



# Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2019 Mary Gates Hall

## Online Proceedings

---

---

### SESSION 2A

---

#### ART'S HISTORIES AND FUTURES

*Session Moderator: Sonal Khullar, Art History*

**MGH 171**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

##### **Nostalgic Mariana**

*Leilana Bill, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University*

*Mentor: Javier Berzal de Dios, Art and Art History, Western Washington University*

This presentation examines Sir John Everett Millais' 1851 Mariana, paying special attention to the ways in which the painting embodies and represents nostalgic desires. A hopelessness that provokes the historical encounter of distant past pervades the piece, which takes its inspiration from a 1830 poem that uses the characters from Shakespeare's play Measure by Measure. Moreover, the aesthetic vision of Millais, like many of his pre-Raphaelite contemporaries, is one framed by a trans-historical dialogue with tradition. The painting depicts Mariana with an arched back and an outward gaze, reminiscing on her past love. Overall, the painting invites the viewers to reminisce about their personal and artistic past while getting lost in the details this painting offers.

Dutch artist Lawrence Alma Tadema. Alma Tadema was an English classicist, creating art in the Victorian era, who participated heavily in the aesthetic movement of the Pre-Raphaelites. Alma Tadema was very successful in his time, mainly due to his use of color, photorealism, and meticulous attention to detail, which are all aspects that are very present, and generally praised, in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*. He is known for painting classic scenes, mainly of middle-class women, performing everyday activities. However, *The Roses of Heliogabalus* departs from this usual rendering, instead focusing on a tyrannical historical event, where a young Roman emperor, Heliogabalus, drowns his dinner guests in an avalanche of rose petals, suffocating, and in turn, murdering them. Many recent critics have denounced this work for being antiquarian; a common critique of this specific piece is that the figures in the scene lack morality in their expressions. However, I think morality is the very thing that can be found in this creation by Alma Tadema. It was common for Victorian art to be created with the thought of moralizing in mind. Alma Tadema, though often depicted as a shallow man who valued schoolboy humor, could not have gone through this era without picking up on the themes of the time. Through visual analysis, comparison to Alma Tadema's peers, and an analysis of the time period and current events, I bring clarity to the themes of morality present in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, and show that this piece, created by a man who was once dubbed "the worst painter of the 19th century," is more valuable than recent critiques that it is only a shallow, antiquarian artwork.

---

### SESSION 2A

---

#### ART'S HISTORIES AND FUTURES

*Session Moderator: Sonal Khullar, Art History*

**MGH 171**

*3:30 PM to 5:15 PM*

\* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

##### **Themes of Morality Present in *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, by Lawrence Alma Tadema**

*Kathryn (Katy) Caskey, Senior, Art History, Western Washington University*

*Mentor: Monique Kerman, Art and Art History, Western Washington University*

This is an analysis of *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888), by