

Guide to the Thomas Woolner Letters to John Frederick Lewis

MSS 53



compiled by Lewis West; edited by Francis Lapka

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Collection Overview

REPOSITORY: Yale Center for British Art, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts
1080 Chapel Street
P. O. Box 208280
New Haven, CT 06520-8280
ycba.rarebooks@yale.edu
<https://britishart.yale.edu/about-us/departments/rare-books-and-manuscripts>

CALL NUMBER: MSS 53

CREATOR: Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

TITLE: Thomas Woolner Letters to John Frederick Lewis

DATES: 1863–1914

BULK DATES: 1874–1876

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: .42 linear feet (1 box)

LANGUAGE: English

SUMMARY: The collection comprises 15 letters from Thomas Woolner to John Frederick Lewis, written between 1874 and 1876. It also includes 5 letters from Woolner to Lewis's wife, Marian Harper, one letter from Lewis to dealer William Vokins, and several letters from Woolner's wife and daughter. The letters primarily concern Lewis's declining health—he died several months after the last letter in the collection—Woolner's admiration for Lewis's painting, updates on the politics of the Royal Academy and Woolner's ongoing artistic projects, and current exhibitions. Woolner comments on several works, including: J.M.W. Turner's, *Van Goyen, Looking Out for a Subject*; Elizabeth Thompson's *Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea*; Lewis's *Lion & Lioness* and *In the Bey's Garden*; and his own monuments to Bishop John Patteson, Sir Cowasjee Jehanghier Readymoney, and Captain James Cook.

ONLINE FINDING AID: To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0053>

Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use on site, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/ycba.mss.0053>.

Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b. box
f. folder

Administrative Information

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund

Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

The collection is the physical property of the Yale Center for British Art. Literary rights, including copyright, belong to the authors or their legal heirs and assigns. For further information, consult the Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Preferred Citation

Thomas Woolner Letters to John Frederick Lewis. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Fund

Biographical / Historical

Thomas Woolner was an English sculptor, poet, and one of the founding members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Born in 1825 in Suffolk, Woolner began his study of sculpture under William Behnes (1795-1864), exhibited his first works as a teenager, and soon formed bonds with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and others members of the Pre-Raphaelites. In 1852, after some professional difficulty—most significantly, failing to win the competition for a national monument to Wordsworth—Woolner left England to prospect for gold in Australia. He soon returned to sculpting, however, and then to England, where he resumed his work with a portrait medallion of Tennyson and, most importantly, a sculpture of Francis Bacon at Oxford. The latter led to a series of commissions and to increased artistic prominence: Woolner soon bought the home where he would spend the remainder of his life and married Alice Gertrude Waugh, with whom he would have six children. Public statues and memorials continued to form the basis of Woolner's recognition, though he produced some church memorials, as well as several volumes of poetry. He was elected an associate of the Royal Academy in 1871 and would later become a professor, though he never lectured and acquired a reputation for irritability. He died on 7 October 1892.

The main recipient of the letters in the collection is John Frederick Lewis, an English painter known for his orientalist depictions of Middle Eastern harems and street scenes. Born in 1804 and trained by his father, an engraver, Lewis established himself as watercolorist, first depicting animals and later picturesque scenes across Europe. He garnered particular attention for his images of Spain, though this changed in 1841 with the beginning of his time in Egypt. There, Lewis modeled his life after his impressions of oriental luxury, and produced numerous portraits, sketches, and other materials that would form the basis of his most prominent work. He married Marian Harper in Alexandria in 1847 and returned to England in 1851. His painting *The Hhareem* was a high point following his arrival in England—it reflected a fascination with visions of the orient that would dominate Lewis's output for the remainder of his life. Critics noted the influence on his work of the Pre-Raphaelites, highlighting his use of vibrant color and minute detail, though Lewis himself remained, for much of his later career, physically disconnected from the broader world of art, living and painting in the relative seclusion of his home at Walton-on-Thames. He died in August 1876, after several years of declining health.

Scope and Contents

The collection comprises 15 letters from Thomas Woolner to John Frederick Lewis, written between 1874 and 1876. It also includes five letters from Woolner to Lewis's wife, Marian Harper, one letter from Lewis to dealer William Vokins, two letters from Woolner's wife to Lewis, two letters from Amy Woolner—Thomas's daughter—concerning the recovery of the letters, and two letters from Charles Aitken of the National Gallery regarding Lewis's paintings. Woolner's letters to Lewis reveal the former's thoughts on his own work, his personal relationships with Lewis and the Royal Academy, his esteem for Lewis's painting, and his thoughts on contemporary art more broadly.

Throughout the letters, Woolner expresses intense concern for Lewis's health—it was during this period that Lewis's health began to deteriorate, culminating in his death in August of 1876, several months after the last letter in this series. Woolner notes his own personal anxiety, while also lamenting the loss that Lewis's incapacity means for the art community. He emphasizes his own admiration for Lewis's work, wondering "what lovely ladies and romantic slaves amid oriental gloom and splendor you are bringing into our life for our delight this year" (1875 January 17). He also remembers "the delightful afternoon at your house; we feel as if we had for awhile lived the life of the Arabian Nights" (1875 July 18)—a comment that echoes those of Thackeray, who, when he visited Lewis in Cairo, described him as a "languid lotus-eater."

Woolner also relays news of the political machinations of the other members of the Royal Academy. While Woolner disclaims any desire for power or accolades, he dismisses younger generations of artists and speaks critically of his fellow academicians. He occasionally provides updates on his own ongoing projects, notably his memorials to Captain James Cook and Sir Cowasjee Jehanghier Readymoney. He references photographs included with his letters, though no photographs accompany the collection.

Woolner describes his encounters with various exhibitions and, on several occasions, asks Lewis for professional assistance. His commentary on exhibits and sales include brief mentions or discussions of Turner's *Van Goyen, Looking Out for a Subject*; Elizabeth Thompson's *Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea*; Paul Delaroche's *L'assassinat du duc de Guise au château de Blois en 1588*; and Lewis's own *Lion & Lioness* and *In the Bey's Garden*. He likewise asks Lewis to assist in proposals to protect Egyptian antiquities and to secure the burial of fellow sculptor J.H. Foley in St. Paul's Cathedral.

General

Cox, John Francis. *"An Annotated Edition of Selected Letters of Thomas Woolner, Pre-Raphaelite Poet and Sculptor."* Unpublished dissertation, Arizona State University, 1973.

Roberts, Mary. *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.

Woolner, Amy. *Thomas Woolner, R.A., Sculpture and Poet: His Life in Letters.* London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1917.

Arrangement

The letters are arranged chronologically.

Collection Contents

- b. 1, f. 1 John Frederick Lewis letter to William Vokins 1863 December
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm 25
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
- "Xmas Day 1863. My dear Vokins, Poor Thackeray has gone! I suppose you saw this morning an account of his death in the "Times". Poor fellow. What a loss! & so young too. At one time I knew him well. Your note gratified me much this morning & when I opened & saw the Photograph, I thought you had put your real self in - & had got somebody to seal you up! Thanks for it - it is very like [...] God knows yet what I shall get by April - I will do my best, if my health holds out - which (I thank God most sincerely) it does at present. The devouring bird shall not find me backward in chucking him tit bits - but he must not be too sanguine - & wait patiently till feeding time. - I will try our friend P. about the girl in the Garden, but as I do not touch that yet, we will say nought at present about it. Do you mean to occupy both houses? or turn one into workrooms? I think your brother wise in his move - Hendon is pretty, very pretty - & I should think his wife wd like it. Besides it will be nice for you & yours to run down to occasionally - Mrs. Lewis thanks you for the Photo. We both write in kind regards & believe [...] to me ever [...] Yours, J.F. Lewis W.V. Esq." William Makepeace Thackeray died 24 December 1863 at age 52.
- With blind-embossed letterhead: Walton on Thames.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Subjects:
Photography
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 1811-1863
Vokins, William, 1815-1895 -- Correspondence
-

- b. 1, f. 2 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1874 February 1
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Feb 1 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, I was sorry to miss the pleasure of seeing you last Thursday, but I was afraid you would not be able to come to town again so soon. The election was I think perfectly satisfactory; the new manner of voting acted well, and really gained the wishes of the body by breaking the coalition of several cliques, which are individually of small account, but formidable when combined. I shall be very pleased to have a chat with you on the subject of your pictures, and anything I could do to help you towards some effective assistance would give me great delight; for I have such an extraordinary admiration for your works that I think every bit of your workmanship should be jealously preserved, and every idea of yours on canvas should be made intelligible, even tho' every bit of it may not be by your own hand. I would willingly turn down to see you some day if I could not meet you in town: but I could most likely meet you any day at the Athenaeum if I had a day or two of notice before. Most truly yours, T. Woolner"
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

-
- b. 1, f. 3 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1874 April 12
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Ap: 12 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, Sir Vincent Eyre is anxious to do something towards preserving the antiquities in Egypt, and intends drawing up a petition to the Khedive for that purpose, and to have it presented to him thro' the Foreign Office. But in order to give the petition full effect both with our and the Egyptians authorities, he thinks it best to obtain the sanctions and signatures of the President and Council of the R. Academy, and of the Roy: Soc: of Antiquaries. He was speaking to me on the subject, and I naturally thought that you would be the fittest member to mention it to the Council of the R. Academy; if you are willing to bring it forward, or look over the paper with a view to bringing it forward, will you kindly let me know that I may tell Sir Vincent what you say? He saw the Khedive this last winter on the subject, and he seemed anxious also to preserve the Monuments; and would be glad of any external assistance such as English opinion, to assist him in such a desirable object. Sir Vincent says the travellers increase and are knocking things about terribly, and he thinks no time should be lost. I hope you are feeling stronger with this milder weather, and are at work again. Believe me truly yours, T. Woolner."
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Geographic Names:
Egypt -- Antiquities
- Names:
Eyre, Vincent, Sir, 1811-1881
Ismail, Khedive of Egypt, 1830-1895
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Bodies:

Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)
Society of Antiquaries of London

b. 1, f. 4

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1874 April 19

"Ap: 19 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, Many thanks for your kind letter; and I have no doubt the R. Academy will wish to support a petition with so good an object. I saw Dobson last evening and he told me the council were not busy now, so that maybe they will take notice of this matter. I grieve to have such a poor account of you from yourself. After such a long habit of close work to be denied it is indeed a loss. But the loss belongs to us all almost more than to you. It will give me great pleasure to meet you any time at the Club you may name. If at any time you came to town, and it would save you the trouble of returning to Walton the same day, I can give you a snug little bedroom where you would be comfortable, and I would try and get [William] Boxall or some pleasant friend to meet you at dinner. I am a bachelor just now; my wife having gone off to the I. of Wight with a little girl who is not strong. Most truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:

Correspondence

Names:

Boxall, William, Sir, 1800-1879
Dobson, W. C. T. (William Charles Thomas), 1817-1898
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:

Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

b. 1, f. 5

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1874 May 17

"May 17 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, your letter was sent on to me at Paris, and greatly delighted I was to know you were pleased with the appreciation of your wonderful picture. You do not think so highly of your own work as your admirers do, or you could not be surprised at any sum being offered for one of your chief pictures. I am sure Mr Graham's offer was bona fide, as he asked me to find out if the possessor would take the sum mentioned, and as he was willing to give it. £10,000 is a large sum, but not much to a man worth £100,000 a year who wishes to gratify a keen taste. He told me he had refused 6000 guis. for Turner's "*Van Goyen in search of a subject*", and he gave 7000 for Gainsbro's two ladies sold at Christie's last year; so that you see he is not wedded to cash where taste is concerned. My belief is that very soon your chief works will be priceless; that is, they will all become established in first class collections where no money will be able [to] extract them. - There are some delightful pictures in the Loan Coll. at Paris, both old and modern. What a pity you are not well enough to go! - There are the choice works from private houses which will not be seen again by the public. Ingres best works are there. Delaroche's best - the Murder of the Duke de Guise. - A wonderful portrait of a young man by Raphael. Two fine portraits by Antonio More; superb Dutch landscapes, and in fact to have an idea of the wealth there the Ex. must be seen.

The knic-knacs are superb and astonishing. - But I will not tire you with an account of all the delightful things I saw. It was particularly pleasant to me, for my wife had never been on the Continent before and everything was new as well as pleasant to her. - Gerome is very fine in the Salon this year, three pictures all equally good. The mass there, of course, being fearful rubbish. The drawing, of which so much is said, is mostly weak, and inexact, and vulgar. - With kindest wishes for your health-
Ever truly yours, T. Woolner. Please [...] to answer this." See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, pages 294-295.

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Subjects:
Art -- France -- Paris -- Exhibitions
Painting -- Prices

Preferred Titles:
Turner, J. M. W. (Joseph Mallord William), 1775-1851. Van goyen, looking out for a subject

Names:
Gainsborough, Thomas, 1727-1788
Gérôme, Jean Léon, 1824-1904
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
Salon (Exhibition : Paris, France)

b. 1, f. 6

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1874 August 29

"Aug: 29 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, The friends of J.H. Foley are anxious he should be buried in St. Pauls, and Canon Liddon tells me that we must have two or three of the chief names in art to support the application: will you kindly send me your aid writing a letter in support of the plan that I may receive on Monday morning. I have to see the Canon at 2 P.M. on Monday to present the letters and help him select the site. You see there is no time to be lost. The Canon proposes Thursday next for the funeral. Most truly yours, T. Woolner. I am grieved to trouble you, but if you can get the letter written your own signature will be enough."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Foley, John Henry, 1818-1874
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Liddon, H. P. (Henry Parry), 1829-1890
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
St. Paul's Cathedral (London, England)

- b. 1, f. 7 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1874 September
1 folded sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm 1
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Sep 1 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, Your generous soul will rejoice that poor Foley will have the last honour due to him; for our application has succeeded and he is to be buried in St. Pauls on Friday next at 12 o'clock. He will lie close to Turner, Reynolds, and James Barry, with only one grave between him and this noble company. The sterling artists are fast passing away, and what the next generation will be like I tremble to contemplate. - With kindest wishes for your health - Ever truly yours, T. Woolner." See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, pages 297-298.
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Foley, John Henry, 1818-1874
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence
- Corporate Body:
St. Paul's Cathedral (London, England)

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- b. 1, f. 8 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1874 November
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm 22
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Nov 22 '74. My dear Mr Lewis, A letter from you comes like the sun thro' this dingy abomination called fog. It would have shocked me had I known such an idea as coming here this weather had even entered your head as a possibility. So far as I am concerned, election to R. A-ship is a point of no great consequence, as I care nothing for fancy titles, and do not like my time to be taken up by Council meetings, and A.R.A.-ship suits me very well indeed, as I get most of the fun and only a little of the work; indeed none, except teaching in the Life School, which I like. But whether I am elected or whether I am not, I would rather have had your kind and hearty letter, or your solitary vote, than nearly the whole voting of the Academy without it, or with yours in antagonism. - I am delighted to know that you can still work a little, but it is very sad to think of your not being able to walk about comfortably. - I was going off to Venice tomorrow, but the friend with whom I travel caught a sore throat and now I have to wait till his Dr lets him off. - Except a fortnight in the spring in Paris with my wife I have had no holiday this year and begin to feel stupid from constant work on monstrous statues. - I gave your message to my wife; she was greatly pleased and told me whatever I said in return to "imply admiration" - for you must know that she is as great an enthusiast for your work as I am myself. Hoping for you all good, every truly yours T. Woolner." See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, page 300.
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence
- Corporate Body:

Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

-
- b. 1, f. 9 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1875 January 17
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Jan 17 '75. My dear Mr Lewis, It is all very well to say "do not answer this"; but I have too good a sense of my privileges to obey such an injunction. In the "Apocrypha" I remember reading in the days of my youth - "If thou knowest a wise man let thy feet wear his doorstep"; - but as I cannot do this I may help to wear out his door-knocker. Since my return from Venice my time has been wholly taken up or I should have thanked you before for your most kind and cordial letter as to my election. I have, as I said, always had a shrinking from honours and Committees, but now I am in the charmed circle, however I may have got there, I must say that it is most gratifying to find the hearty and friendly way in which I have been welcomed by the members; indeed they could not have more clearly shown their satisfaction; with, of course, the exception of the sculptors, who looked sourly as usual, tho' to them I am always as amiable as one being can be to another in ordinary life. I must confess that if your resolution holds good of not attending any meetings at the R.A. any more one of the main attractions will be gone; and I shall feel as the Liberals now feel at losing the leadership of their beloved Gladstone. But whatever you do in withdrawing from society if it helps to get more work from you I think you may well be forgiven. - I wonder what lovely ladies and romantic slaves amid oriental gloom and splendour you are bringing into life for our delight this year! My wife brought one very little lady into life while I was away in Verona, making four daughters, as well as two sons. - So you see, I must work hard to keep all these mouths at work. Ever most truly yours, T. Woolner." See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, page 302.
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence
- Corporate Body:
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)
-
- b. 1, f. 10 Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis 1875 January 31
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
- "Jan 31 '75. My dear Lewis, If you refuse being Mr-ed; - I was much delighted with your kind letter and the hope it offered me of a pleasant glimpse of your happy life. Please to ask Mrs Lewis to accept my bow of homage, and say with what pleasure I look forward to making her acquaintance. I know that I have already seen her several times in life, and, if I mistake not, once in her immortality as she looks in the "Bey's Garden," the guardian angel of the richest cluster of flowers, ever glowing and that ever glowed to mortal sight.- Armstead has done a great deal of work for Gilbert Scott, and his chief performance is half the Podium of the Albert Memorial. He has not exhibited much at the R.A. but as they still want two sculptors to make up their traditional number I think they could not have done much better than to elect him. He is brother-in-law of Wells, and is a personal friend of a great many members of the Academy. I do not know what the Authorities will do with Chantrey's gains, but I know that the Prince may praise and the papers may

trumpet, but the Academy will not purchase the "Roll Call". - I hate the thought of 3 score years and 10 for some persons, and wish it sometimes to be within the programme of the gods to do as they used in the days of Attica - extend their grace to especial favorites, and give you 20 more years of working vigour. It is to me sad to think that now your genius has reached its highest glory you should be able to do less work than ever and be tantalized with unsatisfied aspirations and unrealized visions of beauty. You will know that one human being feels the loss this is to the world. I think I shall not wait for fine weather, as that may be in the remote future, but as you give permission I shall run down to see you the first clear chance I can see. - My wife cordially reciprocates your kind feelings towards her and sends similar greetings. - Most truly yours, T. Woolner." Marginalia on first page: "The enclosed photograph for Mrs Lewis' Album" (no photograph present). Woolner refers to *Calling the Roll after an Engagement, Crimea* (better known as *The Roll Call*), a painting by Elizabeth Thompson. See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, page 303.

With written place of origin: 29 Welbeck St. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Preferred Titles:
Butler, Elizabeth (Elizabeth Southerden Thompson), 1846-1933. Roll call Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876. In the Bey's Garden

Names:
Armstead, Henry Hugh, 1828-1905
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 11

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1875 March 24

"March 24 '75. My dear Lewis, My wife and I called to see [William] Boxall and found that he had not only pulled through this time but was quite frisky, not on his feet as he never was much that way. He looks better than I have seen him for some time; he seemed pleased when I told him you had made enquiries about him. I saw Dr Quain this morning and he told me that the President was tolerably well, and, for him, quite strong. So that it is satisfactory to know that the East wind cannot kill off all the good folk well up in years. I send this off merely by way of bulletin, as I know it gladdens you to hear of the well being of your old friends.- Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Boxall, William, Sir, 1800-1879
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Quain, Richard, 1816-1898
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 12

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1875 May 30

"May 30 1875. My dear Lewis, I hope you are getting better with the bright weather. I came down to spend the day at this lovely place, - the seat of the great Earl Chatham - and having nothing to do but enjoy myself I make a part of that enjoyment saying how-d'ye-do to you. I am truly sorry you do not get strong quickly; and not only on your own account, and on account of art, but also on my own, for I want the pleasure of seeing you. I am Visitor in the Life School till the middle of June; after that is over, I shall turn down to see you if it be only for ten minutes. I do not know what views you have at Walton, but they are sure to [be?] beautiful if you get glimpses of the Thames, but I think they could not beat this Paradisal spot except in the light of the River.- I have not been to the Ex: since it opened, for somehow ordinary work in art seems to me of very little use and gives me no particular pleasure to look at.- Pray make my compliments to kind Mrs Lewis, for she is always kind in telling me of you and I always feel deeply grateful to her.- My wife is here with me drinking in the lovely scenery. Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With printed heading: "Post Town Beckenham"; "Railway & Telegraph Bromley."; "Hayes, Kent."

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Geographic Names:
Hayes (Bromley, London, England)

Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

b. 1, f. 13

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1875 June 21

"June 21, '75. My dear Lewis, It rejoiced my life to see your hand again on paper, and I hope next Friday to behold your veritable countenance, and to hold that hand in my own. It is very good to offer me a bed, but will you smile on my petition? - Instead of staying all night and possibly putting you to some trouble, may I bring my wife to spend the afternoon with you? It will be a joy for her to remember all her life making her bow to you in your own house. There are two convenient trains in the evening, so that all will be comfortable. Alas, alas, my beloved "*Lion and Lioness*" went. I hated sending it at all; but was forced to send every one of my best to avoid the charge of "merely weeding". I put a reserve of £80, which I hoped would secure its return, but it reached £89. - From the numerous failures in monied circles, and the lateness of the season I was told the sale would be a poor one, and thought my reserve would secure me against purchase, but your renown was too much for my prudence, and I lost my treasure. I intend to lose no more money by bad investments as I did last year and the year before; nothing but jogtrots [?] for the future. Bitter as it was to get rid of my lovely pictures I must say it is a relief to be free from so much responsibility. I will tell you all about everything when we meet. I enclose for Mrs Lewis a pho: of my monument to Bishop [John] Patteson representing him as he lay in the canoe after having been stripped, and a mat thrown over him, and a palm branch with 5 knots placed in his hands.- Ever truly yours, T. Woolner" No photo present. Bishop Patteson was murdered in 1871 in the Solomon Islands; his body was found floating in a canoe, covered with a palm mat and holding a palm branch.

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Preferred Titles:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876. Lion & lioness

Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Patteson, John Coleridge, 1827-1871
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 14

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1875 July 18

"July 18 '75. My dear Lewis, I met [Gustave?] Pope at the Mansion House last night and was pained to hear that you were lain up unwell again. I was going to ask if I might run down again before the summer was over to look at your sketches, but now I must wait till you are strong enough again to see anyone. In fact I did not feel sure that a letter would not bother you till Pope said it would rather amuse than otherwise. I cannot tell you the pleasure it is to us to remember the delightful afternoon at your house; we feel as if we had for awhile lived the life of the Arabian Nights, with all its joys and without any of its evil. As generous souls rejoice in the joy they give I am sure that Mrs Lewis and you must have a rich store of enjoyment. I should so much have liked to show you a statue I am doing of Sir Cowasjee Jehangeer, a rich Parsee of Bombay; for while I work at it I think of your work and wonder if you would think I had put the true Oriental character into his attitude and the expression of his face. I should much like to exhibit it next year but my Committee wish it in Bombay before the Prince arrives in November, so that, as usual, I am cheated of my Exhibition right. The President seemed to have revived again last evening, for tho he looked weak compared with a few years back, still he spoke with some amount of firmness and was very pleasant in his manner and cheerful. My wife desires her love to Mrs Lewis and you and is very anxious for comforting news of you. It is this horrid wet weather that has brought you down, for all sensitive nervous natures are more beaten by damp than by any other causes. - Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Subjects:
Orientalism

Names:
Jehanghier, Cowasjee Readymoney, 1812-1878
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Pope, G. (Gustave)
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 15

Thomas Woolner letter to Marian Lewis
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1876 January 16

"Jan 16 '76. My dear Mrs Lewis, the date of your last letter just now shocked me to see how long it was written: it has been on my desk ever since to be answered, and the answer was to be that I meant to jump into a train and to answer for myself.

Now, unless I fix a time I shall go on for 3 months longer without paying you a visit, as I never by any chance have a day disengaged, therefore unless you forbid me to do so I shall come to see you on Sunday 23rd. - But if Sunday is a day with you so solemn and lugubrious as to admit of no pleasure to yourselves or anyone else, in Scotch fashion, then I will pick out some other day and learn your opinion upon it, for I intend to go on no longer in this indefinite manner.- I have lots to tell the great Oriental about the fights over the increase of Associates, and long for a wholesome gossip upon Art, men, and things.- Tell him I have to do a Colossal statue of Captain Cook for Sydney, N.S. Wales to commemorate that mighty hero having discovered the place about 100 years ago. I have heard from time to time how he has been going on, and am glad that on the whole he seems to have got on so for thro' the winter pretty well: but considering how long I have allowed you to rest I think you may send me just 2 or 3 lines to say how you are going on.- We have got on very well hitherto. Kindest remembrances from my wife - Ever truly yours,
T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Cook, James, 1728-1779
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

b. 1, f. 16

Thomas Woolner letter to Marian Lewis
1 folded sheet (1 page) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1876 January 18

"Jan 18 '76. My dear Mrs Lewis, Best thanks; wet or dry I shall come next Sunday at about the time you say. I will tell all about Cook's statue when I come - he is to be on the top of a column so that he must stand - why does the great man wish to see him sitting - he who never rested? Perhaps because he thinks the mighty Captain should rest after so much activity! Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Cook, James, 1728-1779
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 17

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1876 February 13

"Feb 13 '76. My dear Lewis, I met your brother in the street this morning and was grieved to hear from him that you were not so well and that the cold weather affected you. This cold is most penetrating, for almost ever since I was with you I have been bothered with a cough and irritation in my throat, and I cannot get well in consequence of the cold. If the cold serves me in this unjustifiable manner, my whole life being spent in the exercise of jumping up and down stools and steps, how is it to be wondered at that you are cruelly victimized by the tyrant when you can never take enough exercise to counteract its baneful insinuation. I can tell you nothing of the R.A. transactions at present for as yet nothing has been done. On Tuesday, as you know, there is a General Meeting when the great battle comes off, more Ass:s or "as you was". If anything notable should occur I will be your humble chronicler. I am now obliged to flit and only send this as a nod in passing. - Please to remem. me most kindly to Mrs Lewis, Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

b. 1, f. 18

Thomas Woolner letter to Marian Lewis
1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1876 February
20

"Feb: 20 '76. My dear Mrs Lewis, I ought to have answered your letter before, but of late every evening I have had has been so closely engaged that I have not been my own master but rather the unwilling slave of that un pitying Demon brute - Circumstance. Tho wet a great deal, the weather has been so mild these last few days I hope it has dealt kindly with my well-beloved Patriarch. I was by no means pleased to have your confirmation of what I had heard of him. I am glad you think it does him good to have a chat on the way this queer world wags, and I will run down any Sunday you tell me I may see him without hurting him: my duties of the heavy sort are not yet begun at the R.A. and when they are they will not affect my Sunday, as I rarely work on that quiet restful day. What a joke about a bust of S.C. Hall! - doubtless I have during my life done many things a highly developed - or rather a human creature living in a highly developed civilization ought not to have done; - but I can lay my hand upon my faithful bosom and say "Thank that Destiny, hitherto my guide, I have never yet descended into such a puddle of inanity as to exercise my craft upon the features of Mr Pecksniff!" So pray ask your Husband not on my account to swell the vanity or the pockets of this contemptible sneak.- The R.A. business was very simple last Tuesday - it was decided by a majority of 2 to 1 that a first installment of Associates be elected soon as possible with the vote and all other advantages the present ones enjoy. To my mind this is disastrous because it will stop anything like a large movement towards justice for 25 years or longer, but as it appears to serve the purpose of ambition, and as ambition has a large majority to pedestalize him upwards I suppose the most philosophical thing is to smile at the gregariousness of mankind.- Ever truly yours, T. Woolner." S.C. Hall was the editor of The Art Journal and was renowned for his sanctimonious personality. He was widely considered the basis for Charles Dickens's character, Mr. Pecksniff.

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Hall, S. C. (Samuel Carter), 1800-1889
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Body:
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)

b. 1, f. 19

Thomas Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 folded sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

1876 March 9

"March 9 '76. My dear Lewis, I will be with you on Sunday somewhere about 3 P.M.- and as it will give me more time with you I will stay the night, as I suppose I can get away pretty early in the morning. - I sent your letter to my wife, who is at Hastings; she was charmed with the hopeful tone of it and desired me to give you her love. - I am up and over my head in letters as I have no wife here to carry off the press of them as usual. Ever yours, T. Woolner." Marginalia: "I saw [William] Boxall last night: - he is very feeble I fear.-" William Boxall would die on 6 December 1876.

Addressed from "29 Welbeck St. W." Addressed to "J.F. Lewis Esq. R.A. Walton-on-Thames"; with postage stamp and multiple postal markings; torn at edges.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Boxall, William, Sir, 1800-1879
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 20

Thomas Woolner letter to Marian Lewis

1876 March 11

1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

"March 11 '76. My dear Mrs Lewis, I am grieved at your sad news, and hope it is only a few days of depression you have to be anxious about. Tell him he must not think of writing unless doing so allows one to accept it as a sign of very great improvement indeed: - mind this is bona fide, and I cannot accede to any vagaries of his generous impulses. I do not at all like writing to my wife that he is worse for his last letter rejoiced her so much; and she gets so little holiday, having this refractory tribe always on her hands, I do not like to send down a cloud to shade her day of sunshine. - She gave in this morning's letter a fine account of the glorious sea and the waves washing over the roadway. The children are with me; so that she has nothing to do but laugh and grow fat. - Hoping for good news- Ever truly yours, T. Woolner."

With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.

Genres / Formats:

Correspondence

Names:

Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876

Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence

Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

b. 1, f. 21

Thomas Woolner letter to Marian Lewis

1876 March 27

1 folded sheet (4 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 10 x 19 cm, folded to 10 x 10 cm
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

"March 27 '76. My dear Mrs Lewis, We were grieved to have your bad news of your glorious veteran; and the weather so abominable that I scarcely expect to have a better yet awhile. Tell him that if I see anything brilliant I will tell him. I am glad he sent his own, for a true blossom is grateful where artificial flowers fatigue. You saw that my wife has returned, and the house has received its soul again. How she longs for cheery news, and to see you both again. Her day at your house is a memory steeped in Romance, for your artist is her ideal of a splendid painter; and I am vain enough to think praise from her of value, as she gives it rarely, and very little of it to me. - I have been too busy to write before - my love to him - every yours, T. Woolner." Marginalia: "Thanks for your kind letters!" See: *Thomas Woolner, R.A., sculptor and poet*, page 302.

Addressed from 29 Welbeck Street.

Genres / Formats:

Correspondence

Names:

Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876

Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

- b. 1, f. 22 Alice Woolner letter to John Frederick Lewis
1 sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912 between 1874
and 1876,
January 26
- Alice Woolner's hand is difficult to decipher. She appears to be writing on behalf of Thomas Woolner to arrange a meeting with J.F. Lewis on January 29th, at the Athenaeum.
- Addressed from 29 Welbeck St.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
-
- b. 1, f. 23 Alice Woolner letter to Marian Lewis
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912 between 1874
and 1876, March
22
- Woolner appears to inquire about the health of J.F. Lewis, noting "this severe weather I fear is very bad for your invalid."
- With blind-embossed letterhead: 29, Welbeck Street. W.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
-
- b. 1, f. 24 Charles Aitken letter to D. Hewitt
1 folded sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 24 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936 1914 January 5
- "January 5, 1914. Dear Sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind letter about the Lewis pictures. I will write to Christies'. I think the Birmingham Gallery must have bought some. I would be very grateful for the addresses of any owners of Lewis's pictures, if it is not troubling you too much. I am yours very truly, Charles Aitken [...]"
- With blind-embossed letterhead: National Gallery, British Art, S.W.; and blind-embossed seal.
- Genres / Formats:
Correspondence
- Names:
Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936 -- Correspondence
Hewitt, D. -- Correspondence
- Corporate Bodies:
Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery
Tate Gallery

b. 1, f. 25

Charles Aitken letter to D. Hewitt
1 folded sheet (3 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 24 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936

1914 January 15

"January 15, 1914. Dear Mr Hewitt, I am so much indebted to you for your kindness in sending me this valuable list. I want to see Lewis better represented here and shall try to array a little exhibition rather with a view to the Trustees being able to see his work. Mr Horton of Birmingham [i.e., Joseph Horton, d. 1927] has a good big [?] scale one "In the Harem" but he has rather an exaggerated idea of its market price. Sir Cuthbert Quilter had a good one but I do not know at present what became of it. With renewed thanks, I am yours very truly, Charles Aitken."

With blind-embossed letterhead: National Gallery, British Art, Millbank, S.W.; and blind-embossed seal.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Preferred Titles:
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876. Harem

Names:
Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936 -- Correspondence
Hewitt, D. -- Correspondence
Horton, Joseph, -1927
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Quilter, Cuthbert, Sir, 1841-1911

Corporate Body:
Tate Gallery

b. 1, f. 26

Amy Woolner letter to D. Hewitt
1 folded sheet (2 pages) : autograph letter, signed ; 18 x 23 cm, folded to 18 x 12 cm
Woolner, Amy

1914 March 29

"March 29th, 1914. Dear Mr. Hewitt, Thank you very much for searching out the letters of my father and taking so much trouble about the matter. It will be very nice to see you again if you can manage to bring the letters but I should like to know when you mean to come as I might be out - we are leaving this place on Monday April 6th and tomorrow we are out all the afternoon - With our kind regards, I am Sincerely yours, Amy Woolner."

Addressed from: 106 Queen's Gate, S.W.

Genres / Formats:
Correspondence

Names:
Hewitt, D. -- Correspondence
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Woolner, Amy -- Correspondence.
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

b. 1, f. 27

Amy Woolner note

1914 May 19

1 folded sheet (1 page) : autograph note, signed ; 20 x 33 cm, folded to 20 by 13 cm
Woolner, Amy

A folded sheet of paper, inscribed: "Letters from T. Woolner to J.F. Lewis R.A.,
returned with thanks & compliments, May 19, 1914, from Amy Woolner, Belle Vue,
Chiddingfold, Surrey."

Names:

Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

Subjects

Art -- France -- Paris -- Exhibitions
Orientalism
Painters -- Great Britain
Painting -- Great Britain
Painting -- Prices
Photography
Sculptors -- Great Britain
Sculpture -- Great Britain

Geographic Names

Egypt -- Antiquities
Hayes (Bromley, London, England)

Genres / Formats

Correspondence

Names

Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936 -- Correspondence
Armstead, Henry Hugh, 1828-1905
Boxall, William, Sir, 1800-1879
Butler, Elizabeth (Elizabeth Southerden Thompson), 1846-1933 (Roll call)
Cook, James, 1728-1779
Dobson, W. C. T. (William Charles Thomas), 1817-1898
Eyre, Vincent, Sir, 1811-1881
Foley, John Henry, 1818-1874
Gainsborough, Thomas, 1727-1788
Gérôme, Jean Léon, 1824-1904
Hall, S. C. (Samuel Carter), 1800-1889
Hewitt, D. -- Correspondence
Horton, Joseph, -1927
Ismail, Khedive of Egypt, 1830-1895
Jehanghier, Cowasjee Readymoney, 1812-1878
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 (Harem)
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 (In the Bey's Garden)
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 (Lion & lioness)
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Correspondence
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876 -- Health

Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906 -- Correspondence
Liddon, H. P. (Henry Parry), 1829-1890
Patteson, John Coleridge, 1827-1871
Pope, G. (Gustave)
Quain, Richard, 1816-1898
Quilter, Cuthbert, Sir, 1841-1911
Thackeray, William Makepeace, 1811-1863
Turner, J. M. W. (Joseph Mallord William), 1775-1851 (Van goyen, looking out for a subject)
Vokins, William, 1815-1895 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912 -- Correspondence
Woolner, Amy -- Correspondence
Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892 -- Correspondence

Corporate Bodies

Birmingham City Museum and Art Gallery
Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood
Royal Academy of Arts (Great Britain)
Salon (Exhibition : Paris, France)
Society of Antiquaries of London
St. Paul's Cathedral (London, England)
Tate Gallery

Contributors

Woolner, Thomas, 1825-1892
Aitken, Charles, 1869-1936
Lewis, John Frederick, 1804-1876
Lewis, Marian, approximately 1826-1906
Woolner, Alice, 1845-1912
Woolner, Amy