

Basic Detail Report



The Sleeping Princess: Briar-Rose Series

Date

c. 1872-1874

Primary Maker

Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones

Medium

Oil on canvas

Dimensions

126 x 237 cm

Description

Burne-Jones and his fellow student at Oxford, William Morris (1834-1896), with whom he was to collaborate on numerous decorative commissions, abandoned their religious studies to pursue careers in the arts. With the encouragement of John Ruskin (1819-1900), Burne-Jones studied Venetian painting and early Renaissance masters during numerous travels to Italy. The Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) was also an important influence. Burne-Jones was an imaginative, romantic and predominantly self-taught artist who painted his subject matter, drawn from literary, historical and mythical sources, in an original, often evocatively wistful manner. The Sleeping Princess is one of a number of paintings inspired by The Legend of the Briar Rose, which Burne-Jones painted between c. 1871 and 1894 and reveals his love of challenging compositional arrangements stemming from the use of horizontal or vertical canvases. This work differs from his other versions of The Sleeping Princess in its restrained, verdant colour tones and the inclusion of an hour-glass emphasising the passage of time and the legend's underlying theme of the transition from girlhood to womanhood. In 1890, paintings from The Briar Rose series were shown to critical acclaim at Agnew's, his art dealers in London, marking the apotheosis of his career. (JO'D)