

= The Destroying Angel and Daemons of Evil Interrupting the Orgies of the Vicious and Intemperate
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The Destroying Angel and Daemons of Evil Interrupting the Orgies of the Vicious and Intemperate , also known as The Destroying Angel and Daemons Inflicting Divine Vengeance on the Wicked and Intemperate and The Destruction of the Temple of Vice , is an oil painting on canvas by English artist William Etty , first exhibited in 1832 . Etty had become famous for nude paintings , and acquired a reputation for tastelessness , indecency and a lack of creativity . With The Destroying Angel he hoped to disprove his critics with an openly moral piece . The painting is 127 @. @ 8 cm by 101 @. @ 9 cm (50 in by 40 in) and depicts a classical temple under attack from a destroying angel and a group of daemons . Some of the human occupants are dead or unconscious , others flee in terror or struggle helplessly against the daemons .

When first exhibited in 1832 , The Destroying Angel was widely praised for its technical brilliance , but critics were divided on the subject matter . Some praised its vividness and ability to mix fear and beauty without lowering into tastelessness ; others criticised its thematic matter as inappropriate , and chastised Etty for wasting his talents . The painting changed the manner in which art critics viewed the artist ; some saw it as indicating previously unseen character depths , others considered it a renunciation of his previous works . In 1854 Henry Payne , who had commissioned the painting , sold it to Sir Joseph Whitworth . Whitworth donated it in 1882 to the Manchester Art Gallery , where it remains .

= = Background = =

William Etty (1787 ? 1849) , the seventh son of a York baker and miller , had originally been an apprentice printer in Hull , but on completing his seven @-@ year apprenticeship at the age of 18 moved to London to become an artist . Strongly influenced by the works of Titian and Rubens , he became famous for painting nude figures in biblical , literary and mythological settings . Many of his peers greatly admired him , and he was elected a full Royal Academician in 1828 , ahead of John Constable .

Between 1820 and 1829 Etty exhibited 15 paintings , of which 14 depicted nude figures . While some nude paintings by foreign artists existed in private collections , England had no tradition of nude painting and the display and distribution of nude material to the public had been suppressed since the 1787 Proclamation for the Discouragement of Vice . Etty was the first British artist to specialise in the nude , and the reaction of the lower classes to these paintings caused concern throughout the 19th century . Although his portraits of male nudes were generally well received , many critics condemned his repeated depictions of female nudity as indecent . Etty 's Youth on the Prow , and Pleasure at the Helm , completed in 1830 and exhibited in 1832 , attracted scathing criticism for its supposed seductive and sensual nature , leading The Morning Chronicle to comment that " [Etty] should not persist , with an unhallowed fancy , to pursue Nature to her holy recesses . He is a laborious draughtsman , and a beautiful colourist ; but he has not taste or chastity of mind enough to venture on the naked truth . "

Needled by repeated attacks from The Morning Chronicle on his supposed indecency , poor taste and lack of creativity , Etty determined to produce a work that would prove his detractors wrong . The result was The Destroying Angel and Daemons of Evil Interrupting the Orgies of the Vicious and Intemperate .

The Destroying Angel was commissioned by Henry Payne of Leicester in 1822 , on a promise of 60 guineas (about £ 5 @, @ 200 in today 's terms) when complete . Payne had granted Etty complete freedom in the creation of the piece , but Etty had done little with the notion until , stung by The Morning Chronicle 's criticism , he decided to return to the theme , completing it in 1832 . As Etty had become a more prominent painter in the meantime , Payne paid him £ 130 (about £ 11 @, @ 000 in today 's terms) for the piece . The work is thought to have been inspired by the works of John Milton and Alexander Pope , by Michelangelo 's The Last Judgment and possibly by the French Revolution of 1830 , in which Etty had been caught up during a visit to Paris to study in the

Louvre . The topic was one to which Etty felt particularly close , saying that he had put his " whole soul " into the piece .

= = Composition = =

The Destroying Angel is a visionary work , depicting a wholly imaginary scene rather than a scene from history , literature or mythology . It measures 127 @. @ 8 cm by 101 @. @ 9 cm (50 in by 40 in) , and depicts an ornate imaginary classical temple . The temple and its occupants are under attack from a destroying angel and a group of daemons , who are in the process of abducting its human occupants . The angel itself is wreathed in smoke in the centre of the image . Having destroyed one side of the temple , it is poised to hurl a thunderbolt . Below the angel , daemons attack a group of around 25 semi @-@ naked human figures . Each human is shown in a different position and expresses terror in a different way , and each is deliberately painted in paler tones than those Etty typically used in an effort to suggest death and pallor . As with most of Etty 's works , the figures are a collection of depictions of models in studio poses , later arranged for dramatic effect , rather than painted as a group .

To the right of the painting , daemons drag terrified women away . The woman in the lower right hand corner turns to see flames reflected in the eyes of the daemon who holds her from behind , with a look of horrified guilt on her face . Behind her , other women struggle helplessly with the daemons or are carried away unconscious , having fainted .

In the centre of the foreground is a figure modelled on Caius Gabriel Cibber 's Raving Madness , which at the time was one of two monumental sculptures above the entrance to Bethlem Hospital (" Bedlam ") , and a well @-@ known London landmark and symbol of insanity . The chained figure is contorted in agony struggling to escape his bonds , while a daemon pulls on one end of the chain . Beside this lunatic is an unconscious or dead gambler , his winnings spread on the floor beside him .

Behind the central images of the lunatic , daemon and gambler are a group of people who have only just realised what is happening . A male figure in a red Phrygian cap (a symbol of the French and American Revolutions) reclines with his arm around the waist of a female figure (identified as a bacchante by Sarah Burnage of the University of York) . The female figure shades her eyes , either against the brightness of the angel or to block out the horror taking place in front of her .

On the left @-@ hand side of the painting , in the background , the structure of the temple crumbles and burns in the wake of the angel 's path , while figures in varying stages of undress flee the approaching daemons . In the foreground a drunken man mimics the pose of the Barberini Faun as he clutches his head , alert enough to realise his fate if he does not escape but too intoxicated to flee .

Around the painting lie corpses in various states of undress . The Destroying Angel was painted shortly after Etty 's visit to Paris in which he had witnessed the July Revolution at first hand , and the sight and smell of the dead in the streets had left a strong impression on him . The heaped bodies in The Destroying Angel were probably directly inspired by the events Etty had witnessed in France , and perhaps also by the cholera epidemic which killed thousands in London in 1832 .

= = Reception = =

The Destroying Angel was first exhibited at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 1832 . It immediately generated much critical and public interest , and was compared favourably with The Fall of the Damned by Peter Paul Rubens , Michelangelo 's The Last Judgment and " Breughell 's frightful fancies " .

Although the painting was celebrated as a technical accomplishment , some critics were uncertain if it had the correct moral effect . The Library of the Fine Arts was critical of its " pantomimic " quality , which it considered " calculated to excite any but such ideas as we should wish to see produced by Art " , while The Examiner complained about the depiction of women being attacked , arguing : " Mr Etty should not treat the fair sex in this harsh and wanton manner . We doubt his right to put a single

one of them into the hands of a Demon , much less to deliver them over by the dozen to the grasp of the destroyers . " The Times said , " We do not profess to understand what class of compositions that is which originates neither in history nor poetry ? no doubt Mr. Etty does ; but as far as we can comprehend his picture , which is much more intelligible than his language , it represents a quantity of able @-@ bodied demons , who appear angry at the ladies for having stayed out so long , and who are come to fetch them home accordingly " , and criticised Etty for a " slovenly manner " and for " abusing his rich gifts , and [wasting] upon the wild and unmeaning what might be made subservient to much more worthy purposes " . Despite this , the same critic conceded that " The work is one of extraordinary power " and that " The figures are drawn with exquisite skill , the grouping admirably varied , and yet so combined as to present a complete picture , and the colouring vigorous and harmonious in an eminent degree . "

Other critics admired Etty 's unusual interpretation of apocalyptic religious imagery , his ability to give distinct characters and shapes to the individual demons and their victims , and the vividness of his imagination . The Morning Post particularly praised Etty 's ability to convey " creation conceived and thrown upon the canvas with all the fury of poetical inspiration " by combining the " dauntless spirit of a sketch " with the " powerful impression of a finished picture " . The prominent art critic William Paulet Carey (writing under the name of ' Ridolfi ') championed The Destroying Angel , and in particular Etty 's ability to balance beauty , horror and fear without descending into tastelessness . Carey saw Etty as proof that British artistic traditions were equal to any others in the world , and The Destroying Angel as evidence of Etty 's " redeeming grace and spirit " . Etty 's long @-@ standing adversaries at The Morning Chronicle found little to attack in the painting , their review stating that " The upper part of the picture is masterly , grand and beautiful . The lower part not so well , but some of the figures are in admirable action and fine drawing . " The reticence of The Morning Chronicle prompted Carey to comment that they were in " envious silence " .

Despite some criticism , The Destroying Angel changed the way Etty was perceived by critics . They commonly had viewed Etty 's works as insights into his mind , generally with the aim of discrediting him for supposed sexual deviancies . Confronted with a piece so obviously intended to convey a moral lesson , many of those same critics felt that Etty had revealed a more moral nature than they had previously believed . Many explicitly saw The Destroying Angel as a counterweight to the nude paintings for which Etty was famous , or even a representation of Etty 's own repentance for or renunciation of his previous works . Fraser 's Magazine described the painting as " a sermon to [Etty 's] admirers ... where he inflicts poetical justice upon his own gay dames and their gallants , their revels being broken in upon , and they themselves being carried off most unceremoniously , like that little gentleman Don Juan , by sundry grim @-@ looking brawny devils " .

= = Legacy = =

After 1832 , Etty exhibited over 80 more paintings at the Summer Exhibition . He remained a prominent painter of nudes , but from this time made conscious efforts to reflect moral lessons . Yet he remained , in the majority view , a pornographer . Charles Robert Leslie observed shortly after Etty 's death that " [Etty] himself , thinking and meaning no evil , was not aware of the manner in which his works were regarded by grosser minds " . Etty remained commercially successful in his lifetime , amassing £ 17 @, @ 000 (about £ 1 @, @ 600 @, @ 000 in today 's terms) by his death .

Etty died in 1849 , and his work enjoyed a brief boom in popularity . Interest in him declined over time , and by the end of the 19th century the cost of all his paintings had fallen below their original prices . Henry Payne sold the The Destroying Angel in 1854 for 770 guineas (about £ 68 @, @ 000 in today 's terms) to Sir Joseph Whitworth , who donated it in 1882 to the Manchester Art Gallery , where it remains . The painting was exhibited as part of a major retrospective of Etty 's work at the York Art Gallery in 2011 ? 12 .

As Etty had rapidly fallen from fashion , his works had little influence on most subsequent painters . William Edward Frost was a great admirer of Etty , and Frost 's Una Alarmed by Fauns (1843) and Una and the Wood Nymphs (1847) owe a conscious debt to The Destroying Angel in their depiction of a group of semi @-@ clad daemonic and human figures , as does John Everett Millais

's early work *Cymon and Iphigenia* (1848) . As Etty 's style became increasingly unpopular , those artists who had imitated him , other than Frost , soon abandoned the style . Etty 's biographer Leonard Robinson contends that the later fairy paintings of Richard Dadd , which often show large crowds of mythical creatures mingling with humans , were influenced by Etty but concedes that Dadd was likely unconscious of Etty 's influence on his style .