

Trust Trail: Artistic York

William Etty is undoubtedly the city's most famous son for art historians, but the city's artistic connections are far richer and more varied. Aside from oil painters, there are also sculptors, designers, and stained-glass artists.

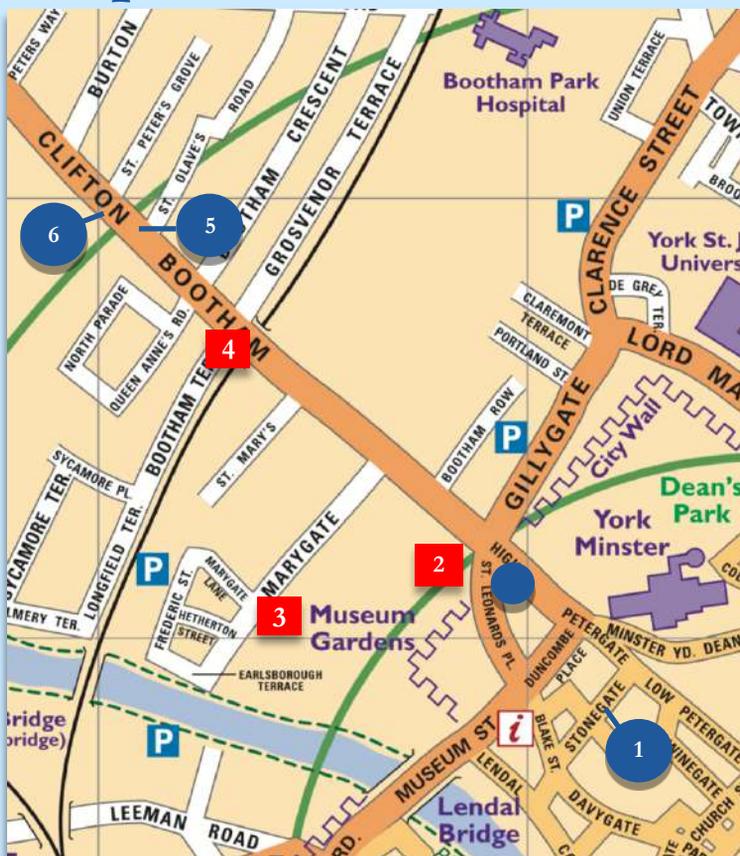
The lives and art of these men and women, where they lived, worked, studied and exhibited, are explored in this half-hour magical history tour.

Their stories touch on associated passions – conservation, heritage, domesticity, civic pride; passions that are true to what continues to make York such a special place today.

Starting on Stonegate, the trail leads to Exhibition Square, Etty's tomb in St Olave's churchyard, then past Bootham Park Hospital and finally to St Peter's School, where Bootham becomes Clifton.



Map



Key

Plaques



Points of interest



Stop 1: J.W. Knowles (1838 - 1931)

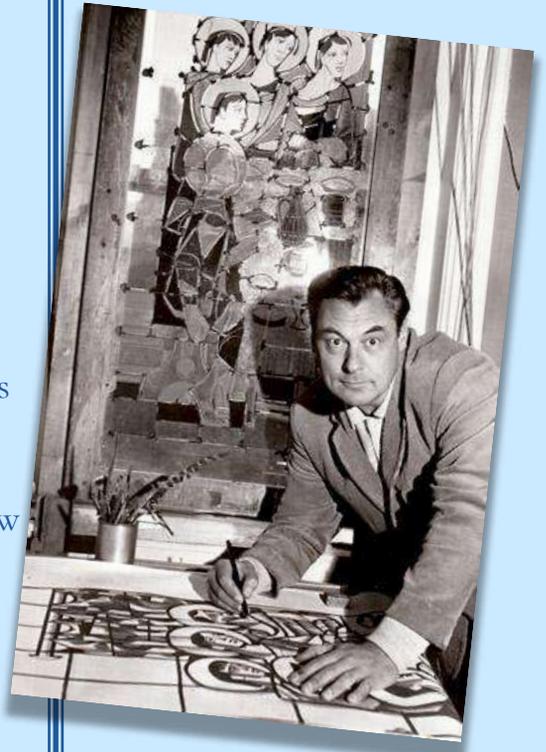
No. 35 Stonegate

William Etty is not the first chapter of York's story of artistic endeavour. There's a much older history that is rich in artistic design: stained glass.

J.W. Knowles & Sons was York's leading firm of glass painters and restorers of its day. No.35 Stonegate was J.W. Knowles's (1838-1931) home from 1873, and now features a 'stained-glass' plaque in the fanlight. Can you spot it?

The practice was also hugely important for its research and promotion of York's long-standing stained-glass tradition. The 'York School of Glass Painting' flourished in the city from the 13th Century and later sustained during the 18th Century by William Peckitt. It reminds us just how important York was and remains as a religious place in the UK, second only to Canterbury. Indeed, for many centuries, the Church was the major patron of the arts in York, of which glass painting was prominent.

Due to the influence of J.W. Knowles & Sons, York continues to be a modern centre of excellence for stained glass. Work by York-based 20th-Century artists, such as Harry Stammers and Harry Harvey (pictured, in his studio in 1969) are nationally renowned. Harvey's large, colourful window in the restored Guildhall depicts the city's history.



Continue to Exhibition Square

Stop 2: William Etty (1787-1849) ~ statue *Exhibition Square*

There are two plaques in the city to William Etty: a stone inscription at 20 Feasegate, where he was born, and close to where he died (next to 'City Screen' off Coney St); see if you can find them!

The son of a baker, Etty's artistic talent took him to London where he established his reputation as an oil painter of scenes from Antiquity. They invariably comprised nudes, then a controversial matter.

Etty (*pictured right*) continued a close association with York, however. He was particularly active in campaigning to preserve the city's historic buildings from demolition and unjust change. This included thwarting the City Corporation, in its attempts to demolish the city's medieval walls, which by the 1830s no longer served any practical purpose and were stifling expansion of the city.

The walls were eventually saved in 1889, many years after Etty's death, but he is often credited with their salvation. He therefore prevented York going the way of numerous other UK towns and cities that tore down their defensive walls during this period.

The statue of Etty dates from 1911 and is by George Milburn (1844-1941), York's most famous sculptor. Etty proudly stands in front of York's art gallery, home to many of his paintings. The statue includes a small model of Bootham Bar behind his right calf and draped in his coat. It celebrates his role in its protection. The statue originally featured a paintbrush in Etty's right hand, now lost, and sadly the small model has greatly eroded over time. Can you still make it out?



LOOK BEHIND

George Walker Milburn: blue plaque *St Leonard's Place (near Bootham Bar)*

There is a blue plaque on St Leonard's Place, opposite the Etty statue. It is to George Milburn (1844-1941), York's most famous sculptor, as it is where his stoneyard and workshop were.

The Etty statue is by Milburn (*pictured above*), who is responsible for three of the city's four figurative sculptures – the seated, modern Constantine statue near the Minster being the exception. Can you think where the other two are and who they celebrate?

Continue to Etty's tomb in St Olave's Churchyard, Marygate (although also visible through the abbey ruins in the Museum Gardens)

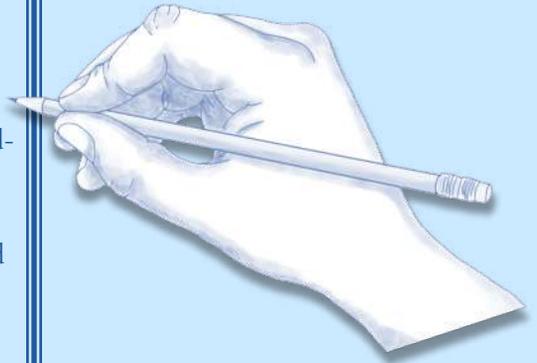
Stop 3: William Etty's tomb

Museum Gardens/ St Olave's Church, Marygate

Etty's tomb is in St Olave's Churchyard on Marygate, but can be best seen through an arch in the ruins of St Mary's Abbey in the Museum Gardens.

St Olave's Church also has a late 19th century stained-glass window as a memorial to Etty, as well as a beautiful century window of the annunciation and crucifixion (*pictured below right*) of 1957 by York-based artist, Harry Stammers.

The Church was also the location of York artist Mary Ellen Best's marriage in 1840 to her German husband, Johann "Anthony" Sarg.



Proceed to the front of
Bootham Park on Bootham

Stop 4: Fine Art & Industrial Exhibition (1866)

Bootham (in front of Bootham Park)

Following the success of the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, not to be outshone, Yorkshire held its own Fine Art & Industrial Exhibition in a temporary building in the grounds of York's Bootham Hospital in 1866. It was a great success.

The exhibition built upon York's newly established design-education pedigree, which William Etty had more than a hand in promoting. York's design school of 1842 was second only to Manchester in being the first of the British Government's new provincial 'Schools of Design'. These were intended to improve national industrial design quality and address grave concerns of becoming second-rate to French and German industrial design.

We might raise an eyebrow today at York being seen a centre of industrial design. But two centuries ago York was rapidly becoming a centre of railway manufacture and had iron foundries and glass works. Besides, Etty had championed the school for York since 1838. True to his reputation for depictions of nudes, Etty encouraged the study of life classes at the school, which was not part of the government's original programme, and occasionally even taught his own class)

In 1879, a second, larger Fine Art and Industrial Exhibition was staged in the city. This time it was held in a permanent, new building: York Art Gallery on Exhibition Square. York's School of Art and Design made this its new home shortly after, where it stayed until 1974.



Continue to 14 Clifton (at junction with St' Olave's Road)

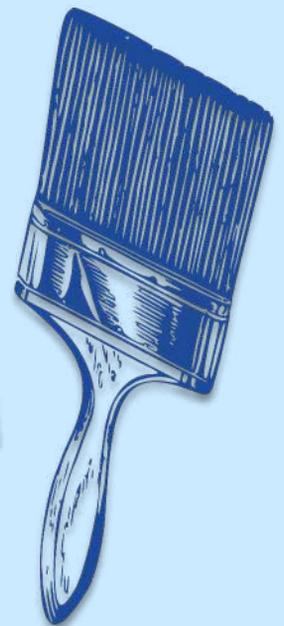
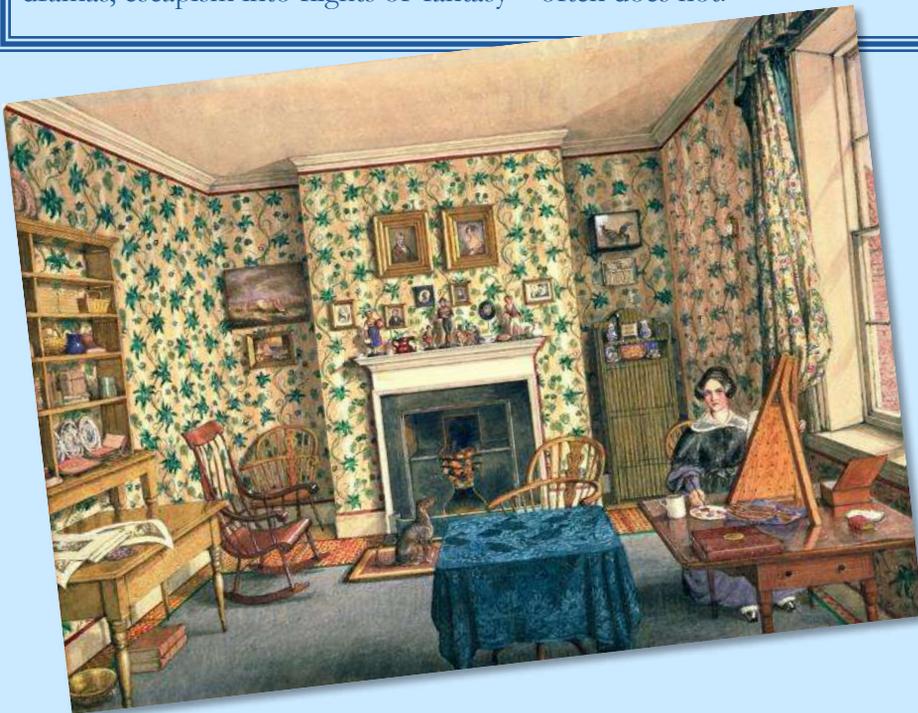
Stop 5: Mary Ellen Best (1809 - 1891)

14 Clifton

Mary Ellen Best loved painting from an early age, and it was said she even made paint brushes out of her own hair.

She was born into an age and social class where young ladies of means were expected to become proficient in domestic and artistic skills including drawing and painting. Yet this was to improve their marriage prospects, not their talent; women were then barred from professional training at the Academy Schools.

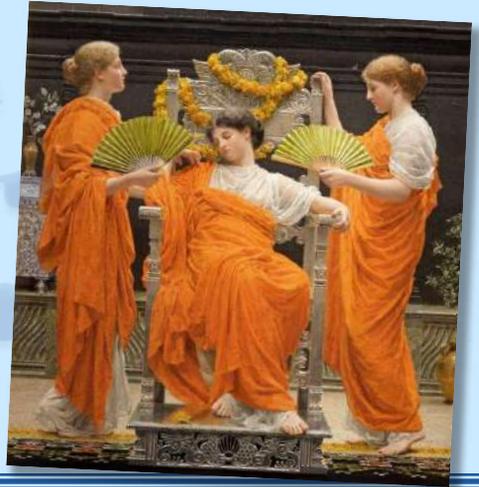
Unlike better known York-born artists, such as Etty and Albert Moore, who both left the city for London early in their careers and whose art predominantly depicts classical mythology, Mary Ellen Best's artwork was largely rooted in York and the home. She painted interiors of churches and of ordinary people in their homes (including her home at 14 Clifton), showing how they furnished them and the clothes they wore; the life and times as seen from a woman's point of view. It provides a unique picture of life in 1830s York that resonates with us in ways that Victorian art by the 'Great Men' – depictions of historical and mythical dramas, escapism into flights of fantasy – often does not.



Cross the road and continue to St Peter's School, Clifton

Stop 6: Albert Moore (1841 - 1893)

St Peter's School, Clifton



Two of York's sons prominent in art and design were educated at St. Peter's School.

Albert Moore (*above*) was part of a distinguished family of York artists. He was a pupil at the school in the early 1850s and made good of his education by becoming, through depictions of dreamy classical figures, such as his 'Midsummer' (1887; *above right*), a leading painter of the Aesthetic movement. He prioritised mood, harmony and form over subject matter: "Art for Art's Sake", as it was called.

His art was popular with self-made Victorian industrialists, who liked the classical vibe of his paintings and understood this to mean the 'good taste' of the upper classes they were eager to imitate. But having never 'received an Education' like that of the upper classes – including Moore at St Peter's, the industrialists often knew little of Ancient World mythology and subsequently did not recognise lack of depth in Moore's paintings. It might help explain why Moore's reputation has waned with time. (This and his lack of flamboyant personality, which always helps in the art world; Dante Rossetti once describing him as a 'dull dog').

Frank Pick (1878 - 1941)

Frank Pick was son of a draper. He attended St. Peter's in the 1890s on a scholarship before joining York's North Eastern Railway Company. This became a springboard for Pick to running London's Underground from 1906 to 1940.

Pick did more than anyone to amalgamate and expand the Underground. But arguably Pick's greatest achievement was the creation of the Underground's iconic 'Roundel' symbol – the famous bar and circle logo that appeared on all stations' walls, maps, advertisement posters and leaflets (*Covent Garden example on next page*). It is considered by many as a first in global, corporate branding, giving him significance world-wide.



In tribute to
FRANK PICK
1878-1941
a scholar of this school.
He served his fellow-men,
made transport an art and
sought beauty and good
design in all things.
Erected by London Transport



His passion for modern design led him to help found the UK's Design and Industries Association in 1915, and he was first chairman of the Council for Art and Industry.

Pick also was unprecedented in commissioning progressive professional artists and designers such as Edward McKnight Kauffer, Paul Nash, Eric Ravilious and Enid Marx to create what are now seen as quintessential underground and transport posters. [

It makes Pick arguably the most important artistic figure to come from York, despite not being strictly speaking an artist. His impact was global rather than national, as is the case with Etty and Moore, or provincial, like Mary Ellen Best or Knowles.

And yet Pick is perhaps also the perfect symbol of York's long-standing tradition of 'good design', be it medieval stained-glass painters or York's 'School of Design', or Milburn's sculptures.

Today, the city continues to be associated with artists of fine repute, such as Jake Attree, John Langton and Mark Hearld. But perhaps the next, exciting chapter of York's art story is being written as digital media, with the city's annual hosting of the international Aesthetica Art Prize and York Mediale underpinning York's designation as an Unesco Creative City of Media Arts.

A stone plaque commemorates Frank Pick at St. Peter's School (left). It was erected under the arch of St Peter's Queen's Building by London Transport in 1951.

End of Trail

We hope you enjoyed it and learned a lot.
Click the link below to view our other
Trust Trails!

<https://yorkcivictrust.co.uk/heritage/trust-trails/>