



WHISTLER AND WATERSTON AT MASS MOCA

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The [Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art \(MoCA\)](#) is now showing [Darren Waterston's](#) "Uncertain Beauty," at the center of which is a contemporary reworking of [James McNeil Whistler's](#) infamous [Peacock Room](#). With major sponsorship by [ABC Carpet & Home](#), the installation, *Filthy Lucre*, enters the dialogue between artist and patron as well as that of the economic discrepancies of past and present.

In 1876, British shipping magnate [Frederick Leyland](#) authorized Whistler to make a few small changes to the room in which he meant to showcase his prized collection of Asian ceramics. The room would feature Whistler's *La Princesse du Pays de la Porcelaine* (1863-64) prominently above the fireplace. However, Whistler did far more than decide on a color palette, unbeknownst to Leyland and his architect who were away. Covering the entirety of the leather walls in gilded peacocks, Whistler excited the animosity of Leyland who later sued him for the sums that Whistler had charged him.

For *Filthy Lucre*, Waterston has reconstructed the famous room, not to its elaborate glory, but as a ruin. Hand-painted ceramics and Whistlerian paintings have been recreated and transformed into partial wreckage as the golden peacock melts down the wall and shelves deteriorate, questioning the foundations of the artist-patron relationship and Gilded Age society.

In addition to *Filthy Lucre*, "Uncertain Beauty" displays several of Waterston's works on canvas and wood panel. The exhibition will be on view through January 2015.

SARAH BOCHICCHIO | *July 21, 2014*