

The Age of Innocence

ALFRED DRURY (British, 1856 – 1944)

'Mr. Drury is among the most personal of our sculptors, always in search of the graceful, the tender, the placid, and the harmonious.' - M.H. Spielmann, *British Sculpture and the Sculptors of Today*, 1901, p.109

Alfred Briscoe Drury was born in London in 1856 and initially studied at the Oxford School of Art and later under Aimé-Jules Dalou at the National Art Training School (now the Royal Academy) in South Kensington. Dalou had migrated from France in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, contributing to the development of art in London before returning to Paris in 1881. Drury followed Dalou to Paris, wishing to learn from him and other masters of the French School.

In 1885, the artist returned to England, first as a teacher at the Wimbledon School of Art, and then joining the studio of the successful sculptor and medallist, Joseph Edgar Boehm. Drury first exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1885, becoming an Associate in 1900. In 1909, France recognised his contribution to the art world by awarding him a national honour.



Alfred Drury, *Circe*, 1894, bronze, commissioned from the sculptor by Leeds City Art Gallery in 1894,

[Leeds City Museum](http://www.leedsartgallery.com)

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Drury's career was mostly concentrated on portrait busts. His most famous works in this style are the models for *St Agnes* (1896), *Age of Innocence* (1896), and *Griselda* (1898). At the same time, Drury also demonstrated his fondness for the poetics of the New Sculpture movement by engaging with idealised, classicising portrayals of mythological and allegorical subjects. Among these, one should mention *Circe* 1893, which was exhibited in Brussels and Paris and won medals at both international venues, *Evening* (1898) and *Spring* (1905).



Alfred Drury, *The Age of Innocence*, 1897, bronze, 69.9 cm, Cleveland Museum of Art, Ohio

Having established himself as one of the leading sculptors of the late 19th century, Drury was commissioned to produce numerous public works in the last decades of his career. Such commissions dramatically influenced the landscape of London, and include the stone groups *Sorrow and Joy*, *Horror and Dignity*, *Truth and Justice* and *Victory and Fame* on the south-west side of the War Office (1905), the four allegorical bronzes of *Education*, *Fine Art*, *Science* and *Local Government* for Vauxhall Bridge (1905), as well

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as the statue of *Joshua Reynolds* for the courtyard of the Royal Academy (1917). Drury died a successful artist in his Wimbledon home in 1944.

The subject of this work is the daughter of the Doncaster's who were friends with Drury. He used each of the daughters as the inspiration for his works. Clarrie was the model for the sculptures of *Morning* and *Evening* in the City Square Leeds, and Gracie was the model for the bust known as *The Age of Innocence*, but for this, his most charming work, he gave no allegorical title, just a simple portrait.

Literature

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