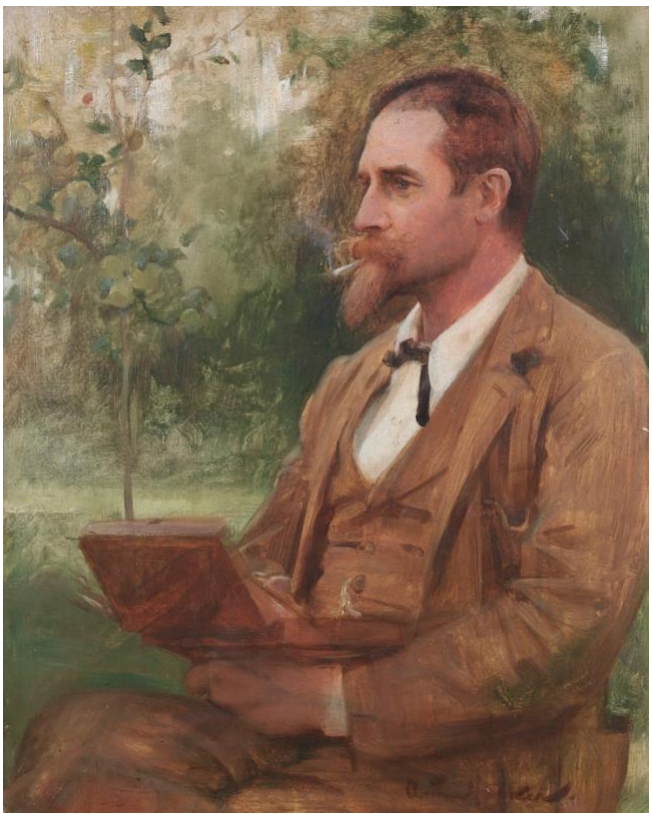
Peace

EDWARD ONSLOW FORD (English, 1852-1901)

Edward Onslow Ford was born in London in 1852. Unlike many of his contemporaries, the artist initially studied in Europe. At the age of 18, he studied painting for one year in Antwerp, at the Koninklijke Academie voor Schone Kunsten. He was then encouraged by one of his professors, Michael Wagmüller, to take up sculpture at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Munich.

Ford returned to London with his newly wed wife, Anne Gwendoline von Kreuzer, in 1874. Ten years later, the sculptor took a studio opposite Alfred Gilbert in Fulham, and they became firm friends, sharing their European experiences and experimenting with the *cire perdue* method of casting.

Having established his practice as a portrait sculptor, it was only in 1884 that Ford plead his allegiance to the New Sculpture movement. In that year, *Linus* was exhibited at the Royal Academy together with Rodin's *Age of Bronze*, which was first created in 1876 and made the fortunes of the master in Paris. As well as deriving inspiration from the French master's composition, *Linus* also demonstrated Ford's ability to assimilate the contemporary English taste, imbuing his model with mythological references.



Arthur Hacker, *Edward Onslow Ford,* before 1901, oil on canvas, 53.4 x 42.8 cm

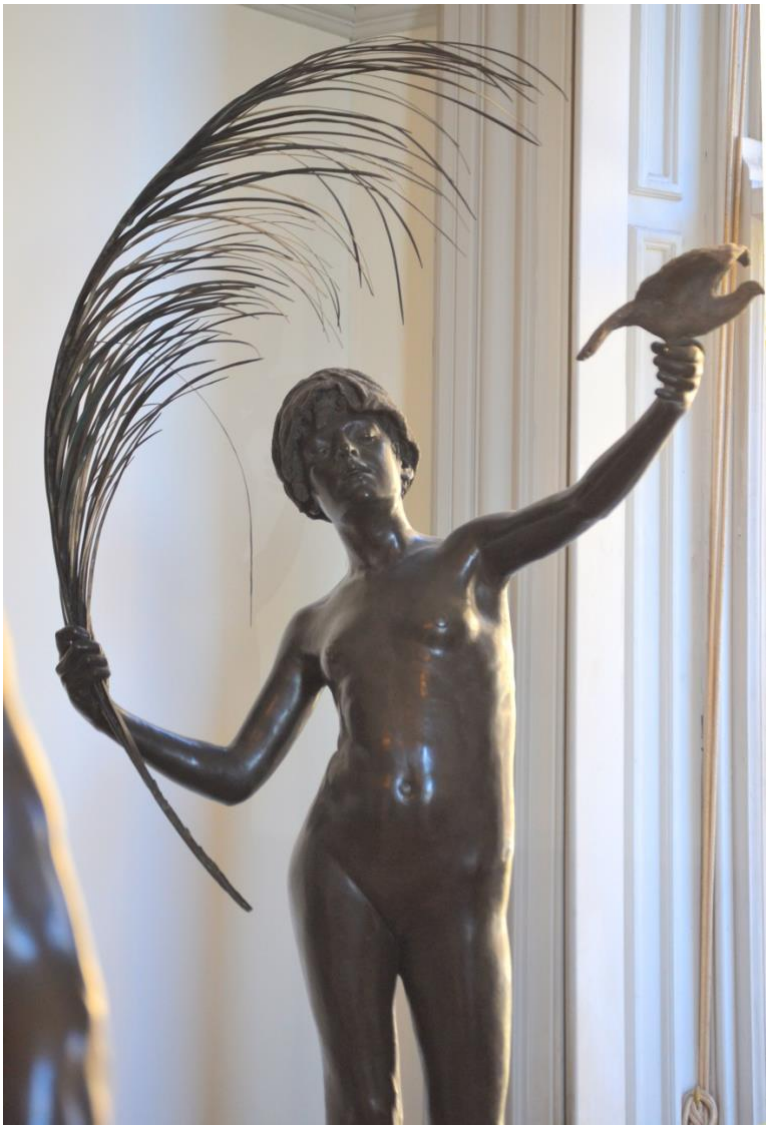
In the 1880s and 1890s, Ford had a number of successes at the Royal Academy. His models *Folly* (1886), *Dancing* and *Music* (1890), *The Singer* (1889) *Peace* (1891) and *Applause* (1893) set a new standard for the representation of female subjects in the late-Victorian period and are some of the artist's most accomplished works. In particular, *Singer* and *Applause* (now at TATE Britain) are agreed to be two of the best examples of 19th-century mixed media sculpture.



Edward Onslow Ford, *Singer*, 1889, bronze, height 90.2 cm, The Tate Britain, London

The success Ford received at the Royal Academy attracted many commissions for monuments and public works. Amongst these are the monument to *General Gordon* (1890), which depicts the distinctive general proudly sat astride a camel. While the piece's composition is particularly impressive, it is the *Shelley Memorial* (1892) at University College, Oxford, which has been considered by many Fords' most exceptional memorial sculpture.

Part of his series of ideal nudes, Onslow-Ford's full-size plaster of *Peace* was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1887, where it was considered by the critic Edmund Gosse to be '*the most delightful contribution to the exhibition'*. Three years later a life-size bronze was also shown; this work is now part of the Walker Art Gallery collection, Liverpool.



Edward Onslow Ford, *Peace*, 1887, bronze, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool

Peace is here depicted as a youthful female figure, following its traditional iconography, holding the palm branch of victory in her right hand and a dove in her left, standing on a piece of armour - the symbol of subdued war. Ford's innovation does not relate to the subject's iconographic attributes, but rather to its composition. Peace is represented as a lively young girl and captured mid-movement, devoid of the stiffness that would have characterised ancient or neoclassical depictions of the same subject.

Peace was one of Ford's first ever works to be cast in bronze in a reduced scale for Arthur L. Collie. Collie's business had opened in 1889, sharing his premises with the renowned fine art dealer Thomas Agnews at 39 Old Bond Street. His endeavour was fundamental for the spreading of New Sculpture aesthetics to a wide British public in the form of affordable, high-quality reductions of popular artists' works.

On 31 May 1890, an article by an anonymous contributor appeared on the London Saturday Review, addressing the novelty of Arthur Collie's endeavour. In the article, the author states how '*Mr Onlsow Ford's elegant and spirited work specially lends itself to reproduction in miniature. No specimen in Mr Collie's gallery is more delightful than the Peace, a little nude female figure in a caressing and conciliating attitude, waving a palm branch'*. Five years later, Gosse's article in Magazine of Art, entitled 'Sculpture in the House', Peace was illustrated in domestic settings alongside statuettes by Frederic Leighton and Hamo Thornycroft, demonstrating the success of Collie's undertaking and the widespread popularity enjoyed by the 'New' sculptors.

<u>Literature</u>

Walter Armstrong, *E. Onslow Ford, Portfolio*, 1890, p. 70

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