



Kate Greenaway 1846-1901

### **Illustrator**

Kate's father was an Engraver employed by a Nottingham Printer and Stationer, working on Chapel Bar but he moved to London and founded the 'Illustrated London News'. So Kate was born in London with relatives at Rolleston, Notts., she spent a lot of her childhood in Nottingham. She was home educated and then in 1858 went to South Kensington School of Art and then the Royal School of Female Art and finally the Slade School of Fine Art.

While she was still in school, Greenaway received commissions for children's book illustrations. The first came in 1867 for a frontispiece for *Infant Amusements*, setting a path towards specialization in children's books. Her reputation was built on the awards she had won while completing the National Art Courses. She also had early exhibitions, in 1868 she exhibited a set of fairy watercolours, which she sold the *People's Magazine*. He set them to verse and printed them in his magazine which led to further commissions. She came to specialise in water colour of children, in imaginary 18th-century costumes in a Queen Anne style, they were extremely popular in England and internationally, sparking the Kate Greenaway style. The new, popular and lucrative card market coincided with the end of Greenaway's formal training and she was hired on a freelance basis to make illustrations for greetings cards Her designs sold well, and early valentines sold 25,000 copies in weeks.

Her first book, *Under the Window* (1879), a collection of simple, perfectly idyllic verses about children, was a bestseller. In the 1880s, the most popular designers of bookplates were by Greenaway, she was elected to membership of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours in 1889. She exhibited her work at the Palace of Fine Arts at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. She built herself an Arts and Crafts style house in Hampstead where she lived for many years, although she spent summers in Rolleston. Greenaway died of breast cancer in 1901, at the age of 55. She is buried in Hampstead Cemetery, London.

The Kate Greenaway Medal, established in her honour in 1955, is awarded annually by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals in the UK to an illustrator of children's books.

