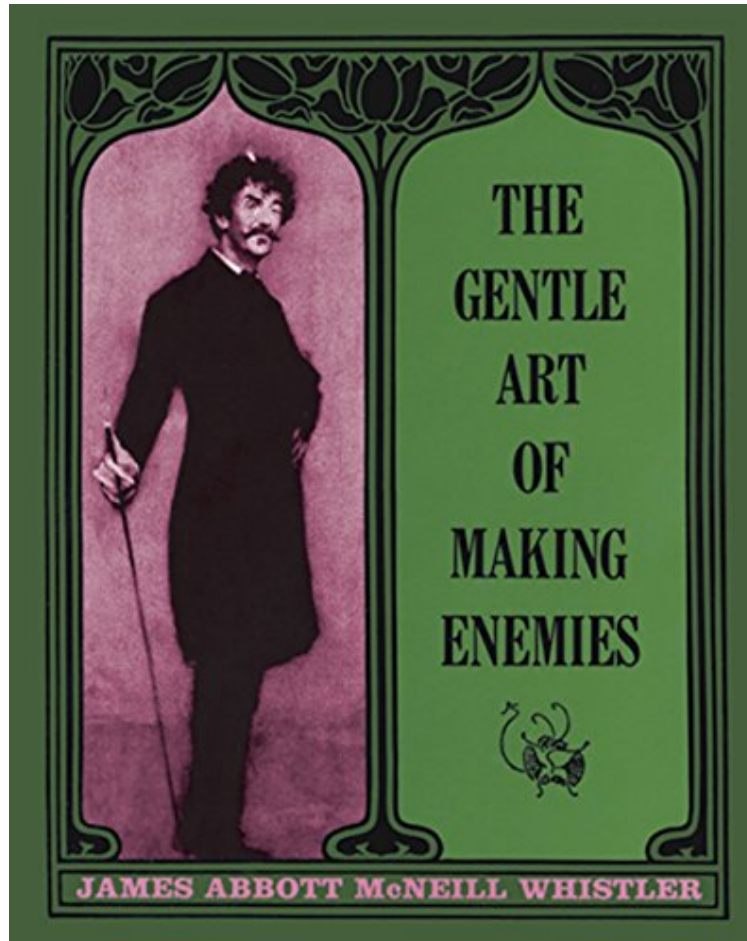


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## The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)

*James M. Whistler*

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**James M. Whistler : The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (Dover Fine Art, History of Art)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Gentle Art of Making Enemies (Dover Fine Art, History of Art):

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Lessons from the masterBy wiredweirdJames A. MnN. Whistler had many talents. His best-known, today, was his skill as a painter, exploring new uses for the medium once photography started to claim literal realism for itself. In his day, though, Whistler achieved some fame for his ability to irritate the art establishment of the time, and for his knack of keeping himself at the forefront of public awareness. This book documents those secondary skills.Nearly all of the content reproduces series of letters to editors of major newspapers, arranged here by Whistler to ensure that he has the last word in each debate. It seems to be a lost art these days, but mighty battles were once waged in the letters columns, with volley after volley of thrust and counterthrust, all in correspondence that drips with elegant vitriol. One could almost see the borders of the news-sheet as the ropes

around a boxing ring, with a editorial referee ensuring a clean fight and an entertaining public spectacle. Although many critics attracted Whistler's public scorn, John Ruskin capped Whistler's career as enemy-maker. After Ruskin maligned one of Whistler's "Nocturnes" in public, Whistler sued him for libel. Whistler won the judgment. With typically British understatement, however, it chastised him as well: he was awarded an entire farthing in damages, a fraction of a cent, but was nearly bankrupted by court costs. Whistler composed this collection largely as a tribute to the glory of Whistler, and that contributes to its enduring entertainment value. Artists from Benvenuto Cellini to the current day have autobiographically publicized themselves; self-publicity seems a required skill for any successful artist. Whistler's unique skill lay in garnering publicity through these refined and public matches of wit against acid wit. These don't just amuse, however, they also help modern readers realize the artistic and social context in which Whistler redefined what painting could be. - wiredweird0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One Star By Juan-Pablo Cárdenas What the!?! No page numbers! Common... 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Nice book, a little complex for non-native english speakers By Luix It's really a good book, but reading took me much more time than I expected because the language. But it's still a good choice.

Whistler's *Gentle Art*, a classic in the literature of insult and denigration, might well be subtitled "The Autobiography of a Hater," for it contains the deadly sarcasm and stinging remarks of one of the wittiest men of the nineteenth century. Whistler not only refused to tolerate misunderstanding by critics and the so-called art-loving public — but launched vicious counterattacks as well. His celebrated passages-at-arms with Oscar Wilde and Swinburne, the terse and penetrating "letters to the editor," his rebuttals to attacks from critics, and biting marginal notes to contemptuous comments on his paintings and hostile reviews (which are also reprinted) are all part of this record of the artist's vendettas. Whistler's most famous battle began when critic John Ruskin saw one of the artist's "Nocturnes" exhibited in Grosvenor Gallery. "I have seen, and heard," wrote Ruskin, "much of cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." Whistler was incensed with this criticism, and initiated the famous libel case "Whistler vs. Ruskin." Extracts from the resultant trial record are among the highlights of this book, with Whistler brilliantly annihilating his Philistine critics, but winning only a farthing in damages. *The Gentle Art*, designed by Whistler himself, is a highly entertaining account of personal revenges, but it is also an iconoclast's plea for a new and better attitude toward painting. As a historical document, it is the best statement of the new aesthetics versus the old guard academics, and it helped greatly in shaping the modern feeling toward art.

From the Back Cover Whistler's *Gentle Art*, a classic in the literature of insult and denigration, might well be subtitled "The Autobiography of a Hater," for it contains the deadly sarcasm and stinging remarks of one of the wittiest men of the nineteenth century. Whistler not only refused to tolerate misunderstanding by critics and the so-called art-loving public—but launched vicious counterattacks as well. His celebrated passages-at-arms with Oscar Wilde and Swinburne, the terse and penetrating "letters to the editor," his rebuttals to attacks from critics, and biting marginal notes to contemptuous comments on his paintings and hostile reviews (which are also reprinted) are all part of this record of the artist's vendettas. Whistler's most famous battle began when critic John Ruskin saw one of the artist's "Nocturnes" exhibited in Grosvenor Gallery. "I have seen, and heard," wrote Ruskin, "much of cockney impudence before now; but never expected to hear a coxcomb ask two hundred guineas for flinging a pot of paint in the public's face." Whistler was incensed with this criticism, and initiated the famous libel case "Whistler vs. Ruskin." Extracts from the resultant trial record are among the highlights of this book, with Whistler brilliantly annihilating his Philistine critics, but winning only a farthing in damages. *The Gentle Art*, designed by Whistler himself, is a highly entertaining account of personal revenges, but it is also an iconoclast's plea for a new and better attitude toward painting. As a historical document, it is the best statement of the new aesthetics versus the old guard academics, and it helped greatly in shaping the modern feeling toward art. Unabridged, unaltered republication of the second (1892) edition.