

James Collinson

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James Collinson (1825-1881)

The least known painter member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, James Collinson would have met Millais, Rossetti and Hunt as fellow students at the Royal Academy Schools. The son of a bookseller and printer, Collinson was living in London by 1846, when he exhibited a study of a head at the Society of British Artists .

He was a member of the Cyclographic Society in the summer of 1848, and was proposed by Rossetti as a member of the Brotherhood in that year.

Nicknamed 'the dormouse', he was teased by Hunt for his lack of camaraderie, needing "to be waked up at the conclusion of the noisy evenings to receive our salutations". A convert to Roman Catholicism, he returned to the Church of England in order to be accepted as Christina Rossetti's fiancé, having first proposed marriage in 1848; the engagement ended in the spring of 1850, when Collinson reverted to the Roman faith and resigned from the Brotherhood on the grounds that he could not, "as a Catholic, assist in spreading the artistic opinions of those who are not".

Between 1853 and 1855 Collinson trained for the priesthood but abandoned this and exhibited again at the Royal Academy from 1855. His domestic genre subjects show brilliant finish and dexterity but little intellectual Pre-Raphaelite purpose. He provided pictures for the Exhibition of British Art which toured America in 1857-1858 and regularly exhibited at the Society of British Artists.