

Topic Page: [Sickert, Walter \(1860 - 1942\)](#)

Summary Article: **Sickert, Walter Richard**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

English artist. His works, broadly Impressionist in style, capture subtleties of tone and light, often with a melancholic atmosphere, their most familiar subjects being the rather shabby cityscapes and domestic and music-hall interiors of late Victorian and Edwardian London. *Ennui* (c. 1913; Tate Gallery, London) is a typical interior painting. His work inspired the Camden Town Group.

Sickert learned his craft from James Whistler in London and then from Degas in Paris. Though often described as an Impressionist, he was only so to the same limited extent as Degas, constructing pictures from swift notes made on the spot, and never painting in the open air.

He worked in Dieppe from 1885 to 1905, with occasional visits to Venice, and produced music-hall paintings and views of Venice and Dieppe in dark, rich tones. In his 'Camden Town' period (1905–14), he explored the back rooms and dingy streets of North London. His zest for urban life and his personality drew together a group of younger artists who formed the nucleus of the Camden Town Group, which played a leading role in bringing post-Impressionism into English art.

Sickert was born in Munich, the eldest son of the Danish painter Oswald Adalbert Sickert. The family moved to London in 1868. After a short period as an actor, Sickert studied art at the Slade School and then under Whistler in Chelsea when, like Whistler, he took to etching. In 1883 he met Degas in Paris, who became the greatest influence on his style and attitude to art. His later work became broader in treatment and lighter in tone, a late innovation being the 'Echoes', in which he freely adapted the work of Victorian illustrators. Although well known in Europe, he did not achieve recognition in the UK until the 1920s. His writings were collected in 1947 under the title *A Free House*.

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