

# ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST

## DARREN WATERSTON'S INTERPRETATION OF JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER'S PEACOCK ROOM

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*Filthy Lucre*, 2013–14, Darren Waterston. Photo: Hutomo Wicaksono/Courtesy of the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler galleries

James McNeill Whistler's now iconic Peacock Room, with its cast of gilded birds painted on jade-color walls, was not always considered a thing of beauty. In fact, when the artist completed the dining room—commissioned in the 1870s by shipping magnate Frederick Leyland to showcase his collection of Asian ceramics—Whistler was promptly dismissed from the job and banned from the house.

In response, he painted a caricature of Leyland in the likeness of a gangly peacock. Hunched rather demonically over a piano, the tycoon is shown with the feathers and crest of the braggart bird, surrounded by his expansive collection of



*The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor)*, 1879, James McNeill Whistler. Photo: Courtesy of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

ceramics. The painting's name, *The Gold Scab: Eruption in Frilthy Lucre (The Creditor)*, combines *filthy* and *frilly* to coin a new word.

In 2014 painter Darren Waterston created his own version of the famous room—*Filthy Lucre*—that riffs on Whistler's work. The new space, while nearly identical, is in a state of crumbling decay. Stalactites drip from the ceiling; the gilded shelves buckle and splinter, as if with age; paint oozes from the surfaces; and an eerie soundtrack completes the haunting feeling. Waterston's work, now on display at the Smithsonian's Freer and Sackler galleries, can finally be seen alongside Whistler's original.

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