus. of Modern Art, New York City). By 1900 the significant part of his work was finished; during the last 50 years of his life his paintings show hesitant draftsmanship and an absence of internal structure. Ensor ranks as one of the great innovators of the late 19th cent.; his art transformed reality, opening the way for such 20th-century movements as surrealism and expressionism.

See Elesh, J. , ed., *James Ensor: The Complete Graphic Works* (2 vol., 1981);

Lesko, D. , *James Ensor: The Creative Years* (1985);

de Zegher, C. , ed., *Between Street and Mirror: The Drawings of James Ensor* (museum catalog, 2001);

Swinbourne, A. , *James Ensor* (museum catalog, 2009).

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Ensor, James Ensor Baron. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/ensor_james_1860_1949



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"Ensor, James Ensor Baron." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/ensor_james_1860_1949. Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.