

Money, Power, Politics.



Picture Resource

William Logsdail

The Ninth November, 1887, 1890

The ninth of November was the traditional day for the Lord Mayor's Show (in 1959 this changed to the second Saturday of November). This painting contrasts the foggy gloom of London with the glitter of the pageant. The reflections of the carriage on the wet cobbles give the appearance of streets paved with gold. The crowd shows people from all walks of life.

The first Lord Mayor's Show took place in the 16th century. It is the ceremonial inauguration of the Lord Mayor of London. The Lord Mayor is appointed rather than elected, and the post-holder changes yearly. The role is specific to the City of London, otherwise known as the Square Mile, and is distinct from that of Mayor of London, an elected position, which has responsibility for Greater London.

Logsdail is known for his plein air style, which means that he painted his subjects as seen, rather than to studio or academic rules.



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Discussion points

- What is the artist's physical position in this painting? What does this perspective do for the viewer? The artist has painted from the perspective of a bystander, watching the pageant progress. This is a key social history painters' technique, placing the viewer in the heart of the action. Logsdail wants the viewer to feel that they are there.
- How has the artist depicted the contrast between the pageant and the onlookers? Consider the artist's use of colour. The pageant contains bright, shining colours, whilst the bystanders are largely depicted in darker, plainer hues.
- Consider the artist's use of light. The sun falls centrally in the painting, drawing the eye to the pageant, and creating a glimmering effect.
- What comment, if any, do you think the artist is making about the Lord Mayor's Show? Is he impressed by it? Repulsed by it? Indifferent? Logsdail in fact felt compelled to create the painting having felt thrilled and impressed by the spectacle of it.
- What elements of the painting relate to the themes of money, power, or politics?

Money: the opulence of the pageant, the gold embroidery on the uniforms, the feathers, the Lord Mayor's coach; the illusion of streets paved with gold; the presence of the Bank of England and Royal Exchange; the contrast between the onlookers and the pageant.

Power: the sturdy permanence of the buildings; the elevation of the Lord Mayor in contrast to the onlookers.

Politics: The Lord Mayor – today, the Lord Mayor of the City of London's primary role is as an advocate of the businesses and residents of the City of London and as an international representative of the UK's financial sector. The role is apolitical (not affiliated to any political party). The Lord Mayor's Show has evolved from the ceremonial journey of the new Lord Mayor from the City to the Royal Courts of Justice at Westminster, to swear allegiance to the Queen.

Activities

In-gallery

- Sketch a person, perhaps an onlooker, from the painting whom you find intriguing. What do you imagine are their thoughts about the pageant?

Around the City

- Visit the Museum of London to see the Lord Mayor's coach (the actual one that's in this painting!). Create your own sketches of details of the coach. Could you abstract these in the style of Brendan Neiland, by zooming in up close?

In the classroom

Write a diary entry for the figure that you sketched from the painting. Describe the scene and their feelings about it.

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William Logsdail, *The Ninth November, 1887*
Oil on canvas, 1890. Guildhall Art Gallery 1091

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Thinking points and further research



A

B

Close-up A

- **What is happening?** The little boy is stealing an orange from the lady's basket.
- **Why is this happening?** Do you think he is taking the orange to be naughty, or for another reason?
- **Why do you think Logsdail might have included this detail?** Could he be drawing a contrast between the pomp and circumstance of the procession, and the realities of life for those watching? Perhaps he witnessed it when he carried out his original sketch?

Close-up B

- **What is happening?** People have gathered on the roof of the Bank of England to watch the procession.
- **Who do you think these people are?** Do you think they're rich or poor? They are wearing hats, possibly top hats. How might they have gained access to the roof of the building? Might they work at the Bank?
- **Imagine that Logsdail had been amongst them.** How different would the scene be? What would you see that you can't see now? What would you not be able to see that you can now?