

[excerpted from <http://histclo.hispeed.com/art/artist-mil.html> and [www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/.../pearssoap.jpg.html](http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/.../pearssoap.jpg.html), emphasis mine]



### Sir John Everett Millais (1829-96)

Sir John Everett Millais was an English portrait and historical painter who worked in the second half of the 19th Century. Millais attended Henry Sass' Drawing School in 1838 and went on to study at the Royal Academy in 1840. While still a youth, he won various medals for his drawings. Millais exhibited at the Royal Academy when he was only 17 years old. His first painting, “Pizarro Seizing the Inca of Peru” (1846), is considered one of the best historical works as was highly praised at the time. He subsequently joined the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a loosely-organized British artists’ association with whom he was associated for the rest of his life.

Millais is today not a well-known painter to those who have not studied art. Even so, one of his paintings, “Bubbles”, is one of the most well-known images to the public at large, few who could name the artist. The painting was completed in 1886. Millais originally named it, ‘A Child's World’. It shows William James, the artist's grandson playing with a pipe and bubbles. “Bubbles” is perhaps one of the 10 most widely recognized paintings ever done, yet few could name Sir John Everett Millais as the artist. It shows the artist’s grandson William wearing a large ruffled collar. (William was associated with this picture all his life. He made the Royal

Navy his career, and became Admiral Sir William James, eventually writing many books and dying at age 92 in 1974.) “Bubbles” became notorious when it was acquired by the Pears soap company for advertising purposes, directly from the artist’s studio. **By co-opting “Bubbles” for a purely mercenary marketing use, Pears’ Soap blurred the line between advertisements and art.** Long after Pears stopped using it, the image was reproduced on dishes, candy boxes, and it countless commercial medium in England, America, and the Continent. Few images in the history of art have been so widely disseminated. This perhaps affected Millais’ reputation among the cognoscente who considered such commercialization to be a crass defilement of art.

