

A close-up photograph of a terracotta sculpture of a young man with curly hair, looking upwards. The sculpture is set against a background of ornate, colorful decorations, including a golden, textured surface on the left and various floral and geometric patterns in the background. The text "British Art Studies" is overlaid in the center of the image.

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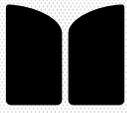
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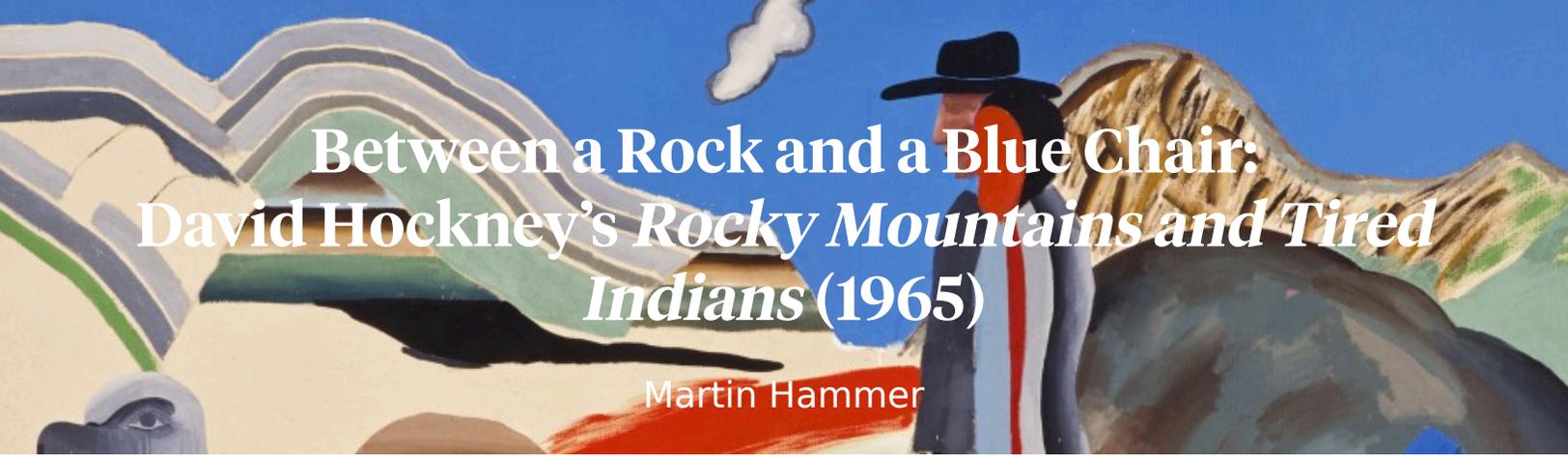
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# Between a Rock and a Blue Chair: David Hockney's *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians* (1965)

Martin Hammer

## **Abstract**

*Travel and cultural exchange between the United Kingdom and the United States of America became a key feature of the 1960s, shaping the world view of many a British artist, curator, architect, writer, film-maker, and academic. Against that wider backdrop, I offer here a focused reading of David Hockney's 1965 painting, Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians. With its faux-naive idiom and overt but quirkily un-modern American theme, the work conveys the artist's singular take on what it felt like to be a Brit at large in the US, an environment at once wondrously exotic and at times strikingly banal. Close analysis discloses Hockney's rich repertoire of artistic and literary allusions in Rocky Mountains, and the meanings and associations these may have encapsulated.*

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## **Acknowledgements**

This article has its origins in my inaugural lecture at the University of Kent in 2013, which was intended as a demonstration of the kind of art history to which I am personally committed, rooted in close scrutiny and awareness of the complexity of the making and viewing processes. That motivation persists in the article. I am grateful to all those who responded to the lecture, and to the editors of *British Art Studies*, especially Martina Droth, for their helpful and constructive feedback.

## **Cite as**

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During the 1960s, the young David Hockney travelled across the pond as assiduously as any of his contemporaries. Following initial trips to New York and the East Coast, Hockney visited Los Angeles for the first time early in 1964. After several months in California he proceeded to drive through Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, and up to Chicago, where he stayed for five days and “looked at the big museums”, before doubling back in order to spend the summer teaching, and being thoroughly bored, he recalled, in provincial Iowa City.<sup>1</sup> The uncharacteristically severe *Iowa* (1964) captured Hockney’s sense that: “The only exciting thing that ever happened there was the clouds coming up over the landscape.”<sup>2</sup> He subsequently met up with his fashion designer friend Ossie Clark back in Chicago, and together they first drove to California then, with Derek Boshier in tow, to Arizona, Nevada, and New Orleans. The “epic road trip” culminated in attending the opening of Hockney’s first show in America at the Alan Gallery in New York.<sup>3</sup> After spending the subsequent winter in London, Hockney returned to the US in 1965. He and his painter friend Patrick Procktor arrived in New York, and then both went off to teach, Procktor filling Hockney’s shoes in Iowa, and Hockney heading for the University of Colorado in Boulder to do another summer stint. It was there and then that he produced the work on which I shall focus, *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians* (fig. 1), subsequently included that autumn in Hockney’s one-man show, *Pictures with Frames and Still-Life Pictures*, at his London dealer, Kasmin. The painting was sold to the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation for the not insubstantial sum of £750, before ending up in the collection of the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh.



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**Figure 1.**

David Hockney, *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians*, 1965, acrylic on canvas, 170.4 x 252.8 cm. Collection National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. Digital image courtesy of National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh | Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates | © David Hockney

Such extended adventures in the States became a veritable rite of passage for numerous British graduates on either side of 1960.<sup>4</sup> Aside from the availability of funding, the prevailing climate of “Americanization” was eloquently evoked by the novelist Malcolm Bradbury, who was a few years Hockney’s senior but provides a revealing literary counterpart to the artist. Bradbury’s recollections capture the euphoric enthusiasm for all things American in dreary post-war England, albeit tinged with ambivalence and a consciously British sense of inhibition and adherence to tradition:

Britain was losing an Empire and gaining a washing machine, and America was where, it seemed, everything that was best came from—the best jazz, the best novels, the best ice-cream, the best cars, the best films. In fact America . . . haunted the imaginations of the Fifties young . . . I became a typical example of a constant figure of the time, Midatlantic Man . . . His underwear came from Marks and Spencers, but his buttondown shirts from Brooks Brothers or the Yale Coop. In Britain he talked all the time of the States; in America he would become notably more British, a flagship in his Harris tweeds . . . And America proved pretty much what was expected. After austerity Britain, it was wildly exciting. After the British class system, it was wonderfully democratic.

There was everything you ever heard of: Marilyn Monroe and Dave Brubeck, Elvis and the Kelvinator, eggs any side up you wanted them . . . once in America, we all fanned out . . . by delivering a new car from coast to coast, you could see all of America . . . if you drove all night without sleeping, you could also pull in the Grand Canyon, grab the Painted Desert, see bear in Yosemite and a geyser in Yellowstone, and still turn up in San Francisco on time.<sup>5</sup>

Bradbury's account serves to indicate that Hockney's experiences and general outlook were in many ways typical of his generation. The work that resulted from his encounters with America was also not without its cultural affinities, as we shall see, but was undoubtedly remote from the Pop Art aesthetic with which the artist tended to be associated.

*Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians* was one of Hockney's most distinctive and acclaimed paintings of the 1960s, which came accompanied by one of his most engaging titles, providing a droll commentary on his depiction of two American Indians, flanked by a traditional statue and modern chair, and set against an asymmetrical landscape backdrop. From a pictorial perspective, this relatively large work, around 170 centimetres high by 253 centimetres wide, bears the visual imprint of its execution in acrylic on canvas. Hockney had started using water-based paint the previous year in Los Angeles, valuing its swiftness to dry and its retention of intense colour when diluted. In the original, even when viewed from a relative distance, *Rocky Mountains* looks a good deal more casual and improvised than it does in reproduction. The overall effect is the opposite of laborious or congested. Indeed, there is no attempt to neaten up the random drips of paint arising from the process of making. Yet, in its pictorial organization, *Rocky Mountains* also appears carefully composed, in terms of the overall rhythm and balance of its component parts. Reviewing the exhibition in which the picture was launched, the youthful critic Robert Hughes generally commended the artist's "sense of placement": "Hockney manoeuvres his knife-edged shapes around until they fall into position with a nearly audible click . . . the paintings are a good deal more sophisticated than they look."<sup>6</sup>

When one starts to register detail, *Rocky Mountains* reads not so much as a coherent stylistic artefact in the conventional manner, but rather as a pictorial montage of discrete and disparate elements, notably varied, for example, in their degrees of naturalism and three-dimensionality. The landscape of the title evokes not so much the literal, dramatic Rockies ("a wild pushing mass of jagged peaks", according to a 1965 Bradbury novel set in the same part of America), but the dry, rocky, eroded, vegetation-less

terrain typical of the American Southwest.<sup>7</sup> This ambience is depicted by means of striated, multi-coloured bands, carefully distributed in the left half of the painting. The bands read as emphatically flat, in one sense, especially in the topmost passage, but they also diminish in size and strength of colour to evoke a layered recession into deep space, as perceived, we might suppose, through the astonishingly clear light that is such a memorable feature of the region. The sense of luminosity is enhanced by the bright blue of the sky but also by the pervasive presence of the off-white ground, which in another way asserts the literal materiality of the canvas. The three repeated mound-like forms in particular serve to plot the progression from foreground to far distance, even though we might struggle to gauge exactly how far away the nearest of them might be relative to the immediate foreground plane.

Within that open but indeterminate spatial expanse, the extended splash of red paint is clearly not the spontaneous, poured gesture that it might appear to be at first sight. On closer inspection, it turns out not to be one single mark at all, but rather to comprise three passages, carefully executed on either side of the nearest striated rock formation, and also of the foreground eagle. The end of the fictive splash even employs a slightly different red from the other two sections. There is no suggestion that the bird and rocky mound were executed on top of a big underlying brushmark. But, given the implied landscape context, what we do begin to discern is the passage not so much of an abstract splatter of paint as that of a river, perhaps muddy given its colour, which we take to be traversing the landscape in the middle distance and getting closer to us towards the left of the composition. The right-hand side of the composition evokes a rather different kind of landscape imagery. The more textural, rounded hill to the top right of the composition is presumably wooded terrain of some sort; while the painterly modelling of the form immediately behind the figures produces a more emphatically three-dimensional solid mass, a jokey reference, we might surmise, to the city of Boulder where Hockney was executing the work. On one level, therefore, *Rocky Mountains* provides a demonstration of how space, three-dimensional form, and diverse types of physical substance can all be encoded pictorially by means of artifice and convention, given a cooperative viewer.

The lower edge of the composition intersects at ankle height the pair of standing, stationary figures, of whom the closest is female and overtly American Indian, her literal redskin facial mask eclipsing any signs of individuality. She is positioned in front of the rather dowdy man, with his economically described cowboy hat, whom we take to be her partner, on the most obvious reading. In more formal terms, her rear silhouette picks up the curves of the distant hills to the right, while the vertical stripes of her dress connect visually with the striated rock features to the left. The central red stripe of her garment provides a more precise counterpart to the not-so-

spontaneous, horizontal splash of red. Beyond the group of cactus leaves that further establishes the nearest plane, we encounter a grisaille eagle, looking stage-left, just like the figures. This element is clearly adapted from a Thunderbird totem, a well-known feature of American Indian visual culture. Though inanimate, Hockney's creature seems more vividly characterized in psychological terms than the humans, reading as rather cross, say, or perhaps sad, if the visible trickles of paint are read as tears. The top of its head minimally overlaps the parallel bands describing the distant mountains, the effect counteracting to a degree the sensation of space, as in more overt fashion does the visible bare canvas, the flat application of the paint in many areas, and the prominent internal border, or frame, whose width seems coordinated with the more irregular bands within the composition. Conversely, the eagle is balanced across the composition by a very modern-looking blue chair, a Saarinen Executive to be precise, which is of equivalent solidity to the bird and echoes the sky colour. This element could be interpreted as a potential respite for one of the figures, just in case thinking about the vista, and perhaps the ardours of old-fashioned tribal existence, became too much for them to contemplate. If we are so inclined, then, we might begin to discern some expressive or thematic point to Hockney's placement of his figures between the emblems of a mythic past, associated with the natural landscape, and a thoroughly Americanized present. Finally, the topmost section of the picture comprises a zone of sky, unmodulated and strikingly bright blue, as is frequently the case in the region, and broken only by a few cartoon clouds. Like the rocky striations, the clouds too equivocate between flat and three-dimensional, and the largest cloud across to the right turns out, when we peer closely, to be executed with flatly applied silver paint. The clouds also look a little like thought bubbles, as if we are invited to imagine what might be passing through the figures' minds, even though their features are inscrutable.

*Rocky Mountains* could well strike the attentive spectator as a virtuoso combination of the faux naive and the sophisticated, the fragmented and the carefully constructed, and the abstract and the figurative; or, to put it another way, of modernist engagement with the autonomy and flatness of the picture surface integrated with, and balanced against, more traditional evocation of a fictive scenario in depth, mobilizing our imaginative responses to the depicted subject matter. Overall, making sense of the painting takes time. Equally, the diverse components seem to cohere thematically around the concept of time, with the contemporary (the chair) and the fleeting (river and clouds) juxtaposed against the primordially remote (the rock formations), with such extreme opposition mediated by the shorter-term unfolding of human history (the Indians, of ancient lineage but now in their Americanized guise). In terms of affective charge, several early critics insisted on the persistent ambivalence in Hockney's early work, which employed "wit as a cover for its serious inclinations".<sup>8</sup> Robert Hughes

perceived an unexpected affinity with Truman Capote, and the “peculiar combination of nostalgia for innocence with a thin, needling presence of evil”.<sup>9</sup> In 1968 Charles Harrison remarked, less melodramatically, that *Rocky Mountains* came across as “unmistakeably Hockney, a strange mixture of whimsy in its construction and disturbing reality in its effect”.<sup>10</sup>

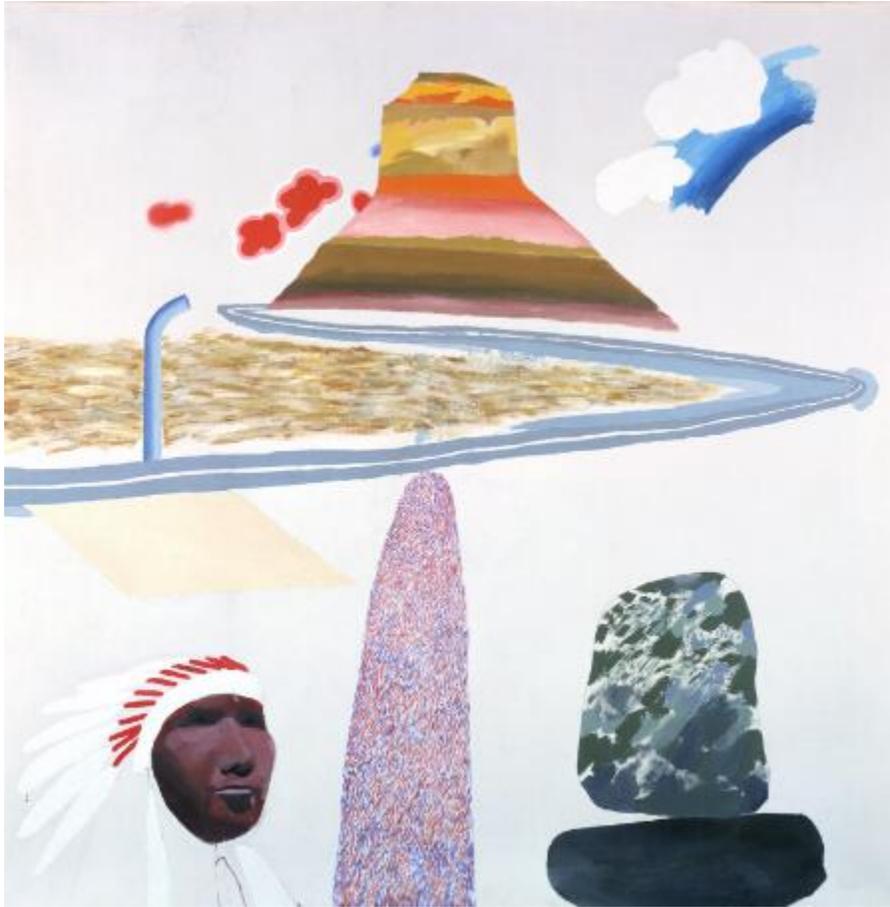
Looking back now over the span of five decades, we need to interrogate how and why Hockney arrived at the distinctive conception of *Rocky Mountains*, and how the picture-making decisions he made were shaped by wider cultural and historical contexts. But the artist’s own perspective on such matters should not act as a constraint. Indeed, there is good reason to take our methodological bearings from a remark Hockney made in the preface to his 1976 autobiography: “It is good advice to believe only what an artist does, rather than what he says about his work . . . People interested in painting might be fascinated by an artist’s statements about their work, but I don’t think one can rely on that alone to learn about an artist’s work, which is all trial and error.”<sup>11</sup> The sense that this particular composition was made up, to a degree, as Hockney went along, is apparent from the minimal evidence of under-drawing, and from the visible pentimenti such as the perspectival lines to the bottom right, buried underneath the description of the rock, a feature whose upper-left contour also extends beneath the back of the female figure. Judging by other works from this time, Hockney probably began with a general idea of the picture, previously set down in a drawing and then transferred onto the canvas, which was then elaborated and modified until he felt that the painting “worked”, which perhaps entailed balancing those contradictory qualities that were outlined above within a suitably striking and suggestive image.<sup>12</sup>

Inevitably, there is a gulf between the highly visual thought processes that feed into decisions that a work is finished and worthy to be released into the world, and the commentary which he or she subsequently elaborates when talking to friends, gallery representatives, journalists, collectors, and so forth. Introspection is quite likely to shade into rationalization, hindsight, and self-promotion. The supremely articulate Hockney has always enjoyed success, whether intentionally or otherwise, in dictating the terms in which his art is understood and appreciated. Critics have frequently ignored that cautionary remark about paintings coming about as much from improvisation as from some preconceived programme of ideas and intentions, and have insisted upon reading his art through the filter of the engaging commentaries which Hockney then proceeded to supply in the main body of his autobiography. That subservience to the proverbial horse’s mouth is nowhere more evident than in the literature on *Rocky Mountains*. The relevant account by Hockney runs as follows:

I went back to America to teach at the University of Colorado, in Boulder, which is an attractive campus on the edge of the Rocky Mountains. I was given a studio that had no window to look out of, no windows to view the Rocky Mountains. Not being able to see them reminded me of *Flight into Italy—Swiss Landscape*. Here I am, surrounded by these beautiful Rocky Mountains; I go into the studio—no window! . . . So I painted *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians*. The whole picture is an invention from geological magazines and romantic ideas (the nearest Indians are at least three hundred miles from Boulder). The chair was just put in for compositional reasons. And to explain its being there I called the Indians “tired”. In the bird there’s a bit of illusion: it’s a wooden bird. <sup>13</sup>

That whimsical anecdote about not having a studio window is the passage that has been endlessly recycled, as though in itself it explained something revealing about the genesis and effect of the painting.

As a starting point, it may be helpful to view *Rocky Mountains* as “an invention”, serving to distil into a single image Hockney’s varied memories of the American Southwest. The obvious precursor to *Rocky Mountains* in his work is *Arizona* (1964), a more immediate and perhaps more illustrative product of the road trip he had enjoyed the previous summer (fig. 2). This likewise features the weathered forms of bare rock, as well as storm clouds, and a boulder and an American Indian in the foreground, balanced around the road snaking back through the landscape. <sup>14</sup> Here, as in *Rocky Mountains*, the acknowledged allusion in the landscape to graphic conventions familiar from, say, *National Geographic* or other educational magazines, was rooted, we might surmise, in Hockney’s perception that the unusually regular, coloured strata characteristic of this particular region were in themselves visually akin to geological diagrams. Nature had evidently seen fit to supply its own didactic exposition of long-term patterns of evolution in the earth’s physical surface that dwarfed the story of human occupancy. <sup>15</sup>



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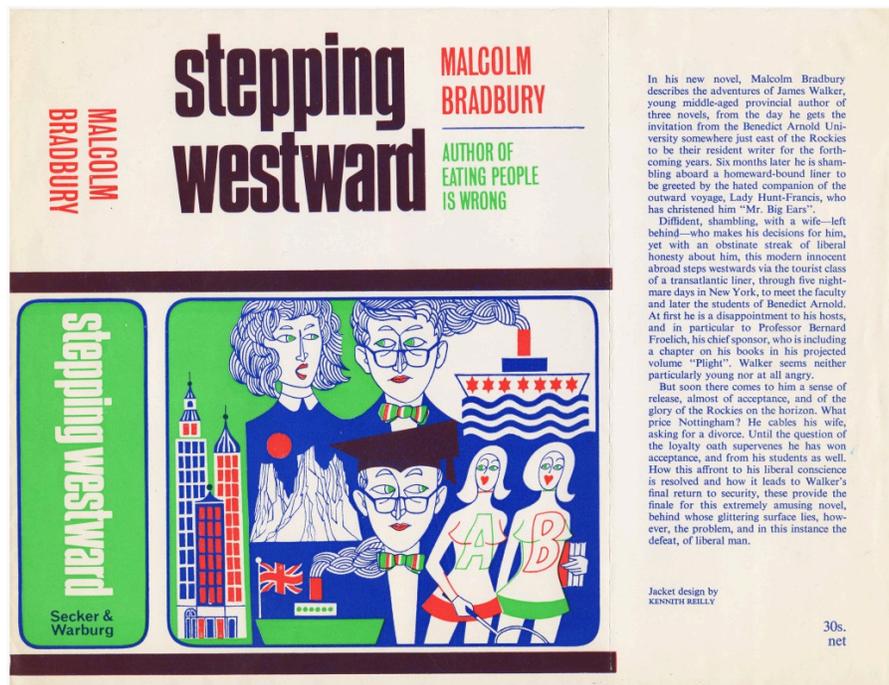
**Figure 2.**

David Hockney, *Arizona*, 1964, acrylic on canvas, 152.4 x 152.4 cm.  
Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of David Hockney

The 1965 picture appears more child-like than *Arizona*, as though assembled with little thought from an array of disparate images and pictorial languages. The apparent lack of artistic refinement might be taken to signify the triteness of the current construction of the Southwest in the popular American imagination, those “romantic ideas” to which Hockney also alluded. The elements add up to a compendium of the clichés about the region purveyed by the local tourist board—intense blue skies, interrupted occasionally by fierce rain storms; the rolling formations of an arid desert, and the geological layers of “painted desert”; verdant pasture and woodland in other parts; weird cactus plants; the accoutrements of American Indian culture, and its current representatives. The general fragmentation and simplification of *Rocky Mountains* implies that we nowadays experience such places through the filter of postcards or illustrations in magazines and brochures, and in more literal terms through the window of a car passing swiftly through. The frame and white border make unmistakable reference to popular visual culture, reinforced by the exaggerated, artificial-looking

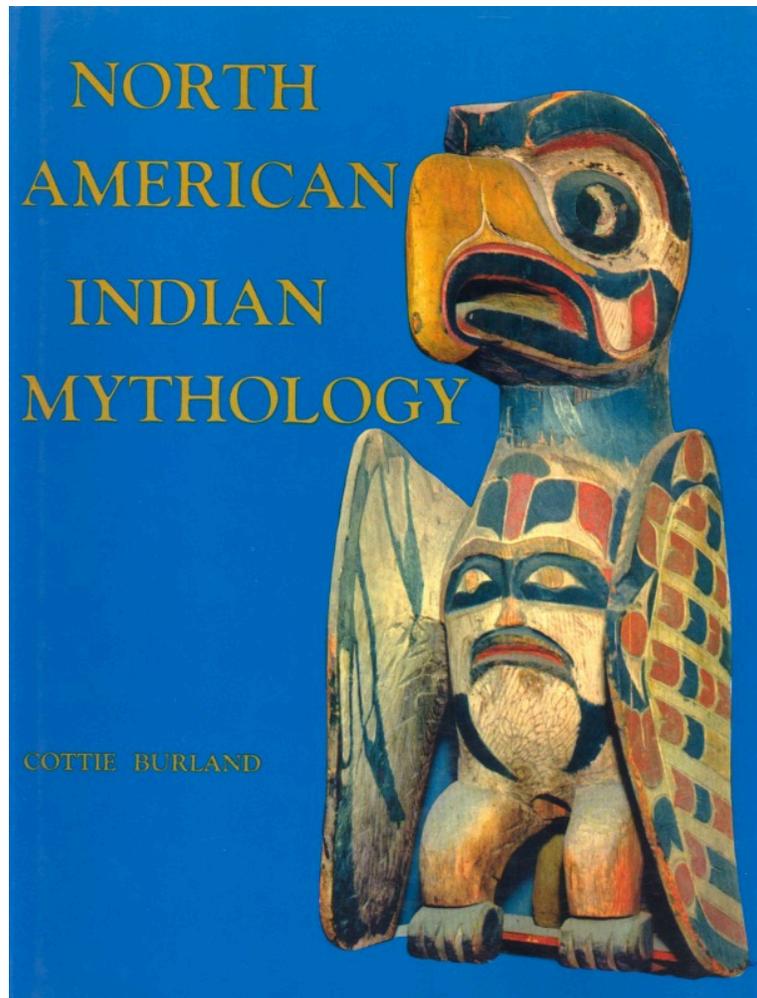
colours. <sup>16</sup> According to Andrew Causey: “The line frame surrounding the picture is a graphic designer’s device, used in postcards and reproductions as pictorial inverted commas to define the sense that something is worth recording, and to make it available as a souvenir or memento.” <sup>17</sup> Such an allusion brings Hockney within the loose orbit of Pop Art. Indeed, one of Hockney’s closest Pop affinities is that between the fake gestural mark describing the muddy river in *Rocky Mountains* and those in Roy Lichtenstein’s carefully wrought, equally ironic Brushstrokes series that likewise dates from 1965. But generally there is a more emphatic distance in Hockney’s work from his vernacular source material. Moreover, compared with mainstream Pop’s derivations from mass urban culture, Hockney’s subject matter here is notably idiosyncratic, as if to assert that it took an outsider from overseas to take an interest in the vast, largely empty centre of America which affluent sophisticates on the east and west coasts tended to ignore. For reasons beyond their control, contemporary American Indians perhaps symbolized for the artist the wider state of estrangement from nature that he saw, with a certain wry amusement, as characterizing modern life in America, a corollary of the growing engagement with superficial sight-seeing amongst the well-heeled middle classes.

The Indians’ presence certainly lends the painting an undertone of pathos that serves to undermine the usual connotations of noble savagery that characterized representations of the indigenous culture at this time. In Arizona or New Mexico, if we follow Hockney’s reference to Indians three hundred miles away, the artist had doubtless confronted the spectacle of real-life American Indians mingling uneasily with the wider community, hawking souvenirs in towns and on their allocated reservations, and all too often locked into significant social and economic problems. Wider awareness of their plight would lead to the passing of the Indian Civil Rights Act in 1968 to deal with specific problems not addressed in the recent, more general Civil Rights legislation. In his 1965 novel, *Stepping Westward* (fig. 3), already cited, Malcolm Bradbury noted with a comparable sense of irony the coexistence of Wigwam Motel (which consisted “entirely of wigwams—each with their own box-spring beds and television”) in his fictional version of a Southwestern University city, while on the road beyond its boundary one could encounter “Indian dwellings of corrugated iron and tar-paper [that] formed small mounds in the desert sand” and “an old truck, the back laden with junk and Indians. A sign beside a shanty said NAVAJO RUGS.” <sup>18</sup>



**Figure 3.** Jacket of the first edition of, *Stepping Westward*, by Malcolm Bradbury (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965). Jacket design by Kenneth Reilly. Digital image courtesy of Kenneth Reilly

It must, in truth, have been hard not to be aware of the gap between reality and image, especially for British visitors brought up on a diet of “cowboys and Indians” movies and TV shows. Equally, postcards and the like, then as previously, tended to show Indians against a backdrop of their ancestral landscape, a formula echoed in *Rocky Mountains*. Headdresses, wigwams, and so forth were the staple of popular representations, rendering the culture suitably picturesque. Hockney’s figures, by contrast, look to have gone native—or rather gone un-native, so to speak, adopting the dress and by implication the banal lifestyle and mindset of modern white Americans. The couple look down at heel, a mere shadow of the mythic braves who had inhabited the distant mountains, living in proverbial harmony with natural spirits. In that sense, *Rocky Mountains* marks a pointed departure from *Arizona*, or from the treatment of Indian imagery in *Ethnic Minority* (1964) by his travelling companion Patrick Procktor, which offers an uncritically primitivist perspective on figures cast as timeless and spiritually charged. <sup>19</sup>



**Figure 4.**

Jacket of the first edition of, *North American Indian Mythology*, by Cottie Burland (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965). Digital image courtesy of Cottie Burland

In *Rocky Mountains* Hockney's eagle may be an identifying attribute, but it reads too as a poignant symbol of a living indigenous culture now reduced to heritage and aesthetic spectacle. Perhaps the expression on its face is really one of disappointment. The image looks to derive from a black-and-white photograph, but in its visual isolation it also recalls the cover of Cottie Burland's *North American Indian Mythology*, which appeared in 1965 and would have been easy for Hockney to spot in local bookstores (fig. 4).<sup>20</sup> Such a publication could more generally have reinforced his sense, as a foreigner and as an inevitably naive observer, that the traditional Indian way of life of popular cliché was becoming increasingly remote from everyday experience. The year of the painting also saw the publication of Roy Harvey Pearce's *Savagism and Civilisation: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind*, a landmark study of the pervasive role of cultural stereotypes and clichés in white responses to the indigenous peoples over the centuries.<sup>21</sup> It

is hard to gauge whether Hockney was politically engaged and motivated, but *Rocky Mountains* can be located in some sense within the emergent shift in attitudes towards the American Indian community that underpinned the more robust positions dominant in recent decades.

Hockney's reading does at any rate seem relevant to the title of our picture. The artist's own explanation seems a little pat—that he simply called the Indians “tired” to go with the chair. *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians* is a mellifluous phrase and, as noted, a suitably literal, deadpan gloss on the imagery.<sup>22</sup> However, consider Bradbury's account of a college town sounding not unlike Boulder:

The small town of Party lies in the American heartland somewhere near the point where the various wests collide—where the middle west meets the far west and the south-west the north-west . . . a town reclaimed from nothing, captured from one of the least desirable sections of the frontier. It has the air of being settled by those settlers who were too tired to go on, who said, on seeing ahead of them the magnificent range of the Rockies, that they could take no more. The Indians who preceded them in the section were tired and debilitated, horse-less cowardly braves with holes in their moccasins, without an art, without hogans, lax even in their production of arrowheads, a bore to anthropologists.

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Hockney's title for his new painting was surely triggered at some level by this specific passage of text. The conjunction of the Rockies and the tired, not to say tedious, Indians can hardly be coincidental, especially given that those sentences come, once again, from the prologue to that new Bradbury novel, *Stepping Westward*. Hockney could have read the book while the picture was under way, or even after it was finished, and been sufficiently struck by the affinity of theme and mood that he allowed its verbal invention to inform his title. More interesting is the idea that reading the passage came before the picture-making process got under way, and that it stimulated Hockney to distil his own experiences of the various American Wests, developing in paint an ironic, anti-picturesque version of the American Indian trope in popular culture. One can well imagine Hockney identifying with Bradbury's comic mode, given the often tongue-in-cheek bent of his own work to date. *Stepping Westward* proceeds to recount the picaresque adventures of one James Walker, a creative writing fellow at the fictive mid-western University of Party, whose pursuit of personal and sexual liberation and search for new beginnings, often have unintended and amusing outcomes. According to Bradbury, commenting on his novel with hindsight: “*Stepping Westward* can be seen as Henry James in reverse; it is British innocence that now goes

toward American experience, in the age when Americans did indeed seem to have the future of the planet in their hands.”<sup>24</sup> Hockney’s idiom is arguably another articulation of a self-conscious British innocence and distance, a mental equivalent to the Harris tweeds that Brits donned on their Grand Tour to America, in the face of the unfamiliar and often disconcerting spectacle that was modern America.

The playful dimension of *Rocky Mountains* might also remind us that Hockney was an enthusiastic admirer of the poetry of W. H. Auden, whose iconic status as a gay man was no doubt part of his appeal. Hockney has always been partial to the couplet from Auden’s poem, “Letter to Lord Byron”, as an antidote to the pervasive influence of abstraction and formalist aesthetics: “To me, art’s subject is the human clay/And landscape but a background to a torso.”<sup>25</sup> The sentiment applies to *Rocky Mountains*, though Hockney’s figurative imagery seems remote from Auden’s torso, with its heroic or alternatively erotic connotations. One can also imagine him responding to the bittersweet idiom of much of Auden’s later poetry, as in the anti-pastoral “Bucolics” sequence from the early 1950s. The opening lines of “Mountains” provide a striking parallel to the imagery and deflating tone of Hockney’s depiction of the Rockies:

I know a retired dentist who only paints mountains,  
But the Masters seldom care  
That much, who sketch them in beyond a holy face  
Or a highly dangerous chair.<sup>26</sup>

It is not known what artists Auden had in mind, but Hockney’s chair looks dangerous indeed, having only two legs (the effect of which is also to diminish the chair’s perspectival disruption of the picture surface). The item of furniture likewise serves to keep the natural environment at bay, best experienced as ornamental backdrop or vista, even, it transpires, by today’s native Americans. In other words, the chair was surely inserted, as suggested above, for thematic reasons as well as for the compositional ones that Hockney acknowledged.

*Rocky Mountains* is a striking instance too of the artist’s visual eclecticism. Within the trial and error involved in the making of pictures, recollections of experiences in the wider world clearly interacted in a very productive way for Hockney, with memories of works seen in galleries or in books and magazines. Indeed, the montage character of *Rocky Mountains* is also symptomatic of its being a tissue of quotations, to recycle a phrase. In the first place, the conception is firmly rooted in aspects of his own practice. *Rocky Mountains* seems not just a distillation of recent travel experiences,

but also the summation of a strand in Hockney's work to date, preceding the emphatic shift in 1966 towards the more naturalistic idiom that dominated his work during the second half of the decade (announced in a work like *Peter in Nick's Pool* from that year). As he explained, the new work was a specific reprise of *Flight into Italy* from 1962, not just because the windowless space in Rockies country brought to mind the experience of being in the back of a moving van and not really being able to see the Alps as he and his friends drove through them. *Flight into Italy* equally offered a precedent for the admixture of diverse ways of applying paint, the extensive use of bare canvas, and the diagrammatic mountains in the background. More broadly, *Rocky Mountains* can be seen as a variation on a type of flat, frontal composition, with figures presented in profile and oriented from right to left, that Hockney had established in *A Grand Procession of Dignitaries in the Semi-Egyptian Style* (from 1961). This was one of the four so-called "Demonstrations of Versatility" that he included in the "Young Contemporaries" student exhibition in London the following February.<sup>27</sup> The formal figure style of Egyptian art is subsequently echoed in paintings like *The First Marriage (A Marriage of Styles)* and *The Second Marriage*, both of 1962, and in other pictures thereafter including *Rocky Mountains*, where the pair of figures are direct descendants of the couple in *The First Marriage*.

The marital theme is pervasive in the funerary imagery encountered in ancient Egyptian sculpture and painting, which Hockney studied in reproduction and at first hand in the British Museum, in Berlin, and, in 1963, in the Cairo Museum.<sup>28</sup> His invitation to visit Egypt in 1963, at the behest of the *Sunday Times* magazine, was sparked no doubt by his overt engagement with its ancient artistic traditions. *Rocky Mountains* compels us to consider the force of that allusion in the context of a work depicting American Indians. Hockney may, for instance, have been struck by the ubiquitous animal and bird imagery in both Egyptian and tribal American art, and also the shared aesthetic impulse towards stylization. But the common ground could equally have been the gulf in each culture between mythic aura and present-day reality. Perhaps Hockney perceived the southwest US as analogous in some ways to modern Egypt. Both places were hot and dry, with striking natural or man-made formations, and both presented the spectacle of incongruous residues of a glorious civilization lingering on amidst an impoverished and down-at-heel modernity (as in Hockney's *Great Pyramid at Giza with Broken Head from Thebes* of 1963, a compositional and thematic precursor to *Arizona*). The couple in one of his Cairo street scenes, in traditional costume but placed against the emphatically contemporary trappings of a political poster and Shell garage (fig. 5), offer a striking precedent for the imagery and expressive tenor of *Rocky Mountains*.<sup>29</sup> The conjunction reinforces the idea of Hockney as a painter of the bathos of modern life, rather than any Baudelairean heroism.



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 5.**

David Hockney, *Shell Garage, Luxor*, 1963, coloured crayon on paper, 30.11 x 48.89 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of David Hockney

When extending his latter-day Egyptian idiom in 1965, Hockney incorporated reference to further visual models, both past and present. This extended to contemporary abstraction. In 1976 Hockney acknowledged that there was “lots of abstract painting I have loved”, but claimed this had not been an influence on his work—surely an oversimplification made with hindsight, when his sceptical attitude towards abstraction had hardened.<sup>30</sup> Elsewhere in his autobiography, he recalled that in 1964 he still “wanted to be involved, if only peripherally, with modernism”.<sup>31</sup> In *Rocky Mountains* the combination of diverse diagrammatic elements, surrounded by bare canvas and moving in and out of spatial illusion, brings vividly to mind the large-scale abstract paintings of Bernard Cohen and especially Harold Cohen, two artists associated with the “Situation” group of young British abstract artists, with its strong transatlantic allegiance. Hockney’s awareness of Harold Cohen, a rising star, would have been heightened by the retrospective staged at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, in May to June 1965, just before Hockney left for the USA. This featured relevant works from 1963 such as *Conclave* (fig. 6) and *Before the Event*, and gave rise to a catalogue that quite solemnly discussed the layout of the paintings as metaphors for the mind and the processes of memory.<sup>32</sup>



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 6.**

Harold Cohen, *Conclave*, 1963, oil, tempera and pencil on canvas, 249.20 x 295.30 cm. Collection National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh. Digital image courtesy of National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh | © Harold Cohen

Likewise, the fictive red river in *Rocky Mountains* looks like a careful, representational elaboration of the spontaneous-looking poured marks, played off against the bare canvas that they stain, which had featured in Kenneth Noland's abstracts from around 1960, recently shown at Kasmin's London gallery.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, Hockney commented that the main body of his work from 1965 was "influenced by American abstractionists, particularly Kenneth Noland, whom I'd got to know through Kasmin who was showing him. I was trying to take note of those paintings."<sup>34</sup> If the annual Hockney shows were a mark of friendship and admiration on the dealer's part, as well as a reliable source of income, the Kasmin Gallery was otherwise operating as the main British outpost for the kind of American "Post-painterly abstraction" that crystallized early in the new decade as an antidote to the ubiquitous Abstract Expressionism of the late 1950s and the upstart Pop Art movement. The new abstract aesthetic had been promoted since around 1960 by Clement Greenberg as the onward march of modernism, and was anointed by a major group exhibition he curated, opening at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in spring 1964 before touring elsewhere in North America.<sup>35</sup>

Noland and the late Morris Louis represented the more purist wing of Post-painterly abstraction. But in the work of artists like Helen Frankenthaler or Friedel Dzubas, both also shown during the mid-1960s at Kasmin, a type of colourful, stained, cropped, improvised abstraction was frequently associated with sensations of space, light, and colour redolent of the natural landscape, a visual equivalence made explicit in the referential titles given by the artists (or their dealers) to many pictures. Frankenthaler's show in 1964, for example, included works such as *Sands* (1964; [fig. 7](#)) and *Sun Dial* (1963), the latter illustrated on the exhibition poster.<sup>36</sup> Hockney was probably in Los Angeles at the time, but had other opportunities to view the artist's work. In *Rocky Mountains* there is, to my eye, a willed awkwardness to the irregular, organic shapes, and to the oppositions of bright and muted, flat and textured, within adjacent patches of colour, that resonates with such recent work by Frankenthaler. Hockney can be seen as debunking the doctrinaire critical claims surrounding Post-painterly abstraction, while resourcefully reconciling its devices and methods with a more traditional and legible kind of landscape-based figuration. Then again, the treatment of sky and clouds echoes the clarity and boldness of the late work of Fernand Léger, where abstract simplification is used to confer an ideal order onto subjects from everyday life, although the effect can be unintentionally comical.



**Figure 7.**

Helen Frankenthaler, *Sands*, 1964, acrylic on canvas, 196.2 × 198.4 cm. Collection of Ulster Museum, National Museums Northern Ireland (BELUM.U534). Digital image courtesy of Ulster Museum, National Museums Northern Ireland | © Helen Frankenthaler Foundation, Inc. / ARS, NY and DACS, London 2017

In addition, *Rocky Mountains* brings traditional exemplars to mind. It seems to allude with equivalent irony to the idea and formal conventions of Sublime landscape, a prominent strand in nineteenth-century British and American art. The mode is exemplified by Benjamin Leader's *Autumn in Switzerland* from 1878 (fig. 8), a work that Hockney could have been familiar with from the art gallery in Huddersfield, near to Bradford where he grew up. The arrangement of mountains, river, and boulder is loosely recapitulated in the Hockney, although again the citation sharpens his wry comment on how the elevated imaginings of Romanticism had come to be debased in the mass tourism that had replaced the aristocratic Grand Tour. Equally, the composition recalls the British portrait genre of a couple in the foreground against a landscape backdrop, epitomized by Gainsborough's *Mr and Mrs Andrews*, a work acquired for the National Gallery in 1960. The sense of proud territorial ownership in the Gainsborough only serves to highlight the sense of loss experienced by the American Indians in the Hockney. In

addition to its landscape imagery, the inclusion of the border relates *Rocky Mountains* to a cluster of Hockneys that referred, in his own words, to the “vastly admired” Villa Aldobrandini cycle by Domenichino from 1616–18 depicting mythological scenes set in an arcadian setting, a series which once again had only recently been acquired for the National Gallery (fig. 9).<sup>37</sup> He was riveted by the overt artifice of these fictive representations of tapestries, executed in fresco for a villa in Frascati, but now transferred onto canvas and displayed as free-standing paintings.



**Figure 8.**

Benjamin Leader, *Autumn in Switzerland*, 1878, oil on canvas, 125.2 × 181.1 cm. Collection of Kirklees Collection: Huddersfield Art Gallery.  
Digital image courtesy of Kirklees Collection: Huddersfield Art Gallery



**Figure 9.**

Domenichino, *The Judgement of Midas*, 1616-18, fresco, transferred to canvas and mounted on board, 267 × 224 cm. Collection of The National Gallery, London Digital image courtesy of The National Gallery, London

Finally, the two figures in the Hockney make evident reference (though this seems never to have been noted) to the couple who preside over Georges Seurat's *La Grande Jatte* (1884-6; [fig. 10](#)), as evident from their orientation, side-on placement, relative positioning and scale, and from details such as the man's hat and the contour of the woman's back, merging into the abstracted folds of her dress. The painting might also be said to recapitulate Seurat's ambition to project a monumental but also slightly mocking take on contemporary life, reflecting in the nineteenth-century artist's case on the airs and graces of the emergent Parisian bourgeoisie. We might go on to identify further allusions to the Seurat, a work which had itself prompted comparisons with the stiffness of Egyptian art when it was first exhibited in Paris.<sup>38</sup> The Hockney approaches the large format of *La Grande Jatte*, which also, of course, contains an internal border. The serious-looking, pipe-

smoking, reclining man to the left finds an echo in both the placement and mood of Hockney's sombre grisaille eagle. *La Grande Jatte* was a familiar enough work in the art-historical canon, but the reference would surely have had a particular point for Hockney, given that his drive through the Southwest had ended up in the great northern city of Chicago, where he had visited the "big museums". They do not come any bigger than the Art Institute of Chicago, which has long had the good fortune to house *La Grande Jatte*. The allusion was integral, then, to Hockney's sense of *Rocky Mountains* as an "invention", fusing memories and associations bound up with touring mid-America during the previous summer.



**Figure 10.**

Georges Seurat, *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*—1884, 1884–6, oil on canvas, 207.5 cm × 308.1 cm. Collection of The Art Institute of Chicago. Digital image courtesy of The Art Institute of Chicago, IL, USA/ Helen Birch Bartlett Memorial Collection | Bridgeman Images

We have seen that multiple scenic, literary, and artistic memories converged in the major new painting that Hockney created in Boulder. Certain of the details in my analysis may be wrong, but some such synthesis of otherwise diverse points of departure was surely involved. The point is that the windowless studio, and indeed being in America generally, did not in the least compel the artist to rethink his methods. On the contrary, those circumstances merely encouraged him to carry on being exactly the kind of artist he had become in the early 1960s to such successful effect, which involved working out of a repertoire of artistic ideas and devices, and incorporating knowing, creative borrowings from all manner of visual and literary sources. Seeking to transpose his immediate sensations of the external world had never been the artist's interest or method. As Guy Brett noted in 1963: "Almost always Hockney's ideas come from museums,

magazines, films, books rather than the more conventional inspirers of paintings—faces, still-lives, people, landscapes.”<sup>39</sup> The constantly reiterated idea that not having that studio window in Boulder was the springboard for *Rocky Mountains* seems symptomatic not just of the dominance of the artist’s voice in interpretation of his work, but also of the pervasive sense of Hockney as an actual rather than a faux-naïve artist. This article has sought to evoke a more learned and complex figure, whose innocent-looking work was in fact richly informed by reading, looking, and reflection.



**Figure 11.**

Unknown photographer, Aby Warburg and a Hopi Indian, Oraibi, May 1896. Collection of The Warburg Institute, University of London. Digital image courtesy of The Warburg Institute, University of London

A final point may reinforce that argument, although it is admittedly more than a little speculative. To my mind, Hockney’s painting triggers a loose visual association with another image in which a figure in native American Indian garb and another in contemporary dress, wearing a cowboy hat to shield his face from the fierce sun, are set against the backdrop of an arid southwestern landscape. That image shows the legendary German scholar Aby Warburg encountering and investigating Pueblo Indians, or more exactly a Hopi dancer in Oraibi, Arizona, during the course of his own visit to the

region in 1896 (fig. 11).<sup>40</sup> There are of course notable differences: the prominent Indian accompanying Warburg is male and semi-naked; the main figures are facing the camera rather than side-on; they stand in front of an array of artefacts and other figures; the landscape is more subordinate. Nonetheless, it is not implausible to suppose that Hockney had the photograph somewhere at the back of his mind as he conceived and developed *Rocky Mountains and Tired Indians*. He would certainly have been familiar with the image. His great friend and artistic inspiration R. B. Kitaj was obsessively interested in Warburg, and in the scholarly journal which had emanated from the Warburg Institute since its move to London, having fallen under the spell of Edgar Wind while a student at the Ruskin in Oxford. Kitaj's own early paintings were steeped in Warburgian allusions. He and Eduardo Paolozzi had collaborated on the work *Warburg's Visit to New Mexico* (1960–2); and the photograph of "Warburg and a Pueblo Indian" was reproduced full-page in the catalogue of his first one-man show held at London's Marlborough Gallery in February 1963.<sup>41</sup> It seems very likely that Hockney and Kitaj would have talked about Warburg in connection with the artist's visits to precisely the region of America which had so powerfully stimulated the German scholar's reflections on Indian religious myth and ritual, and the affinities he perceived with classical Greece. The subliminal visual allusion may again resonate with Hockney's sense of the discrepancy between the idea of American Indian culture which underpinned Warburg's romanticized account of symbols and ritual dances, and the mundane actuality of the impoverished and seemingly assimilated population that Hockney himself had encountered; a "bore", maybe, to the earnest anthropologists of his own day, but not to a young British artist attuned to cultural ironies and clichés. It was the "primitivist" fantasy of a heroic and idealized native culture that was now looking tired, rocky even.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Christopher Sykes, *David Hockney: The Biography* (London: Century, 2011), 153.
- <sup>2</sup> Sykes, *David Hockney*, 155; *David Hockney: Paintings, Prints and Drawings, 1960–1970* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery), 46.
- <sup>3</sup> Sykes, *David Hockney*, 154.
- <sup>4</sup> See John Walker, *Cultural Offensive: America's Impact on British Art Since 1945* (London: Verso, 1998); Martin Hammer, "My Generation: British Art in and Around 1965", in *My Generation: A Festival of British Art in the 1960s* (Canterbury: University of Kent, 2015), 6–35.
- <sup>5</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, "Stepping Westward—Unpublished Afterword". See [http://www.malcolmbradbury.com/fiction\\_stepping\\_westward.html](http://www.malcolmbradbury.com/fiction_stepping_westward.html)
- <sup>6</sup> Robert Hughes, "Blake and Hockney", *London Magazine* 5 (Jan. 1966): 72.
- <sup>7</sup> Malcolm Bradbury, *Stepping Westward* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1965), 9.
- <sup>8</sup> David Thompson, *The New Generation: 1964* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1964), 36.
- <sup>9</sup> Hughes, "Blake and Hockney", 72.
- <sup>10</sup> Charles Harrison, "London Commentary", *Studio International* (Jan. 1968): 36.

- 11 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, ed. Nikos Stangos (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), 27.
- 12 For an example, see Alan Woods, "Pictures Emphasising Stillness", in *David Hockney*, ed. Paul Melia (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 32–33.
- 13 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 101.
- 14 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 111 (plate 111).
- 15 Andrew Causey, "Mapping and Representation", in *David Hockney*, ed. Melia, 89–110.
- 16 Causey, "Mapping and Representation", 94.
- 17 Causey, "Mapping and Representation", 94.
- 18 Bradbury, *Stepping Westward*, 10; 403–4.
- 19 Reproduced (but without accompanying commentary) in Ian Massey, *Patrick Procktor: Art and Life* (Norwich: Unicorn, 2010), 76.
- 20 Cottie Burland, *North American Indian Mythology* (New York: Tudor/London: Hamlyn, 1965).
- 21 Roy Harvey Pearce's *Savagism and Civilisation: A Study of the Indian and the American Mind* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965). The book had first appeared in 1953 under a slightly different title.
- 22 On Hockney's titling, see Woods, "Pictures Emphasising Stillness", 39–40.
- 23 Bradbury, *Stepping Westward*, 9.
- 24 Bradbury, "Stepping Westward—Unpublished Afterword."
- 25 Quoted, for example, in Hockney's statement for *English Art Today, 1960–76* (Milan: Electa, 1976), 98.
- 26 W. H. Auden, *W. H. Auden: Selected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (London: Faber & Faber, 1979), 206.
- 27 Hockney's inspiration for that work is said to have come from "Waiting for the Barbarians" by the Egyptian poet C. P. Cavafy. See Marco Livingstone, *David Hockney* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1981), 39.
- 28 See the drawing *Rahotep and his Wife Nofret sat in a Glass Case at the Cairo Museum* (1963), reproduced in Ulrich Luckhardt and Paul Melia, *David Hockney: A Drawing Retrospective* (London: Royal Academy of Arts/Thames and Hudson, 1995), cat. no. 27.
- 29 *Shell Garage, Luxor* (1963), reproduced in Luckhardt and Melia, *David Hockney*, cat. no. 26.
- 30 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 123.
- 31 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 100.
- 32 Collections Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, and Tate respectively; *Harold Cohen* (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1965).
- 33 For examples, see Diane Waldman, *Kenneth Noland: A Retrospective* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1977), 50–56; 121–23. Shows at the time included *Kenneth Noland: Paintings 1959–62* (London: Kasmin Limited, April 1963); *Kenneth Noland: New Paintings* (London: Kasmin Limited, April 1965).
- 34 *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 88; 100–1.
- 35 The dates of the show *Post-Painterly Abstraction* in Los Angeles were 23 April–7 June 1964. Hockney was in Los Angeles at the time and presumably visited the exhibition. On Kasmin's Greenbergian sympathies, see Lisa Tickner, "The Kasmin Gallery, 1963–1972", *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 2 (June 2007): 263, note 87.
- 36 See *Helen Frankenthaler* (London: Kasmin Limited, 1964); the works noted are in the collections of the Ulster Museum, Belfast, and Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Kendal.
- 37 Henry Geldzahler, "Introduction", in *David Hockney by David Hockney*, 21.
- 38 Andrew Causey noted a general affinity with Seurat in Hockney's treatment of the human figure in his Californian pictures, noting that the formality of *La Grande Jatte* had been described by Seurat's contemporaries as "Egyptian" and "primitive" ("Mapping and Representation", 101; 103).
- 39 Guy Brett, "David Hockney: A Note in Progress", *London Magazine* 3 (April 1963): 74.
- 40 See Edward Chaney, "R. B. Kitaj (1932–2007): Warburgian Artist", accessible at <https://emajournal.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/chaney-rb-kitaj-warburgian-artist.pdf>; David Freedberg, "Pathos at Oraibi: What Warburg Did Not See", accessible at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arhistory/faculty/Freedberg/Pathos-at-Oraibi.pdf>
- 41 *R. B. Kitaj: Pictures with Commentary, Pictures without Commentary*, exh. cat. (London: Marlborough Fine Art, Feb. 1963), 15. Hockney's own title for the show in which *Rocky Mountains* was shown, *Pictures with Frames and Still-Life Pictures*, seems to make knowing reference to Kitaj's formulation two years previously.

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# Drawing after the Antique at the British Museum, 1809–1817: “Free” Art Education and the Advent of the Liberal State

## **Abstract**

*From 1808 the British Museum in London began regularly to open its newly established Townley Gallery so that art students could draw from the ancient sculptures housed there. This article documents and comments on this development in art education, based on an analysis of the 165 individuals recorded in the surviving register of attendance at the Museum, covering the period 1809–17. The register is presented as a photographic record, with a transcription and biographical directory. The accompanying essay situates the opening of the Museum’s sculpture rooms to students within a far-reaching set of historical shifts. It argues that this new museum access contributed to the early nineteenth-century emergence of a liberal state. But if the rhetoric surrounding this development emphasized freedom and general public benefit in the spirit of liberalization, the evidence suggests that this new level of access actually served to further entrench the “middle-classification” of art education at this historical juncture.*

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From the summer of 1808 the British Museum in London began regularly to open its newly established galleries of Graeco-Roman sculpture for art students. The collection, made up almost entirely of pieces previously owned by Charles Townley, had been purchased for the nation in 1805 and installed in a new extension to the Museum's first home, Montagu House, which was built earlier in 1808. After some protracted discussion with the Royal Academy, detailed below, the collection was made available for its students in time for the royal opening of the Townley Gallery on 3 June 1808. From January 1809, a written record was kept of students admitted to draw from the antique. This volume survives in the library of the Department of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum and identifies one hundred and sixty-five separate individuals admitted through to 1817. <sup>1</sup>

The register forms the focus of this essay and is presented here as a facsimile and transcription, with an accompanying directory of student biographies (see supplementary materials below). This may be taken as a straightforward contribution to the literature on early nineteenth-century art education, and the author hopes it may be useful as such. However, it also situates the opening of the Museum's sculpture rooms to students within a rather more far-reaching set of historical shifts. Namely, it argues that this new form of museum access was part of the early nineteenth-century emergence of a liberal state that "actively governs through freedom (free 'individuals', markets, societies, and so on, which are only 'free' because the state makes them so)". <sup>2</sup> Access to the British Museum was "free" in that there were no charges or fees. Meanwhile, the arrangement offered a degree of freedom to the students themselves; they were expected to be largely self-selecting and self-regulating. When the arrangement was exposed to public scrutiny, as a result of questions asked in parliament in 1821, the freedom of access and the service this did to the public good were emphasized. But, once closely scrutinized, the evidence suggests that this manifestation of the freedoms encouraged by the liberal state had a social disciplinary role (even if disciplinary function can hardly be recognized as such), in serving to further entrench the "middle-classification" of art at this historical juncture. <sup>3</sup>

The conjunction of art education and a grandiose notion such as the liberal state may be unexpected, and rests on three key assertions. The first is that art worlds are structured and in their structure have a homological relationship with the larger social environment. <sup>4</sup> The initial part of this statement (that art worlds are structured) may not be especially hard to swallow, given the relatively formalized and hierarchical nature of the London art world during the early nineteenth century, when cultural authority was vested in a small number of institutions, and the practices associated with academic tradition in principle still held sway. However, that the structure of the art world, in its hierarchical dimension, may also be

homologically related to the larger field of power, so that social relationships are reproduced within this relatively autonomous sphere, is more clearly contentious, and runs contrary to commonplace beliefs and expectations about talent and luck in determining personal fate in the modern age—artists' fortunes most especially. In fact, in the period under review here, the artist became an exemplary figure in the new narratives of social mobility: the art world came to serve as a model of how talent or sheer good fortune could override social origins and destinies.<sup>5</sup>

The second assertion is that the Royal Academy and British Museum were developing new forms of state institution, underpinned by the conjoined principles of freedom of access and public benefit. Such has been argued importantly by Holger Hoock, and while I depart from his arguments in some key regards, his insights into the status of these institutions and the role of forms of public-private partnership in their formation are crucial.<sup>6</sup> The third assertion (and this marks a departure from Hoock), is that the state is not a stable, centralized entity, or site of power either “up above” or “below” historical actors. Instead, it is taken to be the sum of actions and dispositions ostensibly volunteered by these historical agents in all their multitude and variety. The crucial point of reference here is the sustained body of work on the liberal state by the historian Patrick Joyce, deploying the work of Bruno Latour and Michel Foucault, among others, to yield a more materialistic and decentralized understanding of the emergence and role of state bodies.<sup>7</sup> The state, in this view, is composed of technologies, disciplinary structures, habits of mind, and ways of doing things. The mechanics of art education, insofar as this involves the movement through or exclusion of individuals from identified places, the arrangement of their bodies in relation to one another and to their model, the management of their behaviour within those places, the very motion of their bodies, hands, and eyes under the surveillance of their peers, teachers or other authorities, may be considered as a form of biopolitics; the student who entered his or her name into the British Museum's register of admission was producing his or her governmentality.<sup>8</sup>

The argument here is emphatically historical and states that this arrangement, while it may have precedents and may have been seminal, belongs to an historical moment—the emergence of the liberal state. My case, which can be sketched out only in outline in this context, is that the emergence of the familiar institutional arrangements of the modern art world between the 1770s and the 1830s (in the form of actual institutions and regulatory structures or permissions, including annual exhibitions, centralized art schools supported by the state directly and indirectly, emphasis on quantifiable measures of access and engagement as the test of public value, and so forth) represents in an exemplary way the illusory freedoms promoted by liberalism, and renewed by present-day “neo-

liberalism”, as addressed by commentators from the prophetic Karl Polanyi through to the later work of Foucault and Bourdieu on the state, and Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, among others.<sup>9</sup> The early nineteenth-century art world can be proposed as a privileged focus of attention because it was still of a scale which can allow for the kinds of data-based analysis which must underpin any sort of sociological exploration, and because its individual membership can be documented in fine detail in a manner which is simply not possible at an earlier historical date. Paradoxically, despite its announced commitment to non-intervention and personal freedom, the emerging liberal state generated huge amounts of documentation about society and its individual members—tax records, parochial and civil records, the national census from 1801—which digitization has made more readily available than ever before, allowing this generation of artists to be documented as never previously.<sup>10</sup>

The production of artistic identities through these records is not unrelated to changes in artistic identity itself over the same timeframe. One way of realizing this might be to consider the period outlined above—c. 1770–1830s—not as a period from the foundation of the Royal Academy (1769) to its removal to Trafalgar Square, or even as the era of Romanticism, as much literary and cultural history-writing would dictate, but as the era from Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* (1776) to the Reform Act (1832) and the Speenhamland system, a last experiment in patrician social care before the Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), taking in Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo. The challenge is thinking of these two frameworks not in sequential or spatially differentiated ways, but as simultaneous and identical. Within this emerging liberal state the figure of the artist is attributed with a special degree and form of freedom, what has conventionally been alluded to, in generally sociologically imprecise ways, as a feature of “Romanticism”, slumping into “bohemianism” and a generic idea of art student lifestyle. If this was a moment of unprecedented state investment in the arts (from the Royal Academy through to the Schools of Design) and government scrutiny (notably with the Select Committees), it simultaneously saw the emergence of artistic identities expressing the values of personal freedom, freedom from regulation, and even active opposition to the state.

I propose that art education, as it took shape in the emerging liberal state, might be explored as a “liberogenic” phenomenon: among those “devices intended to produce freedom which potentially risk producing exactly the opposite.”<sup>11</sup> As such, it may have renewed pertinence for our own time, although this does not entail seeing a “causal” relationship between the past and present, or a linear genetic relationship between then and now. In fact, the purpose of this commentary, and the larger project it arises from,<sup>12</sup> is rather to trouble our relationship with that past. The intention is not, however, to point unequivocally to the era under consideration as here

entailing “the making of a modern art world”, with the rise of art education and museums access representing a stage towards democratization, as illuminated in stellar fashion by the great Romantic artists (J. M. W. Turner—famously the son of a lowly London barber—pre-eminently). I would want instead to take seriously Jacques Rancière’s call for “a past that puts a radical requirement at the centre of the present”, eschewing causality and “nostalgia” in favour of “challenging the relationship of the present to that past”.<sup>13</sup> If giving attention to the “freedom” of art education at the advent of the liberal state provides any insight at all, it should do so by troubling rather than affirming our narratives of the genesis of a modern art world.

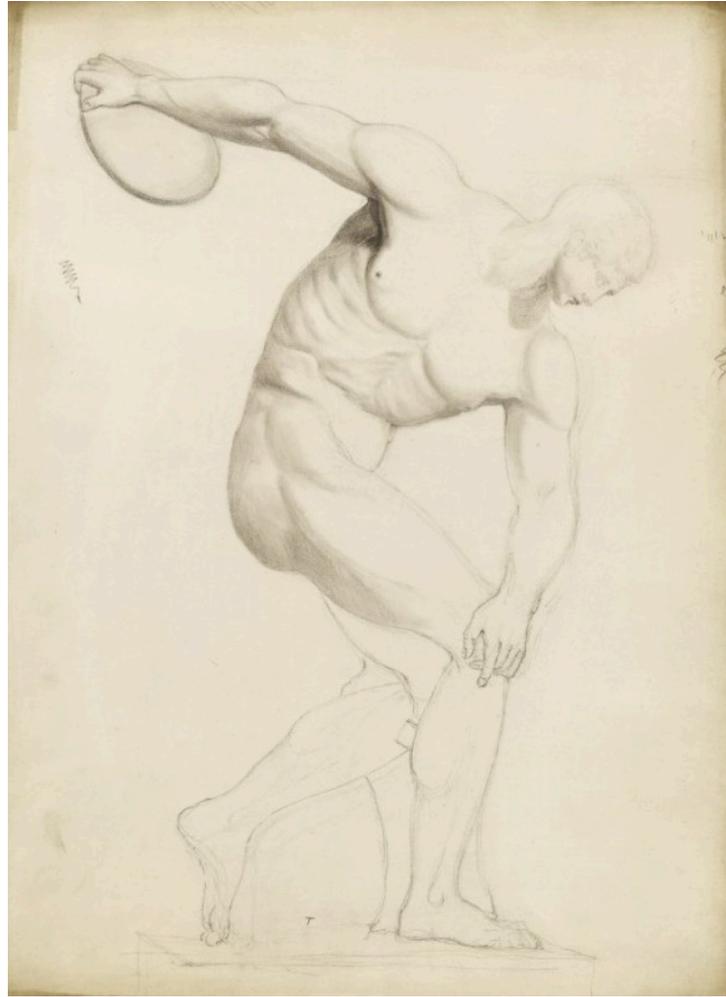
### **Access to the Townley Gallery**

The arrival at the Museum of the Townley marbles, together with the development of the prints and drawings collection and its installation in new, secure rooms in the same wing, fundamentally changed the character of the institution. As Neil Chambers has noted, having been primarily a repository of (often celebrated) curiosities of many different forms, quite suddenly “The Museum was now a centre for art and the study of sculpture.”<sup>14</sup> The shift was acknowledged internally at the Museum by the creation in 1807 of a distinct Department of Antiquities, which also had responsibility for the collection of prints and drawings. But while the significance of the opening of the Townley Gallery in the history of the British Museum is clear, the opening of the collection to students has barely been noticed in the art-historical literature. The register has been overlooked almost entirely, and the relevance of this development in student access may not even be immediately obvious.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 1.**

William Chambers, *The Sculpture Collection of Charles Townley in the dining room of his house in Park Street, Westminster, 1794*, watercolour, 39 x 54 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



**Figure 2.**

Attributed to Joseph Nollekens, The Discobolus, 1791-1805, drawing, 48 x 35 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

Townley's collection had already famously been on display for many years at his private house in Park Street, London. William Chambers' (or Chalmers') drawing of the Park Street display from 1794 includes a well-dressed young woman drawing under the supervision or advice of a man, promoting the idea that the collection was available for sufficiently genteel students of the art more generally (fig. 1). In his recollections of the London art world, J. T. Smith described "those rooms of Mr Townley's house, in which that gentleman's liberality employed me when a boy, with many other students in the Royal Academy, to make drawings for his portfolios".<sup>16</sup> Smith's former employer, the sculptor Joseph Nollekens, has been identified among the more established artists who were also engaged by Townley to draw from marbles in the collection (fig. 2). As Vicky Coltman has noted, "The townhouse at 7 Park Street, Westminster became an unofficial counterpoint to the English arts establishment that was the Royal Academy: as an

academy of ancient sculpture, much as Sir John Soane's London house-museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields would become an academy of architecture in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century." <sup>17</sup> Evidently, a number of the students and artists admitted to draw from the Townley marbles once they were at the British Museum knew them formerly at first hand from visiting 7 Park Street; for instance, William Skelton, admitted to draw at the Museum in 1809, had apparently already studied and engraved three busts from the collection for inclusion in the design of Townley's visiting card (fig. 3).

Townley had hoped for a separate gallery to be erected to house the collection, but his executors, his brother Edward Townley Standish and uncle John Townley were unable to agree a plan. <sup>18</sup> The sale of the collection to the Museum was a compromise. With the erection of a new gallery space for the collection underway, the Museum considered how special access might be given to artists. That the question was posed at all should be an indication of how far the realm of cultural consumption and production was being folded in to the emerging liberal state at this juncture. At a meeting of the Trustees on 28 February 1807, a committee was set up to consider how the prints and drawings collections might be used by artists, and to draw up "Regulations . . . for the Admission of Strangers to view the Gallery of Antiquities either separately from, or together with the rest of the Museum: And also for the Admission of Artists". <sup>19</sup>



**Figure 3.**

William Skelton, Charles Townley's visiting card, 1778-1848, etching, 65 × 96 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

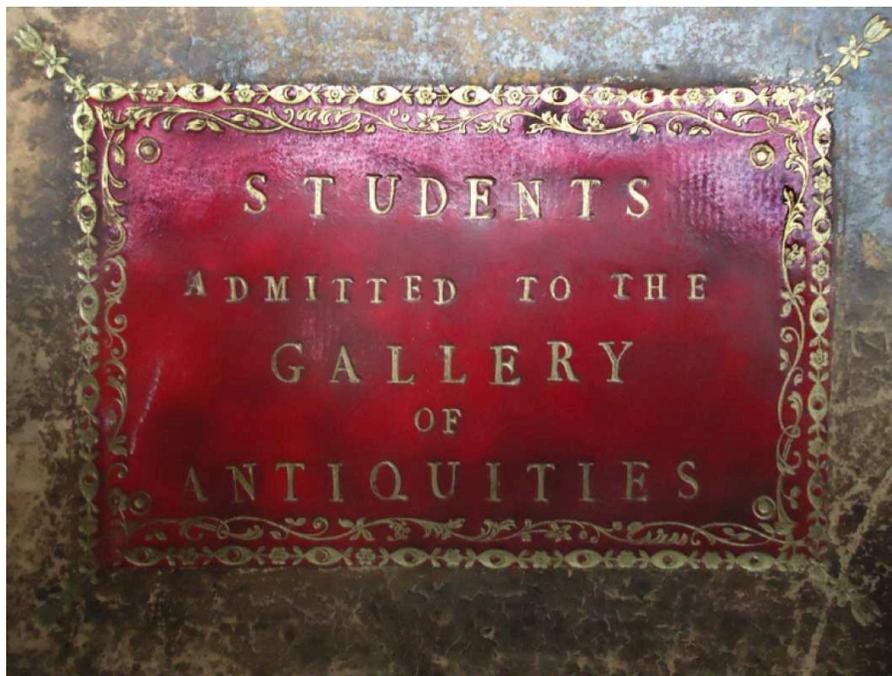
With the Gallery still under construction, the Sub-Committee was not obliged to move quickly, and it proved to be a protracted and unexpectedly fractious affair.<sup>20</sup> It was not until the Museum's general meeting of 13 February 1808, that the principal librarian, Joseph Planta, reported "his opinion of the best time & mode of admission of Strangers as well as artists, to the Gallery of Antiquities", with the request that Benjamin West, President of the Royal Academy, be asked to attend a further meeting.<sup>21</sup> After delays, he did so on 10 March, after which the Council drew up a set of regulations.<sup>22</sup> These went back to the Academy with additions and changes, which were accepted by the Council who wrote to the British Museum on the 10 May to that effect, noting that a General Meeting of the Academy was to take place, "to prepare the final arrangement for his Majesty's approbation".<sup>23</sup>

Accordingly, at the British Museum, the Sub-Committee's reports and proposals were approved by the Standing Committee, with "Resolutions founded on the above mentioned Reports" read at the General Meeting of 14 May.<sup>24</sup> The resolutions, numbered so as to be inserted in the existing regulations regarding admissions, were confirmed in the meeting of 21 May, over three months after what should have been a straightforward matter was raised (see Appendix, below).<sup>25</sup> Clause number eight, concerning the payment of Academicians charged with the supervision of students, evidently caused some consternation within the Academy, as recorded in the diary of Joseph Farington.<sup>26</sup> The relative authority of the Council and General Assembly had been a contentious matter in previous years, and the lengthy dispute over arrangements with the Museum reflected lingering tensions.

On 12 July 1808 the proposals were read, and "After a long conversation it was Resolved to adjourn."<sup>27</sup> The subject was taken up on re-convening on 21 July, but without resolution.<sup>28</sup> At yet another meeting, on 26 July 1808, the point about the Academy's provision of superintendents to monitor the students while at the British Museum was referred back to Council.<sup>29</sup> We have to turn to Farington's diary for a fuller account. He noted that the Academy's General Assembly had met on 12 July "for the purpose of receiving a Law made by the Council 'That permission having been granted by the Trustees of the British Museum for Students to study from the Antiques &c at the Museum, certain days are fixed upon for that purpose, & that an *Academician* shall attend each day at the Museum & to be paid 2 guineas for each day's attendance' . . . Much discussion took place."<sup>30</sup> At a further meeting: "The Correspondence of the Council with the Sub Committee of the British Museum was read from the beginning" and "much discussion" was had about the supervision of the students, Farington making the point that:

as the studies of the British Museum shd. be considered those of *completion* and not to learn the *Elements of art* the Academy shd. not recommend any student whose abilities & conduct wd. not warrant it, that it should be considered the last *stage of study*, when those admitted wd. not require *constant inspection*; therefore daily attendance of a Member of the Academy wd. not be necessary. <sup>31</sup>

The point of contest may have concerned the right of the Council to organize things independent of the General Assembly of the Academicians, and a more general question about economy (“Northcote proposed that the Academician who in rotation shall attend at the British Museum, shd. have 3 guineas a day. West thought one guinea sufficient”). <sup>32</sup> But Farington’s point is more revealing in indicating the expectation that the selected students of the Academy were to be largely self-regulating, and self-disciplining; they were to be granted freedom because they had already internalized the discipline required by these institutions.



**Figure 4.**

Front cover, Register of Students Admitted to the Gallery of Antiquities, 1809-17. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

The matter finally settled, students were admitted to the Townley Gallery from at least the beginning of 1809: the first entries in the register book are dated 14 January 1809 (figs. 4 and 5 to 11). On that date four students were

enrolled, although only one of them was at the Royal Academy. That was Henry Monro, the son of Dr Thomas Monro, Physician at Bedlam and an amateur and collector who ran the influential “academy” at his home in Adelphi Terrace. The other students included two of the daughters of Thomas Paytherus, a successful London apothecary, and a Ralph Irvine of Great Howland Street, who seems quite certainly to have been Hugh Irvine, the Scottish landscape painter and a member of the landowning Irvine family of Drum, who gave that address in the exhibition catalogue of the British Institution’s show in 1809. Another five students registered in February and July. This included another recently registered Royal Academy student, Henry Sass, whose name was entered into the Academy’s books in 1805, recommended for study at the British Museum by the architect and RA John Soane, and the artists William Skelton, Adam Buck, Samuel Drummond, and Maria Singleton. The mix of amateur and professional artists, young and old, and indeed the mix of male and female students (discussed below), continued throughout the register.



Date	Name	Address	Notes
1810			
Jan 23	Mr. Pugin	24 St. Dunstons	Mr. Pugin
Feb 11	Mr. Richard Cook	13 Lower Lane St. Dunstons	Mr. Cook
	Mr. John Thwait	Place Temple St.	Mr. Thwait
	Mr. George Poy	14 St. Dunstons	Mr. Poy
	Mr. R. S. Shaw		Mr. Shaw
	Mr. William Kitchin		Mr. Kitchin
March 16	Mr. Robt. Walter Pope	16 St. Dunstons	Mr. Pope
April 14	Mr. John Cook	14 Water Street, Blackfriars	Mr. Cook
	Mr. Charles L. Godwin	14 St. Dunstons	Mr. Godwin
	Mr. R. T. Paine	15 St. Dunstons	Mr. Paine
	Mr. J. Bradley	2 St. Dunstons	Mr. Bradley
	Mr. W. Brinkley	14 St. Dunstons	Mr. Brinkley
	Mr. S. Waller	3 St. Dunstons	Mr. Waller
	Mr. J. Morrison	25 St. Dunstons	Mr. Morrison
July 14	Mr. C. Middleton	50 St. Dunstons	Mr. Middleton
	Mr. Chas. Bellard	23 St. Dunstons	Mr. Bellard
	Mr. L. ...		
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
Nov 14	Mr. John Pugh	88 St. Dunstons	Mr. Pugh
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. Higgins	32 St. Dunstons	Mr. Higgins
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
March 9	John ...	7 St. Dunstons	Mr. ...
	Mr. ...		
April 1	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
June 5	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		
	Mr. ...		

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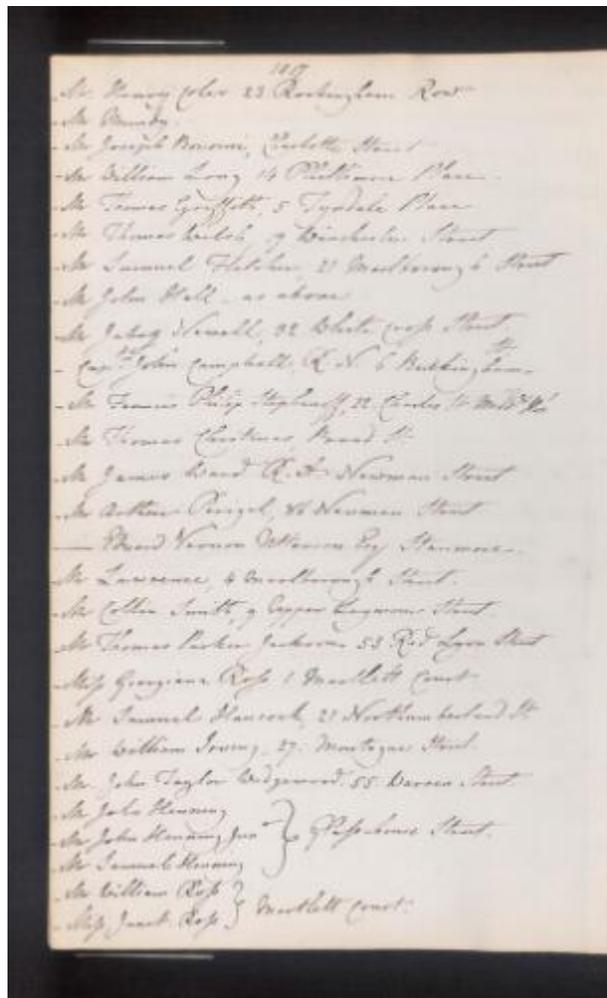
**Figure 6.**

Page 2, Register of Students Admitted to the Gallery of Antiquities, 1809-17. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum





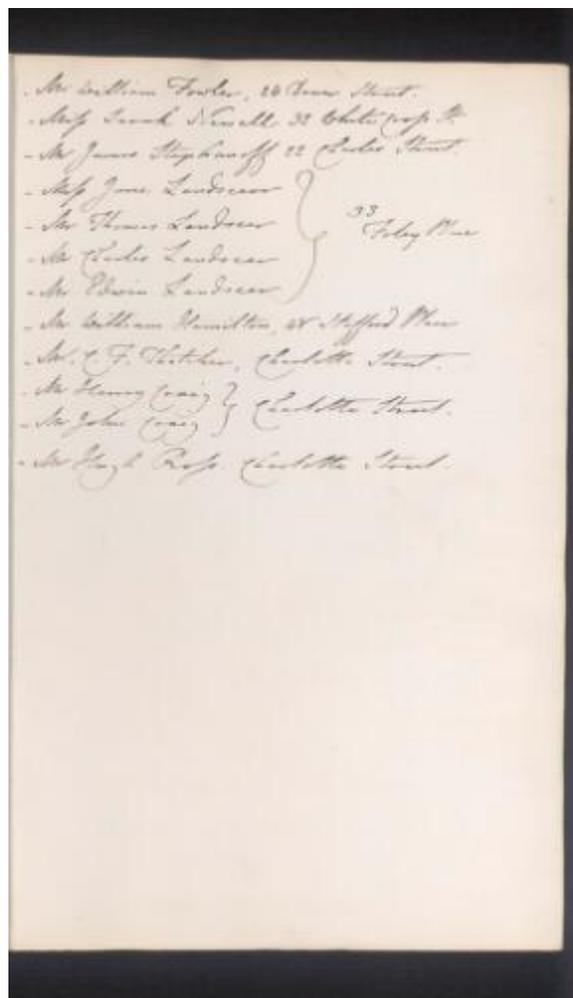




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**Figure 10.**

Page 6, Register of Students Admitted to the Gallery of Antiques, 1809-17. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



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**Figure 11.**

Page 7, Register of Students Admitted to the Gallery of Antiques, 1809-17. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

Eight of the twelve students registered on 11 November were current Academy students; this proportion of Academy students to others continues throughout the record. But on the same day Planta noted to the standing committee

that the Royal Academicians not having availed themselves of the Regulations in favour of their Pupils, & many applications having been made to him for leave to draw in the Gallery of Antiquities, he therefore submitted to the consideration of the Trustees, whether persons duly recommended might not be admitted in the same manner as in the Reading Room. <sup>33</sup>

The matter was referred on to the general meeting.<sup>34</sup> On 9 December 1809 the new regulations were confirmed:

Students who apply for Admission to the Gallery are to specify their descriptions & places of abode; and every one who applies, if not known to any Trustee or Officer, will produce a recommendation from some person of known & approved Character, particularly, if possible, from one of the Professors in the Royal Academy.<sup>35</sup>

On 10 February 1810 it was instructed “That the Regulation respecting the mode of Admission of Students to the Gallery of Sculpture, as made at the last General Meeting be printed & hung up in the Hall, & at the entrance into the Gallery”.<sup>36</sup> The students admitted through 1810 were predominantly students at the Royal Academy, but also included the *émigré* natural history painter the Chevalier de Barde and Charles Muss, already established as an enamel and glass painter. The same pattern was apparent in subsequent years. Twenty-five students were registered in 1811 and again in 1812, before numbers dropped to twelve in 1813, eight in 1814, picking up with nineteen in 1815, and dropping to nine in 1816. The Museum’s original stipulation that no more than twenty Academy students be admitted each year did not, it appears, create any undue constraints on the flow of admissions. Far from having a monopoly over student admissions, as the Museum’s original regulations had anticipated, the Royal Academy had apparently been distinctly *laissez-faire*, doing little to try to push students forward to make up the numbers.

The galleries the students gained access to comprised a sequence of rooms within the new wing added to accommodate the growing collection of sculptural antiquities, notably the Egyptian material taken from the French at Alexandria in 1801. The Egyptian antiquities dominated the galleries in terms of sheer size, although the visual centrepiece, whether viewed from the Egyptian hall or through the extended enfilade of rooms II-V where the Townley marbles were displayed, was the Discobolus (fig. 12).<sup>37</sup> The intimate scale of the galleries brought benefits, as German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel noted on his visit of 1826: “Gallery of antiquities in very small rooms, lit from above, very restful and satisfying”.<sup>38</sup> But it also imposed a practical limit on the numbers of students who could attend. This changed when, in 1817, the Elgin marbles were put on display at Montagu House in spacious, if warehouse-like, temporary rooms newly annexed to the Townley Gallery (fig. 13). The spike of interest recorded in the register, with thirty-seven students listed under the heading “1817”, must reflect this new opportunity. The register terminates at this point, although the volume

continued to be used to record students and artists admitted to the prints and drawings room (upstairs from the Townley Gallery) from 1815 through to the 1840s. <sup>39</sup>



**Figure 12.**

Anonymous, View through the Egyptian Room, in the Townley Gallery at the British Museum, 1820, watercolour, 36.1 × 44.3 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum



**Figure 13.**

William Henry Prior, View in the old Elgin room at the British Museum, 1817, watercolour, 38.8 × 48.1 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

Some form of register must have been maintained, but appears not to have survived, and evidence of student attendance after 1817 is largely a matter of anecdotal record.<sup>40</sup> These later records also, incidentally, point to the variety of student practice in the galleries. While the Museum's original stipulations made the presumption that admitted artists would be drawing ("each student shall provide himself with a Portfolio in which his Name is written, and with Paper as well as Chalk"), students evidently worked in different media as well. James Ward referred explicitly to "modelling" in the Museum in his diary entries of 1817; and George Scharf's watercolour of the interior of the Townley Gallery from 1827 (fig. 14) shows a student sitting on boxes at work at an easel, with what appears to be a paintbrush in his right hand and a palette in his left.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the Townley marbles had lost much of their allure. Jack Tupper, a rather unsuccessful artist associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, recalled his growing disillusion when studying at the British Museum in the late 1830s: "So the glory of the Townley Gallery faded: the grandeur of 'Rome' passed."<sup>42</sup>



**Figure 14.**

George Scharf, *View of the Townley Gallery*, 1827, watercolour, 30.6 × 22 cm. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

The material record of student activity in the Townley Gallery, in the form of images which seem definitely to derive from this special access to the Museum, is extremely scarce.<sup>43</sup> Whatever was produced in the Gallery was, after all, generally only for the purposes of study, and was unlikely to be retained or valued after the artist's death. John Wood, a dedicated student at the Royal Academy from 1819, noted: "I am surprised at the comparatively few drawings I made in the Antique School at the Royal Academy, including my probationary one, not exceeding five, with an outline from the group of the Laocoon.—In the British Museum I made a chalk drawing from the statue of Libēra for Mr Sass", that is, the Townley Venus, apparently drawn by Wood as an exercise for the well-known drawing teacher Henry Sass.<sup>44</sup> Student drawings after the antique must have been numerous, but that does not mean they were preserved. J. M. W. Turner had apparently attended the Plaster Academy over one hundred and thirty times up to the point he

became an ARA, in 1799.<sup>45</sup> Yet even with a figure of his stature, whose studio contents were so completely preserved, and whose dedication to academic study was so notable, we have only a handful of drawings which appear certainly to derive from his time at the schools.<sup>46</sup> There are, doubtless, traces of study in the Museum to be uncovered in finished works of the period. Charles Lock Eastlake's youthful figure of Brutus in his ambitious early work is evidently a direct lift from the marble of Actaeon attacked by his own hounds in the Townley collection; he had been admitted to draw from the antique in 1810 (figs. 15 and 16). But given the dissemination of classical prototypes (in graphic form as well as in plaster) it would be hard to insist that it was only access to the British Museum's antiquities which made such allusion strictly possible.



**Figure 15.**

Charles Lock Eastlake, Brutus Exhorting the Romans to Revenge the Death of Lucretia, 1814, oil on canvas, 116.8 × 152.4 cm. Collection of the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum. Digital image courtesy of Williamson Art Gallery & Museum



**Figure 16.**

Anonymous, Marble figure of Actaeon attacked by his hounds, Roman 2nd Century, marble, 0.99 metres high. Collection of the British Museum (1805,0703.3). Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

## **The Register of Students as Social Record**

Of arguably greater interest than the question of the “influence” of access to the marbles on artistic practice is the evidence the register provides about the social profile of the students. This takes us to the heart of the question about the relationship between art education and the state. This was, in fact, a question raised at the time. The British Museum was in 1821 obliged to draw up a report on student and public attendance of the Museum, prompted by Thomas Barrett Lennard MP, who had entered a motion in the House of Commons seeking reassurance that this publicly funded institution was not “merely an establishment for the gratification of private favour or individual patronage”.<sup>47</sup> Lennard’s questions arose from a growing body of criticism

directed against the Museum, which turned on the question of whether, as a publicly funded body, everyone could expect free access, or only a more specialist minority. As one critic jibed in 1822, “If the British Museum is open only to the friends of the librarians, & their friends’ friends, it ceases to be a public institution.” <sup>48</sup>

The report elicited by Lennard’s question provided a detailed breakdown of admissions. With regard to providing access to draw from the antique, the Museum indulged the impression that it not only fulfilled but exceeded its commitment to admitting Royal Academy students: providing the figures for the period 1809–17 (based, surely, on the register under consideration here), the Museum’s report elaborated:

The Statute for the admission of Students in the Gallery of Sculptures being among those required by the Order of the House of Commons, it may not be irrelevant to add, that the number of students who were admitted to make drawings in the Townley Gallery, from the year 1809 to the year 1817, amounted to an average of something more than twenty. <sup>49</sup>

Notably, this summary gives the clear impression that the antiques were being opened to the students of the Royal Academy; such is, quite reasonably, presumed by Derek Cash in his recent, careful commentary on admission procedures at the Museum. <sup>50</sup> The report also pointed to recent changes:

In 1818, immediately subsequent to the opening of the Elgin Room, two hundred and twenty-three students were admitted: in 1819, sixty-nine more were admitted, and in 1820, sixty-three.

It asserted that, now:

Every student sent by the keeper of the Royal Academy, upon the production of his academy ticket, is admitted without further reference to make his drawings: and other persons are occasionally admitted, on simply exhibiting the proofs of their qualification. According to the present practice, each student has leave to exhibit his finished drawing, from any article in the Gallery, for one week after its completion. <sup>51</sup>

Thus stated, the Museum appeared to be fulfilling its public duty in providing free access to appropriately qualified students. The bare figures might seem to indicate a steady rise in student interest, which could be taken as a marker of quantitative success. In one of the earliest historical accounts of the Museum, Edward Edwards implied that the statistical record was evidence of how Planta had progressively extended access to the Museum: "From the outset he administered the Reading Room itself with much liberality . . . As respects the Department of Antiquities, the students admitted to draw were in 1809 less than twenty; in 1818 two hundred and twenty-three were admitted."<sup>52</sup> At that level of abstraction the information appears beyond dispute. What I test in the remainder of this essay is how these statements stand up to the more individualized account of student activity represented in the biographical record.

That record does include the most assiduous students of the Royal Academy of the time, who certainly did not need the kind of "*constant inspection*" Farington worried about, the kind of student anticipated by the Museum's regulations. Among these we could count Henry Monro, Samuel F. B. Morse and Charles Robert Leslie, William Brockedon, Henry Perronet Briggs, William Etty and Henry Sass, the last two famously dedicated as students of the Academy.<sup>53</sup> However, the full biographical survey of the register points to a more complicated situation. Of the one hundred and sixty-five individuals named in the register, it has proved possible to establish biographical profiles for the majority: details are most lacking for about twenty-four of the attending students, although in most of those cases we can conjecture at least some biographical context.<sup>54</sup> Slightly less than half the total number of individuals listed were recorded as students at the Academy at a date which makes it reasonably likely that they were actively attending the schools when they were admitted to the British Museum (eighty in all).<sup>55</sup> Around twenty more established male artists attended, and several of these were formerly students at the Royal Academy, including John Samuel Agar, John Flaxman, and James Ward. Whether they were pursuing their private studies or undertaking more specific professional tasks is not always clear. There are, certainly, a few cases where the latter appears to be the case. When William Henry Hunt was admitted it was explicitly for the purpose of preparing drawings for a publication; both William Skelton and John Samuel Agar were probably admitted in connection with his ongoing work engraving from sculptures at the Museum. It seems likely that the "Students to Mr Meyer", that is, the engraver and print publisher Henry Meyer, were engaged on professional business, as was Thomas Welsh, recommended by the publisher Thomas Woodfall.

More striking, though, is the determined presence in the register of artists who did not pursue the art professionally or full-time, including the relatively well-documented Chevalier de Barde, Arthur Champernowne, John Disney,

Hugh Irvine (assuming he is the “Ralph Irvine” who appears in the register), Robert Batty, Edward John Burrow, Edward Vernon Utterson, and a number of others designated as “Esq”, so clearly from the polite classes, even if their exact identities remain unclear. There are at least fifteen male individuals who appear to come from backgrounds sufficiently socially elevated or affluent enough to suggest they were taking an amateur interest rather than pursuing serious studies.<sup>56</sup> Enough of these men are known to have practised art to make it quite certain that they were not, at least generally, being admitted to consult the collection without intending to draw, and John Disney was admitted explicitly “to make a sketch of a Mausoleum”. Notable, in this regard, are the large number of women admitted to study, most of whom are or appear to be from polite backgrounds, including the Paytherus sisters, Elizabeth Appleton, Louisa Champernowne, Miss Carmichael, Elizabeth Batty, Miss Home, Lucy Adams, Jane Gurney, Maria Singleton, and Anne Seymour Damer.<sup>57</sup> Some were established artists, or became so; others were pursuing art as a polite accomplishment, or at least we can assume so given their family circumstances; in other cases the situation is by no means clear-cut. All were admitted without special comment or notice despite the issues of propriety around the drawing of even the sculptured nude figure by female artists which crops up in contemporary commentaries.<sup>58</sup> This may be all the more striking given the relative paucity of women admitted as readers at the British Museum library over the same period: only three out of the three hundred and thirty-three admitted between 1770 and 1810, as surveyed by Derek Cash.<sup>59</sup> On this evidence, the field of artistic study was, in the most literal terms, relatively female compared even to the study of literature or history. This points to an under-explored context for the inculcation of the students into life as an artist: the “feminine” sphere of the home, and of siblings (whether brothers or sisters) alongside parents. We have, surely, barely begun to consider the family as the context in which artists are made as much as, if not more than, the studio and academy.

Nor is it straightforward to assume that those individuals who had enrolled as Academy students also had expectations about the professional pursuit of the art. Among the Academy students who attended, a large proportion, including a majority of the most assiduous, were from polite social backgrounds, with fathers in the professions, or who were office-holders or from the landowning classes, including Henry Monro, John Penwarne, Richard Cook, William Drury Shaw, Charles Lock Eastlake, Henry Perronet Briggs, Alexander Huey, Thomas Cooley, Samuel F. B. Morse, Andrew Geddes, John Zephaniah Bell, Thomas Christmas, John Owen Tudor, and Samuel Hancock. Others were the sons of elite tradesmen, highly specialized craftsmen or merchants, including William Brockedon, Seymour Kirkup, Charles Robert Leslie, Gideon Manton, and John Zephaniah Bell. These were not, either, predestined to be artists, by simply following in their father’s footsteps, but were opting in to an artistic career, having had, usually, a decent education,

and access to material and social support. In many cases their brothers, who shared the same upbringing, became doctors or lawyers, property-owners or merchants. A number of individual students gave up the practice of the art—Thomas Christmas became a landowner in Willisden; Richard Cook was able to retire, wealthy; Seymour Kirkup languished in Rome dabbling in the arts; William Brockedon became more engaged as an inventor and traveller; while others were never really obliged to draw an income from their practice but pursued art as a pastime.

It remains the case that there was a high level of occupational inheritance; perhaps thirty-eight of the students (23 percent) had fathers who were architects, engravers or artists in painting or sculpture. Many were the sons of established artists (including Rossi, Bone, Stothard, Ward, Dawe, Wyatt, Bonomi, and the brothers Stephanoff); a few were part of “dynasties” encompassing generations engaged in the arts (Wyatt, Wyon, Hakewill, Landseer). Even then, there is the case of John Morton (noted confusingly as “John Martin” in the register, although the address given provides for a firm identification), who, although the son of an artist and a student at the Royal Academy, exhibited personally as an “Honorary”, suggesting he was not professionally engaged. That his brother became quite prominent as a physician suggests that this was a quite emphatically middle-class family setting.

There are several points to derive from this information, even as lightly sketched as it necessarily is here. Firstly, it is noteworthy that while female students were a minority they were a definite presence; in this regard, the British Museum was like other spaces of artistic study, notably the painting school at the British Institution.<sup>60</sup> The observation is upheld by the contemporary records of student attendance at the British Institution or of copyists at Dulwich Picture Gallery, and should serve as a reminder that the Royal Academy was exceptional among the spaces of art education in being so entirely male.<sup>61</sup> Secondly, it is striking how few came from humble backgrounds unconnected with the art world; really, only a handful, which would include John Tannock (son of a shoemaker in Scotland), William Etty (son of a baker in York), John Jackson (son of a village tailor in Yorkshire), and William Henry Hunt (whose father was a London tin-plate worker). The circumstances which led to their gaining access to the London art world are, therefore, noteworthy, as a third and most important point would be to emphasize how emphatically metropolitan, polite, and middle-class was the British Museum as a site of artistic education. The Townley Gallery on student days was a place where working artists, students, amateurs, and patrons mingled.<sup>62</sup> While the Royal Academy is conventionally seen as an engine of professionalization, it is striking that the social affiliations of artists point to strong, arguably increasingly strong, affiliations between amateurs and professionals—to the extent that our terminology around this point needs to

be reconsidered. Looking over the biographical survey, the kind of social suffering or precariousness typically associated with artists' lives, perhaps especially during the era of industrialization, is markedly absent. When it does appear—most strikingly with the grim life-stories of the siblings Jabez and Sarah Newell—they are among the minority of students from backgrounds neither closely connected with the art world, nor comfortably middle-class or genteel. The examples of stellar social ascent and achievement on the basis of talent alone are real; but they are the exceptions rather than representative.

The relative weight of personal and Academic connection is exposed in the record of the provision of references for students. Of the forty-three referees recorded between 1809 and 1816, less than half (nineteen) were Academicians. One of those was Henry Fuseli, who as Keeper of the Academy Schools through this period must have provided references as part of his duties, and accordingly provided the second largest number of recommendations (nineteen; all but one students at the RA). The lead in providing references was taken by William Alexander, artist and keeper of prints and drawings (twenty-two; mainly but not exclusively students). Overall, officers and Trustees were most active in admitting students. Most only ever provided a reference for one, or at most a handful, and the jibe about “friends of the librarians, & their friends' friends” contains some truth. But the same point applies to the artists, most of whom only ever recommended one student, often known personally to them already: David Wilkie recommended his assistant, John Zephaniah Bell; George Dawe provided a reference for his own son; Thomas Lawrence for his pupil William Etty; Thomas Phillips and John Flaxman, the relatives of fellow Academicians; Thomas Stothard, the son of a neighbour (Kempe). Geography, too, seems to have played a role, with referees often coming from the same area as their favoured student: Francis Horner recommended John Henning, whom he had known in their native Scotland; the Scottish George Chalmers recommended James Tannock; Arthur Champernowne put forward William Brockedon, his protégé, whom he had supported in moving from Devon to the metropolis to pursue art; James Northcote recommended two fellow West Countrymen; Benjamin West, notorious for giving special assistance to visiting American students, two such (Leslie and Morse). If the admission procedure could be interpreted as an opportunity for the Academy to assert a corporate, professionalized identity, based purely on merit, we can nonetheless detect underlying patterns of kinship, personal, social, and geographical affiliation.

Simply stated, even if study at the Museum was free and freely available, any given student would still need to access a letter of reference and the time to go to the Museum (as well as the material means to acquire the portfolio, paper, and chinks anticipated by the Trustees). The opening hours for students militated against anyone attending who had to use these daylight hours for work, a point which was made quite often with reference

to the Reading Room through this period.<sup>63</sup> The most assiduous students needed the time free to study at the British Museum, something that well-off students like Eastlake, Brockedon, Briggs, and Monro had readily available to them. Their peers at the Academy who were obliged to work during the day to make a living, or who were serving apprenticeships, would simply not be able to make the hours available at the Museum.<sup>64</sup> The ambitious painter Thomas Christmas was free to attend the Museum, having dedicated himself to study after working as a clerk, but his brother, Charles George Christmas, who held down a job in the Audit Office, would have struggled; accounting for his studies at the Academy, he had told Farington, "He shd. continue to do the business at the Auditors' Office, Whitehall, which occupies Him from 10 o'clock till 3 each day, as it will keep His mind free from anxiety abt. His means of living and leave Him with a feeling of independence."<sup>65</sup> Given that the students were admitted to the Townley Gallery from noon to 4 o'clock in the afternoon, and that the Trustees continued to prohibit the use of artificial lights in the Museum, there was scarcely any real possibility of Charles George Christmas attending, although he also enjoyed the comforts of a middle-class home background (their father was a Bank of England official).

With the ascent of utilitarian criticism, visitor levels were turned to anew as a measure of the institution's fulfilment or failure to fulfil its "national" purpose. On strictly statistical terms, the Museum seemed to be successful at providing opportunities for art students. Only under the closest scrutiny, with attention to the "micro-history" of individual lives, does that illusion start to be tested. It is, though, at this "micro" level that we can apprehend the characteristic paradox of an emerging cultural modernity, one that is still with us. Yet the point, to follow Rancière, is not to see the past ascent of a present situation, but to force ourselves to feel uneasy with that sense of recognition and its tacit model of history. The evidence is that free access to culture and the (circumscribed) promotion of equality were combined with socially restrictive patterns of preferment.<sup>66</sup> Study at the British Museum may have been free, and freely available to properly qualified students of the Academy, but you needed to be in the right place at the right time, to have the time available, and, indeed, to know or at least be able to access the right people, to get in.

This point may seem unduly sociological or even tendentious, but overlooking it involves a denial of the socially invested nature of time, specifically, of the scholastic time (given over to study or contemplation or to creation) mythically removed from the influence of social forces.<sup>67</sup> The acts of nomination which saw certain men and women given special access to the Townley Gallery, acts so seemingly trivial in themselves involving perhaps only an exchange of words and a scribbled note, were microcosmic manifestations of social authority of the most far-reaching kind.<sup>68</sup> When

Robert Butt, the principal manager of the bronze and porcelain department at Messrs Howell & James, Regent-street, was examined by the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures in 1835, he noted:

The process by which a knowledge of the arts of painting and sculpture is now acquired is this: a young man receives tuition from a private master; he draws from the antique at the British Museum for a certain time, and when he shows that he has sufficient talent to qualify him for a student of the Royal Academy he is admitted; but the expense of acquiring that preliminary knowledge is considerable, and the young artist must also be maintained by his relatives during the time that he is acquiring it.

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The following year, in a further parliamentary committee, this time dedicated to testing out the British Museum's claims to public status, James Crabb, "House Decorator" of Shoe Lane, Fleet Street, was asked, "Did you ever obtain any assistance, by means of casts, from the better specimens of sculpture in the Museum or elsewhere?", to which he replied, "I should derive assistance from them if I had the opportunity, but I have not time." <sup>70</sup> Considered sociologically, as the personal experience of these men seems to have obliged them to do, time was certainly of the essence.

The prevalence of students with secure middle-class backgrounds at the British Museum might, then, be taken as evidence of an early phase in the "middle-classification" of art practice, the awkward but evocative phrase used recently by Angela McRobbie in her eye-opening observations of careers in the present-day creative industries. <sup>71</sup> Whatever emphasis may be put on equality of access to educational opportunity, however rigorously fair-minded and anonymized the tests and measures involved in admission procedures, without forms of positive support to counterbalance or actively adjust social inequalities, those same inequalities will tend to be reproduced, homologically, in the educational field. This is patently not a simple matter of social and material advantage underpinning artistic enterprise in a wholly predictable way; such would be a nonsense, in light of the many students who did not enjoy such advantages. Instead, it is the very flexibility built into the exclusionary processes of the emerging cultural field which is significant—the possibility that talented students could get access, gain reputation, achieve success, without being limited by their social origins. "Freeing" art education allowed for the expression of personal preferences or dispositions at an individual level, which at an aggregate level reproduced larger power relations. Exposing that ultimately exclusionary process, which may be marked only in small differences, in personal dispositions and

behaviours, in the personal choices and decisions which are neither truly personal nor really pure as choices, is no small task. This essay, and the biographical survey accompanying it, with its details of a multitude of student lives otherwise scarcely recorded or recognized, is intended as a small contribution to that larger project, with the excess of data presented here perhaps imposing, in itself, new requirements on our understanding of the history of art education.

## **Appendix**

Regulations for the admission of students of the Royal Academy to the Townley Gallery at the British Museum (May 1808):

**[7]** That the students of the Royal Academy be admitted into the Gallery of Antiquities upon every Friday in the months of April, May, June, & July, & every day in the months of August and September, from the hours of twelve to four, except on Wednesdays and Saturdays the Students, not exceeding twenty at a time, to be admitted by a Ticket from the President and Council of the Royal Academy, signed by their Secretary.

**[8]** The better to maintain decorum among the Students, a person properly qualified shall be nominated by the Royal Academy from their own body, who shall attend during the hours of study; the name of such person to be signified in writing, from time to time, by the Secretary of the Royal Academy to the Principal Librarian of the British Museum.

**[9]** That the members of the Royal Academy have access to the Gallery of Antiquities at all admissible times, upon application to the Principal Librarian or the Senior under Librarian in Residence

**[10]** That on the Fridays in April, May June & July one of the officers of the Department of Antiquities do attend in the Gallery of Antiquities according to Rotation in discharge of his ordinary Duty.

**[11]** That in the months of August & September some one of the several Officers of the Museum, then in Residence, do (according to a Rotation to be agreed upon by themselves & confirmed by the Principal Librarian) attend on the Gallery upon the Days for the admission of Students.

**[12]** That the attendants in the Department of Antiquities be always present in the Gallery during the times when the Students are admitted.

## Footnotes

- 1 The original register is held in the Keeper's Office, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum.
- 2 Patrick Joyce, "Speaking up for the State" (2014), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/patrick-joyce/speaking-up-for-state>.
- 3 These points are made in light of a larger research project, which has given rise to the present study: a biographical survey of all the students of paintings, sculpture, and engraving who were active at the Royal Academy schools between its foundation in 1769 and 1830 together with a monograph, provisionally titled *The Talent of Success: The Royal Academy Schools in the Age of Turner, Blake and Constable, c. 1770–1840* (forthcoming). This fuller survey indicates several important shifts over these decades, including a fundamental shift in the proportion of students coming from family backgrounds in the arts and design-oriented trades, in comparison with those coming from professional and genteel backgrounds. It exposes, specifically, a new group whose fathers were engaged as "officers", in the civil service or bureaucratic roles, who in turn had a disproportionate representation within the developing art establishment (as Academicians, or as officials in other cultural bodies).
- 4 The term "art world", as designating a space of co-production, stems from Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (1984), rev. edn (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008). As deployed here, it is closer in conception to the sociological "field" as detailed by Pierre Bourdieu across a succession of influential works. Notable among these, for present purposes because of its methodological statement about the homological analysis of the world (field) of art in relation to the field of power, is *The Rules of Art*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), esp. 214–15.
- 5 See, notably, the chapter on "Workers in Art" in Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, first published 1854 with numerous further editions. On the self-motivated artist as the model for all forms of work, see Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative: Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), esp. 70–76.
- 6 Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: The Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture, 1760–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Hoock, "The British State and the Anglo-French Wars Over Antiquities, 1798–1858", *Historical Journal* 50, no. 1 (2007): 49–72.
- 7 Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003) and Joyce, *The State of Freedom: A Social History of the British State Since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); also his "What is the Social in Social History?", *Past and Present* 206, no. 1 (2010): 213–48.
- 8 On this Foucauldian framing of art education and creative production within liberalism, see McRobbie, *Be Creative*, 71–76 and *passim*.
- 9 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944; Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2002); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979*, ed. Michel Senellert, trans. Graham Burchell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London and New York: Verso, 2007); Pierre Bourdieu, *On the State: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1989–1992*, ed. Patrick Champagne and others, trans. David Fernbach (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2014).
- 10 See Edward Higgs, *Identifying the English: A History of Personal Identification 1500 to the Present* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), 97–119. Higgs's account is, essentially, positive about the liberties and rights secured by this rising documentation. The position taken here is more determinedly Foucauldian. For the foundational role of statistics in "liberalisation", and the hidden affinities between the liberal and the totalitarian, see Michael Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*, ed. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin, 2004).
- 11 Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 69.
- 12 A biographical dictionary of Royal Academy students from 1769–1830. See note 3, above.
- 13 Jacques Rancière, *The Method of Equality: Interviews with Laurent Jeanpierre and Dork Zabunyan*, trans. Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 108.
- 14 Neil Chambers, *Joseph Banks and the British Museum: The World of Collecting, 1770–1830* (London: Routledge, 2007), 107.
- 15 The register is mentioned in the notice of Seymour Kirkup in G. E. Bentley, *Blake Records*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 289n. Kirkup was an unusually assiduous student at the Museum, admitted in 1809 and renewing his ticket through to 1812. The reference in Bentley appears to be the only published reference to the register. The admission of the Paytherus sisters to draw at the Museum is noted by James Hamilton in his *London Lights: The Minds that Moved the City that Shook the World, 1805–51* (London: John Murray, 2007), 72, although with reference to the early Reading Room register (marked "1795") in the British Museum Central Archive, rather than the volume in Prints and Drawings.
- 16 See J. T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 2 vols., 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), 1: 242.
- 17 Vicky Coltman, *Classical Sculpture and the Culture of Collecting in Britain since 1760* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 242–44.
- 18 See B. F. Cook, *The Townley Marbles* (London: British Museum Press, 1985) and Ian Jenkins, *Archaeologists and Aesthetes in the Sculpture Galleries of the British Museum, 1800–1939* (London: British Museum Press, 1992).
- 19 Chambers, *Joseph Banks*, 107.

- 20 Derek Cash, "Access to Museum Culture: The British Museum from 1753 to 1836", *British Museum Occasional Papers* 133 (2002), 68. [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/research\\_publications\\_series/2002/access\\_to\\_museum\\_culture.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/publications/research_publications_series/2002/access_to_museum_culture.aspx).
- 21 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1029-30.
- 22 Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, CM/4/50-52.
- 23 Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, CM/4/59.
- 24 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1034.
- 25 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1043-144. Cf. "Chapter III: Concerning the Admission into the British Museum", in *Acts and Votes of Parliament, Statutes and Rules, and Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum* (London, 1808), 15-16.
- 26 Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kenneth Garlick, Angus Macintyre, and others, 17 vols. (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1978-98), 9: 3284.
- 27 Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, GM/2/366, 370.
- 28 Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, GM/2/371.
- 29 Library of the Royal Academy of Arts, London, GM/2/372-73.
- 30 *Diary of Joseph Farington*, 9: 3313.
- 31 *Diary of Joseph Farington*, 9: 3317.
- 32 *Diary of Joseph Farington*, 9: 3284.
- 33 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/3/9/2426.
- 34 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/3/9/2428.
- 35 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1069.
- 36 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1070.
- 37 The arrangement of the galleries was first detailed in a written description provided by Westmacott for Prince Hoare's *Academic Annals* (London, 1809) and in Taylor Combe's *A Description of the Ancient Marbles in the British Museum*, 3 vols. (London, 1812-17). See Cook, *Townley Marbles*, 59-61.
- 38 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, "*The English Journey*": *Journal of a Visit to France and Britain in 1826*, ed. David Bindman and Gottfried Riemann (New Haven, CT, and London, 1993), 74.
- 39 The record of admissions to view prints and drawings must have arisen from the new regulations issued by the Trustees in November 1814; see, Antony Griffiths, "The Department of Prints and Drawings during the First Century of the British Museum", *The Burlington Magazine* 136, 1097 (1994): 536.
- 40 In March 1817 the student artist William Bewick wrote to his brother: "I last Monday set my name down as a student in the British Museum." See Thomas Landseer, ed., *Life and Letters of William Bewick (Artist)*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1871), 1: 37.
- 41 Edward Nygren, "James Ward, RA (1769-1859): Papers and Patrons", *Walpole Society* 75 (2013): 16.
- 42 Jack Tupper, "Extracts from the Diary of an Artist. No.V", *The Crayon*, 12 December 1855, 368.
- 43 An album of drawings of the Townley Marbles in the British Museum (2010,5006.1877.1-40) appears to have been collected by Townley himself, so dates to before the installation of the marbles at the Museum. The drawings serve as records of the objects rather than student exercises. The drawings by John Samuel Agar in the Getty Research Institute are evidently preparatory for the prints published in *Specimens of Antient Sculpture*.
- 44 BL Add MS 37.163 f.106. This and other figures in the Townley collection could also be found as casts in the Royal Academy's plaster schools, so even if Wood's drawing, for example, could be traced, it could not definitively be said to be made in the Townley Gallery.
- 45 See Ann Chumbley and Ian Warrell, *Turner and the Human Figure: Studies of Contemporary Life*, exh. cat. (London: Tate Gallery, 1989), 12-13.
- 46 Eric Shanes, *Young Mr Turner: The First Forty Years, 1775-1815* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 33-34.
- 47 Hansard (House of Commons), 16 February 1821, c.724 (online at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1821/feb/16/british-museum>). See Cash, "Access to Museum Culture", 197-225 for a full account of public discussions around this date.
- 48 Quoted in Cash, "Access to Museum Culture", 208.
- 49 *British Museum: Returns to two Orders of the Honourable House of Commons, dated 16<sup>th</sup> February 1821*, House of Commons, 23 February 1821, 2.
- 50 Cash "Access to Museum Culture", 71.
- 51 Quoted in *The Literary Chronicle*, 17 March 1821, 168.
- 52 Edward Edwards, *Lives of the Founders of the British Museum* (London: Trübner and Co., 1870), 520.

- 53 See Martin Myrone, "Something too Academical: The Problem with Etty", in *William Etty: Art and Controversy*, ed. Sarah Burnage, Mark Hallett, and Laura Turner (London: Philip Wilson, 2011), 47–59.
- 54 The barest and most conjectural biographies include those for William Carr of New Broad Street; W. W. Torrington; Edward Thomson; Richard Moses; and Mr Lewer. Information is most notably lacking for the trio of Miss Cowper, Miss Moulta, and Mr Turner of Gower Street; William Hamilton of Stafford Place; William Irving of Montague Street; Thomas Williams of Hatton Garden; Daniel Jones; M. Hatley of Albermarle Street; Miss Edgar; Miss Carmichael of Granville Street; Mr Atwood; Mr Higgins of Norfolk Street; George Pisey of Castle Street; Charles White of George Street; Robert Walter Page of Wigmore Street; Henry A. Matthew; Thomas Welsh; and John Hall.
- 55 Students were entered as "probationers" for a period of three months (which might be extended), and once registered could attend the Schools for a period of ten years.
- 56 Ralph Irvine; Arthur Champernowne; the Chevalier de Barde; John Disney; John Campbell; Edward Utterson; John Lambert; Robert Batty; Alexander Huey; Richard Thomson; Charles Toplis; John Frederick Williams; Edward Burrows; William Carr; W. W. Torrington.
- 57 Jane Landseer; Janet Ross; Georgiana Ross; the two Misses Paytherus; H. Edgar; Maria Singleton; Elizabeth Appleton; Louisa Champernowne; Miss Carmichael; Elizabeth Batty; Frances Edwards; Eliza Kempe; Ann Damer; Miss Cowper; Miss Moulta; Miss Trotter; Miss Adams; Sarah Newell; Emma Kendrick; Jane Gurney.
- 58 *Gentleman's Magazine* (1820) and *A Trip to Paris in August and September* (1815), quoted by William T. Whitley in his *Art in England, 1800–1820* (London: Medici Society, 1928), 263, as evidence that "It was still thought improper for women to study from such figures" as the Apollo Belvedere.
- 59 Cash, "Access to Museum Culture", 113.
- 60 As the American Samuel F. B. Morse (a student at the Royal Academy and the British Museum) noted in 1811: "I was surprised on entering the gallery of paintings at the British Institution, at seeing eight or ten *ladies* as well as gentlemen, with their easels and palettes and oil colours, employed in copying some of the pictures. You can see from this circumstance in what estimation the art is held here, since ladies of distinction, without hesitation or reserve, are willing to draw in public." See Edward Lind Morse, ed., *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals*, 2 vols. (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 1: 45.
- 61 Lists of students admitted to copy at the British Institution appear in the Directors' minutes, NAL RC V 12–14, and in contemporary press reports. Individuals admitted to copy at Dulwich Picture Gallery were routinely listed in the "Bourgeois Book of Regulations" from 1820; photocopies and notes at Dulwich Picture Gallery, C1 and H3.
- 62 This is especially clearly expressed in James Ward's diary notes on his visits in 1817, meeting there the artists William Skelton, Joseph Clover, Henry Fuseli, and William Long, but also the gentlemen collectors and scholars William Lock, Edward Utterson, and Francis Douce (Nygren, "James Ward").
- 63 See Cash, "Access to Museum Culture", 217 and *passim*.
- 64 Although the timing of the Academy's evening classes might seem to be more accommodating, even this may have been challenging. The master of Richard Westall, later a watercolour painter, "permitted him to draw at the Royal Academy, in the evenings; but for that indulgence he worked a corresponding number of hours in the morning". *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1837, 213.
- 65 *Diary of Joseph Farington*, 4: 4783.
- 66 On educational tests as linking "macro" and "micro", "both sectoral mechanisms or unique situations and societal arrangements", see Boltanski and Chiapello, *New Spirit of Capitalism*, 32.
- 67 See Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).
- 68 "Acts of nomination, from the most trivial acts of bureaucracy, like the issuing of an identity card, or a sickness or disablement certification, to the most solemn, which consecrate nobilities, lead, in a kind of infinite regress, to the realization of God on earth, the State, which guarantees, in the last resort, the infinite series of acts of authority certifying by delegation the validity of the certificates of legitimate existence", Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, 245. The potentially trivial nature of the acts of nomination involved in gaining access to the British Museum is highlighted in Joseph Planta's own account of providing recommendations (for the Reading Room) often only on the basis of casual conversations. See Cash, "Access to Museum Culture", 207.
- 69 *Report of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, House of Commons, 4 September 1835, 40.
- 70 Report of the Select Committee on the British Museum, quoted in Edward Edwards, *Remarks on the "Minutes of Evidence" Taken before the Select Committee on the British Museum*, 2nd edn (London [1839]), 14.
- 71 McRobbie, *Be Creative*.
- 72 The British Museum, Central Archive, C/1/5/1043–144.

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# A “Modern Rendezvous” in London: Painters, Pilots, and Edward Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight* (1914)

Bernard Vere

## Abstract

*Edward Wadsworth’s A Short Flight was first exhibited in June 1914 and reproduced in the Vorticist journal Blast later that summer. Vorticism’s leader, Wyndham Lewis, had spent the time leading up to the inaugural publication of Blast trying to differentiate the English movement from Italian Futurism, and did so by adopting a more sceptical attitude in the face of Futurism’s technophilia. Accordingly, A Short Flight has been read as a painting that portrays the individual as subservient to the mechanized world. Disputing that interpretation, this article resituates A Short Flight in the context of aviation in London before the First World War, when 120,000 people attended the meeting at Hendon Aerodrome over the Easter weekend of 1914. Moreover, four pilots flying at Hendon were amongst the names that the Vorticists “Blessed” in Blast. Fellow painters and patrons flew from the venue, which quickly assumed the status of a fashionable “modern rendezvous”. Coming in the wake of F. T. Marinetti’s description of his flight over Milan in the “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”, but anticipating the response of Futurism’s own painters to the theme of aviation, Hendon made the ideal subject for a painting that contested Futurism’s claims to be the art of the modern metropolis.*

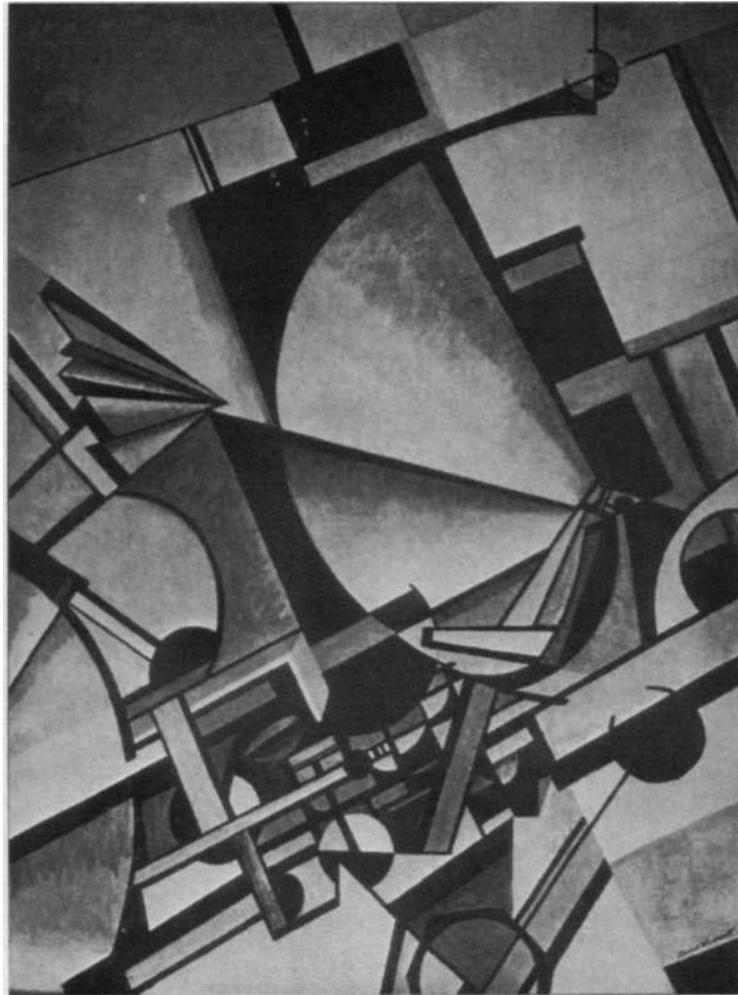
## Authors

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Futurism and Vorticism have often been confused. Although the movements are distinct and deserve to be treated as such, they are certainly intertwined. Much of the scholarship on Vorticism has been about distinguishing the movement from Futurism, taking its lead from the critical comments made by Wyndham Lewis towards the Italian movement as he sought to establish Vorticism. But the grounds of distinction can become reified and harden into orthodoxies that are inadequate to describe the complex and at times chaotic gestation of Vorticism in the nine or so months preceding the publication of *Blast* in the summer of 1914. This essay argues that Edward Wadsworth's painting *A Short Flight* (1914) has been the object of such misreadings and proposes a new interpretation.

When the Italian Futurist leader F. T. Marinetti opened his "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature" in 1912 he did so from a distinctly modern situation: "Sitting astride the fuel tank of an airplane," Marinetti wrote, "my stomach warmed by the aviator's head, I felt the ridiculous inanity of the old syntax inherited from Homer." <sup>1</sup> Mocking what he termed this "Latin period", he claims that the "swirling propeller" forced him to realize that "the period, naturally, has a prudent head, a stomach, two legs, and two flat feet: but it will never have two wings. Just enough to walk, take a short run, and come up short, panting!" <sup>2</sup> Elsewhere, he had already written that "we are not joking when we declare that in human flesh wings lie dormant", predicting a coming "nonhuman, mechanical species" and "a development of the external protrusion of the sternum, resembling a prow, which will have great significance, given that man, in the future, will become an increasingly better aviator". <sup>3</sup> Italian Futurist painters responded to these words, but they took some time to do so. It was not until the late 1920s that *aeropittura* would become central to Futurist painting. But even those earlier works of Italian Futurism which made flight a prime concern were not produced in the immediate wake of Marinetti's manifesto. Gino Severini's *Flying Over Rheims* dates to 1915. The most significant pre-First World War Futurist work, Carlo Carrà's *Patriotic Festival*, a dazzling free-word, "pictorial poem" collage/painting based on a whirring propeller, was in all likelihood composed in the last two weeks of June 1914. <sup>4</sup> By this time Wadsworth's *A Short Flight* (fig. 1) was already on display in London and, shortly afterwards, its painter became a signatory to the manifesto that appeared in the first number of *Blast*, the journal of the Vorticists. <sup>5</sup> *A Short Flight* was reproduced there as one of five works by Wadsworth.



**Figure 1.**

Edward Wadsworth, *A Short Flight*, 1914, oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Lost

That an artist contributing to *Blast* was amongst the first to react to Marinetti's words might come as a surprise. From around the turn of the year Lewis had been orchestrating attempts to put some distance between Italians and the emergent English movement. Startlingly, an early product of this campaign was a catalogue essay entitled "The Cubist Room", that contained the claim, "Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird."<sup>6</sup> Lewis's essay accompanied an exhibition held in Brighton at the end of 1913, where artists exhibiting alongside Lewis and Wadsworth included Frederick Etchells and Cuthbert Hamilton, both of whom would go on to become Vorticists, as well as C. R. W. Nevinson, who remained a Futurist. But of these, it is Wadsworth who has since been portrayed as the faithful "lieutenant" to Vorticism's leader, and the seven works of his reproduced

over the two issues of *Blast* are second only to Lewis's nine.<sup>7</sup> What, then, led him to produce a painting that seems more aligned to the precepts of Marinetti's writings than those of Lewis?

My argument will situate Wadsworth's work in the context of Marinetti's writings and Lewis's responses to them, but it will also put some distance between *A Short Flight* and both of these figures, Lewis as much as Marinetti. It will do so by putting the work's reproduction in the context of *Blast's* inclusion—again surprising if we take Lewis at his word—of four celebrated pilots amongst the list of those it Blessed. The Vorticists proved themselves adept readers of mass culture when compiling the lists of those Blasted and Blessed for *Blast*, and the Blessed included some of the most prominent British-based aviators of the day: B. C. Hucks, Gustav Hamel, Claude Grahame-White, and Henri Salmet. All were associated with London's celebrated aerodrome at Hendon, which leads me to an examination of the culture and spectacle of flight there before the First World War. This will involve an extended treatment of the place of aviation in English mass culture, including its differentiated appeal to both the upper classes and artists, but I will also concentrate on the aesthetic precedents and theories that might have influenced Wadsworth. I approach Vorticism, in Fredric Jameson's words, by prioritising "the works themselves", rather than the "verbal and rhetorical evocations" of Ezra Pound, or the "declarations of intent" of Lewis as to how the movement might be defined.<sup>8</sup> Doing so disrupts a previous reading of the painting, which claims the "absence of the pilot" figures the "Vorticist diagnosis of the reduction of the individual to an industrial helot, functioning—and hence understandable—only within the context of the mechanical world of modernity in which he or she subsists."<sup>9</sup> Far from being helots, or slaves, pilots were feted well beyond the aerodrome, but, Wadsworth's work cannot be divorced from Hendon and indeed probably portrays it.

## **Wyndham Lewis versus F. T. Marinetti**

"Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird" is one of a number of slogans in the months leading up to and including the publication of *Blast* through which Lewis rails against Italian Futurism's celebration of the machine. In *Blast* he writes "AUTOMOBILISM (Marinetteism) bores us. We don't want to go about making a hullo-bulloo about motor cars, anymore than about knives and forks, elephants or gas-pipes. Elephants are VERY BIG. Motorcars go quickly."<sup>10</sup> In "The Melodrama of Modernity", he exhorts: "Cannot Marinetti, sensible and energetic man that he is, be induced to throw over this sentimental rubbish about Automobiles and Aeroplanes?"<sup>11</sup> As part of the Manifesto, he denounces "The Latins" for "their Futuristic gush over machines, aeroplanes, etc." and repeats the charge in "Automobilism",

a piece not included in *Blast*: “The extraordinary childishness of the Latins over mechanical inventions, aeroplanes, machinery, etc., is familiar to anyone who has lived in France or Italy.” <sup>12</sup>

The catalogue essay “The Cubist Room” suggests that Lewis was working with some knowledge of Marinetti’s “Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine”. The artists exhibiting would certainly have had a chance to hear his ideas first-hand—Lewis and Nevinson had organized a dinner in his honour that November, Wadsworth had attended—and the essay does seem to respond implicitly to Marinetti’s evolutionary claims. Instead of Marinetti’s radical and avowedly Lamarckian reimagining of the body, Lewis offers a continuity: “Beneath the Past and the Future the most sanguine would hardly expect a more different skeleton to exist than that respectively of ape and man.” <sup>13</sup> But, he continues: “All revolutionary painting to-day has in common the rigid reflections of steel and stone in the spirit of the artist; that desire for stability as though a machine were being built to fly or kill with.” <sup>14</sup> Not only does Lewis reject the radical reimagining of the body, he rejects, too, Futurism’s euphoria of movement, replacing it with rigidity and stability, and he does so by recourse to the aeroplane. Resolutely of the present, Lewis’s proto-Vorticist aesthetics disdain the euphoric flying experience of Marinetti’s epistemological break and privilege cool, rational construction, the machine as a rigid framework rather than a guide.

Such statements have become key planks in formulating the differences between Futurism and Vorticism. Hal Foster, for example, contrasts Marinetti’s work “to explode the old bourgeois idea of a nontechnological subject” with Lewis’s imagining of “a new ego that can withstand the shocks of the military-industrial, the modern-urban, and the mass-political, indeed, that can forge these stimuli into a new protective shield, convert them into a new hardened subject able to *thrive* on such shocks.” <sup>15</sup> Foster then deduces that “a basic difference between the two movements as a whole [is that] in images and forms, futurist art favors the explosive, while vorticist art focuses on the fixed.” <sup>16</sup> David Wragg writes that “Lewis’s most direct negation of Futurist enthusiasm for mass modernity occurs in his ‘history-painting’ *The Crowd*.” <sup>17</sup> Giovanni Cianci uses this work to establish the difference between Vorticism and Futurism: “We know also of the non-emphatic, detached, critical attitude towards the city, as revealed, for instance, in the famous, most un-Marinetian painting *The Crowd*.” <sup>18</sup> But such attitudes hardly seem adequate to account for Wadsworth’s *A Short Flight*.

Here, I want to claim that another view of the aeroplane offers an alternative to the binary oppositions of Futurist intoxication and dreams of the body as metalized flesh versus Vorticist cool detachment and deadening in which the machine figures as a structuring principle rather than a subject. The

aeroplane was many things in 1914: an engineering marvel, signifying the conquest of nature, a technology that seemed to render national borders useless, an emergent, rather than a developed, military force, but above all it was a spectacle, “one of the era’s defining forms of spectacle”, according to Jeffrey Schnapp.<sup>19</sup> Most people’s experience of aircraft came not from being in them, but in watching them from the ground, often at meetings and increasingly, as was the case in London, at dedicated aerodromes. Moreover, aviation was one of the major topics for the illustrated press. Pilots enjoyed a level of celebrity as a result.

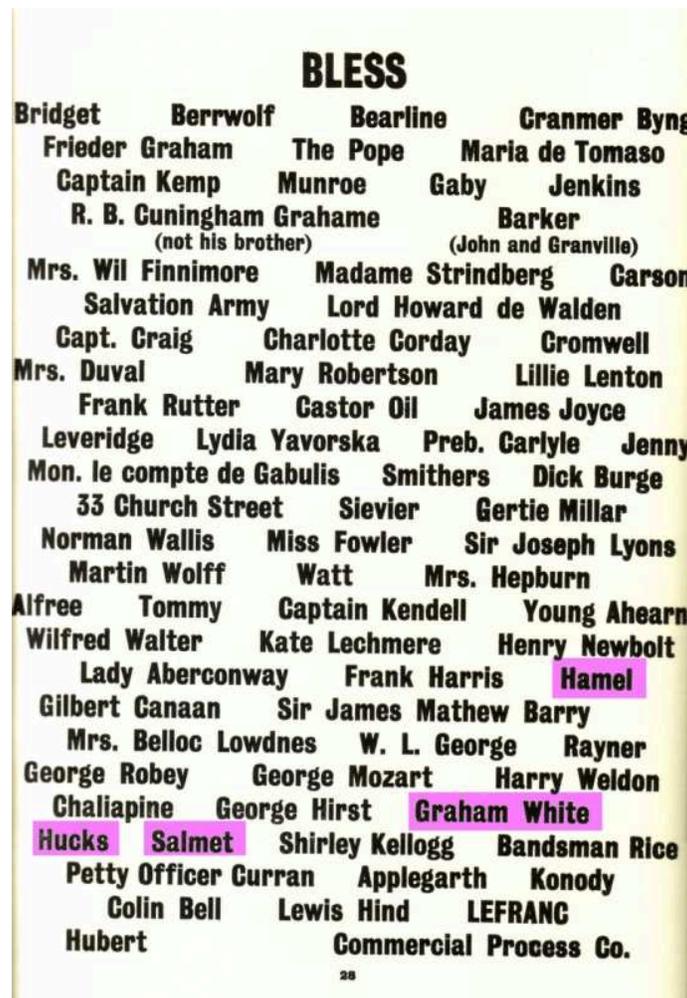
## **The Spectacle of Flight in London**

The London Aerodrome, Hendon, had been established in 1911 by pioneering British aviator Claude Grahame-White, one of the pilots the Vorticists Blessed. At that point, British aviation was noticeably lagging behind both the United States and parts of continental Europe, especially France. When Lewis dubbed the country an “Industrial Island machine, pyramidal workshop” in *Blast*, it was significant that he did so in a part of the Manifesto devoted to ships and shipping, where Britain was still, or at least perceived itself to be, preeminent.<sup>20</sup> In July 1909 it had been the Frenchman Louis Blériot who had first flown across the Channel, claiming in the process a £1,000 prize from Lord Northcliffe, the proprietor of the *Daily Mail*. In the same month, A. V. Roe had become the first British pilot to fly an all-British plane; its flight lasted for under three hundred metres. It is with a hint of envy that Lewis follows up his comments on the “childishness” of “the Latins” by claiming that: “The French Press gushes sentimentally every day about their ‘*hommes-oiseaux*,’ the ‘*oiseaux de France*.’ ‘*La France a des ailes!*’ you hear in a climax of idiotic sentiment.”<sup>21</sup> “Idiotic sentiment” was a crude way to brush off French superiority, and it is no coincidence that many of the terms we still use to describe parts of an aircraft, such as fuselage, or ailerons, are French. By 1914, Britain had gone some way to closing this skills gap, largely as a result of activities at Hendon. Six miles from central London, the site was always intended to be an entertainment venue and in addition to the seventeen hangars that were initially built, it opened with grandstands and refreshment rooms to service the paying public.<sup>22</sup> Gate receipts for the first year were £11,000.<sup>23</sup> Grahame-White capitalized on these promising beginnings. In mid-1912 the number of hangars had grown to thirty and by 1913 eight flying schools were based there, training new pilots and providing secure employment for existing ones, albeit that most of the machines they were flying were still French.<sup>24</sup> But Hendon really came alive at the weekends. Over the Easter weekend of 1914, at about the same time that the Vorticists were compiling the lists of people to *Blast* and *Bless*, an estimated 120,000 people attended the venue, testifying to its mass appeal.

<sup>25</sup> Ticket prices started at a very affordable sixpence for ground admission, but the venture was always associated with the fashionability of a modern sporting venue. That May, *The Play Pictorial* described the London Aerodrome as a “social rendezvous” and compared it to the exclusive Hurlingham polo and croquet club. <sup>26</sup> *Flight* magazine described it as a “veritable ‘Ascot’ in London”, referencing the racecourse that held a royal meeting every summer. It continued:

A splendid health giving—interesting—pleasurable worry-forgetting rendezvous, with everything that can possibly be thought of for the comfort of visitors. Splendid and comfortable tea pavilions—little red and white garden tents scattered about, each with its wooden floor, and its dainty tea service prettily and invitingly set out. Plenty of walking-space, thousands of comfortable chairs, and plenty of fine flying. Music, fashion, sport, interest, comfort, fresh air, what more can one want? Truly, on a sunny Sunday afternoon, Hendon is a sight for the gods. <sup>27</sup>

The crowds came to watch races and the latest in trick flying. Of the other pilots Blessed (fig. 2), B. C. Hucks became the first Englishman to fly upside down and to loop the loop, and in April 1914 flew across the Channel with a cameraman recording the progress of the royal yacht below as the king and queen sailed to France to mark the tenth anniversary of the Entente Cordiale. He then returned to Hendon with the film, allowing it to be processed in time to be watched at the London Coliseum music hall that same evening, where Hucks himself took to the stage to the acclaim of the audience. <sup>28</sup>



**Figure 2.**

“Manifesto”, Blast 1, (London: John Lane, 1914), 28, including pilots B. C. Hucks, Henri Salmet, Claude Grahame-White, and Gustav Hamel. Collection of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust. Digital image courtesy of The Wyndham Lewis Memorial Trust

Looping the loop was all the rage at Hendon in 1914. At the Easter meeting *Flight* magazine described how it was “of course, the principal feature, but whereas at previous looping demonstrations the air was cleared of all aeroplanes whilst looping was in progress, this time the other machines not only went up as usual, but on one occasion four machines looped at one and the same time”.<sup>29</sup> Henri Salmet was the Chief Flying Instructor at the Blériot Flying School at Hendon, Blériot having also contributed some of the initial capital for the London Aerodrome. Salmet held the British altitude record (an important one in the early years of flight) and had toured the country under the auspices of the *Daily Mail*. Gustav Hamel was the son of a surgeon and a naturalized Englishman. Described as “the most popular airman after Grahame-White”, Hamel held the record for the number of cross-Channel

flights.<sup>30</sup> He became the pilot of the first airmail delivery when he carried letters from Hendon to nearby Windsor in 1911, a landmark that was covered by the newsreels, which featured him prominently (fig. 3). But he owed his real popularity to perfecting the tricks that Hucks had imported. In February 1914 he looped the loop over Windsor Castle at the request of the king. At the Easter meeting he performed twenty-two successive loops. As the *New Zealand Herald* wrote, “A more consummate master of trick-flying never lived. . . . He acquired every trick and performed each with consummate mastery, a sureness and deftness of touch which no other pilot has ever equalled. Scores of them have looped the loop and flown upside down, but not one of them ever had the Hamel touch or his genius.”<sup>31</sup> This piece, written by the *Daily Telegraph*'s aeronautical correspondent, served as Hamel's obituary, as he had disappeared on a flight over the Channel on 23 May 1914, his body never recovered. The saga was extensively covered in the press, but in all likelihood it took place too late to influence his inclusion in *Blast*. Nevertheless, as Barbara Wadsworth writes that “juxtaposition was important” in compiling the lists of Blasted and Blessed, it is possible that the placement of the names of the aviators plays on their profession, with Hucks and Salmel side-by-side on the ground on the left, Grahame-White just above them, and Hamel soaring aloft on the right.<sup>32</sup>



[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 3.**

Hendon—First Aerial Post. Mr Hamel leaves Hendon with his letter bags, 1911. Digital image courtesy of Film courtesy of British Pathé

## Hendon's Aristocratic and Painterly Appeal

It seems reasonable to assume, given the inclusion of the famed pilots, that at least some, if not all, of the Vorticists were among the hundreds of thousands who acquired what the venture's publicity referred to as the "Hendon habit". Certainly a number of their associates did. The Countess of Drogheda visited Hendon in January 1914 at the same time that Lewis was completing the décor for the dining room in her London townhouse.<sup>33</sup> A newspaper account of her visit to Hendon makes plain that it had become a destination not only for the masses, but for the highest echelons of contemporary society:

It has now become the fashion for society ladies to accompany aviators on flights at Hendon each Sunday afternoon. The Arctic conditions which prevailed at the London Aerodrome yesterday did not deter many members of both sexes from paying for the privilege of making flights, and Mr. Grahame White took up in turn, on a Maurice Farman biplane, Lady Drogheda, Lady Eileen Vivian, and Lady Eileen Knox.<sup>34</sup>

One of the ways in which high society could distinguish itself from those paying sixpence for entrance to Hendon's grounds was to take a flight with a noted pilot, thereby consolidating celebrity, novelty, and a demonstration of financial means. Prices for these flights started at two guineas; "notoriously", as Lawrence Rainey observes, "the guinea was a monetary unit of social nuances, used until 1971 in place of the mundane pound to state professional fees, rents for better premises, and similarly impressive purposes."<sup>35</sup> Two guineas for a flight was eighty-four times as much as the cheapest ticket Hendon had to offer. But those at the very top of the social ladder might find their charges waived altogether. There was considerable merriment in the general press when Grahame-White was duped into giving free flights to the aristocratic-sounding (but non-existent) "Crown Prince of Wurtemberg" and his secretary "Lord Stanton Hope". At least one newspaper speculated that the prankster was Horace de Vere Cole, who had earlier perpetrated the Dreadnought Hoax with Virginia Woolf.<sup>36</sup>

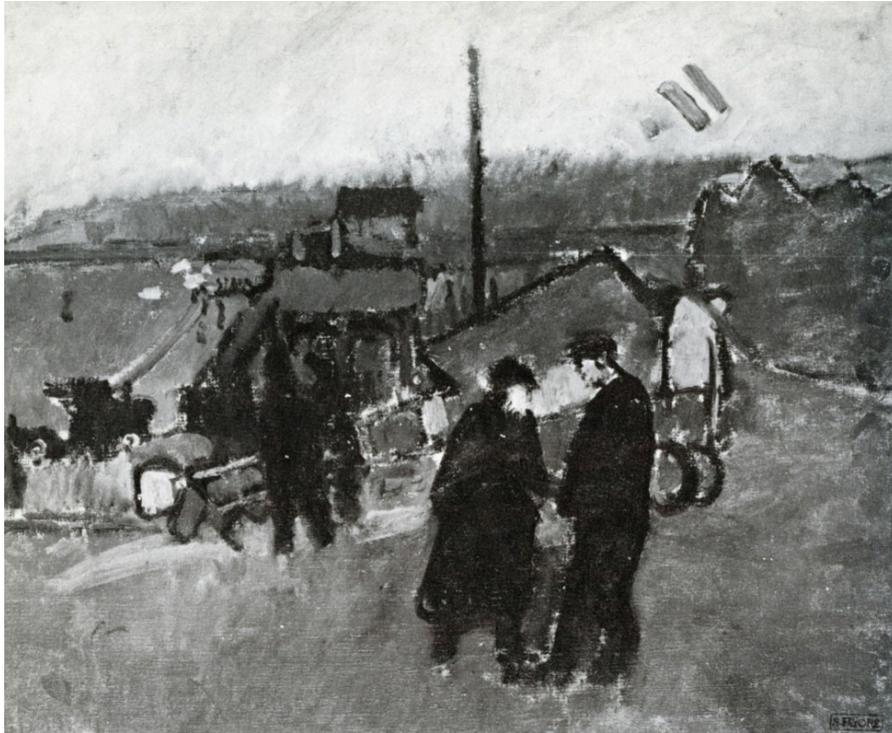
Going up in a plane could also mean acquiring significant cultural capital, particularly important not just for the wealthy, but also anybody whose artistic relevance depended on their being up to date. The masses stood on the ground and watched, but the elite flew. Pierpaolo Antonello expands on this distinction: "the experience of flight had a divine connotation because it was a new form of aristocratic experience, which was also one of the reasons for its poetic and artistic appeal. It is a symbolic and actual form of elevation.

The mechanical vehicle is a motif which re-inserts a form of symbolic hierarchization within the increasing level of social indifferenciation of mass society.”<sup>37</sup> Marinetti had first flown at a meeting in Brescia in 1909, but his brief experience had been rather eclipsed by Gabriele D’Annunzio’s eight-minute flight with the famous American pilot Glenn Curtiss.<sup>38</sup> Part of the purpose of the opening of “The Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature” was to document the flight “two hundred meters above the mighty chimney stacks of Milan” that Marinetti had taken the following year with Giovanni Bielovucic, which firmly established him as part of this aristocracy of flight.<sup>39</sup>

One painter who certainly took a flight was the Camden Town Group’s Spencer Gore. He visited Hendon in the weeks immediately following the opening of the nightclub The Cave of the Golden Calf, for which he and Lewis, amongst others, had collaborated to produce the interiors. The pair were old friends, having been contemporaries at the Slade School of Fine Art at the turn of the century, after which they travelled to Spain together. Gore was also the guiding spirit behind the exhibition at Brighton for which Lewis wrote the “The Cubist Room” essay. As his son, Frederick Gore, and art historian Richard Shone recount:

Gore and a number of other painters attended the Hendon Flying Meeting of probably 6<sup>th</sup> July 1912. The Gores made up a party with Albert Rutherston and a lady friend and, since they had to meet together at dawn for the trip, they dined and stayed the night at L’Etoile, the restaurant in Charlotte Street. They all went up in a Bleriot monoplane. Mrs Gore related that [Harold] Gilman, who was also there, had been driving his friends mad with his obsession that they should emigrate to the South Seas (financed by Arthur Clifton). When he went up in a German pilot’s plane and came down with a frightful bump, they all cheered.<sup>40</sup>

It would be fascinating to learn if there were other painters there in addition to Gore, Rutherston and Gilman, but Gore did leave a tangible record of the day, his *Flying at Hendon* of 1912 (fig. 4). In the peculiarly static picture two figures engage in conversation before a monoplane, which is the object of some curiosity on the part of a few onlookers. Further down the slope is the judges’ tower at the airfield, while a biplane arcs away from the landing area at the top right. As Simon Watney has written of this work, Gore, unlike the Vorticists, “showed no interest in an ideology of modernity for its own sake. . . His airmen are wealthy amateurs at their chosen pastime, and as such may be related to the conventional genre of Sporting Art rather than to a fiery intoxication with machine technology per se.”<sup>41</sup>



**Figure 4.**

Spencer Gore, *Flying at Hendon*, 1912, oil on canvas, 50 × 60 cm.  
Location unknown.

### ***A Short Flight Reconsidered***

These many links to Hendon amongst the Vorticists and their extended milieu invite a rereading of *A Short Flight*. Possibly painted as a riposte to Gore's work, the most powerful analysis of the work, one to which I have previously subscribed, has been produced by David Peters Corbett.<sup>42</sup> In Corbett's reading, *A Short Flight* depicted the individual reduced to a slave, making the painting an exemplary product of a technologically sceptical Vorticism defining itself in opposition to Futurism's technophilia, a distinction sanctioned by Lewis's writing in *Blast* and echoed in much of the secondary literature, as discussed above. Although I will challenge some of his conclusions, Corbett's account of attempting to read the painting is so useful that I reproduce his argument in full:

In the surviving photograph, at least, the surface of the painting seems divided into an irregular pattern, describing smoothly inhuman shapes with little sense of either mimesis or figure on ground. Clearly visible are simplified versions of mechanical forms reminiscent of compass, T-Square, and ruler, as well as, more faintly, industrial forms and objects. But there seems nothing

precise enough to identify with any certainty.

When we look more closely at the image, however, we begin to see that it is not without representational elements and that, like many Vorticist works, *A Short Flight* adopts a bird's-eye perspective, straight down onto the object beneath, so that the subject matter of the image becomes a schematic plan or map of itself. In this case, the view is down from the airborne plane onto the angular shapes of fields most clearly visible at top and top right. In the center of the painting, the flight, described by both mechanical forms and by the arrowhead shape of the prow, forces its way across the landscape below. There is no sign of a pilot unless we read the T-square shape as a sitting figure. That absence points toward a central plank of Vorticism's understanding of modern experience. *A Short Flight* presents a summary of the Vorticists' preoccupations with the industrialization of the 'island' and of the place of the individual subject within it. The absence of the pilot figures the Vorticist diagnosis of the reduction of the individual to an industrial helot, functioning—and hence understandable—only within the context of the mechanical world of modernity in which he or she subsists.

43

There is no doubt that *A Short Flight* is a recalcitrant painting, resistant to attempts to reconcile its many elements. In his review of the work when it was shown at the Allied Artists', fellow Vorticist Henri Gaudier-Brzeska thought it "a composition of cool tones marvellously embodied in revolving surfaces and masses", perhaps indicating that Wadsworth's use of colour helped those who saw the painting exhibited to decipher it, although Gaudier's brief comment hardly establishes this with any certainty.<sup>44</sup>

Corbett's closing thought—that the individual is reduced to a helot within the mechanical world of modernity—recalls the lines immediately following "Man with an aeroplane is still merely a bad bird" in Lewis's "The Cubist Room": "But a man who passes his days within the rigid lines of houses, a plague of cheap ornamentation, noisy street locomotion, the Bedlam of the press, will evidently possess a different habit of vision to a man living amongst the lines of a landscape."<sup>45</sup> This is a rather more neutral, matter-of-fact statement than a claim that the individual is reduced to a serf governed by the mechanical as a result; indeed Lewis is using it as a justification for the semi-abstract paintings he and his confrères (Wadsworth included) were producing, where there is a "realisation of the value of colour and form as such independently of what recognisable form it covers or encloses".<sup>46</sup> The

placement of the photograph of *A Short Flight* only a few pages from the Blessing of Hucks, Salmét, Grahame-White, and Hamel, along with *Blast*'s claim that "The artist of the modern movement is a savage (in no sense an 'advanced', perfected, democratic, Futurist individual of Mr. Marinetti's limited imagination): this enormous, jangling, journalistic, fairy desert of modern life serves him as Nature did more technically primitive man", should makes us question the diagnosis of the individual as impoverished by mechanization.<sup>47</sup> *Blast* goes on to claim that "Machinery is the greatest Earth-medium: incidentally it sweeps away the doctrines of a narrow and pedantic Realism at one stroke."<sup>48</sup> Modern, urban life and machinery provides subjects for the artists, removing the need for accurate representational painting and opening up the vistas of the abstract, an invitation, as Lewis put it in "The Cubist Room", to people "to change entirely their idea of the painter's mission, and penetrate, deferentially, with him into a transposed universe as abstract as, though different from, the musicians [*sic*]."<sup>49</sup>

This is not to say that all that has been written about Vorticist scepticism over the beneficial effects of modernity is wrong, that Lewis's *The Crowd* is not opposed to Marinetti's ideas, but it is to suggest that *A Short Flight* is more celebratory than Corbett allows, which is in line with Wadsworth in particular. Jonathan Black describes his works at this point as "less robust than those of Lewis yet more elegantly decorative, lighter in colour and more multi-layered, with a greater variety of perspectival viewpoints and spatial levels suggested by the designs. . . . Lewis's designs are somehow predicated on the sapping of energy and destruction while Wadsworth's vision is rather more benign and optimistic."<sup>50</sup> For Black, "The metallic flanks of Lewis's designs were impressive but also rather repellent and sinister whereas Wadsworth conjured a future machine whose sides one wanted to stroke while listening to the reassuring constant hum of energy within."<sup>51</sup> Nowhere would that hum be more reassuring than whilst suspended in the air, exposed to the elements in the centre of a wooden and canvas framework.

## **Flight as a Theme for Robert Delaunay**

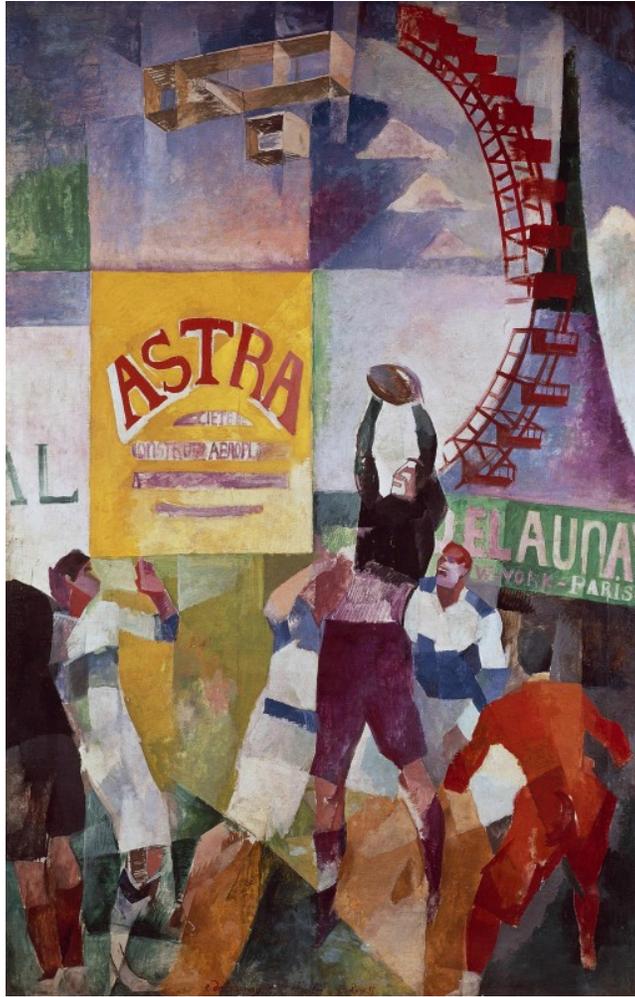
There were precedents for Wadsworth's treatment of this subject matter: although formally different to Vorticist work, Robert Delaunay had produced several notable paintings featuring aeroplanes. His submission to the 1914 Salon des Indépendants was unambiguously laudatory, titled as it was *L'Hommage à Blériot* (fig. 5). Robert Wohl records that the Delaunays had paid close attention to Blériot's pioneering cross-Channel flight in 1909,

and had been on the streets to welcome him home, Robert also writing him a letter of congratulation.<sup>52</sup> Here too, the pilot himself is not represented, but Delaunay wrote a dedication across the bottom of the painting “to the great builder Blériot”, a factor Wohl believes invites the viewer to celebrate Blériot as “the inventive industrialist, symbol of collective human effort, who through his ingenuity made it possible for other men to fly” (in addition to his flying schools mentioned above, Blériot was a successful manufacturer of aeroplanes, as I discuss below).<sup>53</sup>



**Figure 5.**

Robert Delaunay, *Homage to Blériot*, 1914, tempera on canvas, 250 × 251 cm. Collection of Kunstmuseum, Basel. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images



**Figure 6.**

Robert Delaunay, *The Cardiff Team (Third Representation)*, 1912-13, oil on canvas, 32.6 × 20.8 cm. Collection of Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images

It is uncertain how aware the proto-Vorticists were of this latest work by Delaunay. One of their number, Frederick Etchells, was in Paris over the spring and so almost certainly would have seen the work in person and, at two-and-a-half metres square, the painting was difficult to miss. But there was no doubt that they were familiar with another of Delaunay's works. The upper right portion of *L'Hommage à Blériot* shows an aeroplane flying over the Eiffel Tower. As Wohl identifies this as a Voisin biplane, it has little to do with Blériot, who flew and manufactured monoplanes, and everything to do with Delaunay's entry to the Indépendants of the previous year, *The Cardiff Team (Third Representation)*, a painting praised by Guillaume Apollinaire as "the most modern picture in the Salon" (fig. 6).<sup>54</sup> Above the heads of the rugby players, a biplane flies next to a schematic representation of the Eiffel

Tower. The work contains a further reference to aircraft, as the bright yellow poster advertises Astra, the company which held the French licence to manufacture Wright flyers.<sup>55</sup>

Even if the English artists had not seen the version of *The Cardiff Team* at the Indépendants, or in reproduction, Delaunay had produced a sketchier “first representation” of the work (fig. 7) that already has all of these compositional elements and was shown at his one-man show in Berlin at the start of 1913. In October that year, Frank Rutter selected it for his *Post-Impressionist and Futurist* exhibition at the Doré Galleries. Although smaller than the Indépendants version, this painting was still nearly two metres tall and captured the attention of the London critics. *The Daily Sketch* called it “a cheery monstrosity, suggesting that a colour-blind bill sticker who was sent out on a half-acre job with posters advertising Blackpool for health, an assorted selection of brands of cocoa, and a flying race at Hendon, had got the sections mixed up in his bag and then put them on in the dark. A nice picture, but you probably couldn’t get a single housemaid who would be left alone in the house with it.”<sup>56</sup> Lewis and Wadsworth would definitely have seen this work, as both were also exhibiting alongside Delaunay. Had they asked for Marinetti’s opinion of it they would no doubt have received short shrift, for Delaunay was involved in a fierce argument with the Futurists over primacy, and the exhibition of the definitive version at the Indépendants had so angered Umberto Boccioni that he wrote an essay in response titled “The Futurists Plagiarized in France”.<sup>57</sup> If Delaunay’s work had antagonized the Italians to such an extent that they felt plagiarized, then a further painting, one that offered a visual equivalent to the experience of flight, was bound to antagonize them still further, especially given the absence of Futurist artistic work that explicitly depicted the aeroplane.



**Figure 7.**

Robert Delaunay, *The Cardiff Team (First Representation)*, 1912–13, oil on canvas, 195 × 130 cm. Collection of Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images

If anything, Futurism seemed to be moving further away from technological themes. In April 1914, the same month that well over 100,000 people attended Hendon, the Futurists returned to London with a group exhibition at the Doré Galleries. Even at this stage there were no works dealing with aviation and precious few that had explicitly mechanical titles. Giacomo Balla showed *Dynamic Decomposition of a Motor in Rapid Movement* and Luigi Russolo his *Dynamism of an Automobile*. But these were far outweighed by the number of pictures by Gino Severini on dance, Carlo Carrà's works on the female body and the still lifes of more recent recruit Ardengo Soffici. Lewis saw this as an acknowledgement that machinic fascinations were a dead end. After their abandonment, most of the Futurists "seem to have become quite conventional and dull Cubists, with nothing left of their still duller Automobilmism but letters and bits of newspaper stuck all over the place".<sup>58</sup>

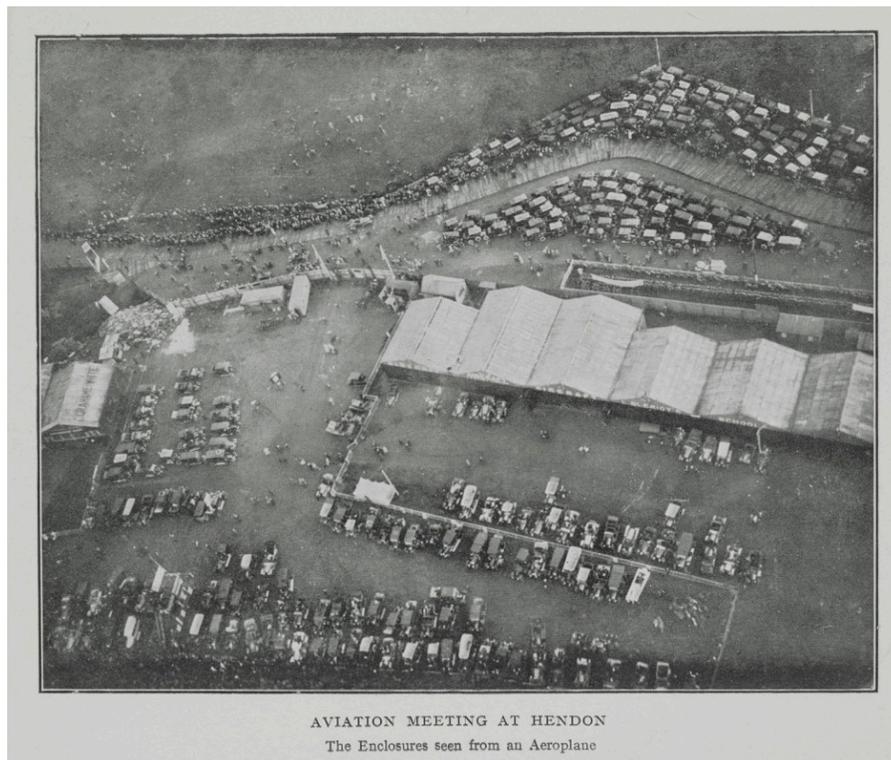
Wadsworth, on the other hand, seems to have taken a different view. The Futurist exhibition almost certainly coincided with the period when *A Short Flight* was produced, and he perhaps sensed an opportunity now that the Futurists had apparently given up technological themes. In other words, where Lewis claimed to be bored by Marinetti's technological enthusiasms and saw in the painters' desertion of mechanical subjects a confirmation that their novelty had worn off, Wadsworth instead saw the gap between Marinetti's rhetoric and the production of the painters as an opportunity to trump the Italians in the field of representations of machinery. For Paige Reynolds, "The Vorticists had mastered the art publicity tactics of Marinetti and used them to distinguish themselves from Futurism and assert that a new English brand of the avant-garde had replaced the original, imported product."<sup>59</sup> *A Short Flight* might well have been produced as part of that campaign. Moreover, in terms of spectacle—if not technology—Hendon was in a position to rival, if not displace, anything in mainland Europe as a centre for aviation. In contrast to Reynolds, Lawrence Rainey, referring to the "imitative gesture of *Blast*", concludes that this attempt simultaneously to distinguish themselves from the Futurists and to fight them on their own terms was doomed to failure, but *A Short Flight* belongs to the period when this seemed to be the most urgent task of the proto-Vorticists.<sup>60</sup>

### **Hendon as the Subject of *A Short Flight***

Taken together, *Blast*'s blessing of pilots, its comments on machinery as an inspiration for the painter, Wadsworth's "benign and optimistic" designs, and the precedent of a major continental, non-Futurist artist producing a stream of works featuring aviation as a subject, means that *A Short Flight* can be viewed as hailing the modern, urban, and commercial spectacle of flight as entertainment, rather than dealing with the deleterious consequences of mechanization. But I want to go further than this and suggest that the painting is actually a depiction of Hendon.

Corbett's description of the painting does a lot of work in identifying its objects. The wings of the plane run from lower left to centre right of the work, with the fuselage running perpendicular to this towards the bottom right of the canvas. It is indeed a bird's-eye perspective, and I agree with his reading of many of the geometric forms towards the top of the work as fields. There are, however, other forms that are more difficult to be certain about. It is unlikely that Wadsworth worked from aerial photographs "regularly illustrated in specialist journals like *Flight*", as Richard Cork suggests.<sup>61</sup> There were, in fact, few such photographs in *Flight* during the first half of 1914 and the only contemporary aerial photograph of part of the aerodrome I have found comes in Hamel's posthumously published book, *Flying* (fig. 8). But an aerial photograph of the site from 1919 (fig. 9) shows features that

are possibly recognizable in Wadsworth's painting. For example, three large, dark buildings roughly correspond to three dark masses that arrange themselves around the semi-circular form in the painting's centre, with two grouped together and the third a short distance away. If Wadsworth was sketching at ground level, then some discrepancies in placement become easily explicable. The concertinaed form at centre left (which itself resembles a paper aeroplane) could represent in short perspective the serried rows of workshops and hangars that make up the majority of the buildings in both photographs. Certainly this mixture of fields and buildings seems more likely to describe the suburban jumble of the airfield than a location in the country. The grandstands and refreshment rooms are all missing in the later photograph of course, victims of the site's co-option for military purposes during the First World War. The races at Hendon before that had involved the pilots negotiating a series of pylons on the ground (fig. 10). Viewed from above these might account for some more of the clutter, possibly including the small incomplete circle at top right.

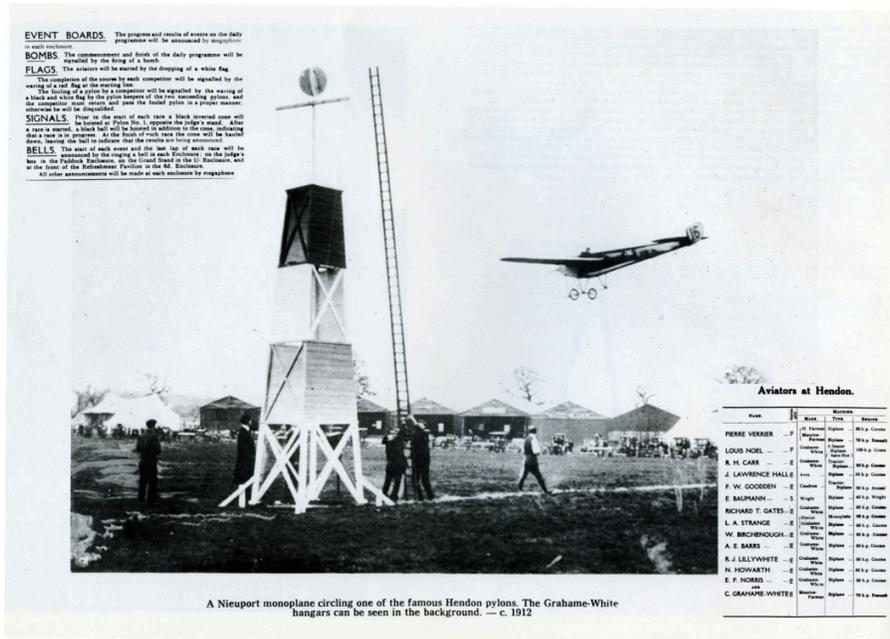


**Figure 8.**

Gustav Hamel and Charles, Aviation Meeting at Hendon, circa 1914, photograph in *Flying* by Gustav Hamel and Charles C. Turner (London: Longmans, 1914)



**Figure 9.**  
Aerodrome and Works, Hendon, 26 July 1919, Digital image courtesy of Historic England



**Figure 10.**  
Clive R. Smith, A race at Hendon showing a pylon surmounted by a ball, indicating that the race is in progress, circa 1912, photograph in *Flying at Hendon: A Pictorial Record* by Clive R. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974)

Returning to the aircraft itself, it is evidently a monoplane. Corbett refers to its prow, by which I assume he means the triangular shapes that jut out from the forms of the wings. No planes at this time had a pointed front, but monoplanes, including the Blériot and Morane-Saulnier machines that Hamel flew ([fig. 11](#)), had a metal superstructure known as a *cabane* above the pilot's head that held tensed wires that radiated out to the wings to brace them. Allowing for the multiple perspectival views mentioned by Black, this is the most plausible explanation for this form, since a viewpoint above and behind the plane made the *cabane* appear to project out in front of the aircraft. Hamel's plane for his royal performance also had discs painted on its wings ([fig. 12](#)) and this could account for some of the proliferation of circular forms, as could the appearance of these forms in Delaunay's *L'Hommage à Blériot*. Multiple perspectives could also explain the large, pale semi-circle that dominates the centre of the work. This is evidently shaded and suggests the whirring form of the propeller. Andrew Wilson has written of *A Short Flight's* "external/ internal viewpoint" and this raises the possibility that the pilot is not absent, but that the viewer is asked to assume that role, seeing the ground through the blurred form of the propeller, or seeing the first plane through the propeller of a second from which it is painted.<sup>62</sup> Either reading would not reject Futurism so much as fulfil one of its most celebrated statements, to "make the spectator live in the centre of the picture", putting them in the position of pilot or passenger.<sup>63</sup> A further possibility, not incompatible if we accept multiple viewpoints, is suggested by the two near circles appearing near the fuselage, the lower one cut off by the bottom of the canvas and the other just to the right of the fuselage and touching the wing. Joined by a line, this resembles nothing so much as the undercarriage of the plane, raising the possibility that the absence of the pilot reflects not so much the individual's reduction to an industrial helot, but rather the popularity of upside-down flying at Hendon, and that what we are looking at is actually the bottom of the plane.

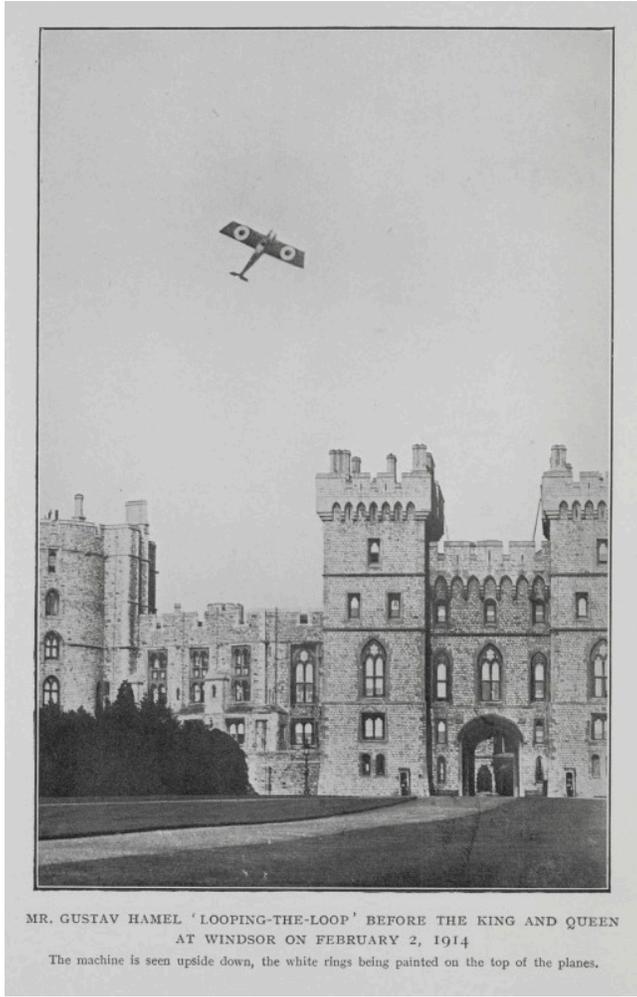
The implied presence of a second aircraft from which this view is painted was also a commonplace in commercial illustrations of flight at this point, both in London and in Europe. Cyrus Cuneo produced a poster for London Transport that used this device ([fig. 13](#)). Cuneo's picture, captioned "A Monoplane Passenger Flight at the London Aerodrome Hendon: An artist's impression as seen from a thousand feet high", sums up Hendon as a "modern rendezvous". The pilot is hunched over the controls of his Blériot beneath the *cabane* with its network of tensed wires. On the ground below figures cluster around one of the racing pylons, more planes wait on the airfield, behind which are the crowds and a row of buildings with pitched roofs, and beyond them open fields. A female passenger, perhaps one of the society ladies who frequented Hendon, raises her handkerchief in acknowledgement of the artist. It might even be Miss Trehawke Davies, who had accompanied Hamel on one of his cross-Channel voyages and who, on 2 January 1914, became

the first woman to loop the loop when she was Hamel's passenger at Hendon, earning a full-page photograph in *Flight*, which was accordingly compelled to reduce its usual heading "Men of Moment in the World of Flight" by dropping the first word. <sup>64</sup>



**Figure 11.**

Gustav Hamel at Radnorshire, Knighton, with a monoplane showing the *cabane* holding tensed wires above the cockpit, 29 August 1913 Digital image courtesy of oldukphotos.com



**Figure 12.**

Gustav Hamel Looping the Loop at Windsor, 2 February 1914, with white rings painted on the tops of the wings, photograph in *Flying* by Gustav Hamel and Charles C. Turner (London: Longmans, 1914)



**Figure 13.**  
 Cyrus Cuneo, *Flying at Hendon*, Poster for London Transport, 1914, colour lithograph, 102 × 64 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of Bridgeman Images

As Trehawke Davies's experience demonstrates, flying at Hendon was spectacular, up to date, and daring, but it was actually, by the standards of the day, reasonably safe. It had to be in order to take up fee-paying members of the public, let alone loop the loop with them, especially in an era without parachutes. An article in *Flight* at the end of January 1914 records the death of pilot George Lee Temple, but points out that this was the first fatality at the weekend meetings and only the third since the airfield had opened, remarkable considering the number of novice pilots being trained at the flying schools.<sup>65</sup> There was no doubt that the possibility of a crash added a frisson to watching aeroplanes. Five of the six colour illustrations Cuneo produced for Grahame-White's book *With the Airmen* dealt with non-fatal crashes and their aftermath, with captions such as "A portion of the wall broke away, and all the lower part of the monoplane was crumpled up."<sup>66</sup>

But the overwhelming proportion of deaths amongst airmen came not at venues like Hendon, where flights were short, the weather could be assessed from the ground, and there were ample suitable places to land if a pilot got into difficulties. Rather, as in the case of Hamel's disappearance, they came on longer flights when the weather could close in, affecting either the machines, or the pilot's ability to see the ground and navigate. Although hardly a neutral view, Grahame-White's opinion was that "If a thoroughly competent man flies in suitable weather conditions, and on a perfectly reliable machine, he is certainly in no more danger than if he were steering a motor-car along a road." <sup>67</sup> Catastrophic machine failure or pilot error could not be ruled out, but the reasonably good safety record at Hendon means that if it is the setting for Wadsworth's *A Short Flight*, we should resist the temptation to connect the work either to the high number of fatalities amongst aviation's earliest pioneers a decade or so beforehand, or to the still greater numbers of pilots killed in the First World War. Flying at Hendon was, for the most part, thrilling rather than dangerous.

My final reason for believing that *A Short Flight* is a painting of Hendon is based on its title, which I suspect is connected to the passenger flights at Hendon. Grahame-White presented these as altruistic learning opportunities, although "Seeing that the airman risks a very valuable machine every time he makes an ascent, it is natural that fairly high prices should be charged for these passenger flights. . . . People who are keen to find out by practical experience exactly what flying is like, do not make any demur about paying these prices. They recognize the heavy expenses to which the aviator is put." <sup>68</sup> An ultra-modern administrative system governed the booking of tickets:

At Hendon, for example, we have a telephone on the flying ground which is connected directly with the offices of some well-known booking agents in the West-end of London. When anyone wants to enjoy the thrill of an aerial voyage, they ring up on the telephone, and book a flight for any specified hour on any given day. Then, when the day comes round, they make a telephone inquiry to find out if the weather is favourable and—if it is—come down, without any waiting about, to enjoy their flight. <sup>69</sup>

"When the weather is fine, indeed", Grahame-White concluded, "we are often busy at Hendon carrying passengers all day long. When the conditions have been particularly good, we have taken up as many as two hundred people in one week." <sup>70</sup>

In fact, as this sophisticated system indicates, passenger flights were lucrative business. A complicated pricing structure developed, in which two guineas bought a couple of circuits of the aerodrome, and three guineas bought two higher and wider circuits. A double flight was four standard circuits and cost four guineas and a “Special Flight”, “Outside the aerodrome, in the direction of Edgware, returning towards the Welsh Harp [a local reservoir]”, was five guineas. Flying in a monoplane, rather than a biplane, started at three guineas. As, according to Grahame-White himself, the cost of buying a new monoplane was less than the cost of buying a new biplane, the attempt that he makes to link this pricing structure to the replacement value of an aeroplane is spurious.<sup>71</sup> Cross-country flights, starting at ten guineas for the sixteen miles to Elstree and back and rising to £26 5s. for a thirty-eight-mile return trip to the motor-racing circuit and occasional flying venue of Brooklands, could also be booked, along with a fifteen-shilling-per-mile charge for bespoke trips, rising to twenty shillings per mile if the passenger did not want to return to Hendon.

What is being sold here, on a sliding scale, is the experience of flight. As discussed above, this was expensive, even if only a short flight was purchased. In an earlier book Grahame-White had described how the first passengers in aeroplanes had been unable to conjure up anything verbally adequate to summarize their experience, having been reduced to uttering “it was great”, “it’s absolutely ripping”, and, most reductively, “You just fly.”<sup>72</sup> It would be naive to believe that this experience equated to pure affect, and, by the same token, it would also be naive not to recognize that such an experience could be exploited in commercial terms, with the consequence that such an experience was also subject to a law of diminishing returns as flight became, if only fractionally, more ordinary. The multiple price points and differing lengths of flight reflect a commodification of flight, of affect, that was bound to end even without the War.<sup>73</sup> Although leaving the ground was still the crucial moment in the social hierarchy, there were obviously ways in which it was not enough for some, who wanted to pay more to fly for longer or further. Marinetti himself falls into this category, with his initial short flight at Brescia in 1909 all but superseded by his flight over Milan with Bielovucic the following year.

There is a perception that Wadsworth was affluent by this point. Brigid Peppin, for example, writes that “Unlike many of the Vorticists, Wadsworth was financially well off.”<sup>74</sup> This certainly was the case later on, when Wadsworth received a very substantial inheritance that allowed him to indulge a taste for the most expensive and luxurious marques of car, but in 1914 he and his wife were still reliant on his parents’ allowance, which often, according to Barbara Wadsworth, required household economies in order to make it stretch to the end of the quarter.<sup>75</sup> Under such circumstances, if

Wadsworth did purchase a flight, it was almost guaranteed to be a short one.<sup>76</sup> A two-guinea couple of laps of the aerodrome ride was priced as a “Passenger Flight”, but as all the options were passenger flights, this certainly gives a lot of scope for the word “passenger” to be replaced by the word “short”. It is clear that anyone picking up the telephone at Hendon and speaking to a booking agency and asking for a “passenger flight” would quickly have to find a way to differentiate what duration of flight they wanted. The phrase “a short flight” occurs only intermittently in *Flight’s* accounts of Hendon, which for the most part did not concern itself with the financial aspect of the venture, but it is easy to see how “a short flight” in more general usage might have taken on the connotation of any flight that confined itself to the aerodrome and was relatively brief.

## Conclusion

Hendon was at the centre of British aviation in the first half of 1914, and any painting displayed by a British artist in London at the end of that period would be bound to evoke the location in the mind of the viewer. It might be that Wadsworth himself had flown, although only circumstantial evidence suggests this. Other than the painting itself, there is Wadsworth’s later enthusiasm for top-of-the-range automobiles, and the inclusion of the names of four prominent aviators among the list of those Blessed in *Blast*. Whether or not Wadsworth or any of the other Vorticists had flown, these names would have been at least as familiar to readers of *Blast* as those drawn from music halls or sport. As Andrew Horrall has demonstrated, flight was very much part of the continuum of popular culture in London.<sup>77</sup>

An artistic fascination with flight was also associated with Italian Futurism, thanks mainly to Marinetti’s “Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature”. In order to do the necessary work of differentiating Futurism and Vorticism, it is also necessary to acknowledge that the English artists took time to produce a position from which to comment critically on the Italian movement. As Lisa Tickner has written, “local modernisms are different, despite their debts, because there are local inflections to the web of relations that makes up the cultural field.”<sup>78</sup> There was a growing sense amongst the English artists that they were doing something different, although it is worth remembering that *A Short Flight* was not produced as an avowedly Vorticist work, for the simple reason that the term was only used for the first time on the very day that the painting went on display, when the Vorticists disrupted a lecture by Marinetti. But this route to Vorticism was not a straight path and individual Vorticists did not march in union towards a common viewpoint.

Vorticism's particular web of relations included the example of Marinetti and the concomitant dual necessities of following his lead as an avant-garde impresario while differentiating Vorticism from the Italian movement. Partly this could be done by an insistence on British precedence and primacy in industrialization and technology. But such an argument miscarried when it came to aviation. Faced with this, Lewis dismissed the aeronautical fascination of Marinetti (and, at least by implication, Delaunay) as "childish", "sentimental rubbish", and "gush". This sits uneasily, however, with the Blessing of the four pilots, one of whom is French, and another German-born, flying mainly French machines at Hendon. To read *A Short Flight* in terms that deny its mass cultural and spectacular aspects is to impute Lewis's views to Wadsworth, when there is scant evidence that he shared them. Rather, a second way of countering Marinetti was to insist on the rapid development of aviation as a spectacle in Britain. This opens up a reading of *A Short Flight* as marking a form of peculiarly modern, fashionable, spectacular, and commodified entertainment taking place in London, as less about the technology of flight and more about its consumption, whether that took place by going up with a pilot, watching from the ground, or simply following the exploits of the aviators in the press. All of these ways of following flight made celebrities of its leading performers, rather than figuring them as slaves to the machine. Wadsworth's paean to flight in London might also be a calculated response to Futurism, an affirmation of London generally and Hendon in particular, as a site of cosmopolitan, technologically fixated spectacle on a grand scale.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> F. T. Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Literature", in *Futurism: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi, and Laura Wittman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 119. An earlier version of this essay was presented as a paper at the *Historical Modernisms Symposium*, organized by Angeliki Spiropoulou at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, in December 2016. My thanks to those who listened and commented then.
- <sup>2</sup> Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto", 119. The manifesto is brilliantly analysed by Jeffrey T. Schnapp in "Propeller Talk", *Modernism/modernity* 1, no. 3 (1994): 153–78.
- <sup>3</sup> F. T. Marinetti, "Extended Man and the Kingdom of the Machine", in F. T. Marinetti, *Critical Writings*, ed. Günter Berghaus, trans. Doug Thompson (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 86 (perhaps still better known by the title of its earlier translation, "Multiplied Man and the Reign of the Machine").
- <sup>4</sup> See Flavio Fergonzi and Lewis Kachur's entry for *Patriotic Festival* in *The Mattioli Collection: Masterpieces of the Italian Avant-Garde, A Catalogue Raisonné*, ed. Fergonzi (Milan: Skira, 2003), 205–15 for the work; 208 for the date of its composition.
- <sup>5</sup> The work was included in the Allied Artists' Association exhibition, which opened on 12 June 1914. Wadsworth appended his name to the "Manifesto" in *Blast* 1 (20 June 1914): 43. The issue is dated 20 June, but appeared on 2 July 1914. See Mark S. Morrison, *The Public Face of Modernism: Little Magazines, Audiences, and Reception* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 117.
- <sup>6</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "The Cubist Room", *The Egoist* 1 (1 Jan. 1914): 9.
- <sup>7</sup> Barbara Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth: A Painter's Life* (Salisbury: Michael Russell, 1989), 42.
- <sup>8</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Wyndham Lewis's *Timon*: The War of Forms", in *Vorticism: New Perspectives*, ed. Mark Antliff and Scott W. Klein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 15.
- <sup>9</sup> David Peters Corbett, *The World in Paint: Modern Art and Visuality in England, 1848–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 237.
- <sup>10</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "Long Live the Vortex!", *Blast* 1, 8.
- <sup>11</sup> Wyndham Lewis, "The Melodrama of Modernity", *Blast* 1, 144.

- 12 Wyndham Lewis, "Manifesto", *Blast* 1, 41, and Wyndham Lewis, "Automobilism", reprinted in *Creatures of Habit and Creatures of Change: Essays on Art, Literature and Society, 1914-1956*, ed. Paul Edwards (Santa Rosa, CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1989), 33.
- 13 Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
- 14 Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
- 15 Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), 115.
- 16 Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, 131.
- 17 David Wragg, "Wyndham Lewis and the Visions of Modernity", in *The Great London Vortex: Modernist Literature and Art*, ed. Paul Edwards (Bath: Sulis Press, 2003), 159, note 90.
- 18 Giovanni Cianci, "The Centrality of the City", in *The Great London Vortex*, ed. Edwards, 18.
- 19 Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 157.
- 20 Wyndham Lewis, ed., *Blast* 1, 23-24.
- 21 Lewis, "Automobilism", 33.
- 22 Andrew Horrall, *Popular Culture in London, c. 1890-1918: The Transformation of Entertainment* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 84.
- 23 Clive R. Smith, *Flying at Hendon: A Pictorial Record* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 5. Converting historic values into present-day equivalents is always difficult, but the Bank of England's Inflation Calculator makes £11,000 in 1914 worth £1,164,765.31 in 2016. See <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/resources/inflationtools/calculator/default.aspx>
- 24 David Oliver, *Hendon Aerodrome: A History* (Shrewsbury: Airlife, 1994), 18, 20.
- 25 "Easter Aviation at Hendon: Some Fine Flying", *Western Daily Press*, Tuesday 14 April 1914, 8. As I argue in my forthcoming "'BLAST SPORT'? Vorticism, Sport, and William Roberts's *Boxers*", *Modernism/modernity* 24, no. 2 (April 2017), based on the careers of the boxers who are Blessed, the meeting to determine which names to include in *Blast*'s lists is highly unlikely to have predated April 1914.
- 26 *The Play Pictorial*, May 1914, quoted in Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 2.
- 27 *Flight*, May 1914, quoted in Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 2.
- 28 Horrall, *Popular Culture in London*, 97.
- 29 "Flying at Hendon: The Seventh London Aviation Meeting", *Flight*, 18 April 1914, 411.
- 30 Smith, *Flying at Hendon*, 10.
- 31 "Gustav Hamel's Career: A Wonderful Air Record, A Brilliant Pilot", *New Zealand Herald*, 11 July 1914, Supplement, 2.
- 32 Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 51.
- 33 For Lewis's work on the project, see Richard Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 177-90, where he also speculates that Lewis might have had an affair with the Countess.
- 34 "Society Ladies and Aviation", *Birmingham Mail*, Monday 12 January 1914, 7.
- 35 Lawrence Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism: Literary Elites and Public Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 16.
- 36 "His Simple System: The Young Man Who Fools Society", *Western Mail*, 11 March 1914, 6.
- 37 Pierpaolo Antonello, "On an Airfield in Montichiari, near Brescia. Staging Rivalry Through Technology: Marinetti and d'Annunzio", *Stanford Humanities Review* 7, no. 1 (Summer 1999): 93.
- 38 Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 156.
- 39 Marinetti, "Technical Manifesto", 107. See also Schnapp, "Propeller Talk", 158.
- 40 Frederick Gore and Richard Shone, *Spencer Frederick Gore, 1878-1914*, exh. cat. (London: Anthony d'Offay, 1983), n.p. Rutherford, who at that time would have been known as Rothenstein, was a close friend of Wadsworth and also involved with The Cave of the Golden Calf. It is likely that the pilot referred to is Hamel, who was born in Germany.
- 41 Simon Watney, *English Post-Impressionism* (London: Studio Vista, 1980), 140.
- 42 For my use of Corbett's argument, see Bernard Vere, "Oversights in Overseeing Modernism: A Symptomatic Reading of Alfred H. Barr Jr's 'Cubism and Abstract Art' Chart", *Textual Practice* 24, no. 2 (2010): 273-74.
- 43 Corbett, *World in Paint*, 236-37.
- 44 Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, "Allied Artists' Association Ltd.", *The Egoist* 1 (15 June 1914): 228.
- 45 Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
- 46 Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
- 47 Lewis, "Manifesto", 33.
- 48 Lewis, "Manifesto", 39.

- 49 Lewis, "Cubist Room", 9.
- 50 Jonathan Black, *Edward Wadsworth: Form, Feeling and Calculation: The Complete Paintings and Drawings* (London: Philip Wilson, 2005), 23.
- 51 Black, *Edward Wadsworth*, 23.
- 52 Robert Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1908-1918* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 193-94.
- 53 Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 194.
- 54 Guillaume Apollinaire, "Through the Salon des Independants", in *Apollinaire on Art: Essays and Reviews 1902-1918*, ed. LeRoy C. Breunig, trans. Susan Suleiman (Boston, MA: MFA Publications, 2001), 291.
- 55 Wohl, *A Passion for Wings*, 188.
- 56 "The Confetti School of Painting", *Daily Sketch*, 17 October 1913, 6, quoted in Anna Gruetzner Robins, *Modern Art in Britain, 1910-1914* (London: Merrell Holberton and Barbican Centre, 1997), 129.
- 57 Umberto Boccioni, "I futuristi plagiati in Francia", in *Archivi Del Futurismo*, ed. Maria Drudi Gambillo and Teresa Fiori, vol. 1 (Rome: Da Luca, 1958), 147-51.
- 58 Lewis, "Melodrama of Modernity", 144.
- 59 Paige Reynolds, "'Chaos Invading Concept': Blast as a Native Theory of Promotional Culture", *Twentieth Century Literature* 46, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 244.
- 60 Rainey, *Institutions of Modernism*, 39.
- 61 Cork, *Art Beyond the Gallery*, 196.
- 62 Andrew Wilson, "Rebels and Vorticists: 'Our Little Gang'", in *Blast: Vorticism, 1914-1918*, ed. Paul Edwards (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 37.
- 63 Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, "The Exhibitors to the Public", in *Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umbro Apollonio (Boston: MFA Publications, 2001), 47. The essay was originally published in the catalogue that accompanied the Futurist exhibition in London of 1912.
- 64 "Of Moment in the World of Flight", *Flight*, 10 January 1914, 29.
- 65 "Flying at Hendon", *Flight*, 31 January 1914, 119.
- 66 Claude Grahame-White in collaboration with Harry Harper, *With the Airmen* (London: Henry Frowde Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 118.
- 67 Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 147.
- 68 Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225.
- 69 Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225.
- 70 Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 225-26.
- 71 Grahame-White, *With the Airmen*, 226.
- 72 Claude Grahame-White, *The Story of the Aeroplane* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1911), quoted in Antonello, "On an Airfield", 93.
- 73 To update this to the present day, no one apart from the airline's customer relations department would think to ask about your experience of flying and even they would be wrong-footed if the passenger's response was an awestruck "you just fly", rather than indifference or quibbles about the range of in-flight snacks.
- 74 Brigid Peppin, "The Thyssen 'Vorticist Composition': A New Attribution", *Burlington Magazine* 152, no. 1290 (September 2010): 591.
- 75 Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 45-46.
- 76 Richard Cork suggests that Wadsworth had flown. Barbara Wadsworth is more sceptical about this claim, but concedes "there can be no certain answer to this." Her argument that Wadsworth based his paintings with aerial viewpoints on "air-photographs" he had access to "during his service on the Paddington gun site" is easily dispelled in the case of *A Short Flight*, since Wadsworth only served there after war broke out in August 1914 (Wadsworth, *Edward Wadsworth*, 71).
- 77 Horrall, *Popular Culture in London*, 78-105.
- 78 Lisa Tickner, "English Modernism in the Cultural Field", in *English Art: Modern Artists and Identity*, ed. David Peters Corbett and Lara Perry (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 30.

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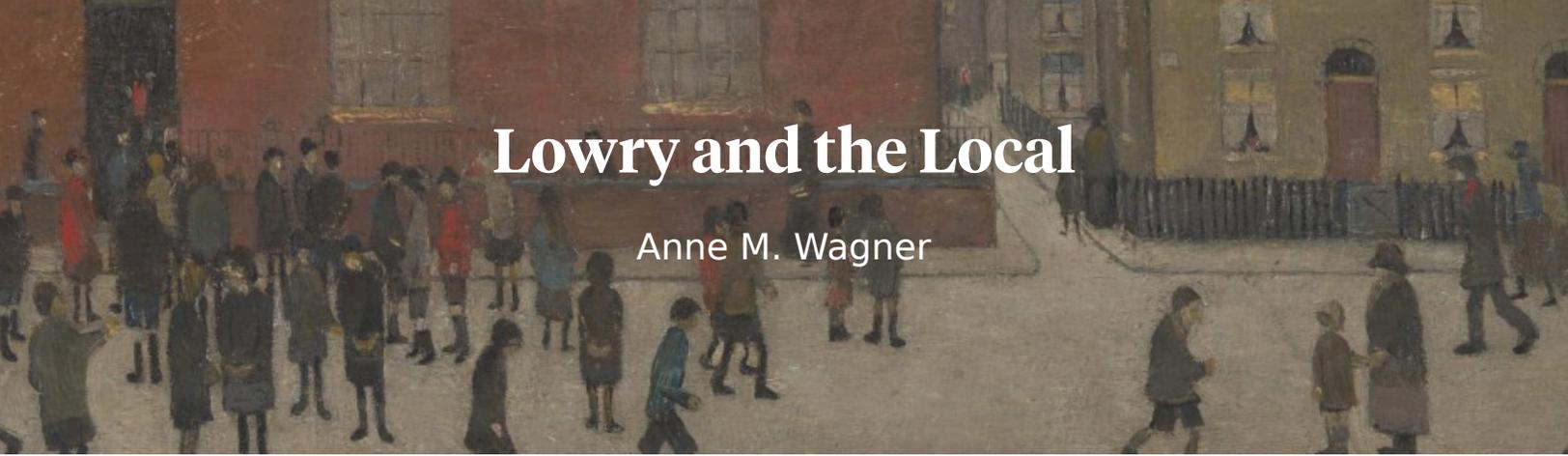
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# Lowry and the Local

Anne M. Wagner

## Abstract

*This essay concerns a group of drawings made and exhibited in 1930 by L. S. Lowry in Ancoats, then a notorious (and pictorially unpromising) Manchester slum. Though many are now lost, we know enough about those that survive to say something about the representational project they exemplify. What does it mean to draw a slum? Lowry, one of the few artists to take up this question, adopted a notably uninflected manner, descriptive, but not dramatic. His images depict, but do not preach, adopting a reserve that spoke to and of their local audience, the founders and patrons of the Manchester University Settlement. Hitherto unpublished documents establish this context, when studied alongside a wide range of other materials. These include contemporary maps and photographs, social and urban histories, and theories of drawing and knowledge.*

## Authors

Art Historian

## Acknowledgements

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## Cite as

Anne M. Wagner, "Lowry and the Local", *British Art Studies*, Issue 5, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-05/awagner>

## Locating the Local

At the heart of this essay is a discrete group of twenty-six urban landscape drawings by L. S. Lowry (1887–1976). All were made using pencil on white wove paper; all seem to share the same dimensions; all were briefly exhibited together in late March 1930, then promptly dispersed. Some—particularly those initially purchased by the exhibition’s invited viewers—are still known to us; the rest are now lost.<sup>1</sup> The selection of images directly below is a group of drawings that may have been part of the exhibition, based on their subject, medium, dimensions and style (figs. 1 – 14). Although our knowledge of the group is incomplete, we know more than enough about its history to suggest that it presents an exemplary instance in the aesthetic and social life of art. Taken together, the drawings summon an artist, Lowry; a time, the first years of the Great Depression; and a place, the worn-out working-class Manchester area of Ancoats, a place identified from the 1830s as a notorious slum.<sup>2</sup> By 1844, according to Friedrich Engels, it already contained “a vast number of ruinous houses, most of them being, in fact, in the last stages of inhabiteness”.<sup>3</sup> Hence Engels’s damning insistence that “no more injurious method of housing the workers has yet been discovered than precisely this.”<sup>4</sup>

TWENTY-SIX DRAWINGS OF  
ANCOATS

BY  
L. S. LOWRY.

EXHIBITED AT THE  
MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY SETTLEMENT,  
ANCOATS HALL, MANCHESTER.

March 25th and 26th, 1930.

- ✓ 1. Every Street Playground.
- ✓ 2. The Round House.
- 3. St. Mary's Church, Beswick.
- ✓ 4. Stony Brow.
- 5. Rochdale Canal Wharf.
- 6. Garden Place. No. 1.
- ✓ 7. Canal Scens.
- 8. Backwater.
- ✓ 9. Across the Medlock. No. 1.
- 10. Wesley Street. No. 1.
- 11. Crowther's Buildings, Pin Mill Brow. No. 1.
- ✓ 12. Johnson's Buildings.
- ✓ 13. Across the Medlock. No. 2.
- ✓ 14. The Lock House.
- 15. Limekiln Lane Railway Bridge.
- 16. Wesley Street. No. 2.
- 17. Garden Place. No. 2.
- ✓ 18. The Cliff, Palmerston Street.
- ✓ 19. Beswick Fair.
- ✗ 20. Old Houses, Great Ancoats Street. No. 1.
- 21. Crowther's Buildings, Pin Mill Brow. No. 2.
- ✓ 22. Playground, Holt Town.
- ✓ 23. Pollard Street.
- 24. Store Street. Canal Bridge.
- 25. Old Houses, Great Ancoats Street. No. 2.
- 26. Fairbain's Buildings, Store Street.

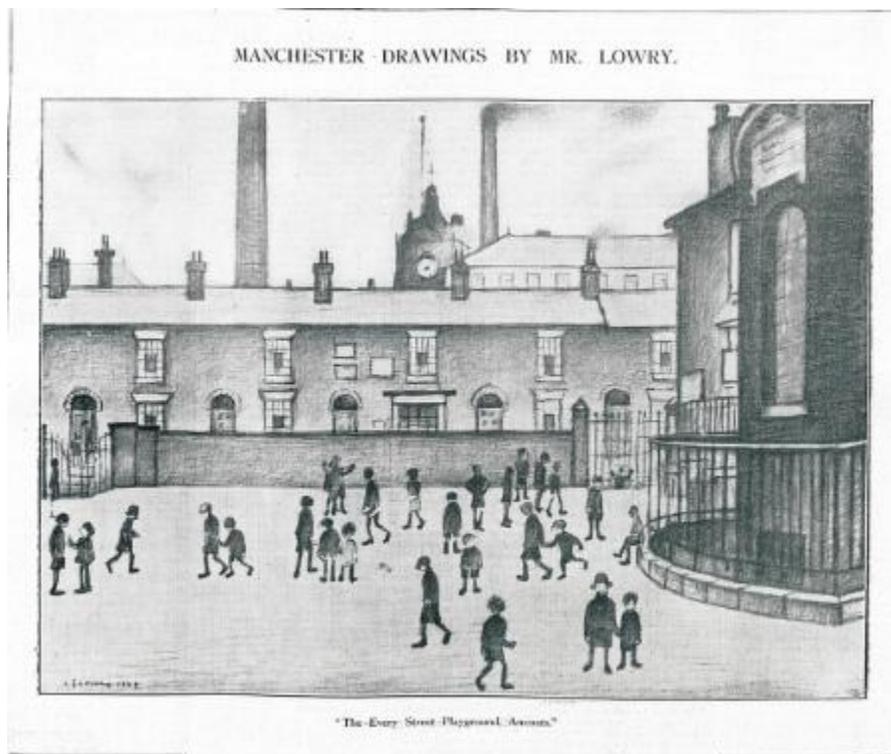
Drawings, framed, four guineas each.

Unframed, three and a half guineas.

[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 1.**

Photocopy of hand list of drawings included in, Twenty-Six Drawings of Ancoats, by L. S. Lowry exhibited at the Manchester University Settlement, Ancoats Hall, March 25-26, 1930. Collection of The Lowry. Location of original list unknown. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford



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**Figure 2.**

L. S. Lowry, *The Every Street Playground, Ancoats*, 1929, pencil on paper. Illustration published in *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1930, p. 9. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 3.**

L. S. Lowry, The Round House, Ancoats, 1929, pencil on paper, dimensions unknown. Collection of Manchester Settlement. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of Manchester Settlement/ The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 4.**

L. S. Lowry, *A Fairground*, 1929, pencil on paper, 27 x 37 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 5.**

L. S. Lowry, Ancoats, Manchester, 1929, pencil on paper, 27.9 x 38.1 cm. Collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 6.**

L. S. Lowry, Crowther's Buildings, Ancoats, Manchester, 1930, pencil on paper, 38 x 28 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 7.**

L. S. Lowry, Garden Place, Tutbury Street, Ancoats, Manchester, 1930, pencil on paper, 27 x 36.5 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 8.**

L. S. Lowry, Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, 1929, pencil on paper, 11.3 x 19.7 cm. Collection of The Lowry. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford



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**Figure 9.**

L. S. Lowry, Great Ancoats Street, Manchester, 1930, pencil on paper, 27.7 x 38.1 cm. Collection of The Lowry. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford



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**Figure 10.**

L. S. Lowry, Junction St, Stony Brow, Ancoats, Manchester, 1929, pencil on paper, 28 x 38.3 cm. Collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 11.**

L. S. Lowry, Palmerston Street, Manchester, 1930, pencil on paper, dimensions unknown. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017/Sotheby's, London



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**Figure 12.**

L. S. Lowry, Pollard Street, Ancoats, 1929, pencil on paper. Illustration published in *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1930, p. 9. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 13.**

L. S. Lowry, *The Viaduct, Store Street, Ancoats*, 1929, pencil on paper, 27.9 x 38.1 cm. Collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



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**Figure 14.**

L. S. Lowry, Canal and Mill Scene, 1929, pencil on paper, 28 x 37 cm. Collection of Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Lakeland Arts Trust, Kendal, Cumbria. Digital image courtesy of Abbot Hall Art Gallery, Lakeland Arts Trust, Kendal, Cumbria / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017

Ancoats was hardly a propitious site or subject, yet Lowry was asked not only to draw this dystopia, but also to do so with a local exhibition as his goal. As this essay shows, the works he made in response to that invitation are singularly laconic experiments in urban description. More than this, they redefine “description” in strikingly contextual terms. Already an accomplished draftsman, on this occasion Lowry produced a suite of drawings that paid scrupulous attention to setting down the main characteristics of a singularly ordinary urban place: *place*, meaning a recognizable location marked by distinct and identifiable features—a

definition to which we return.<sup>5</sup> Thanks to the efficiently predictable effects of perspective, the lineaments of his chosen locations are meant to be convincing, without being “interesting” in any familiar pictorial way.

The special qualities of the Ancoats drawings summon a mundane urbanism, a matter-of-factness, that seems to beg for a word of its own. I think enviously of *urbescape*, for example, which, not many decades later, the painter and printmaker Prunella Clough was to devise.<sup>6</sup> But for Clough such a landscape was by definition devastated: a post-nuclear world of cranes and cooling towers, held hostage by threat. Where Lowry’s urban drawings are concerned, this is not the case. Lowry’s world is clearly urban, but it is also ordinary, though seldom domestic; his drawings show factories and smokestacks, but also steeples, schools, stores, and playgrounds. Some sites are deserted, certainly, but in other contexts adults and children move along prosaically; life goes on.



**Figure 15.**

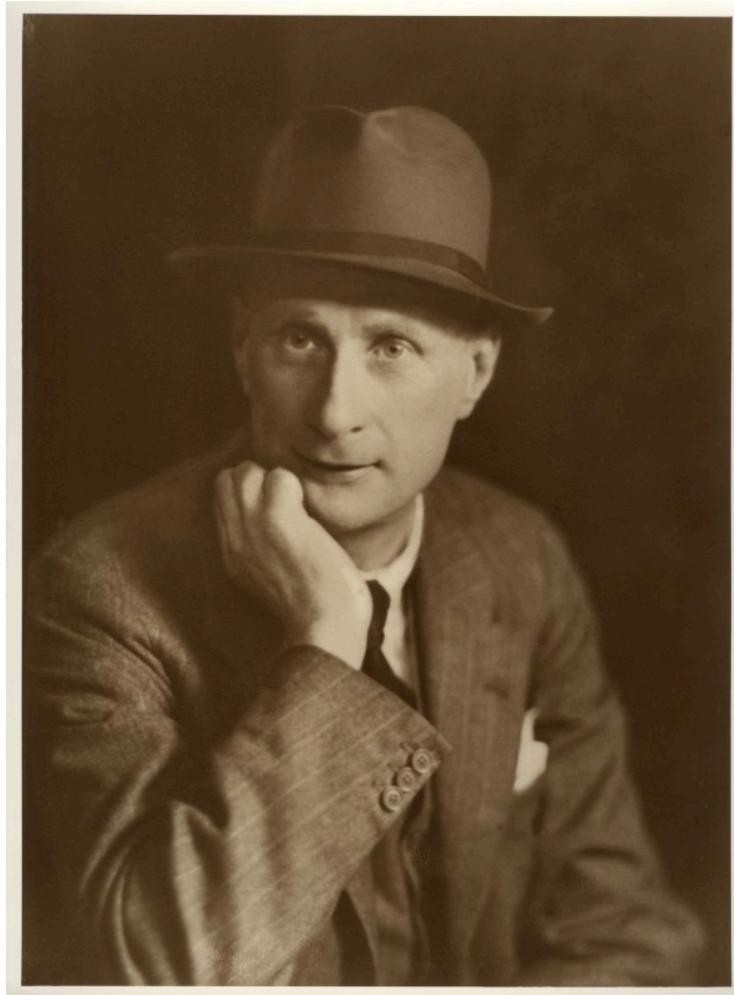
L. S. Lowry, Swinton School's Courtyard, 1929, pencil on paper, 38 × 27 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



**Figure 16.**

L. S. Lowry, *The Football Match*, 1930, pencil on paper, 26 × 37.2 cm. Private Collection. Digital image courtesy of The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017

When Lowry made these drawings, he knew his audience would not only recognize the world he depicted and confront it with assumptions and expectations beyond his control. Did he work with those expectations in mind? Such questions can be difficult for art historians to answer, yet in the case of the Ancoats drawings, answers can be deduced or inferred if we begin from the absolute basics, and work out from there. How did such an unusual commission come about? What were its results? Why does it matter that when Lowry drew these streets and junctions, he was working in a section of Manchester that had long since exemplified many of the more noxious aspects of urban industrial life? How, if at all, did Lowry manage to convey the human experience of such an inhumane place? Or do Lowry's Ancoats drawings fail to suggest "places" at all? Both a general sense of the local terrain and the particular nature of its characteristic structures must surely play a role in what viewers are shown. An image must locate its audience *somewhere*—this is essential to landscape depiction—and this necessity remains true even after buildings and pavements have sealed away the earth that lies beneath.<sup>7</sup>



**Figure 17.**

Elliott & Fry, L. S. Lowry, late 1920s, half plate glass copy negative. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London

At the time that Lowry drew *Ancoats*, he had already established his name as an artist. Not only had he been exhibiting for a decade, but the late 1920s had also brought a string of real successes: paintings included in shows in Paris, London, Leeds, and Manchester; respectful, even penetrating reviews in the *Studio* and *Manchester Guardian*; and a few important sales, among them *Coming Out of School*, a canvas that would enter the Tate.<sup>8</sup> Such responses are undoubtedly not to be taken as the achievements of a novice, yet at the same time Lowry was not yet fully “in character” as the artist we like to think we know.<sup>9</sup> If we want an image of the man we are concerned with, it is hard to do better than the studio photograph now in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, which the artist travelled to London to have taken at a flourishing society studio, Elliott and Fry, a firm that since 1863 had pursued its business of photographing a clientele drawn principally from the middle class (fig. 17).<sup>10</sup> Hence the portrait’s very existence says

something about Lowry's sense of himself at this moment, just as his drawings speak of his increasingly visible place in the civic world of Manchester, the context that brought him a remarkable commission to produce a suite of drawn urban views.

Yet at this point in his career, Lowry apparently had yet to exhibit any drawings. Then, in 1930, he assembled a show. Its twenty-six landscapes do not amount to much when set against the thousands Lowry is sometimes said to have produced. Yet as a group united in conception and exhibition, they are more or less unique.<sup>11</sup> Remember that a great many of Lowry's pencil studies—perhaps the majority—were simply jottings, scribbled notations made on the fly, in the street or leaning in a doorway.<sup>12</sup> It is easy to forget, given such suggestive impressions, that he also drew in the studio; it was there that the Ancoats drawings were certainly worked up. Lowry presumably put them together deliberately, carefully, with an exhibition in view. Its purpose, to repeat, was the depiction of Ancoats, that notorious slum. And when the group was shown for the first and only time, it was in Ancoats itself, under conditions that point to its rhetoric of place.

It is not just the constants in subject, exhibition, and intention that define the Ancoats drawings as a focused set. Equally significant is their distinctly local address, that aspect or quality of drawn depiction that Philip Rawson, in his 1969 book, *Drawing*, called "touch". Perhaps the term nowadays seems a bit old-fashioned: so be it. Contrary to the tactile concreteness it implies, Rawson insists that touch is an "intangible" aspect of the expression of any drawing, which "oddly enough, is best translated into words that have a kind of moral value, in the broadest and most liberal sense".<sup>13</sup> Touch, Rawson continues, is the feeling of the work, or if not of the work itself, of what we may infer from it about the maker and subject. In the end, I shall argue that the "kind of moral value" this group of Lowry's drawings possesses is a function of their approach to their location. More precisely stated, they declare a stance or conception towards the local, while also depicting a particular locality, a place. And both, at least in part, are a matter of touch. When critics question just how "in touch" Lowry actually was with the urban worlds he depicted, the two senses of the word start to collide.

One further preliminary is needed. In suggesting that Lowry's Ancoats drawings convey a concept of "the local" I suggest that they evoke the particularities of a place, Ancoats. But I also want to say — recruiting ideas developed by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz — that not least as drawings, or *because* they are drawings, they exemplify "crafts of place". These are the pursuits, according to Geertz, that work by the light of local knowledge.<sup>14</sup> His examples include sailing, gardening, politics, poetry, law, and ethnography—this last, of course, a reference to Geertz's own vocation, which like the others he mentions is rooted in "seeing broad principles in

parochial facts". Drawing too is such a practice; or if not all drawing, then certainly Lowry's drawings of Ancoats, which is to say, among other things, that as a place Ancoats shaped Lowry's artistic identity, as well as the other way around.

### **"Lonely Cottages"**

By 1930, Lowry had reached the phase in his career when, as his critics did not fail to remind him, his signature subjects began to seem run of the mill and he questioned what to do next. This is the context in which Lowry accepted an invitation to present a two-day exhibition at the Manchester University Settlement, a charitable institution established in Ancoats in 1897. As its name declared, it was an offshoot of the settlement movement founded in London in 1884 to address the increasing impoverishment of the industrial working class, and to do so in the areas of the city where such abuses were lived out.

The question was where the appropriate poor were to be found. In London, the answer was Whitechapel; in Manchester, it was Ancoats, in the city's east end. Though by the early nineteenth century Ancoats had become the most populated quarter of the city, ironically enough, its name is likely to come from an Old English phrase meaning "lonely cottages"—"*ana cots*".<sup>15</sup> These romantic origins had nothing to do with the standard back-to-back housing endemic in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: wretched structures that existed, as Engels observed, "in the shadow of the largest mills of Manchester . . . colossal six- and seven-storeyed [*sic*] buildings towering with their slender chimneys far above the low cottages of the workers." Far from lonely, these structures were "almost never built singly, but always by the dozen or the score; a single contractor building up one or two streets at a time". The pattern aimed at profit, clustering working-class dwellings around airless courts and dividing cottages using walls, to cite Engels, "as thin as it is possible to make them". How thin might this be? A single brick, or even half a brick, when they were laid end to end. Often a cottage would have only one windowed wall out of four.<sup>16</sup> The two diagrams Engels provided could serve as a guide to building on the cheap (figs. 20 and 21).



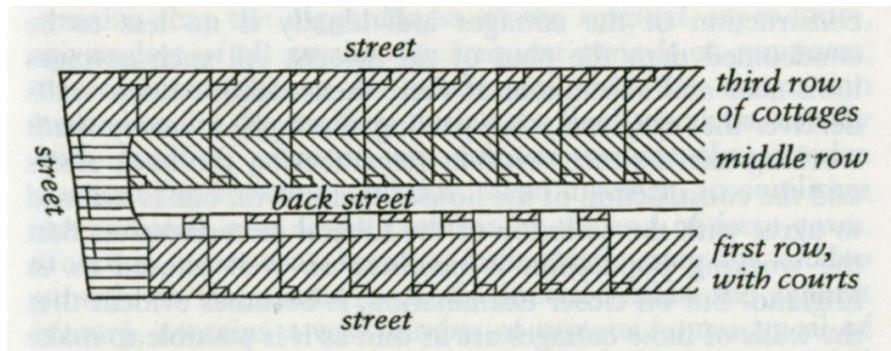
**Figure 18.**

J. Ryder, Ancoats, Great Ancoats Street, corner of Every Street, *new flats built on slum clearance land, taken from the grounds of Ancoats Hall, 1960s.* Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries



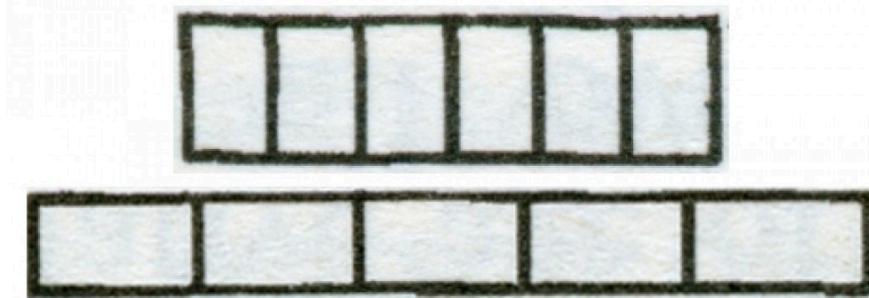
**Figure 19.**

J. Ryder, Ancoats, Great Ancoats Street, *view of slum clearance land corner of Palmerston Street, showing back of terraced houses on Pin Mill Brow and property facing Ashton Old Road, 1960s.* Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries



**Figure 20.**

Illustration from Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Edited and introduced by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford World Classics, 1993), 69. Translation based on the original English version by Florence Kelley-Wischnewetsky, 1887



**Figure 21.**

Illustration from Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Edited and introduced by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford World Classics, 1993), 69. Translation based on the original English version by Florence Kelley-Wischnewetsky, 1887

The housing types and living conditions Engels observed in Ancoats were still in use a century later. To turn from his diagrams to the detailed maps of the area produced during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is to notice the density of the local built fabric, including the infamous courts (fig. 22). But it is also to grasp that at least during the peak years of production, the big mills cohabited with smaller stores, workshops, and yards—enterprises as likely to cater to the working people of the area as they were to employ them.

Initially the Manchester Settlement established its offices at the eastern end of Great Ancoats Street, between Every Street and Palmerston Street, on a site once occupied by Ancoats Hall, the seventeenth-century country house of the local line of Mosley baronets.<sup>17</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, the family had left Ancoats behind. Predictably, no doubt, given the wave of industrialization then transforming Lancashire, both their manor and the land it stood on passed into the hands of newly prosperous local merchants and

manufacturers. The old hall was eventually torn down, its timber and plaster fabric rebuilt in the assertively functional medium of brick. But then both the new brick structure and its run-down gardens were sold to the Midland Railway Company as a site for a goods station; the company's offices, meanwhile were housed in one end of the hall.



**Figure 22.**

G. E. Anderton, Ancoats Old Hall, Manchester, 1900, dimensions unknown. Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries



**Figure 23.**

G. E. Anderton, Ancoats Old Hall, Manchester, 1900, dimensions unknown. Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries



**Figure 24.**

G. E. Anderton, Ancoats Old Hall, Manchester, 1900, dimensions unknown. Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries

These changes evidence the rapid transformations brought about by the active intervention of new industries and new capital in the built fabric of Ancoats—as Henri Lefebvre would put it, the place had been “attacked by industrialization”.<sup>18</sup> A counter-attack was not far behind. It took the form of social initiatives launched by critics of the exploitative treatment of factory workers and their families. In Ancoats one such effort was launched in 1886, when a part of the new Ancoats Hall (or more accurately, its brick replacement) became the site of the Ancoats Art Museum, established on the site by the philanthropist Thomas Coglan Horsfall (1841–1932) ([fig. 22](#)). A follower and correspondent of John Ruskin, his aim was an institution that, in fulfilment of Ruskinian principles, would be “small, selective, educational, and specifically targeted at the working man”.<sup>19</sup> Hence his alliance with the Manchester University Settlement. The two institutions occupied the same premises until the Settlement moved to a nearby location on Every Street, in a building with its own role in the local history of reform.

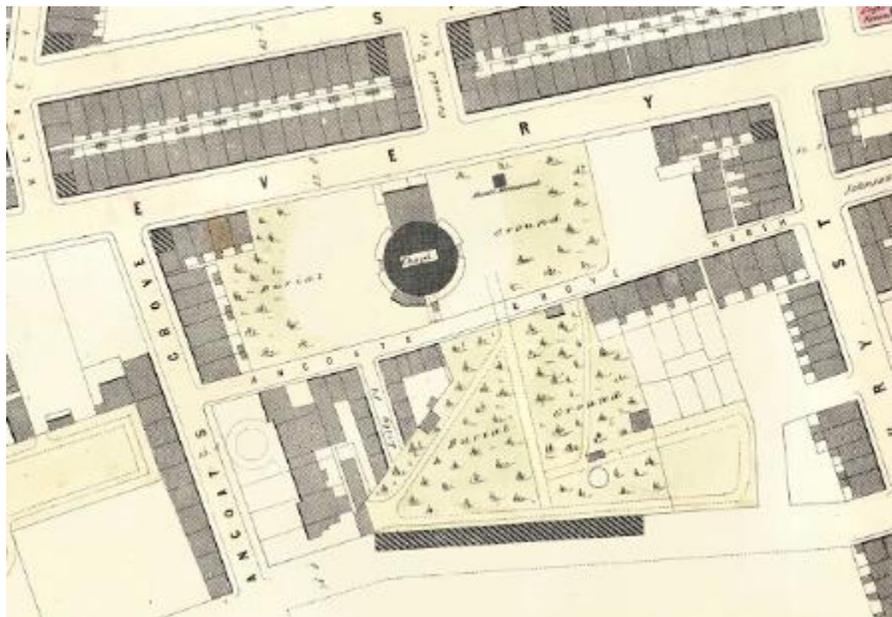


**Figure 25.**

Bassano Ltd, Mary Danvers Stocks (née Brinton) Baroness Stocks, December 1938, bromide print. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London

The new site was centred on a century-old circular chapel, built in the 1820s by members of the Salford branch of the Bible Christian Movement, a relatively local ministering sect: its tell-tale footprint, surrounded by a burial ground, appears on nineteenth-century maps ([fig. 26](#)). The Round House, as it was soon known, seems to have been fairly easily repurposed to house the university's mission, though of its interior arrangements precious little is known. What can be said about its appearance relies on a few period photographs, one of which was published in 1945 ([fig. 27](#)). It was published in a brief history of the Settlement by Mary Danvers Stocks (1891–1975), a suffragist and economist educated at the London School of Economics, whose husband, J. L. Stocks (1882–1937), was elected professor of philosophy at the University of Manchester in 1924 ([fig. 25](#)).<sup>20</sup> After he died she moved to London to take up an active career in education, politics, and

broadcasting until her death. In the years around 1930, however, she played a crucial part in the activities of the Settlement, where among other tasks she regularly took it upon herself to write the Christmas play. The title of one such effort, "Every Man of Every Street", seems to convey the tenor of the place quite well: on Every Street, it declares, dwell ordinary people living ordinary lives. With one exception: the university men and women who briefly settled in Ancoats lived there by choice.



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 26.**

Joseph Adshead, Adshead's Twenty Four illustrated maps of the Township of Manchester, 1850-1851 (detail showing the configuration of a typical Ancoats court). Collection of Chetham's Library. Digital image courtesy of Chetham's Library / Digital Archives



**Figure 27.**

Unknown photographer, The Round House, circa 1930-45, frontispiece from *Fifty Years in Every Street: The Story of the Manchester University Settlement* by Mary Danvers Stocks (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1945)



**Figure 28.**

A. W. Johnson, Round Chapel, Every Street, Manchester, 1900. Collection of Manchester Libraries. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Libraries

It was Stocks who seems likely to have been behind the Settlement show. The suggestion finds support in the text of a letter addressed to me towards the end of the Lowry exhibition held at Tate Britain in 2013. It came from a visitor with a story she thought I should hear:

Mary Stocks had approached Lowry about doing a show of his drawings for the University Settlement. In order to get as much interest as possible, she wanted him to do things in Ancoats. She herself did not see what there was to draw in the area and mentioned this to Winifred Gill, who was working at the Settlement. Miss Gill disagreed saying that she had found a number of places that made good subjects. Mary Stokes asked her to show Lowry these places, which she did. It was a very quiet tour. Neither of them said very much. Lowry took no notes but remembered every place and went back to draw them.<sup>21</sup>

In relating this story, my correspondent implied—though was not concerned to justify—her sense that Gill should be understood as if not the author of Lowry’s drawings, then at least someone to whom substantial credit was due. Yet in the end, of course, Lowry was the artist the Settlement decided to show, a decision that lends weight to the idea that Stocks chose the artist best able to arouse “as much interest as possible” in the Settlement’s work.

Enter Lowry, Miss Gill at his elbow, as the artist charged with representing Ancoats as a site for social work. By late March 1930, he had assembled a large group of drawings for a brief exhibition and sale on Settlement premises—it was only open eight hours all told. Even so, a hand list was printed, complete with titles and prices; the surviving copy remains our only guide to what was shown (fig. 29).<sup>22</sup> The outcome of this brief show is a topic we will return to before long.

No	1.	Tray cart. Bayground. St. by J. L. Skiba.			
"	2.	The Board House. S. Frankenburg	pt.	4	15
"	4.	Henry House. St. by Miss B. Higgins or Mr. Dinwood.		18	16
"	9.	Across the Yard. St. by Mr. Gill.	pt.	2	20
"	15.	Across the Yard. No. 2. J. L. Skiba.	pt.	4	2
"	14.	The Lock House. St. by Mrs. E. T. Smith.	pt.	1	1
"	17.	Boarding House. J. L. Skiba.	pt.	4	1
"	20.	Bayground. St. by Mr. Gibson.			
"	23.	Beland Street. St. by A. Cashmore.	pt.	3	18
"	25.	Old House. St. by Mrs. Frankenburg	pt.	3	18
"	18.	Palmerton Street. St. by Prof. Clay.		4	4
"	7.	Canal Lane. Mr. Chas. Rowold.	pt.	6	13
26. Various Drawings					
		Meeting in the General Office of Mr. Chas Rowold	pt.	3	18
		Street in stock post.	pt.	3	18
"	12.	Johnston's Buildings. St. by Prof. Watson.		3	18
		5 <sup>th</sup> 2nd St		5	12
				2	12
Cheques paid over -					
		Mr. Rowold. £11.0.6			
		Cashmore. £3.13.6			
		Frankenburg. £7.17.6			
		Mr. M. Gille.			
		Cash. £8.13.6			
		<u>£26.5-</u>			
		Balance.			
		Rowold.		5	18
		Cashmore.		3	18
		Frankenburg.		4	4
		Mr. M. Gille.		3	18
		Cash.		8	13
		<u>£26.5-</u>			
		Rowold.		3	18
		Cashmore.		3	18
		Frankenburg.		4	4
		Mr. M. Gille.		3	18
		Cash.		8	13
		<u>£26.5-</u>			
		Rowold.		3	18
		Cashmore.		3	18
		Frankenburg.		4	4
		Mr. M. Gille.		3	18
		Cash.		8	13
		<u>£26.5-</u>			

[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 29.**

Photocopy of a page from a lost ledger listing works sold at Twenty-Six Drawings of Ancoats, by L. S. Lowry exhibited at the Manchester University Settlement, Ancoats Hall, March 25-26, 1930. Collection of The Lowry. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford



**Figure 30.**

Paul Popper, L. S. Lowry walking on Oakfield Road, Manchester, 1957  
Digital image courtesy of Getty Images

For now, consider Lowry as he set about discovering the pictorial possibilities latent in Ancoats, by looking at the Settlement itself—its distinctive premises and immediate surroundings—and then moving further afield. The Every Street site was not far from the River Medlock, and also close to a mill and dye works flanked by tenements along two sides. The artist made two drawings, numbers 1 and 2 on the hand list, intended to locate the viewer within the Settlement's walled enclosure, a space today given over to weeds, trash, and grass (fig. 31). In the centre of the plot, a low brick wall retraces the shape of the Round House, while a few carved gravestones conjure up the burial ground that in the nineteenth century was a feature of the site. In Lowry's two drawings (figs. 2 and 3), by contrast, the earth reads only as a much-scuffed surface, inhabited mostly by children dwarfed by the gates and wall that close them in. Most stand or walk, alone or in pairs, the older children leading the younger ones. One lone little figure stands against the bars, looking out.



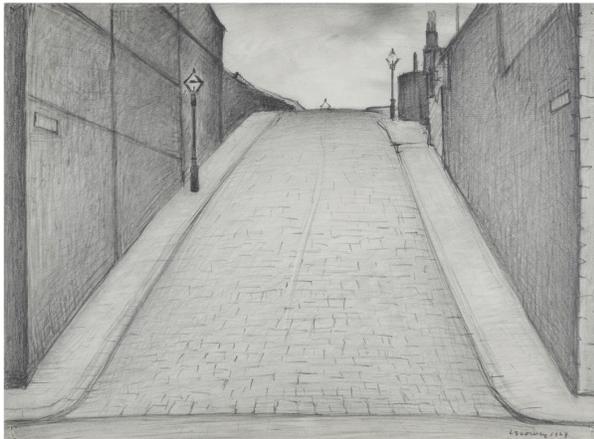
**Figure 31.**

The brick wall that remembers the Round House building, Every Street, Manchester, March 2017. Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography

If the presence of this isolated little body conveys why it seems hard to tie down the tone of these drawings, Lowry's overall approach to the place itself was above all prosaic, rather than performative. Consider in both Round House drawings how Lowry treats the distinctive features of this keyhole-shaped structure: its windows, both their distribution and framing; its wall and gates; its noticeboard and plaque—all this has been faithfully recorded. Look, too, at the artist's standpoint, not only in view of the Settlement's linked volumes, but also in relation to its place in an urban context. As Lowry sees it, that world has surface and depth. In front of the walls of the Round House runs Every Street. A row of modest houses lines its other side. Behind them rise assorted roofs and a pair of smokestacks, one closer to Every Street, the other a bit further away. Between them is a clock tower, which presumably marked the entrance to a mill; time is money, they say.<sup>23</sup> Yet all this has been accomplished unobtrusively, so to speak, without any impressive display of "technique". Instead information rules the day, as if to ensure that the small world the drawings summon seems convincing, as well as straightforward, even matter of fact. To my eye they suggest that when Lowry "went back to draw" the sites Gill showed him—I doubt they were unfamiliar to him—he was careful neither to celebrate nor to deplore.

Instead, he produced a set of drawings marked by the same pragmatic neutrality characteristic of his Every Street views. I imagine he worked steadily, with the exhibition in view. And it is clear that he went ahead with a fairly clear idea of the sort of subject he wanted to show. On the list of titles,

four are tellingly generic: *Canal Scene* (no. 6), *Backwater* (no. 7), *Across The Medlock* (in two versions, nos. 1 and 2; on the hand list, these are 9 and 13), and *The Lock House* (no. 14).<sup>24</sup> As for the rest, the titles they bear were clearly intended to summon particular streets and familiar buildings. Yet even these are fairly general, if not laconic in tone: simply consider numbers 20 and 25, *Old Houses, Great Ancoats Street, Nos. 1 and 2*; or number 22, *Playground, Holt Town*. If Lowry's aim, as John Berger puts it, was "to represent the historic", then he did so by a process best thought of as a sort of transference: in lieu of desolate people we are given desolation of place. The world depicted in Lowry's work, Berger suggests, is simultaneously "civic and deprived".<sup>25</sup> Today, in the aftermath of sweeping transformations to Ancoats fabric (initially mooted in the mid- to late 1930s, and then, in the 1960s, undertaken with a vengeance), many of the old names persist: Holt and Beswick, Wesley Street, Pollard Street, Palmerston Street, Store Street, Pin Mill Brow. The hill once called Stony Brow is there too, though no longer on Junction Street; it is Jutland Street now ([fig. 32](#)). Nearby is a viaduct the artist also drew ([fig. 33](#)). Yet to know a name is not the same as recognizing a place. Information about Ancoats in the early 1930s is sparse. Of the social and material world that Lowry depicted, precious little remains.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 32a.**

L. S. Lowry, Junction St, Stony Brow, Ancoats, Manchester, 1929, pencil on paper, 28 x 38.3 cm. Collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017



**Figure 32b.**

Jutland Street (formerly Junction Street), Manchester, March 2017. Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography



**Figure 33a.**

L. S. Lowry, *The Viaduct, Store Street, Ancoats*, 1929, pencil on paper, 27.9 × 38.1 cm. Collection of Manchester Art Gallery. Digital image courtesy of Manchester Art Gallery / The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017

**Figure 33b.**

*The Viaduct, Store Street, Ancoats*, March 2017. Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography

The same might be said of Lowry's drawings. Of the twenty-six included in the initial exhibition, only eleven can be identified with any certainty today. Less than half, in other words, of which two are known only in reproductions that appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, along with a notice of the show (figs. 2 and 12).<sup>27</sup> Even so, I think there is just about enough historical and visual evidence to make some suggestions about the show's character and what it achieved. Consider its pictorial purposes and conceptual scope: here are drawings that tie their ambitions to a strikingly even-handed application of marks.<sup>28</sup> This communality, like their seemingly identical measurements, argues for the idea that they were made for the occasion, as a considered response to the Settlement's invitation to draw—and to draw attention to—a particularly notorious inner-city neighbourhood, a place first singled out by Engels for its back alleys and low cottages, and then, a century later, by the Settlement, as its principal frontier. To insist on the obvious, Ancoats was the Manchester neighbourhood it felt most called upon to help. When its officers turned to Lowry to draw it, the request was not merely a tribute to his strength as a draughtsman. It was also a test of his ability to take hold of the character of Ancoats, to show it as a *place*—a problem that Mary Stocks was not alone in being unable to solve. According to the *Manchester Guardian*, Lowry emerged from the project with a “firmer grasp of slum landscape”.<sup>29</sup>

Everything suggests that his patrons were pleased, though perhaps not to the extent sometimes claimed. For a start, it no longer seems certain that the show sold out, as has consistently been asserted.<sup>30</sup> Nor is it the case that it was held in the Round House, as I myself once thought. Instead it was installed in the Ancoats Art Gallery, where both the University Settlement

and Midland Railway had space.<sup>31</sup> What this means, of course, is that like his patrons, Lowry's audience was not working class. To examine the remaining financial records of the Settlement (though incomplete, they are in the Manchester University Archive) is to discover a careful ledger entry of the drawings that were sold, along with the names of their purchasers and how each paid, by cash or cheque (fig. 29). The result is a cache of information about ties of patronage and taste. The network extended from the university and its more socially minded professors—among them J. L. Stocks, husband of Mary and a noted Professor of Philosophy since 1924; Frederick Ernest Weiss, Harrison Professor of Botany; and Henry Clay, first Professor of Political Economy and subsequently Professor of Social Economics—to Mrs E. T. Scott, wife of the recently appointed editor of the *Manchester Guardian*; Lawrence Haward, the first Director of the Manchester City Art Gallery; Hilda Cashmore, the Settlement Warden from 1926–34; Margaret Pilkington, Manchester philanthropist, proficient watercolourist, and skilled engraver; Sydney Frankenburg, who inherited a successful Salford rubber factory and whose wife, Charis Ursula Frankenburg, was a follower of Marie Stopes and co-founder with Mary Stocks of the Manchester and Salford Mothers' Clinic; and finally, a Mr W. M. Gile and a Mr Gibson, about whom nothing is currently known.<sup>32</sup> Mrs Renold bought three drawings, Frankenburg two. Three went to Mary and J. L. Stocks. And as if this is not enough, the ledger also tells us that not all of the drawings on sale were framed and hanging in the show; Mrs Renold picked up *Street in Stockport* and *Meeting in the General Strike* in this way.<sup>33</sup>

These are patrons who had some sort of interest—not necessarily an aesthetic one—in the question of what it means to grasp a slum. Acquaintances and colleagues rather than friends, most were involved in the work of the Settlement as officers of its governing board. Others—Frankenburg, for example—were presumably present out of conviction or belief.<sup>34</sup> Can such a place, or non-place, be captured? How could its particular version of nothingness be drawn? *Slum* is a word that denotes bleakness and desolation, all that is “loathsome, dreary and decayed”. How did Lowry go about the task of depicting the mundane anti-monuments—mill, canal, viaduct—that marked the physical centre of working-class life? He clearly made the task his project, and his single-minded focus suggests that its outcome should be understood as a suite or series in which each image, no matter how distinctive, has a place in a larger whole. Each is soft lead pencil on paper, deployed to straightforward purpose, without flourishes of any kind: judging from those that can currently be identified, each measures about twenty-seven by thirty-eight centimetres;<sup>35</sup> and each found its focus in the area's physical structures—the lay of its land, the shapes of its buildings and road works—rather than its human population, the people of all ages who bore the brunt of the “poverty, dirt

and overcrowding” of its “mean streets” (both Stocks and Engels use this phrase).<sup>36</sup> In the attention he brought to the neighbourhood’s various features, Lowry shares something with the social geographer, who ties human experience to the physical environment—our dwelling in, and transformation of our material worlds—rather than the ethnographer. It is here that Geertz’s terms seem most effective: these drawings work “by the light of local knowledge”—even if that light is thick with smoke. Yet Lowry offers no retreat from the city’s shared spaces; his Ancoats drawings do not include interiors: the local is not to be found inside closed doors.

What I am after here is to convey, with thanks to Rawson, that the *Manchester Guardian*’s idea of an artist’s “grasp” summons something larger and less technical than composition alone. For while these images seem to show Lowry working with a whole new sense of the framing limits of his paper, and savouring the blunt decisiveness possible with pencil, these strategies are a means to an end. Lowry has put aside what critics initially saw as the “almost oratorical power” of his art, its marvellously contradictory effects of “populous desolation”, in favour of a newfound clarity in figuring the differences among his chosen sites. The result is no less “oratorical” than Lowry’s earlier imagery, but now it is as if the speaker is quite deliberately expanding and varying his topics and terms of address. The result is a set of slum views—more specifically, views of Ancoats, the archetypal slum—that are insistently diverse in subject and form. A canal, a settlement house, a cul-de-sac, a viewpoint, and many smoke stacks—all these combine to make up Ancoats: a slum, granted, but even so allowed its own concrete presence as a place. Lowry has sought out—perhaps even discovered— a set of features that are emphatically distinctive, without the viewer’s experience devolving into effects that are merely pictorial or, worse, picturesque.



**Figure 34.**

L. S. Lowry, *City Scene, St John's Parade*, 1929, pencil on paper, 28 × 38 cm. Collection of the British Council. Digital image courtesy of British Council Collection, London/ The Estate of L. S. Lowry. All Rights Reserved, DACS 2017

They are saved from that fate by the artist's distinctive ability to present the most ordinary feature of the urban landscape—a view over roofs, a stark city square—as a tonal or compositional tour de force. The result was “grimy but classical”, to make use of one of the *Manchester Guardian's* better turns of phrase. For a gloss on this contradictory concept, we can do no better than to turn back to what in my eyes remains the most memorable of this set of works: *Junction Street, Stony Brow, Ancoats, Manchester*, 1929 (fig. 10).

If this drawing is grimy, this is because of Lowry's graphic skill. His drawings, as one critic put it, are saturated “with the black substances of the industrial atmosphere”, and their structures are “finger-rubbed into squat grey masses”. In a monochrome drawing, grime is seen as “colour”, and Lowry developed his already considerable expertise with the pencil to represent inner-city dirt.<sup>37</sup> Thesis two: if the drawing is classical, this is because its design is rock solid, yet active as well. Its structure is built out from the bottom corners using diagonals that carry the composition, shaping space as they go. Lowry is doing nothing more than mining the familiar magic of perspective, yet the result—its delaying of visual satisfaction—still seems as unfamiliar, as “strange [a] tour de force”, as it did eighty-odd years ago.<sup>38</sup> We have arrived, so the title tells us, at both a brow of a road and its junction; such a moment should be consequential, and yet we do not know

what lies ahead: we cannot see that the way will lead to the multi-storey dry-salting factory built by Thomas Hassall and said to be the only one in England.<sup>39</sup> Instead the composition is open to both anticipation and threat.

The reason that *Junction Street, Stony Brow* seems so significant is not because, as so often happened with other compositions, Lowry used its layout again. On the contrary, as far as we know, the design seems to have been unique in this series, and infrequent in the artist's work as a whole.<sup>40</sup> There is no denying that any such example of singularity within the work of so repetitive an artist gives the exception added force. In this case, that force results in a subtle staging of the complexities of place, a staging that leads to the question, "Is this a place at all?" Yes and no. In Lowry's slum drawings, we know we are somewhere—the sheer matter-of-factness of Lowry's use of his pencil, its pragmatic decisiveness, insists on this—yet as strangers we don't quite know where.

## Grey on Grey

In an earlier essay on Lowry, I argued that to see what is distinctive about this series it is useful to compare it to another account of the visual world of the slum.<sup>41</sup> My choice fell on a speech made by Larry Meath, one of the protagonists in Walter Greenwood's 1933 Manchester novel about working-class poverty and labour, *Love on the Dole*.<sup>42</sup> Early in the story we come across Meath, a mill hand and would-be reformer, speaking to a crowd about the realities of their shared life: "Labour never ending, constant struggles to pay the rent and to buy sufficient food and clothing; no time for anything that is bright and beautiful. We never see such things. All we see are these grey depressing streets; mile and mile of them; never ending."<sup>43</sup> Endlessness, in other words, not only shapes Meath's rhetoric; it is the very form of working-class life, which extends from Salford's streets to the men that throng through them on their way to work, "a great procession of heavily-booted men all wearing overalls and all marching in the same direction". Tobacco smoke rises above them, all blue and grey, and the air resounds "with the ringing rhythmic beat of hobnailed boots".<sup>44</sup> Passages like these are not merely descriptive; they are transformative, finding the force within sameness and a song in the ring of heavy boots. These effects make for what in that initial essay I presented as an aesthetic characteristic of the 1930s. In that context, I called it the art of the grey monotone. The phrase still fits.

All the more significant, then, that Lowry's efforts to describe the Ancoats area—its canal, its mills by the dozen, its chemical works, cloth finishing works, foundries, glass works, and aircraft factory (founded as early as 1910), its hospitals, and schools—did not simply repeat this single sombre note. His Ancoats was not uniform, however consistent its grey. On the contrary, his drawings claim that that urban space is deep and often jumbled; every here is backed by a there, which often impinges. And there is an insistent presence latent within its characteristic structures, and in what we might well call its infrastructure today. How striking that each sheet in the series focuses on a different urban feature, a different component of its fabric, as if to suggest that together, these cyclopean stone steps and that viaduct; this junction, shop front, church, and smokestack; this quiet canal and empty road—that all these things, taken together, make this place what it is. It is an assertion that not only draws deeply on a fund of local knowledge, but also aims to demonstrate to its audience what it too knows, or should know, about this place. According to Henri Lefebvre, such features comprise the “symbolic dimension” of the city: “monuments, but also voids, squares and avenues, symbolizing the cosmos, the world, society, or simply the state”. <sup>45</sup>



**Figure 35.**

Nicolas Lancret, Study of a Tree, 1705-1743, red chalk, 34.8 x 25.3. Collection of the British Museum. Digital image courtesy of Trustees of the British Museum

This idea of local knowledge returns us to Rawson's conception of touch: touch, to repeat his central notion, is an "intangible" aspect of the expression of any drawing, which—I quote Rawson once again—"oddly enough, is best translated into words that have a kind of moral value, in the broadest and most liberal sense." It is good to be wary of any critic who uses words like "moral" and "intangible", even one who agrees that they are odd. This said, there *is* something at stake in Rawson's phrase. Touch turns out not to be straightforwardly tactile at all; instead *texture* is the term he chooses to name the artist's application of marks to the page. Its effects may be brought about unconsciously or systematically, but in either case, texture results. Or as Rawson puts it, "the draughtsman does not *draw* texture, he *produces* it. Its actual marks are not part of the structure of his design." <sup>46</sup> Texture, in other words, is not a means of rendering the surfaces of things in the world. On the contrary, it is the textural qualities of the medium that are

at stake. In Nicolas Lancret's undated *Study of a Tree* (fig. 35), for example, texture points to the softly smudged syncopation of short comma-like strokes that indicate sunlight playing on leaves and branches. Their emphases result not from careful emulation (chalk depicts tree) but rather from a successful substitution, in which strokes of chalk stand in for a tree.



**Figure 36.**

Michelangelo Buonarroti, Row of Figures for the Deposition of Christ (Studies for a Pietà and an Entombment), 1540, black chalk on off-white paper, 18 × 28.1 cm. Collection of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. Digital image courtesy of Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

Touch is something else. Speaking of a black chalk drawing by Michelangelo exploring the *Deposition* (fig. 36), Rawson insists that “there can be no mistaking the extreme tactile affection with which the touch of the old Michelangelo sets down and develops his figures.”<sup>47</sup> In the same way, there can be no mistaking the presence and actuality that Lowry gives to his Ancoats views. This is a place we are asked to consider, and thus get to know. Hence our encounters with it are markedly direct. This world coheres. At the same time, the artist’s depictions of it are not particularly detailed. This is true, but still not quite right: substantial, perhaps, and spatially distinct. At any rate, such images do not turn our first thoughts to what we know of graphic ellipsis, or suggestive evocation, although—the point is crucial—these are effects that Lowry could and did deploy. I think, for example, of the black chalk shorthand that sets down the *Bandstand, Peel Park* (fig. 37) made in 1924 in Lowry’s own town of Salford, while transforming its clustering listeners into a comically alien crowd.



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 37.**

L. S. Lowry, Bandstand, Peel Park, Salford, 1924, pencil on paper, 17.7 x 25.4 cm. Collection of The Lowry. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 38.**

L. S. Lowry, *A View from the Window of the Royal Technical College, Salford, looking towards Manchester*, 1924, black chalk and pencil on paper, 55.5 x 38 cm. Collection of The Lowry. Digital image courtesy of The Lowry Collection, Salford

Consider too the *View from the Window of the Royal Technical College*, also drawn in 1924 (fig. 38); there the thrill lies in the telescoping vista, which rushes past the parterres while statues dance a jig. The College, like Peel Park, was in Salford which, as just noted, was where the artist lived. There too he studied drawing and clearly often drew. Yet to put these two sketches of Salford's one-time cultural centre in touch with his views of Ancoats is to demonstrate that there can be no confusing the two. Their differences are above all a matter of Lowry's touch. If Rawson is right, if touch does translate into terms that have a kind of moral value, in the broadest and most liberal sense, then it seems worth reopening the question, in Lowry's case, of the values his drawings put into play.

To my eye, the work that Lowry did in Ancoats seems strikingly matter of fact. The marks he used are spare, though neither elusive nor ambiguous. Few go to waste, and none look extraneous. The result seems entirely purposeful, so much so as to suggest that as an approach to drawing, plainness is a choice—a style, or anti-style—that needs perfecting. Achieving it requires practice and thought.<sup>48</sup> But more than this, to devote such terse sufficiency to the depiction of aspects of the city that go mostly undepicted was for Lowry something of a founding principle. Perhaps the idea was that visibility and presence are essential, if the task is to conjure a world in its symbolic dimension, as Lefebvre would say.

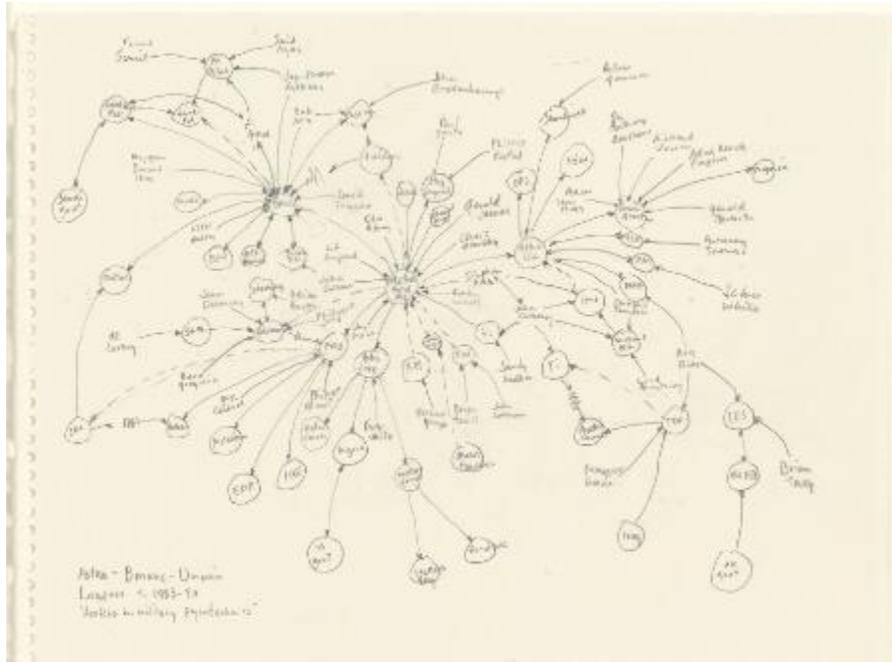
## Local and Global

Many years after Lowry drew Ancoats, his old friend Hugh Maitland (1895–1972) began to put together a never-published Lowry biography, which provides invaluable details on the decades the artist spent working full-time collecting rents.<sup>49</sup> (Not incidentally, Maitland, a notable microbiologist, was Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Manchester, and from 1927 directed the Public Health Laboratory, which specialized in the diseases of the poor.)<sup>50</sup> Maitland wrote that the artist “had an inordinate interest in the names and positions of the streets . . . in the poorer districts of the city and a perfect knowledge of them. They seemed in themselves to have a special significance for him.”<sup>51</sup> The implications of this comment lie in the idea that Lowry’s quasi-cartographic fascination with the streets of the city lay in his ability to read past the map’s abstractions to locate some other, “special” meaning, perhaps even truth: the truth of life *there*. Maitland saw that truth as testifying to Lowry’s hitherto hidden role as a rent collector, and doubtless it did. Yet it also gives evidence of the artist’s connection, even commitment to an urban network, and the extent of his efforts to convey something of the visual complexity—and perhaps even the social significance—of a representational project rooted in the physical fabric of life in the slum.

I offer the phrase “representational project” because although far from felicitous, it insists that Lowry’s work was knowingly assertive, even demanding, in tone. It asks us to dwell, as we don’t often do, on the painter’s awareness of his audience, and his exercise of intention and choice.

I hope it goes without saying that in my view, the idea (even the cause) of the local remains worth defending—maybe more so, when the global has become its counter-term. Frictionless, mobile, placeless, globetrotting: it is everything that the local is not. It is difficult to imagine the global ever being drawn. Difficult, but not impossible—I think, for one example, of the US artist Mark Lombardi, who died in the year 2000. His legacy takes the form of a

concerted effort to discover and describe the proliferating networks of connection, the financial scams, corruption, and crime that shape the placeless trade in influence, oil, money, and arms, and the sweeping arcs and vectors he made use of to describe the wide compass of that exchange.<sup>52</sup> In these works—for example, *Astra - Bmarc - Unwin, London c. 1983-90*, “dealers in military pyrotechnics” (fig. 39), which he produced in the year of his death—it is the fatal emptiness of the paper that stands for the ability of the powerful to blank out the world. Within that blankness, everyday life, ordinary connections, have been erased.



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 39.**

Mark Lombardi, *Astra - Bmarc - Unwin, London c. 1983-90*, “dealers in military pyrotechnics”, 2000, pencil on notebook paper, 22.9 x 30.5 cm. Collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Judith Rothschild Foundation Contemporary Drawings Collection Gift. Digital image courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art, New York / Estate of Mark Lombardi / Scala, Florence

In Lowry’s drawings, by contrast, even nowhere is somewhere: a world presented by his pencil as solid presence, a matter of spatial and structural fact. A slum has become a locus, a landscape, in other words, where such a thing, such a possibility, had never existed before. It leaves us reflecting on the eventual erasure of this world and its structures, and what is to be found there instead. In the case of Ancoats, what remains is not much—close to nothing at all. The Round House was demolished in 1986. In its place is only a plaque, plus a shape traced by a low brick wall. In 2009, a structure known as the “New Roundhouse” (figs. 40 - 43) was completed in Openshaw to

rehouse the Manchester University Settlement. Again, the choice has fallen on a struggling neighbourhood, this one three miles east of the Every Street site.



**Figure 40.**

The brick wall that remembers the Round House building, Every Street, Manchester, March 2017. Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography



**Figure 41.**

Commemorative Plaque at the site of the Round House building, Every Street, Manchester, March 2017. Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography



**Figure 42.**

New Roundhouse, Manchester University Settlement, Openshaw, Manchester, March 2017 Digital image courtesy of Paul Grogan Photography

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Towards the end of the run of the Lowry exhibition, which closed on 20 October 2013, I received a letter from the British artist Margery Clarke, who was born in Manchester in 1926 and befriended by Lowry in 1940, when she was fourteen. When she turned twenty in 1946, she was sent to Hamburg to complete her National Service, and in 1954 she married and moved away. I mention these facts because they are part of the reason I am inclined to think that the event she described in her letter should be dated to sometime during the Second World War, or soon after—perhaps about 1948–9.<sup>53</sup>

Here is what she wrote:

After the usual slap-up lunch in a nice restaurant, as was his wont for me, LSL said, “I want to show you something.” Thereupon we made our way to the bustling Piccadilly and turned off into what I learnt was Ancoats. Seemed to be a compact area squeezed within two main roads. The noise of the traffic disappeared as we wandered round the streets. It seemed to be a different world, not just still but utterly silent, almost disembodied. People occasionally passed us, like ghouls, though there were one or two soft short signs of recognition to him. Time disappeared in the greyness. It was calm and quietly encompassing, like a dream. Eventually we found ourselves on the outskirts at the bottom of the steps (which was one of his subjects) overlooking the area with its huddled terraces and some smoking chimneys. “Awful, isn’t it”, he said. “Can’t they be moved to better housing?” I asked. “It’s a community and can’t be broken up like that.”<sup>54</sup>

But Lowry was wrong. Communities can be broken up, as was Ancoats. The transformation was radical. What he did get right, I think, is his analysis of urban space. If he drew a place, but not its people, perhaps this was in recognition that people need a place to be. In Ancoats, it is still needed, even though “urban renewal” and rebuilding have recently begun all over again.<sup>55</sup>

In his recent book on the Welsh landscape artist Edward Pugh, John Barrell describes another version of local knowledge than the one Geertz sets out. For Barrell, such knowledge is manifest in the recognition that local viewers brought to Pugh’s images—a nod of familiarity, Barrell calls it, which comes with “the pleasure of knowing where that was” and perhaps even that it could be a landscape too.<sup>56</sup> Lowry is not Pugh, nor is Mary Stocks to be equated with Pugh’s middle-class patrons. Even so, the differences in their

motives notwithstanding, Stocks and Lowry, like Pugh and his patrons, were after local knowledge of a place. They aimed to make Ancoats visible as an urban site or fabric that, though worn and threadbare, still contrived to cohere. Its buildings and viaducts, tenements and chimneys served to construct a minimal scaffolding for urban life. And it is this minimal density, this coherence that in Ancoats has since been lost. Landscapes need continuity; do away with such connections and the urbscape has won. Such a malign victory is possible when people fail to see—and thus to grasp—the implications of place. No risk of Lowry committing such an error. He knew full well, as he put it, that “he had lived through the time of social awareness.”<sup>57</sup> But more than this, in living through such a time, he made that awareness his own.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> At present there is no catalogue raisonné of drawings by L. S. Lowry, nor indeed any estimate of how many he might have produced. (A catalogue of the artist's paintings, by contrast, is currently underway.) The first study of the artist's drawings was undertaken by the artist and writer Mervyn Levy (1914–96); *The Drawings of L. S. Lowry* (London: Cory, Adams and Mackay, 1963), with introduction and notes by Levy. Other key resources for any student of Lowry's drawings are Michael Leber and Judith Sandling, *L. S. Lowry* (London: Phaidon, 1987), and most recently the catalogue of the important exhibition curated by Neil Walker at the Djanogly Art Gallery, *Lowry* (Nottingham, 2011–12), with essays by Michael Howard and Charlotte Wildman.
- <sup>2</sup> For a richly readable treatment of the history of Ancoats, see Michael E. Rose, with Keith Falconer and Julian Holder, *Ancoats: Cradle of Industrialization* (Swindon: English Heritage, 2011). Available on line at <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/ancoats/ancoats.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, Introduction by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 71. See also Alan Kidd, *Manchester: A History* (1993; Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd., 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2006).
- <sup>4</sup> Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*.
- <sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that animals, like humans, demonstrate a strong sense of place.
- <sup>6</sup> I thank Catherine Spencer for introducing me to Clough's use of this phrase. For a sample of Spencer's work on Clough, see Catherine Spencer, “Covert Resistance: Prunella Clough's Cold War ‘Urbscapes’”, in *British Art in the Nuclear Age*, ed. Catherine Jolivet (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 171–94; Catherine Spencer, “Abstraction's Ecologies: Post-Industrialization, Waste and the Commodity Form in Prunella Clough's Paintings of the 1980s and 1990s”, *British Art Studies*, Issue 1, doi:10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-01/cspencer
- <sup>7</sup> For stimulating remarks on the “sedimentary strata of history” invoked here, see Clare Warden, “Ugliness and Beauty: The Politics of Landscape in Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole*”, *New Theatre Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Feb. 2013): 39.
- <sup>8</sup> For an exploration of these seldom-noted successes, see T. J. Clark and Anne M. Wagner, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life* (London: Tate Publishing, 2013). See also the fine chronology provided by Helen Little in the same volume (208–25). The Duveen Paintings Fund was a short-lived patronage scheme set up by Lord Duveen in 1926 for the purchase of contemporary art; the purchased works were stored at the Tate, and remained there even after acquisitions lapsed in 1929. Lowry's *Coming out of School* (1927) was bought in 1927, in the wake of its inclusion in the “*Daily Express*” *Young Artists Exhibition*, 1927. It was formally presented to the museum in 1949. See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/lowry-coming-out-of-school-n05912/text-catalogue-entry>
- <sup>9</sup> For a useful reminder of the variety of attitudes towards Lowry and his work among art critics currently publishing in Britain, readers might wish to survey the range of views voiced by journalists in response to the above-mentioned retrospective, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, mounted at Tate Britain in summer 2013. Note that my essay in the book accompanying the show refers to some of the works and issues discussed here. See Anne M. Wagner, “Lowry, Repetition and Change”, in Clark and Wagner, *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, 93–110.
- <sup>10</sup> See <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person.php?LinkID=mp06938&role=art&wPage=543>. The present essay draws its information from this useful source.
- <sup>11</sup> The only parallel to the Ancoats drawings in this or any other period of Lowry's life was a set of twelve illustrations he produced for *The Cotswold Book* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931). For an account of the circumstances of their making, see Shelley Rohde, *L. S. Lowry: A Biography* (1979; Salford: Lowry Press, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 1999), 170–75.
- <sup>12</sup> A good sample of the artist's urban drawings is reproduced in Judith Sandling and Michael Leber, *Lowry's City: A Painter and his Locale* (Salford: Lowry Press, 1999).

- 13 Philip Rawson, *Drawing* (The Appreciation of the Arts, Vol. 4), gen. ed. Harold Osborne (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 123.
- 14 Geertz's formulation is the premise of his essay "Local Knowledge: Fact and Law in Comparative Perspective", first published in 1983, which forms the centrepiece of Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 2000). It can also be consulted on line at [http://hypergeertz.jku.at/GeertzTexts/Local\\_Knowledge.htm](http://hypergeertz.jku.at/GeertzTexts/Local_Knowledge.htm). Invoked here is the first sentence of that essay. Note that Geertz follows this initial characterization of his concept by describing it as a "cast of mind, a to-know-a-city-is-to-know-its-streets approach to things". This is a cast of mind Lowry certainly possessed.
- 15 This etymology is suggested and supported in Eilert Ekwall, *The Place-names of Lancashire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1922), 35; consulted on line at [https://archive.org/stream/placenamesoflanc00ekwauoft\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/placenamesoflanc00ekwauoft_djvu.txt)
- 16 Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 69, 70.
- 17 Although the history of the Mosley family can be traced to the creation of a baronetcy bearing that name in 1640, the branch of the family resident in Ancoats is known as the third baronetcy, and included as the sixth holder of the title Sir Oswald Mosley (1896–1980), founder of the British Union of Fascists.
- 18 Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. E. Kofman and E. Lebas (London: Blackwell, 1996), 74.
- 19 See Stuart Eagles, "Thomas Coglean Horsfall and Manchester Art Museum and University Settlement", 2009, *The Encyclopaedia of Informal Education*, [www.infed.org/settlements/manchester\\_art\\_museum\\_and\\_university\\_settlement.htm](http://www.infed.org/settlements/manchester_art_museum_and_university_settlement.htm).
- 20 Mary Danvers Stocks, *Fifty Years in Every Street* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1945). Stocks remains an important source for historians of the Settlement, particularly its early years.
- 21 Winifred Gill (1991–1981), an artist whose niece was my correspondent's cousin, is particularly known for her involvement in the running of the Omega Workshop, but was also active on many other fronts. In addition to her work in the Settlement movement, she was also involved with the Lake Mere archaeological dig, and was active at the BBC, both as a broadcaster and in audience research. Margaret Bennett, Gill's long-time house-mate and the aunt of my correspondent, Chrystine Bennett, was the one to initiate the effort to sort through Gill's papers and eventually to offer them to the Bodleian, Oxford. <http://www.cluttergone.co.uk/Winifred.html>. Bennett's efforts led to a BBC Radio 4 programme on Gill (see <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00jxc77>), and also to a 2009 Courtauld exhibition, which devoted a room to Gill's work. Unfortunately, on the evidence of the Bodleian website, the bulk of these collections does not yet seem to be publicly available.
- 22 At present, the only known record of this hand list is preserved as a photocopy in The Lowry, Salford. The invitation to the annual meeting of the governing board of the Settlement is housed along with other items relating to the Settlement; see note 30 below. The same flyer was used to invite the board to Lowry's brief exhibition. The text of this paragraph reads: "You are also invited to view a collection of 25 PENCIL DRAWINGS OF ANCOATS made by Mr. L. S. Lowry at the special request of the Settlement. The drawings, which are for sale, will be on view in the Common Room, Ancoats Hall, before the meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup>, from 12 to 6 p.m., and also on Wednesday, March 26, from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tea at the Buffet ninepence each." As is clear, the source of the information that there were twenty-five drawings in Lowry's show (as opposed to the twenty-six listed on the flyer) lies here. The same text, moreover, clears up the misconception, which I once shared, that the drawing show was in the Round House itself.
- 23 The nineteenth-century maps of the area published by Adshead position two mills just north of Every Street: J. & L. Williams Cotton Mill, which lay between Tame and Harrison Streets, and J. & J. L. Gray's Cotton Mill, which along with Swindells and Williams chemical works, was built between Harrison and Pollard Streets.
- 24 It seems likely that the placelessness telegraphed by these titles is keyed to the fundamental link between canals and rivers on the one hand, and notions of continuity and transit on the other.
- 25 John Berger, "Lowry", in *The Moment of Cubism and other Essays* (New York: Pantheon, 1969), 107.
- 26 The paradoxes of Lowry's relationship to this disappearing world are considered in H. Roy Merrens and Glen Norcliffe, "L. S. Lowry and the Heritage Movement", *Manchester Region History Review* 8 (1994): 50–53.
- 27 Two drawings from the show were reproduced in the *Manchester Guardian* on 25 March 1930, as halftone illustrations. The review itself, "Mr Lowry in Ancoats", ran on a different page from the illustrations.
- 28 "Mr Lowry in Ancoats", *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1930.
- 29 "Mr Lowry in Ancoats", *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1930.
- 30 In her biography of the artist, Shelley Rohde advances this claim. see Rohde, *L. S. Lowry*, 185–86. It is not supported by the surviving records of the Settlement—in particular, the ledger entry preserved among the Settlement archives, MUS/1–MUS/7, which lists the titles of drawings sold from the show along with their numbers on the surviving hand list, and annotates them with the names of the purchasers, how payment was made, and whether the work was sold framed.
- 31 From 1870, the Midland Railway maintained offices in the Hall, close by its goods depot on what was once Mosley land. See "Ancoats Railway Station", Wikipedia, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancoats\\_railway\\_station#CITEREFKellert1969](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancoats_railway_station#CITEREFKellert1969)

- 32 Sydney Solomon Frankenburg (1881–1935) was a member of a conservative Jewish family in the city headed by Isidor, founder of I. Frankenburg and Sons, which after a merger around 1920 became Greengate Leather and Rubber Works, and advertised itself as “the first British manufacturers to produce Rubber-proofed aeroplane and balloon fabrics.” See <http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/File:Im19091009Fl-Frankenburg.jpg>. In this context it is worth noting the reminiscences of Kate Herbert (b. 1928), an artist born in Salford who met Lowry while a student at the Salford College of Art, and who remembered his attraction to Greengate, where he often walked and drew. See the blog written by Herbert’s granddaughter, Naomi Racz: <https://blacktoprain.wordpress.com/2012/11/18/lowry-and-kate-herbert/>

Note, however, Herbert’s memories place Lowry in Greengate during or after the Second World War. For an overview of the history of the Frankenburg firm, see [http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Greengate\\_and\\_Irwell\\_Rubber\\_Co](http://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Greengate_and_Irwell_Rubber_Co)

One further relevant aspect of Sydney Frankenburg’s biography is his role as the husband of Charis Ursula Frankenburg, née Barnett (1892–1985), who with Stocks and Flora Blumberg, founded the Manchester and Salford Mothers’ Clinic, which, according to Prof. Bill Oliver, was the first place outside London to offer free family planning advice to women. See <http://www.citizenscientist.org.uk/welcome/success-in-salford/mary-stocks-charis-frankenburg-and-flora-blumberg-pioneers-of-family-planning/>  
<http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/frankenburg/frankenburg.html#frankenburg.A>

Charis Frankenburg would go on to publish *Common Sense in the Nursery* (1934) and *Not Old, Madam, Vintage* (London: Galaxy Books, 1975), her memoir. In the 1960s, the *Guardian* published a good number of her letters to the editor.

- 33 Not all these names can be traced, but there is enough information to be able to place these individuals as among Manchester’s intellectuals and taste-makers, and, as in the instance of Sydney and Charis Frankenburg, to begin to understand something of the left and liberal ties among them.
- 34 See Frankenburg, *Not Old, Madam, Vintage*, 121 and *passim* on her husband’s charitable nature.
- 35 Lowry, of course, would have understood these dimensions in inches, making use of a pad or packet of paper with uniform sheets. Note, however, that for a Lowry drawing to have these dimensions is not evidence enough that it was on view at the Round House show.
- 36 The phrase is drawn from a 1904 report by T. R. Marr, *Housing Conditions in Manchester and Salford*, cited by Mary Stocks in *Fifty Years in Every Street*, 9. Stocks also cites Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 8, and takes up his phrase, “mean streets”.
- 37 Levy, *Drawings of L. S. Lowry*, 15.
- 38 “Mr Lowry in Ancoats”, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 March 1930.
- 39 This information comes from <https://m.facebook.com/manchestermemorylane/posts/1121617434563978>. Such websites provide valuable sources for memories and photographs of an industrial and residential landscape that has since been almost entirely erased.
- 40 Perhaps the most similar are among the drawings Lowry made at the invitation of his friend Harold Timperley to provide illustrations for the latter’s *A Cotswold Book* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1931). There were twelve in all, some of which approach, but do not achieve, the stark minimalism of Lowry’s Ancoats work. For the general circumstances of the commission, see Rohde, *L. S. Lowry*, 170–75.
- 41 Wagner, “Lowry, Repetition and Change”, 99–100.
- 42 Walter Greenwood, *Love on the Dole* (1933; London: Vintage Classics, new ed. 1993), chapter 3.
- 43 Greenwood’s descriptions return to a longstanding claim about life in the labouring towns of northern England, one already articulated in the nineteenth century. In particular, there are echoes here of the observations of the critic Angus Reach writing in the *Morning Chronicle* in 1849: “In general, these towns wear a monotonous sameness of aspect, physical and moral . . . In fact, the social condition of the different town populations is almost as much alike as the material appearance of the tall chimneys under which they live. Here and there the height of the latter may differ by a few rounds of brick, but in all essential respects, a description of one is a description of all.” Cited by Rob Powell in *In the Wake of King Cotton* (Rochdale Art Gallery, 1986), 12.
- 44 Greenwood, *Love on the Dole*, chapter 3.
- 45 Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, 116.
- 46 Rawson, *Drawing*, 187.
- 47 Rawson, *Drawing*, 193. Rawson is concerned with a drawing in the Ashmolean Museum customarily dated c. 1540.
- 48 Among Lowry’s Ancoats drawings is to be found a study/finished drawing pairing, which confirms this point. It is made up of two views of Great Ancoats Street, one of which is dated 1929, the other—and more finished—version dated 1930.
- 49 Lowry worked as a rent collector and accountant for the Pall Mall Property Company, located on Brown Street, in central Manchester, on a site now occupied by Tesco. Famously, he remained there from 1910 until 1952, when he retired at the age of sixty-five with a pension of £200 per year. According to Rohde, “His duties soon took on a regular pattern: Longsight and Old Trafford on Mondays, Hulme and Higher Broughton on Tuesdays, Withing on Wednesday mornings, and the remainder of the week employed as a cashier in the front office.” Much of the information she offers on the artist’s working life came from Clifford Openshaw, who joined the Pall Mall Property Company in 1928. See Rohde, *L. S. Lowry*, 89–94 and *passim*. Founded in 1895, the Pall Mall Property Company survives, with offices in Lytham St Anne’s, Lancashire; see <https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk/company/00043386>.

- 50 Details of Maitland's role at the University of Manchester can be gleaned from the website of the university library. See also the obituary by A. W. Downie for the Society for General Microbiology, now the Microbiology Society, 1 May 1973, *Journal of Medical Microbiology* 6: 253-258, doi:10.1099/00222615-6-2-253
- 51 Maitland MS, 4. A photocopy of Maitland's unpublished manuscript is in the archive of The Lowry, Salford. My thanks to Claire Stewart, Curator.
- 52 See Robert Hobbs, ed., *Mark Lombardi: Global Networks* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2003). This exhibition circulated among eight galleries and museums in the US and Canada, including the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, where I was fortunate to see it in 2004. The scale of the drawings, and the intricacy of their execution made this direct encounter especially valuable.
- 53 Margery Clarke and her son Paul Clarke today run a small gallery, "The First" Gallery, which operates from their home in Bitterne, Southampton, and still maintains a website; see <http://www.olfocsls.org.uk/first/>. Among the artists the gallery represents is Crispin Eurich (1936-76), who took some memorable photographs of Lowry in Stockport.
- 54 Undated letter from Margery Clarke to the author, autumn 2013.
- 55 The initiative, dubbed Ancoats Urban Village, is detailed in a paper dated June 2011 and titled "Lessons from Ancoats Urban Village and Islington Millennium Village, Manchester". The text is the effort of the Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods Network. See [http://urbed.coop/sites/default/files/Ancoats%20and%20New%20Islington%20report\\_0.pdf](http://urbed.coop/sites/default/files/Ancoats%20and%20New%20Islington%20report_0.pdf)
- Note too that the policy of representing and preserving the area as an industrial landscape is expressly articulated as part of the city's approach to its conservation. See [http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/511/conservation\\_areas/1216/ancoats\\_conservation\\_area](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/511/conservation_areas/1216/ancoats_conservation_area)
- 56 John Barrell, *Edward Pugh of Ruthin, 1763-1813: "A Native Artist"* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013), 31-32.
- 57 Lowry, as quoted by T. J. Clark in "Lowry's Other England", in *Lowry and the Painting of Modern Life*, 73.

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# Resurrection, Re-Imagination, Reconstruction: New Viewpoints on the Hereford Screen

Ayla Lepine

## Authors

Art and Architectural Historian

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The Hereford Screen is one of the most complex and intricate choir screens of the Victorian era. Positioned in the gallery of the Victoria and Albert Museum's main entrance, its glistening metalwork, brass, and terracotta effect surfaces, incrustations of wrought floral forms, Gothic Revival lettering, and semi-precious stones combine with delicate slivers of glinting glass that wink at each of the museum's visitors, whether they journey up the stairs to gaze at this monument up close or regard it from afar on their way to the galleries beyond. The Hereford Screen is one of a family of screens produced by the architect George Gilbert Scott and the metalwork firm of Francis Skidmore for British cathedrals in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The Hereford Screen was perceived by many to be the pinnacle of Victorian Gothic Revival metalwork. Before its installation in Hereford Cathedral it was shown at the 1862 International Exhibition in London. It is a sign of changing beliefs and practices in the Church of England in the nineteenth century. Its metalwork figures and framework recalled the medieval screens within medieval churches and cathedrals throughout Britain, many of which had long since been removed by the mid-nineteenth century. With the rise of High Anglicanism and its interest in Pre-Reformation art and architecture within religious contexts, an enthusiasm for and expertise in Gothic screens returned to the British architectural and theological imagination. The Hereford Screen is a complex and innovative outcome of this cultural shift. Its place within Hereford Cathedral was part of a wider complex of material relationships instigated through Victorian alterations and additions to the cathedral's fabric, including floor tiles, gates, textiles, high altar sculpture, and the organ. The Hereford Screen was removed from the cathedral in 1967, a victim of anti-Victorian changes in taste as well as a consequence of shifts in understanding of liturgy and worship, and it languished in pieces in Coventry until it was acquired by the V&A in 1983. Its restoration is one of the largest projects the museum has ever undertaken, and it garnered public support at the close of the twentieth century in a manner that suggested a shift in taste regarding Victorian art and architecture had taken place once again.



**Figure 1.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen, 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics, and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (M.251:1 to 316-1984). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum

In a sense, the story of the Hereford Screen in its many layers and contexts tells of the reception of a series of receptions. In other words, the Gothic Revival's distinctively selective engagement with the Middle Ages produced innovative Victorian responses to the medieval world for modern settings and needs. These objects and buildings were prone to substantial criticism and what might even be considered severe iconoclasm in the early and mid-twentieth century, as the revivalist impulses of the Victorians were scrutinized and found wanting. This attitude to Victorian uses (indeed, perceived abuses) of history has transformed again in recent decades, led in part by the concerted efforts of amenity society campaigning, developments in scholarship, and increased opportunities for exhibitions and public education.



**Figure 2.**

Sir George Gilbert Scott and Francis Skidmore, Hereford Screen (detail), 1862. painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.251:1 to 316-1984). Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill

Within the groundbreaking online environment of *British Art Studies*, this One Object project picks up the strands of Gothic Revival historians' interactions with the Hereford Screen in the context of George Gilbert Scott, Francis Skidmore, and Victorian exhibitions, and offers new perspectives on the Hereford Screen's unique story of revival, resurrection, restoration, and reconstruction. This *British Art Studies* feature has provided an invaluable opportunity for an international collaboration to explore the Hereford Screen from new angles. It brings together musicology, the digital humanities, conservation, archaeology, and theology. The online platform of *BAS* has allowed authors to bring digital humanities to bear on their thinking and scholarship. This feature includes digital models, films, and high-resolution zoomable imagery. The project draws heavily on archival material, which has been digitized and made available for the first time. Collectively, we hope that this feature will not only shed new light on this particular screen, but also encourage further study of rood and choir screens in modern and medieval Britain, and exploration of the intersection of religion and art as a key area for development in British art history.

This project began with a series of informal conversations around the subject of screens—not only choir screens specifically, but also the conceptual idea of screens as partitions or framings, which have the ability to produce alluringly fragmented viewpoints, translations, and transportations, as well as links between religious and cultural institutions. From these conversations an idea began to grow, and the interconnectivity of a international range of academics with the potential to create a new set of research questions regarding the Gothic Revival, religion, and the arts, with the Hereford Screen at its epicentre, resulted in a team of contributors keen to work collaboratively and offer new insights into the histories of the screen in its various locations. It became clear that much was to be gained from enabling scholars working on the Middle Ages, modern Britain, materials and conservation, and other aspects of the cultural resonances of choir screens, to learn from one another over an extended period. To that end we convened multiple meetings and placed direct interaction with the Hereford Screen at the heart of our discussions as plans for the project evolved. It was important, too, to focus as much on the screen's past in exhibition and cathedral settings as on its more recent restoration campaign, as well as its contemporary and historical meanings. A gathering at the V&A, a study trip to Hereford Cathedral, and a workshop at the Paul Mellon Centre with visits to the V&A's metalwork archive, the screen itself, and a comparison of the screen in situ at St Cyprian's Church near Baker Street, enriched the contributors' views on the Hereford Screen in an organic way and led to the multi-dimensional, multi-media series presented within this issue of *British Art Studies*.

Jacqueline Jung has attended to the Hereford Screen by relating it to a wide variety of medieval precedents; her film considers why and how the medieval screen was an essential liturgical element of Christian sacred interiors, and how the experiences of clergy and worshippers are formed and framed by these diverse elements of architectural sculpture. Her work demonstrates the status of screens as thresholds *par excellence*, delivering nothing less than the prospect of a glimpse of heaven and an encounter with God in the sacramental moments in which Christians believe heaven and earth meet. Tessa Murdoch's focus on the musical history of the Hereford Screen roots this 1860s object firmly within its Hereford Cathedral context, by drawing deeply on the cathedral's rich archival collections. The screen as a presence through unique choral histories offers new ways of exploring how musicology and art history may be productively entwined, and how the effect of the screen in its colour and symbolism was a perpetual harmony, a rich and elegant chord resounding at the heart of the cathedral until its removal in the 1960s.

The Hereford Screen is a significant element within a wider, well-established discourse on the Gothic Revival in Victorian Britain and Scott's major contribution to this artistic and architectural strand of history. Alicia Robinson

fleshes out the full narrative of the Hereford Screen's arrival and departure, and the controversies and complex debates surrounding these circumstances. Social history, materiality, art-historical insight, and shifts in religious sensibility are all at stake in her account of the screen's reception. In a second essay, she describes the nature of the collaboration between Scott and Skidmore, which produced not only the Hereford Screen, but also ironwork Gothic Revival choir screens at Lichfield and Salisbury Cathedrals. My own contribution locates the Hereford Screen in a theological debate regarding the differing meanings of rood and choir screens in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, and contains a trio of short films produced in London and Cambridge. Diana Heath takes up the next phase of the Hereford Screen's history following Robinson's contribution, exploring the major undertaking of restoring and conserving thousands of Victorian fragments. Bringing the V&A's extensive metalwork archive to life, she re-animates recent conservation practices with an eye informed by direct experience of the screen's painstaking reconstruction. Prior to its erection at Hereford Cathedral, the screen had what might be considered a past life, which echoes forward into its Victorian installation and its present state at the V&A. Matthew Reeve, also a medievalist, charts the archaeological screen history of cathedrals in which Scott worked, placing Hereford's medieval history in the frame to illuminate the project as a whole. Justin Underhill, an expert on the latest tools available at the frontier territory of the digital humanities, has created digital models of Hereford Cathedral and the Scott and Skidmore screen within it, allowing the monumental object to be imaginatively re-inserted into this holy space, and opening up exciting new avenues for understanding the impacts of its physical presence upon acoustics and architectural effects. It is hoped that this unique and multi-faceted One Object project within *British Art Studies* will create springboards for further exploration of the distinctive histories of religious architectural sculpture, the status and shifting circumstances of cathedrals and their interiors in modern Britain, and the capacity for new online methods of scholarship to produce stimulating modes of engagement for multi-disciplinary approaches to Gothic Revival studies.



# Theology and Threshold: Victorian Approaches to Reviving Choir and Rood Screens

Ayla Lepine

## Abstract

*In 1851, A. W. N. Pugin published an influential treatise on rood screens, intending in his irrepressible polemical style to create further Gothic Revival momentum for inserting these iconographically complex and liturgically vital elements into Roman Catholic and Anglican churches throughout Britain and its empire. In the decades that followed, debates regarding ritual, aesthetics, materials, and Eucharistic theology surrounded the design, presence, and indeed absence of these screens. This interdisciplinary article on the borderlands between architectural history and theology explores what was at stake in the religious symbolism of a small number of diverse screens designed by George Gilbert Scott, George Frederick Bodley, and Ninian Comper, considering them in light of the key writing produced by Pugin at the mid-point of the nineteenth century, as well as by priest-architect Ernest Geldart in the century's end. This study, together with its three short films that explore the screens' meanings and histories in situ, charts shifts in theology and style as each architect offered innovative views through delicate latticework of stone, paint, and wood towards the Christian sacred epicentre of the Incarnation and the sacrifice of the Eucharist.*

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A constellation of viewpoints on the virtues, challenges, and controversies surrounding the revival of rood and choir screens emerged in Victorian Britain. By focusing on the unique importance of screens within the Gothic Revival as a whole, this essay considers the perspectives of Victorian and early twentieth-century British architects and designers A. W. N. Pugin, George Frederick Bodley, Ernest Geldart, and John Ninian Comper, to illuminate how leading Gothic Revival designers informed and learned from George Gilbert Scott's groundbreaking collaborations with Francis Skidmore. The distinctiveness of Scott and Skidmore's work for their trio of cathedral screens at Lichfield, Salisbury, and Hereford—and the Hereford Screen in particular—marked a turning point in the use of materials as well as the theological implications of a set of iconographic strategies offered as an ensemble within a monumental choir screen. Victorian architectural histories of sacred spaces can easily be done a disservice by not sufficiently considering their theological contexts. This essay outlines what was at stake in the relationship between seeing, liturgical interaction, and belief across a varied half-century of rood and choir screens. It notes the modern distinctions between these two approaches to the partitioning of churches and cathedrals, each of which invoked new ideas as much as referencing medieval ones.

Designs for nineteenth-century rood and choir screens were diverse and daring, and in many cases invited new ways of experiencing the beauty and wonder of sacramental life, particularly the Eucharist. As a way of bringing the Passion—and the Crucifixion in particular—into the heart of Christian worship in modern Britain, the rood's traditional inclusion of Christ's crucified body, attended and worshipped by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist, was more strikingly visceral and, indeed, more Roman Catholic-leaning than the choir screen, which often had a simple cross or an image of Christ in majesty, resurrected and ascended into heaven. Scott and Skidmore's cathedral screens are all of this latter choir-screen type. They were erected amidst an ongoing religious debate regarding screens, liturgical activity, and representations of Christ's death and resurrection in sacred spaces focused on sacramental life and faith.

Victorian perceptions of and controversies over the revival of rood and choir screens were complex, and today their nuances can be clarified with reference to the modern philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas about seeing and existence. These assist in shaping an approach to embodied vision, whereby the liturgical aspects of the rood and choir screen act as an invitation into greater wholeness with Christ through the preciousness of the Eucharistic sacrifice, rather than merely being an ornate barrier between the proper place of the laity and that of the clergy and sacred ministers. Merleau-Ponty wrote of what he called "that little verb" *to see*: "Vision is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself, for being present at the fission of Being from the

inside—the fission at whose termination, not before, I come back to myself.”  
<sup>1</sup> In his view, seeing is necessarily relational, and necessarily a vehicle of connectivity with the divine through multi-sensory stimulation.

Similar dynamics of looking are articulated both in contemporary accounts of Victorian screens and by their interpreters in later eras. Regarding the Victorian revival of screens, Pugin’s recent biographer, Rosemary Hill, observes:

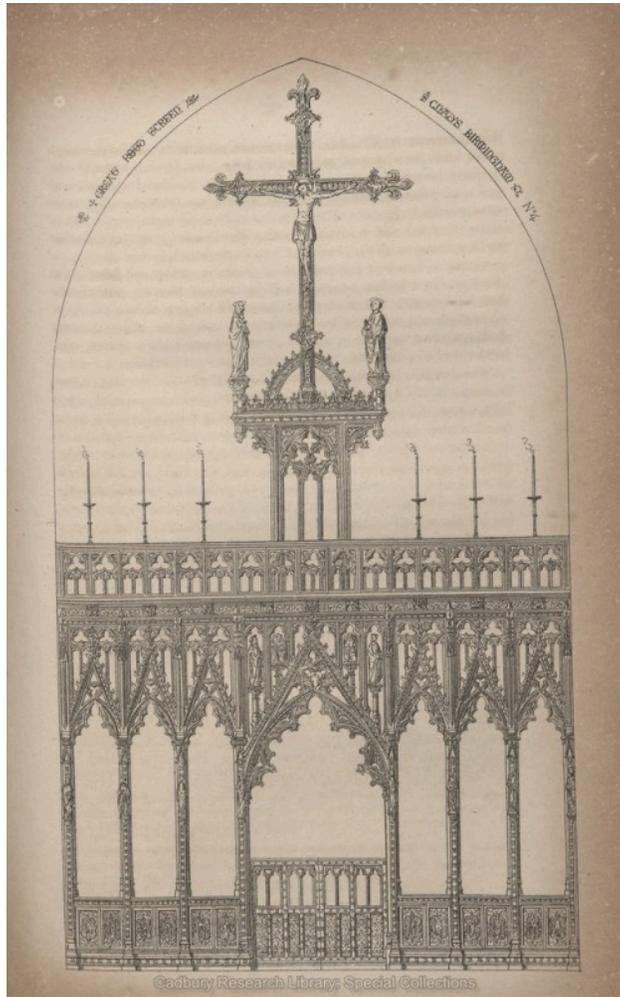
A screen, partially veiling the sanctuary, attracts the gaze and at the same time resists it, emphasising both the centrality and the impenetrable mystery of the Mass. It is medieval but also picturesque, creating the views between “unequal varieties of space, divided but not separate” that Payne Knight defined as the essence of the picturesque in Gothic buildings.<sup>2</sup>

To see partially, and to mediate seeing through a threshold of imagery connected to what is seen and what is hidden, is the primary function of a rood or choir screen. How that gaze towards the altar, and therefore the gaze directed towards the Eucharist, is inflected by devotion and liturgical process in the Victorian era, depends on the medievalist-modern programme assembled by the screen designer. This contemporary practice of interweaving references from past and present created particular effects within and upon the worshipping community on both sides of this potent architectural sculpture.

Despite attending to numerous voices in the Gothic Revival screen debate, this study is in no way exhaustive. Because little academic attention has been paid to screens as a liturgical and visual cultural phenomenon in their own right, I instead place key historic points of reference into conversation with the Hereford Screen before and after its production. The reception of Victorian screens has not always been positive: over the past couple of generations many were destroyed or removed like the Hereford Screen itself, as the Church shifted its liturgical, theological, and therefore architectural views. The enduring consequence of the screen debates, which centred on whether they were obstructive or conducive to worship and liturgical development, as well as their general status as signs of the Gothic Revival’s reworking of pre-Reformation theological themes, has been often to perceive rood and choir screens as an inhospitable barrier rather than a holy threshold. They became less manifestations of wonder and more expressions of division.

Rood and choir screens have a significant place within the ongoing and rich discourses surrounding the survival of Victorian sculpture and sacred interiors. The exhibition *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1901* (2014-15) and its landmark catalogue, explored Christian art extensively and discussed monuments in fresh new ways. But this is an exception—more often the scholarship has been limited to George Gilbert Scott's Albert Memorial and descriptions of the major figures of the Gothic Revival movement, without sufficient attention paid to religious contexts. Broadly, church interiors and the unique architectural sculpture of rood and choir screens have been overlooked. <sup>3</sup>

In the Gothic Revival, there was no intention to replicate an object from the Middle Ages with exact precision. The screens presented here, and the Hereford Screen in particular, are resurrections and reconsiderations of the vast histories of European rood and choir screens rather than exercises in copying and reconstruction. Architects used a medieval architectural toolkit to create spaces that suited Victorian understandings of God, devotion, and the crucial role of Christian art and architecture in framing worship. These points are illustrated in three short films that accompany this study, which were produced at St Cyprian's, Clarence Gate in London; All Saints', Jesus Lane in Cambridge; and at the Hereford Screen itself in the V&A.



**Figure 1.**

Augustus Pugin, Design for Great Rood Screen, St Chad's, Birmingham, from *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* by Augustus Pugin (London: Charles Dolman 1843). Digital image courtesy of Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham

Pugin wrote the *Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* in 1843. Within this book he illustrated one of his most prominent rood screen designs, explaining its combination of older and newer elements into a single whole. Drawing medieval and Victorian designs together into an ideal composite, the screen constituted a kind of manifesto for the prospect of their revival as a type of liturgical, sacred architectural sculpture, drawing on medieval models and allowing them to speak afresh to a Victorian Christian public. Of this screen, for St Chad's in Birmingham (fig. 1), Pugin wrote:

The great rood was certainly one of the most impressive features of a Catholic Church; and a screen surmounted with its lights and images, covered with gold and paintings of holy men, forms indeed a glorious entrance to the holy place set apart for sacrifice. We have here introduced an etching of the great screen and rood lately erected in the Cathedral Church of St. Chad, Birmingham, and which will afford a tolerable idea of the sublime effect of the ancient roodcreens, before their mutilation under Edward the Sixth. The images are all ancient and were procured from some of the suppressed continental abbeys; the crucifix itself is of the natural size, and carved with wonderful art and expression; the images of our blessed Lady and St. John are less in proportion, which is quite correct. Immediately under tracery panels in front of the loft, are a series of ancient sculptures; the centre of which represents the consecration of St. Chad, patron of the church, the other refers to the life and glories of St. John the Baptist. On the mullions between the open panels, on foliated corbels, are eight images of prophets. The rood is richly gilt and painted, and it is proposed to continue the same decoration over the screen itself. <sup>4</sup>



**Figure 2.**

Augustus Pugin, Rood Screen, St Giles' Catholic Church, Cheadle.

Collection of St Giles' Catholic Church, Cheadle. Digital image courtesy of Oosoom

St Giles', Cheadle (fig. 2) also gives a flavour of Pugin's ideals for rood screens in the 1840s, at the height of his short career. One of his final publications before his death in 1852 was a treatise on *Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts*. Here, Pugin laid out his beliefs regarding best design practice by taking the reader on a geographical tour of European screens across Germany, France, and Britain. The book concludes, delightfully, with a polemical discussion of four types of iconoclasts and their screen-breaking motivations, based on Pugin's perception (from his Gothic Revival and stridently Catholic point of view) of their own distorted ideology and its violent results. He names them as Calvinist, Pagan, Revolutionary, and Modern. Regarding the latter, Pugin wrote:

The principal characteristics of modern iconoclasts may be summed up as follows:—Great irritability at vertical lines, mutations of screens, or transverse beams and crosses; a perpetual habit of abusing the finest works of Catholic antiquity and art . . . they require great excitement in the way of lively, jocular, and amatory tunes at divine service, and exhibit painful distress at the sound of solemn chanting or plain song . . . unlike their predecessors, [they] confine their attacks to strokes of the pen; and we do not believe that they have hitherto succeeded in causing the demolition of a single screen.<sup>5</sup>

One of Pugin's most impactful projects was the design for the Medieval Court at the Great Exhibition in 1851. Screens played a key role in it, and his Caen stone rood screen for the chapel of St Edmund's College in Ware, Hertfordshire, was something of a manifesto, matching his beliefs as laid out in his publications on chancel screens and rood lofts. The screen is seven bays long and houses two altars. It combines stone and wood, with the rood itself being carved of pine and polychromed.<sup>6</sup>

For Pugin, as many historians have observed, the Gothic Revival was no mere stylistic architectural endeavour, but a moral imperative, and a personal passion that spread out through Church and civic commissions to become a national conviction. The Gothic Revival itself was also far from monolithic and could be selectively shaped and instrumentalized by those designers who understood that Gothic was a style across hundreds of years and myriad cultures that one could combinatively deploy with dexterity and historically informed care. Not everyone saw it that way, however. There was also a tendency, among Gothic's detractors as well as its promoters, to view the Gothic Revival as a fixed entity which one either complied with or digressed from, only to be found lacking. A challenge to Pugin's role in its promotion, and an insight into the Revival more broadly, came from John Henry Newman, who wrote:

Mr Pugin is notoriously engaged in a revival—he is disentombing what has been hidden for centuries amid corruptions; and, as, first one thing, then another is brought to light, he . . . modifies his first views, yet he speaks as confidently and dogmatically about what is right and what is wrong, as if he had gained the truth from the purest and stillest founts of continuous tradition . . . Gothic is now like an old dress, which fitted a man well twenty years back but must be altered to fit him now . . . I wish to wear it, but I wish to alter it, or rather I wish *him* to alter it.<sup>7</sup>

Alteration, adjustment, and “refinement” (the latter the term preferred by the late Victorian architect George Frederick Bodley) both defined and problematized the Gothic Revival’s pull on attention for sacred British architecture.<sup>8</sup> For George Frederick Bodley, Scott’s first architectural pupil and one of his most successful, as well as a co-founder of the furnishings and fittings firm Watts and Company, rood screens were a key element of church interiors. This is exemplified by the screen in All Saints’, Jesus Lane in Cambridge—a church project largely regarded as Bodley’s turning point towards the values of the Aesthetic Movement as well as the attractions of fourteenth-century English Gothic. The screen adheres to multiple aspects of Pugin’s preferred approach but does not go so far as to create a rood. It is a choir screen, with a bare cross featuring emblems of the Four Evangelists at its ends. The life of Christ revealed through scripture is the focus of this liturgical sacred sculpture.



[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 3.**

Ayla Lepine, *Theology and Threshold: The Choir Screen at All Saints' Church, Cambridge*, 2016. Digital image courtesy of Film by Jonathan Law

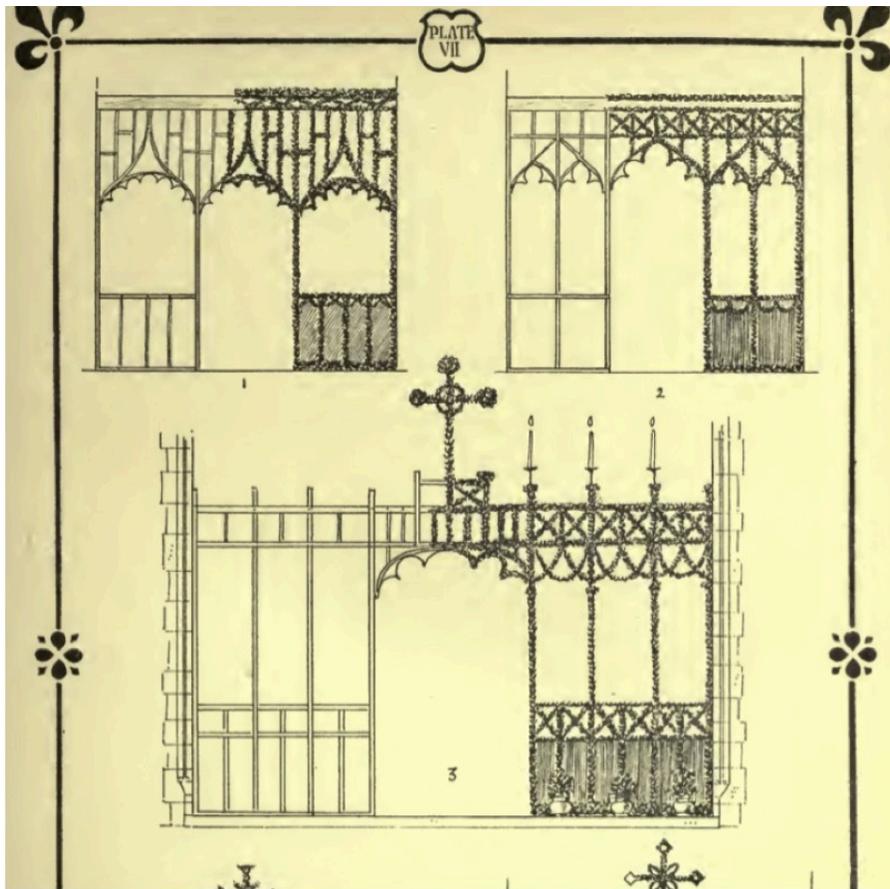
A significant Gothic Revivalist who, like Bodley and Pugin, was also closely involved in a vast range of designs for sacred decorative arts and furnishings, was the priest-architect Ernest Geldart.<sup>9</sup> In his *Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism* (fig. 4) published in 1899 as a practical guide, with its own share of Anglo-Catholic polemic, Geldart suggested that the screen was an opportunity to bring into play temporary rood decorations that conveyed the eschatological vision of the Eucharist. Aware of the regular appearance of choir screens without roods (fig. 5), Geldart ventured that it could work well to include

a *tentative* cross, whether hung at the chancel arch, or placed upon a screen that lacks its Rood. Here, since a screen does not inevitably *imply* a Rood, the occasional or periodic introduction of a temporary cross need not indicate a hesitating or temporizing policy. But it is a perfectly fair trial to see if it looks well, and if, in the best sense of the word, “it pleases the people.”<sup>10</sup>

Geldart's own designs included rood beams rather than full screens, and in 1896 he designed one which could have been produced either in wood or metal, high above the steps between chancel and nave. It was never built. <sup>11</sup>



**Figure 4.** Ernest Geldart, Frontispiece and title page, from *A Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism* by Ernest Geldart (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1899)



**Figure 5.**

Ernest Geldart, Plate VII , from *A Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism* by Ernest Geldart (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co, 1899).

Variations on rood and choir screens continued into the twentieth century. A handbook published in 1932 by the Warham Guild furnishings company provides a window onto how the debate developed: “At the present time there is a reaction against the erection of any kind of barrier or screen between the altar and congregation. Nevertheless it should not be assumed that a screen should never be erected.”<sup>12</sup> The handbook offers a brief history of screens and concludes that gilt and colour should be used wherever possible. The text expresses strong admiration for East Anglian late medieval screens like the ones so highly regarded by William Morris and Bodley, as well as by Comper, particularly in his designs for St Cyprian’s, Clarence Gate. These late Gothic survivors had often been subject to iconoclastic attacks in history too, and the melancholic and indeed violent slashes through painted faces of saints and angels, exposing the grainy ancient wood beneath, served as a stark reminder to Victorian and later screen designers about the power of these liturgical artistic objects to provoke.

Iconoclasm, restoration, and medievalism formed a tripartite foundation for the debates that raged across the long nineteenth century regarding the blending of old and new Gothic material and the manner in which this might be done. A dedication plaque in Winchester Cathedral attests to one method of recollection mixed with innovation:

The great altar screen of this cathedral church was erected in the course of the XVth Century. In the year 1538 it was grievously mutilated and despoiled of the figures which adorned it. In succeeding ages it was subjected to various tasteless alterations until its original beauty was almost entirely effaced. In the year 1885 the restoration of the central portion was begun . . . The work thus far accomplished . . . on the vigil of the annunciation, the figure of our blessed Lord together with the enrichments of the cross . . . were dedicated, thus completing as far as possible the restoration of the screen to its original condition of glory and beauty. <sup>13</sup>

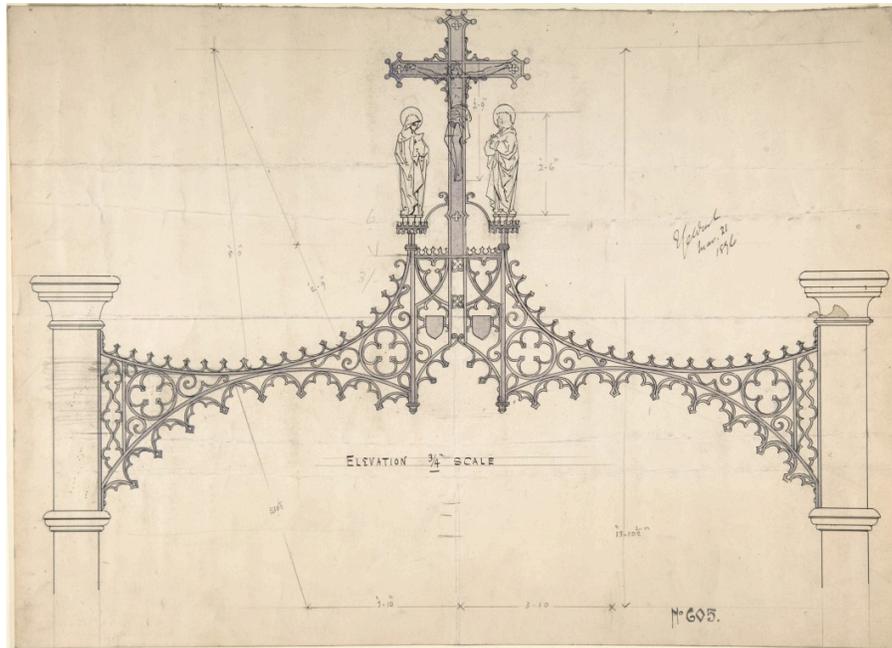
The desire to return to a medieval ideal, albeit with a Victorian twist, resulted in rood and choir screens being carefully studied from around the mid-nineteenth century onwards for aspects of detail in colour, materials, decorative forms, and geometry as well as in their general principles and dominant iconography. An 1875 drawing by Walter Lewis Spiers ([fig. 6](#)) demonstrates the interest in East Anglian colour at St Agnes Church at Cawston in Norfolk, which could be transferred not only to new designs in painted wood but into fuller and more diverse schemes for the Victorian church, from painted ceilings to palettes for ecclesiastical textiles.



[View this illustration online](#)

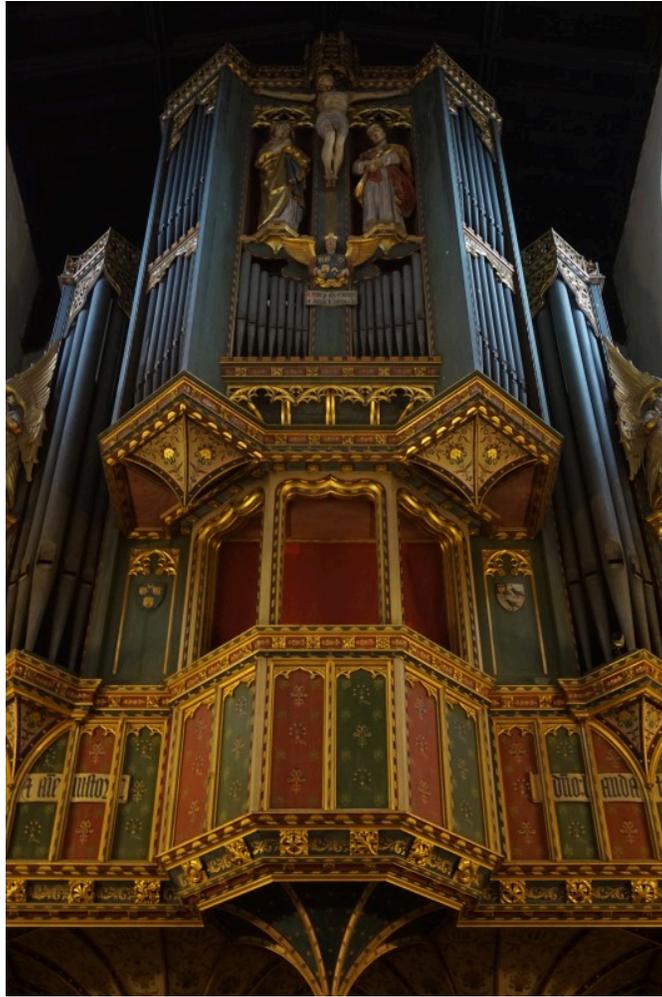
**Figure 6.**

Walter Lewis Spiers, Design for the painted rood screen at St Agnes Church, Cawston, 1875, drawing, 14 x 11 cm. RIBA Collections. Digital image courtesy of RIBA Collections



**Figure 7.**

Ernest Geldart, Rood and screen, 1896, pencil and ink over graphite, 29.8 x 41.9 cm. Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Digital image courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (Exchange, Royal Institute of British Architects, 1960)



**Figure 8.**

Sir Ninian Comper, Rood Screen, 1893, All Saints Parish Church, St Ives. Collection of All Saints Parish Church, St Ives. Digital image courtesy of Ayla Lepine

The Scottish architect John Ninian Comper made careful study of these rood screens—and Ranworth in particular—blending their dominant characteristics with his own unique way of combining classicism and Gothic, and earlier and later periods of church design. A near-contemporary of his work, inspired by East Anglian Gothic at St Cyprian’s, Clarence Gate in London, is at All Saints at St Ives in Cambridgeshire, where the rood is uniquely (to the best of my knowledge) integrated with the organ (fig. 8). Comper’s study of rood screens also encompassed Spanish traditions of *rejas*. His inter-war metalwork screens looked back less to Scott and Skidmore than to Early Modern Spanish metalwork, as at St John’s, Stockcross, completed in 1933. Comper was perhaps the most experimental, if not the most politically controversial of the rood screen designers considered here. At St Mary’s, Wardleworth, Comper combined a detailed approach to a Gothic English rood screen, complete with sculptures of saints in niches below the rood, with an

unusual placement of a *Pantokrator* figure on the beam directly above the screen. In doing so, he was directly inspired by rood beams (where the rood sits on the beam but there is no screen), though instead of the crucified Christ he reinvented the form, answering the suffering of Jesus on the rood with the triumph of Christ in heaven on the additional beam. At St Cyprian's, Clarence Gate, the rood screen, the chancel arch's Christ in majesty, and the further imagery of Christ as *Pantokrator* above the altar, all inserted into the church by Comper across a period that spanned decades, creates a programme that charts Christ's Passion through to his resurrection across a concentrated space between the nave and the altar, with the relatively unadorned chancel between. Christ on the cross of the rood as entry-point to Christ as victorious over all creation is regarded as an opportunity for meditation: in the words of the Lenten *Triodion*, "Today He who hung the earth upon the waters is hung on the Cross. He who clothes himself in light as in a garment stood naked at the judgement." <sup>14</sup>



[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 9.**

Ayla Lepine, *Theology and Threshold: The Rood Screen at St Cyprian's, Clarence Gate, London*, 2016. Digital image courtesy of Film by Jonathan Law

Where does this leave Scott's own theological context for the development of the choir screen at Hereford Cathedral? The image of the *Pantokrator*-type Christ in blessing allowed for a depiction of triumph and resurrection that avoided Catholic-leaning theology which might dominate the screen's Anglican message, but it was not necessarily drawing upon Eastern Orthodox

Greek visual culture in the way that Comper's *Pantokrator* figures eventually would. Rather, it is the language of cathedral portals, and thresholds between exterior and interior in western Europe that Scott seemed to channel most closely in his translation from stone to metalwork leading up to the 1862 International Exhibition. In Scott's autobiographical *Personal and Professional Recollections* he wrote little about screens despite encountering a great number of medieval and modern examples across a long career. One of the few mentions he makes of rood screens in his autobiography concerns a restoration project undertaken in Chesterfield, in which he "found the rood screen to have been pulled down and sold, but we protested, and it was recovered".<sup>15</sup> Similarly, he praised German churches in which roods had been retained.<sup>16</sup> As a rule, in Scott's church and cathedral restoration work, he would leave existing screens in place. Regarding his own work at Hereford, he outlined the tensions between his design and Skidmore's execution, concerned that Skidmore's "eccentricity" had allowed for the final product to deviate from its historicist purpose. He worried that the screen represented innovative decoration for its own sake rather than applying new techniques and materials to reinterpreted medieval models.<sup>17</sup> Not everyone was convinced by the effort, particularly the sharply critical minor architect J. T. Emmett, who believed that "the screens at Lichfield and Hereford are sufficient monumental records of the audacity of an architect and of the simplicity of his employers."<sup>18</sup>



[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 10.**

Ayla Lepine, *Theology and Threshold: The Hereford Screen at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London*, 2016. Digital image courtesy of Film by Jonathan Law

In her 2014 study of Scott, Claudia Marx pointed out that in Scott and Skidmore's collaborations at Lichfield, Salisbury, and Hereford, the insertion of ironwork screens was at sites "wherever an ancient pulpitum was missing".<sup>19</sup> This is an interesting light in which to view these screens: their ironwork lattice creates nothing like a *pulpitum* replacement, but rather a distinctively Victorian medievalist echo, not only asserting Scott and Skidmore's own unique modern medievalist design language in motifs, iconography, and—crucially—materials and techniques, but also going about this task such that the particularly skeletal qualities of ironwork created a kind of gloriously luminous aesthetic that echoed earlier iterations of heftier medieval screens in stone and wood. This effect may in part be Scott and Skidmore's way of referencing the monumental architectural thresholds created by older *pulpitum* formations in these cathedrals and elsewhere in Europe (such as those explored by Jacqueline Jung in her contribution to this One Object project).

The presence of a crucified Christ in a Victorian space in the form of a rood screen demanded different theological responses from Christian worshippers than the image of a resurrected one, or indeed of a cross upon a screen alone. Indeed, the elements in these screens were also combined in different ways with additional symbolism, such as in the screen at All Saints', Jesus

Lane in Cambridge, in which the cross on the uppermost portion of the screen is surrounded by emblems of the Bible and Christian tradition in the form of the symbols of the four Evangelists. This was an alternative for choir screens, in place of a medieval rood sculptural group that focused upon the specific biblical account of Christ's mother and the Beloved Disciple as mourning witnesses of Christ's death. In his 2009 work on modern imagery of crucifixion and resurrection, the theologian George Pattison writes: "The new creation to which Christian theology bears witness, the new creation brought about in and by 'Christ and him crucified' . . . is a new creation of a world and a history that has been degraded and diminished by suffering, violence and every possible manifestation of sin." Pattison believes that concentrating of artistic attention on the cross is a key element of meditating upon its status as a kind of hinge—an event through which all this suffering is utterly redeemed, transformed, and recollected into the dying (and subsequently rising) Son of God. As he explains, the cross "is the reversal of the quantitative accumulation of nothingness that has so long overwhelmed our individual and collective aspirations to something better".<sup>20</sup>

Seeking to contemplate the Passion through a medieval lens with renewed clarity for a modern world, the Victorian period also saw a rise in medieval revivals of devotional poetry and hymnody. The two most relevant to the revival of rood screens are the late eighth-century *The Dream of the Rood* and the sixth-century hymns of Venantius Fortunatus, translated by John Mason Neale for the English Hymnal in the early 1850s. The latter's *Vexilla Regis Prodeunt* focuses on the dazzling beauty and light of the cross as a living, fruitful source of life for all, paradoxically weaving together the suffering of the Passion and the promise of salvation for all through Christ. In *The Dream of the Rood*, the cross itself speaks: "I tower/ High and mighty beneath the skies, having power to heal/ Whosoever shall bow to me." As liturgist Christopher Irvine explains, "Because the cross in this Old English poem represents the bloody scene of Christ's victory, so it is transmuted into a tree of beauty, a tree that bore the king in his dazzling splendour."<sup>21</sup> This connects with Merleau-Ponty's stance of vision as an experience of proceeding forth, a journeying outwards, in order to attend afresh to what he calls the "Being within".

Representations of Christ's crucified body remind worshippers that transformation is imminent through the divine nexus of profound love and horrendous suffering. The presence of a Christ in majesty, in the act of blessing—as in the Hereford Screen—provides a slightly different Christological message, that the ascended Christ protects and cares for all God's people, promising God's glory and the bodily resurrection to the faithful. In Scott's case, the re-introduction of choir screens allowed for a renewed expression of medievalism to come into contact with modern needs in the Church and in industrial and artistic processes. This was different from

the motivations of Pugin, Bodley, or Comper, though somewhat closer to Geldart's view regarding materials and details in the embellishment of screens. Most significantly, for all three architects innovation in design came through stylistic and iconographic means. The emphasis on the modern, the fresh, and the invigorating for new outlooks on art and religion was captured in the praise of the *Illustrated London News* when the Hereford Screen was exhibited at South Kensington in 1862: it was "the most noble work of modern times . . . a monument of surpassing skill of our land and our age."

<sup>22</sup> For Scott in his work with Skidmore in particular, the chief innovating factor rested with the deployment of materials, despite his concern that novel eccentricities had resulted from losses in translation. For each of these architects who created rood and choir screens, and inserted sacred thresholds declaring Christ's presence in the Eucharist and in the heart of the worshipper in a variety of text and image combinations, the role of the screen—whether depicting the crucified or the risen Christ—was a foundational element in the many iterations of modern British medievalism.

## Footnotes

- 1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind", in *The Primacy of Perception*, ed. James Edie (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 186.
- 2 Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 201.
- 3 Martina Droth, Jason Edwards, and Michael Hatt, *Sculpture Victorious: Art in an Age of Invention, 1837-1902* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2015).
- 4 A. W. N. Pugin, *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture* (London: Charles Dolman, 1843), 78.
- 5 A. W. N. Pugin, *A Treatise on Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts* (London: Charles Dolman, 1851), 98-99.
- 6 "Roman Catholic Chapel of St Edmund's College", Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1308305> (accessed 5 Jan. 2017).
- 7 John Henry Newman to Ambrose Philipps, in *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman*, Vol. 12: *Rome to Birmingham*, ed. C. S. Dessain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 221-22.
- 8 For a full account of Bodley's career, see Michael Hall, *George Frederick Bodley and the Late Victorian Gothic Revival in Britain and America* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2014).
- 9 For a full account of Ernest Geldart, see James Bettley, "The Reverend Ernest Geldart and Late Nineteenth-Century Church Decoration", PhD Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1999.
- 10 Ernest Geldart, *A Manual of Church Decoration and Symbolism* (Oxford and London: Mowbray & Co., 1899), 45.
- 11 My thanks to James Bettley for confirming this.
- 12 *The Warham Guild Handbook* (London: Mowbrays, 1932), 50-52.
- 13 Inscription at Winchester Cathedral next to the screen.
- 14 Mother Maria and Bishop Diokleia Kallistos, eds., *The Lenten Triodion* (Waymart, PA: St Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002), 582.
- 15 George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, ed. G. Gilbert Scott (London: Sampson Low, 1879), 96.
- 16 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 139.
- 17 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 216.
- 18 Quoted in Gavin Stamp, *Gothic for the Steam Age: An Illustrated Biography of George Gilbert Scott* (London: Aurum, 2015), 18.
- 19 Claudia Marx, "Scott and the Restoration of Major Churches", in *Sir George Gilbert Scott, 1811-1878: An Architect and His Influence*, ed. P. Barnwell, G. Tyack, and W. Whyte (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2014), 98.
- 20 George Pattison, *Crucifixions and Resurrections of the Image: Christian Reflections on Art and Modernity* (London: SCM, 2009), 54.
- 21 Christopher Irvine, *The Cross and Creation in Christian Liturgy and Art* (London: SPCK, 2013), 119.

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# The Hereford Screen: A Prehistory

Matthew Reeve

## Abstract

*This paper explores two contexts for Francis Skidmore and George Gilbert Scott's screen at Hereford Cathedral. First, it locates the screen within a succession of choir screens at Hereford from the middle ages to the present, thereby charting the typology of the choir screen within a single institutional context. Second, it shows that Skidmore and Scott's work at Hereford should be understood in light of their related work at Lichfield and Salisbury, and that, more distantly, the three buildings were subject to significant "improvements" in the eighteenth century that Scott and Skidmore's work was intended to erase.*

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## Cite as

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Many viewers of the Hereford Screen (now in the V&A) would no doubt agree with a commentator who saw it at the 1862 International Exhibition in London and called it “the grandest, most triumphant achievement of modern architectural art” (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> Although a work of the Gothic Revival, its style and material character is inconsistent with the medieval building in which it was placed, and its sinuous forms make no obvious allusion to the history of English medieval great church screens (nor, for the most part, does its material). For this reason and others, scholars have tended to study it within its immediate Victorian context as a stunning work of Gothic modernity (which it surely is), thereby privileging its moment of inception and its immediate aesthetic, technical, and historical aspects. But Skidmore and Scott’s screen was at least the fourth choir screen at Hereford. It replaced a fourteenth-century screen that was taken down in 1841 under the aegis of Dean Merewether and Lewis Nockalls Cottingham as part of a broader campaign to re-medievalize the cathedral choir after the devastations of the eighteenth century, which was itself the replacement of an earlier screen from the thirteenth-century remodelling. A prior screen must have existed in the Romanesque building, and further screens before that, even if we cannot chart them with accuracy. Like its medieval predecessors, the Hereford Screen would also fall out of fashion or be deemed inappropriate in a great church; by 1897 it was deemed “gorgeous . . . but not so particularly artistic . . . a great deal too gaudy and glittering for its place”, and by 1967 it was removed altogether.<sup>2</sup> While the emancipation of a modern, Gothic Revival object from its medieval typological and institutional history is, more often than not, an accepted methodological premise in scholarship on the Gothic Revival, this paper argues in the opposite direction by positioning the screen within a series of monuments, thereby reconnecting a work of medieval revival to the Middle Ages itself. This demands understanding not only the morphology of Hereford Cathedral’s choir space from the middle ages to the present, but also its changing liturgical functions and requirements. It takes the form of a “reverse archaeology”, beginning at the bottom of the sedimented history of the screen and working chronologically forward to Scott and Skidmore.<sup>3</sup> My thinking along these lines is indebted, on the one hand, to current work on anachronic appraisals of the art object in which an object can exist (or be implicated) in multiple temporalities, and on the other, to what Nicola Camerlenghi has called, following the historians of the *Annales* School, the *longue durée* of medieval buildings.<sup>4</sup> Implicit in this approach is my own belief that medievalists and Gothic Revivalists not only have much to learn from each other, but that the study of medieval forms cannot readily be tethered to one period (the “Middle Ages” or “modernity”) since they consistently demand to be explored “out of time”.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 1.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen, 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics, and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (M.251:1 to 316-1984). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum

Not atypical of English medieval religious objects and *ornamenta*, choir screens in England are precious survivals. Early screens were regularly replaced during building campaigns in the high and later Middle Ages such that English churches now retain a relative wealth of late medieval examples of great screens but few from the eleventh, twelfth, or thirteenth centuries. Where they do survive, they are not in their original position or even, in some cases (including our own), in their original building, and they require archaeological reconstruction and recontextualization.<sup>6</sup> There appear to be no obvious English medieval designs for or representations of cathedral choir screens in contemporary drawings or paintings, although our knowledge is occasionally supplemented by documentary or literary accounts, such as Henry of Avranches's extraordinary thirteenth-century description of St Hugh's choir screen at Lincoln:

The entrance to the choir is painted with a golden majesty. Christ crucified is properly expressed by His proper image, and the course of His life is there worked in consummately. Not only the cross or image, but the broad surface of six pillars and two wooden panels blazes with tested gold.<sup>7</sup>

When not rebuilt during the course of the Middle Ages, screens were subjects of iconoclasm during the Dissolution, and were subsequently altered, destroyed, or replaced according to changing tastes and liturgical functions

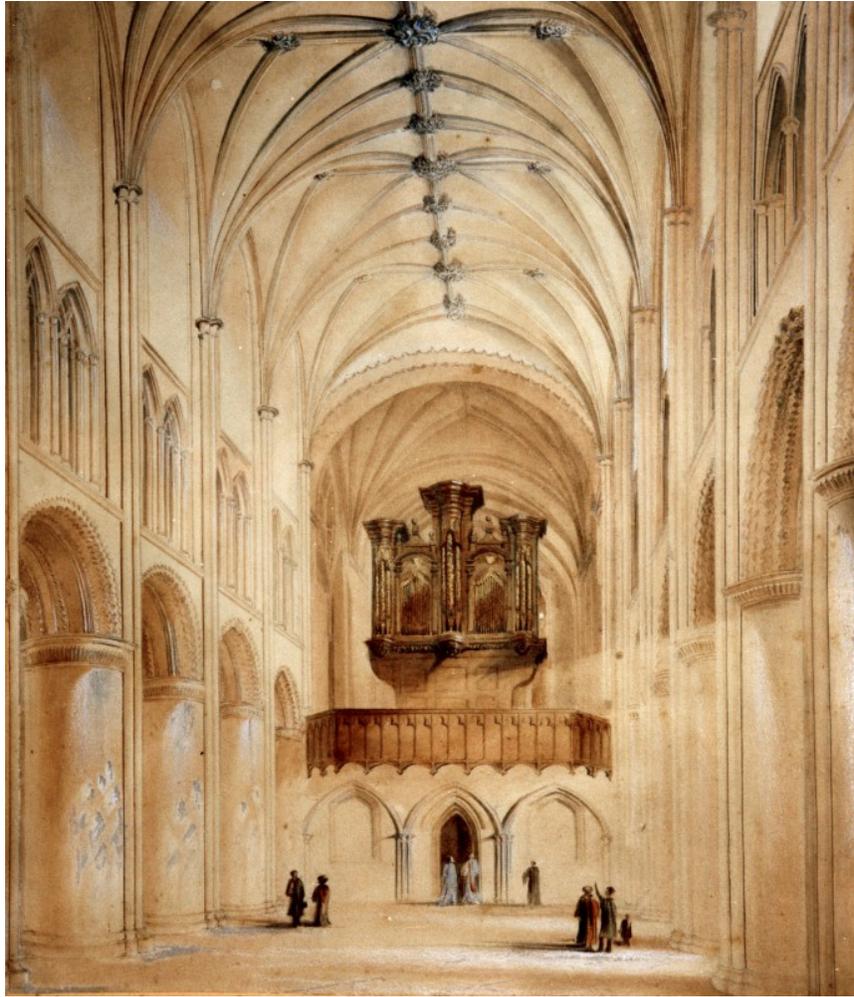
in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. The study of the Hereford Screen is, in these respects, typical of the study of medieval choir screens generally. Also, while there is a wealth of scholarship on English screens (much of which began with the same medievalist and ecclesiological movement that gave birth to the Skidmore and Scott screen), still no comprehensive account of the choir screen in English, much less British art, has been written.<sup>8</sup>

## **The Hereford Screens: Romanesque to Revival**

There is no conclusive evidence for the existence of a choir screen in the post-Conquest Hereford cathedral, built from 1107 to 1148, although we can safely surmise that a screen was part of its basic liturgical topography. As Malcolm Thurlby has argued, the capitals from the western crossing piers may provide evidence for the position of the Romanesque screen. Their sculptural elaboration suggests that, typical of medieval architecture, they functioned as liturgical markers to articulate a place of sanctity, which is consistent with the likely location of the choir screen.<sup>9</sup> The Romanesque capitals were recarved by Lewis Nockalls Cottingham during his nineteenth-century reconstruction (of which more is said below), although we know from documentation that Cottingham insisted on the precise replacement of the medieval stonework, indicating that the recarved capitals followed the original design. While we have no fabric evidence that can be securely attributed to the Romanesque screen (and Cottingham's restorations have removed any masonry scars or set-in marks), Thurlby's reading of the fabric accords with liturgical custom.<sup>10</sup> Whatever Romanesque screen may have existed, it was surely replaced in the early Gothic extension and remodelling of the eastern arm. Completed in two phases, it comprised the new eastern transepts (which included east-facing transept chapels) and the bays of the retrochoir and Lady Chapel vestibule, all of which is attributed to the episcopate of William de Vere (1186–98). Following a break of some twenty years, around 1220 the crypt and Lady Chapel above were built, followed by the remodelling of the chancel in the 1230s, including a new vault and clerestory. All of this was likely intended as space for the burgeoning cult of St Ethelbert as much as for the celebration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this, Hereford followed from a list of eastern extensions in England in the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, particularly at Salisbury (from c. 1220) and Worcester (from 1224), all of which drew ultimately from the eastern extension at Canterbury for the cult of Thomas Becket (from 1174).<sup>11</sup>

If no conclusive evidence survives for these earlier monuments, we do have visual evidence of what was likely the subsequent screen in Joseph Carless's 1833 watercolour drawing of the nave (fig. 2).<sup>12</sup> Like its predecessor(s) the construction of this choir screen was tied to the liturgical changes of the

building. The later thirteenth-century history of Hereford was dominated by the cult of Thomas Cantilupe (d. 1282) whose stunning shrine still stands in the north transept (fig. 3), and much of its architectural and religious history is necessarily oriented around it.<sup>13</sup> Enthusiasm for Cantilupe's cult inspired (and afforded) an updating of the cathedral in order to articulate a pilgrimage route for devotees to Cantilupe's shrine (the north aisle was built first leading from the north porch as the public route to the shrine). New vaults and large windows were inserted in the aisles of the nave and subsequently the choir between about 1290 and 1310.<sup>14</sup> But the choir aisles suggested a further rethinking of the venerability of the episcopal see in its extraordinary series of retrospective funerary effigies of the bishops of Hereford set in Gothic niches (five on either side of the choir), forming a kind of episcopal pantheon from 1079 terminating in Cantilupe himself.<sup>15</sup> It has not been noted that this scheme reflects an earlier tradition of retrospective episcopal memorials from the Romanesque church mentioned by William of Malmesbury.<sup>16</sup>



**Figure 2.** Joseph Carless, Hereford Cathedral Nave, 1833, drawing, 35 × 29 cm. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives



**Figure 3.**

Thomas Cantilupe Shrine, 1282, Hereford Cathedral.  
Collection of Hereford Cathedral. Digital image  
courtesy of Phil Chapman

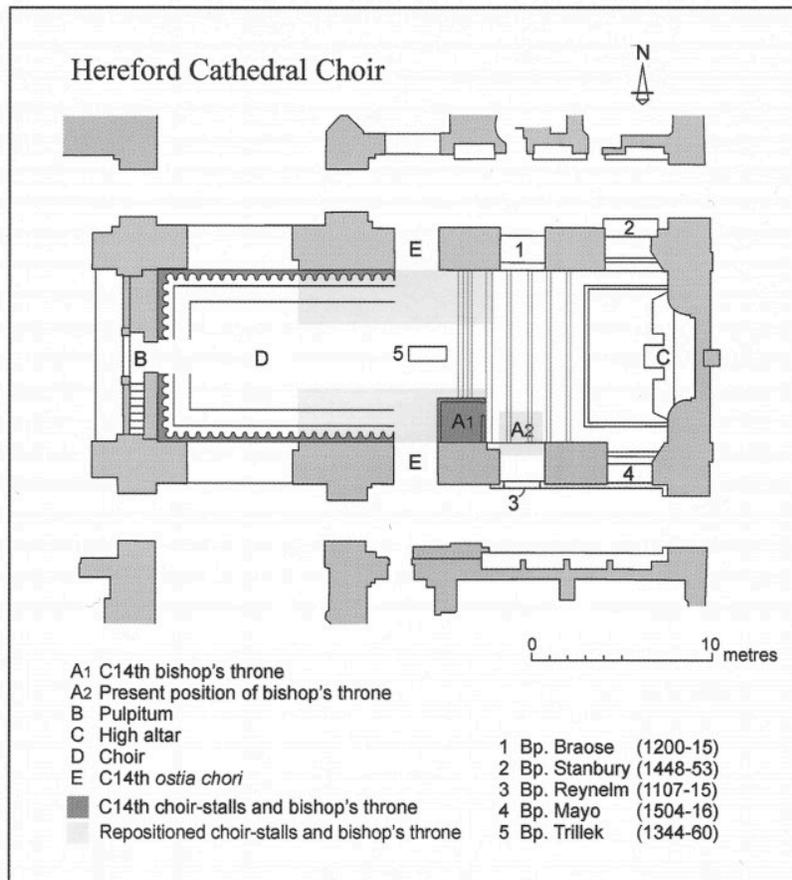
While these works provided substantial opportunity for the remaking of a screen in light of renovations to the adjacent fabric, current opinion suggests that the screen represented in Carless's view was built in the subsequent phase of construction in the second quarter of the fourteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In this campaign, new towers were built over the crossing and the west façade, which provided visual markers for travelling pilgrims and endowed the church with the appearance of a celestial city. Already failing, the crossing and crossing tower were likely to have been the concern of the canons of Hereford who appealed to Pope John XXII in 1319 and demanded shoring up the crossing.<sup>18</sup> Although Cantilupe was canonized in 1320, the choir itself was not remodelled for some years, possibly beginning in the episcopate of Bishop Charlton (1327–44) and completed during the episcopate of Bishop Trillek (1344–60), who would be buried in the centre of the new choir. It is Trillek to whom most of the wooden episcopal throne, choir stalls, and

adjacent stone choir screen are attributed, albeit on stylistic rather than documentary grounds (fig. 4). The fourteenth-century choir ensemble, characterized by its elaborate micro-architectural canopies—a fluid translation of stone-built ornament to wood carving—has been carefully explored by Charles Tracy.<sup>19</sup> In its fourteenth-century arrangement, the choir filled the central crossing and the first three bays of the eastern arm (fig. 5). The choir screen or *pulpitum* ran between the centre of the western crossing piers and the abutting forty-eight choir stalls extended to the easternmost extent of the eastern crossing piers. Breaking with the *synthronon* arrangement of the early church, the bishop's throne was not set centrally ahead of flanking choir stalls, but was set against the flat pier on the south side of the presbytery to allow for an unhindered view of the high altar from the west (fig. 6). The high altar established the eastern termination of the choir space and the piers were subsequently filled with episcopal tombs to create a liturgical *cordon sanitaire*, with the notable exception of the arcading in the first bay east of the crossing which allowed for the *ostia chori*.



**Figure 4.**

Choir stalls, circa 1327–60, Hereford Cathedral. Collection of Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman



**Figure 5.**

Oxbow Books, Casemate Academic / Photo: Charles Tracy, Hereford Cathedral Plan, from *A History and Britain's Medieval Episcopal Thrones* by Charles Tracy (Oxford: Oxbow Books, Casemate Academic, 2014).



**Figure 6.**

Bishop's Throne, 14th century, Hereford Cathedral.  
Collection of Hereford Cathedral. Digital image  
courtesy of Phil Chapman

Unfortunately, we know much less about the choir screen illustrated by Carless than we would like. It was removed in 1841 by Cottingham when he was doing further remedial work on the crossing. The choir stalls were removed for some twenty years to the crypt, and the organ (which sat atop the screen) was temporarily located in the south transept. Dean John Merewether, an active antiquarian and author of *A Statement on the Condition and Circumstances of the Cathedral Church of Hereford in the Year 1841*, wanted to make a new screen of "Norman character", surely in the style of the cathedral, and to remove later Georgian panelling in the choir in an early effort to return it to its medieval character.<sup>20</sup> George Gilbert Scott was puzzled by Merewether's intentions and suggested that Cottingham's work had been "founded upon utility rather than history", an ironic statement given that his own screen would itself bear few obvious historical parallels in English medieval art.<sup>21</sup> Writing subsequently of Cottingham's

removal of the screen, Scott reasoned that his predecessor was not dealing with a medieval screen in the first place, and that if he was “he left no relics of it”, even if the 1842 survey of the fabric notes “a piece of unrepaired wall extending from the twin attached columns of the NW tower pier”.<sup>22</sup> Although Scott was surely mistaken in his observations, it is nevertheless early drawings such as Carless’s that provide us with the best visual evidence for the screen.

Carless’s drawing shows an austere monument with a two-centred, central door under a label, and two flanking Gothic apertures, which may have been filled with reredos for east-facing chapels.<sup>23</sup> As Morris points out, the function of the rood screen and *pulpitum* were combined in the fourteenth century. Aside from the conventional functions of the *pulpitum* for the liturgy (that is, the singing of the lessons at Matins, for the lessons at Mass, and other aspects of the yearly liturgy), the altar of the “Much cross” was set in front of the screen, and the altar of the Holy Cross was located in the rood loft itself. By 1394 the parish altar of St John the Baptist was also located in the *pulpitum* to the south of the choir entrance.<sup>24</sup> Multi-functional though it was, in style the screen stands to one side of the wave of magnificent choir screens constructed in Wales and the West Country at Exeter (1317–25) ([fig. 7](#)), Tintern (c. 1330), and St David’s (c. 1340), each employing aspects of the new vocabulary of Decorated architecture.<sup>25</sup> If Carless’s drawing is to be trusted, the screen would seem to have features of a late thirteenth-century date: the clustered triplets of shafts, complex mouldings, and compressed heads of the arches are far closer to the architecture of the thirteenth-century north transept, or more still to the remodelled aisles and the niches for the retrospective episcopal effigies dating from around 1300. Also, the choir screen bears none of the richly wrought micro-architecture of the episcopal throne or the choir stalls, with which, it has been argued, they are coeval. In Morris’s account he draws attention to the ballflower ornament of the central tower as a diagnostic feature to date it in the 1320s, but again, ballflower ornament appears to be altogether absent from the choir screen. Put simply, the features of the screen fit far more comfortably with the late thirteenth century and work at Hereford dating from around 1300, and stand rather uncomfortably aside the elaborations of the mid-fourteenth-century choir. If we can date the Hereford Screen to around 1300, it would be the earliest in the sequence of screens noted above. Outside of the remodelling of the aisles discussed above, there were various occasions between around 1290 and 1320 when a new choir screen could have been built. If Bishop Charleton had begun the campaign to update the choir, for example, as Tracy intimated, it would accord well with his movements to reform its liturgical functions, including the expansion of vicars and enhancing the musical service.<sup>26</sup> In the absence of more solid physical or antiquarian evidence, the date of this particular Hereford Screen cannot be resolved.

Minor alterations are noted to the doors of the screen in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, although they are unlikely to have had an effect on the stonework.<sup>27</sup> Remarkably, the new Scott and Skidmore screen is barely mentioned in the Chapter's specifications for Scott's work, except in the Cathedral Statement of Appeal in which the Dean and Chapter requested the reinstating of a division between the nave and choir, without "severing it from the remainder of the Church by a solid Screen of Stone", thus suggesting, perhaps, that the apparent deficiencies of the former screen were remembered.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 7.**

Exeter Cathedral Choir Screen, 1317–25, Exeter Cathedral. Collection of Exeter Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alamy Stock Photo / Photo: Jorge Tutor

## **Comparative Morphologies: Hereford, Salisbury, Lichfield**

Scott and Skidmore's Hereford Screen demands to be understood within a still broader context. As is well known, it forms one of three or more "triumphant" screens that these men created in the same period for English cathedrals, including Salisbury (1870) and Lichfield (1859–63) (figs. 8 and 9). As at Hereford, these screens were intended to victoriously conclude the lengthy, and, for many, *deleterious* histories of England's greatest choir spaces from the English Reformation to the present day by reinstating the magnificent screens that were destroyed in the intervening years. Looking comparatively at these post-medieval histories shows not only that they were each punctuated by the screens of Skidmore and Scott, but, like Hereford, they were subject to no less complex and extensive campaigns of renovation during the previous century. Hereford, Salisbury, and Lichfield had

each been substantially reordered by the controversial architect James Wyatt (1746–1813) between 1787 and 1797, whose work as a “restorer” of great churches was vigorously critiqued by preservationists and antiquarians including Richard Gough (1735–1809), Director of the Society of Antiquaries, John Carter (1748–1817), and subsequently George Gilbert Scott and A. W. N. Pugin, among others. Wyatt’s work has rightly been understood to pivot between two phases of the Gothic Revival, and to have been a significant impetus toward the institutionalization of the protection, study, and conservation of medieval art.<sup>29</sup> Discussion of the comparative morphology of these spaces illuminates personal, liturgical, and spatial commonalities, and illustrates the fact that Scott and Skidmore’s work was framed as a “correction” to these Georgian interventions, a perspective that is writ large in the critical reception of these spaces during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>30</sup>



**Figure 8.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, Salisbury Cathedral Screen, 1870. Collection of Salisbury Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of RIBA Collections / RIBApix



**Figure 9.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, Lichfield Cathedral Crossing Screen, 1859-63. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Steve Cadman

Wyatt's work at Hereford was, perhaps, the least invasive of the three campaigns insofar as its renovation of the choir space was concerned, and the least controversial. But significantly, it came last in a series of deeply contested projects that were responded to by Scott, both in his writing and his commissions. James Wyatt made an initial report on the state of Lichfield on 7 March 1787, which centred initially upon the choir (structural flaws were discovered during his work and his attention was turned toward the nave and transepts) and he exhibited his proposals at the Royal Academy the same year. At Lichfield, as at Hereford, Wyatt's work was assisted by Joseph Potter (c. 1756-1842).<sup>31</sup> Wyatt proposed a series of changes that would improve the comfort of the choir and diminish draughts, and open its eastern end by removing the Perpendicular high altar reredos, thereby joining the choir and the eastern Lady Chapel in a continuous vista.<sup>32</sup> Removing the spatial divisions of the Gothic church, Wyatt's approach was fundamentally informed by the aesthetics of Neo-classicism: in spatial conception if not in form, he aimed to clarify and homogenize the liturgical spaces of the great church according to his own dominantly Neo-classical tastes. Typical of Wyatt's restorations, he re-employed fragments of the high altar reredos under the east window and on the west face of the late-medieval choir screen (which was removed in the nineteenth century by Sydney Smirke shortly before Scott started work).<sup>33</sup> Despite this, Scott was one of many who condemned Wyatt's work in the choir, opining judiciously, "The choir had been dealt with by Mr Wyatt in the most extraordinary manner possible."<sup>34</sup>

Wyatt's opening of the choir at Lichfield—whether it was his own design or one suggested by his patrons—would be continued elsewhere in his work, and particularly at Salisbury. His “improvements” (rather than “alterations” or “restorations”) were executed under the careful tutelage of Bishop Shute Barrington (1782–91). Between 1789 and 1793 Wyatt removed much of the screening in the cathedral that compartmentalized its spaces, including the original 1236 choir screen (fig. 10)—complete with its host of bustling liturgical angels—which was reset in the west wall of the northeast transept in 1789. Understanding that a stone screen was required to buttress the crossing piers, he inserted a new screen in its position, which, like that at Lichfield, was faced with medieval spolia, as were the walls of the Trinity Chapel (in this case derived from the Beauchamp and Hungerford chantry chapels pulled down by Wyatt).<sup>35</sup> Also like Lichfield, the campaign at Salisbury involved removing the high altar screen (and parts of the eastern bay of the choir enclosure) to create an uninterrupted view from the choir into the Trinity Chapel. Wyatt's image of an open, purified cathedral interior was manifest particularly in his whitewashing of the original thirteenth-century scheme of vault paintings that adorned the entirety of the cathedral choir and eastern transept vaults, an action that drew extraordinary ire from the Society of Antiquaries who sent their draughtsman, Jacob Schnebbelie, to hastily record the paintings in October 1789.<sup>36</sup> The concerned response from the public, which blazed across the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and other publications, assured these works a pivotal place in English art and antiquarianism. John Milner was perhaps the most restrained commentator on Wyatt's Salisbury work, noting that “ever since 1789 . . . a difference of opinion, and more or less a controversy has subsisted concerning the taste and propriety of them.”<sup>37</sup> Wyatt's Salisbury works drew great criticism from Scott, who considered it his mission to systematically undo them, from reinstating (however inaccurately) the vault paintings (he commissioned the work of Clayton and Bell), to pulling down Wyatt's choir screen, and of course replacing it with his design of 1870.



**Figure 10.**

Original Morning Chapel Choir Screen, 1236, Salisbury Cathedral. Collection of Salisbury Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Mattana-Salisbury

This brings us back to Hereford. Wyatt appeared there in 1788 when he surveyed the fabric following the collapse of the west tower in 1786, which had destroyed much of the nave. Wyatt's major work at Hereford was to rebuild the nave in what was, from a contemporary perspective at least, a remarkably accurate reconstruction of the Romanesque fabric, albeit executed in plaster rather than stone. Wyatt also rebuilt the west front, which was, according to Richard Gough and John Carter, "poor, meaningless, insipid and shallow".<sup>38</sup> His Hereford work was not directed toward the choir space, and as we have seen, he did not take down the choir screen. He did, however, propose a scheme analogous to Salisbury and Lichfield in which he lengthened the choir by removing the altarpiece and placing an arch under the choir window, but this was not executed.<sup>39</sup> Scott's intention in his great church projects was to "restore the building to the state in which it had existed in better times of ecclesiastical architecture, and reverse, wherever possible, previous 'improvements.'"<sup>40</sup> Scott's critique was a conventional and hardly subtle allusion to Wyatt's work. Considered "The Destroyer" for his liberal interventions to great churches in order to "purify" Gothic interiors according to dominantly Neo-classical tastes, Wyatt's work was positioned on one side of a rich debate over the present and future state of England's patrimony of great churches. Part of the rhetoric of Scott and Skidmore's screens was to amputate what they understood to be debased Georgian interventions that contaminated the church interior, and to return the

cathedral to a perceived pre-Reformation form and aesthetic. Indeed, antiquarians and preservationists such as Richard Gough lamented “the scalping knife of modern taste” and opined that “*Improvement* like Reformation, is a big sounding word and oftentimes alike mischievous in its consequence”.<sup>41</sup> Typical of a nostalgic tradition of medievalist thought that began in the years after the Reformation itself, medievalists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries could readily elide current alterations or depletions of the fabric of great churches with the much-maligned political, religious, and aesthetic regimes of the English Reformation.<sup>42</sup> Many of the medievalist and antiquarian critics of Wyatt’s and others’ works were themselves either Catholic (such as John Milner, or latterly, A. W. N. Pugin) or Catholic sympathists, for whom the Dissolution of the monasteries was a profound aesthetic and cultural fissure in the fabric of English history.<sup>43</sup> Unsurprisingly, a proponent of Wyatt’s work could call his detractors in the Society of Antiquaries “a Papish Cabal”.<sup>44</sup> Understood in these terms, Scott and Skidmore’s works suggest not only an erasure of a recent generation’s work, but also a temporal leap, a bending of time to return the cathedral to its pre-Reformation state. Yet the stylistic and material incongruity of their projects with the medieval structures in which they are located also suggests a thoroughly modern, and even triumphant medievalism, in which modern Gothic paradoxically signals the art of the Gothic past, while also self-consciously surpassing it.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Anon., “The Hereford Screen in the International Exhibition”, *London Illustrated News*, 30 August 1862, 246.
- <sup>2</sup> *Architecture* (June 1897), 269 (V&A Metalwork Department, uncatalogued). These and other responses are recorded in Ingrid Brown, “The Hereford Screen”, *Ecclesiology Today* 47/48 (2013): 3–44, references at notes 1 and 2.
- <sup>3</sup> I borrow “reverse archaeology” from Arnold Klukas, “Durham Cathedral in the Gothic Era: Liturgy, Design, Ornament”, in *Artistic Integration in Gothic Buildings*, ed. Virginia Chieffo Raguin, Kathryn Brush, and Peter Draper (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 69–83, although I use it in my own way.
- <sup>4</sup> Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010); Nicola Camerlenghi, “The *Longue Durée* and the Life of Buildings”, in *New Approaches to Medieval Architecture*, ed. R. Bork, William W. Clark, and Abby McGehee (Aldershot: Routledge, 2011), 11–20.
- <sup>5</sup> Alexander Nagel, *Medieval Modern: Art Out of Time* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012).
- <sup>6</sup> See, for example, William St. John Hope, “Quire Screens in English Churches, with special reference to the Twelfth Century Quire Screen formerly in the Cathedral Church of Ely”, *Archaeologia* 68 (Jan. 1917): 43–110; Jeffrey West, “The Romanesque Screen at Canterbury Reconsidered”, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Canterbury*, ed. Alixe Bovey, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 35 (Leeds, 2015), 167–79; Charles Tracy and others, “The Adisham ‘Reredos’: What is it?”, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 156 (2003): 27–78.
- <sup>7</sup> For example, Thomas of Elmham’s “groundplan” of the choir of St Augustine’s, Canterbury which shows its high altar screen with two doors (*ostia*), or the extraordinary miniatures of screens in Oxford Bodleian MS Douce 131 f. 126r. Henry of Avranches, *The Metrical Life of St Hugh of Lincoln*, ed. and trans. C. Garton (Lincoln: Honeywood Press, 1986), 60–61.
- <sup>8</sup> The most recent monograph on great church screens focuses on continental material. See Jacqueline Jung, *The Gothic Screen: Space, Sculpture and Community in the Cathedrals of France and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>9</sup> Malcolm Thurlby, *The Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture (with a History of the Anarchy in Herefordshire by Bruce Coplestone-Crow)* (Almeley: Logaston Press, 2013), 261–62.
- <sup>10</sup> Thurlby, *Herefordshire School of Romanesque*.

- 11 Peter Draper, *The Formation of English Gothic: Architecture and Identity* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2006).
- 12 Aymer Vallance, *Greater English Church Screens* (London: Batsford, 1947), 69–71.
- 13 Meryl Jancey, ed., *St Thomas Cantilupe Bishop of Hereford: Essays in His Honour* (Hereford: Friends of Hereford Cathedral, 1982); Ben Nilson, *Cathedral Shrines of Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1998), esp. 160–61; Nicola Coldstream, “The Medieval Tombs and Shrine of Saint Thomas Cantilupe”, in *Hereford Cathedral: A History*, ed. Gerald Aylmer and John Tiller (London: Hambledon Press, 2000), 322–30.
- 14 Richard K. Morris, “The Remodelling of the Hereford Aisles”, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 37 (1974): 21–39.
- 15 Phillip G. Lindley, “Retrospective Effigies, the Past, and Lies”, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford*, ed. D. Whitehead (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 15) (Leeds, 1995), 111–21.
- 16 William of Malmesbury, *The Deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta Pontificum Anglorum)*, trans. David Preest (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2002), 202.
- 17 Richard Morris, “The Architectural History of the Medieval Cathedral Church”, in *Hereford Cathedral*, ed. Aylmer and Tiller, 203–40; Charles Tracy, *Britain’s Medieval Episcopal Thrones: History, Archaeology and Conservation* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 73–88.
- 18 Morris, “Architectural History”, 221–22.
- 19 Tracy, *Britain’s Medieval Episcopal Thrones*.
- 20 See in general, David Whitehead, “The Mid-Nineteenth-Century Restoration of Hereford Cathedral by Lewis Nockalls Cottingham, 1842–1850”, in *Medieval Art, Architecture and Archaeology at Hereford*, ed. Whitehead (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 15) (Oxford, 1995), 176–86; David Whitehead, “The Architectural History of the Cathedral Since the Reformation”, in *Hereford Cathedral*, ed. Aylmer and Tiller, 241–86, at 266; and Janet Myles, “L. N. Cottingham, 1787–1847, Architect: His Place in the Gothic Revival”, PhD thesis, Leicester Polytechnic, 1989, 204–16.
- 21 George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), ed. Gavin Stamp (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 273, 275.
- 22 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 291. George Marshall, *Hereford Cathedral: Its Evolution and Growth* (Worcester: Littlebury, 1951), 125–26, quotes Willis’s survey (1842) referring to “a piece of unrepaired wall extending from the twin attached columns of the NW tower pier”.
- 23 Vallance, *Greater English Church Screens*, 70.
- 24 Morris “Architectural History”, 224–25. See the plan of the late medieval altars and furnishings in Robert Swanson and David Lepine, “The Later Middle Ages, 1268–1535”, in *Hereford Cathedral*, ed. Aylmer and Tiller, 48–86, fig. 25.
- 25 Stuart Harrison, Richard K. Morris, and David M. Robinson, “A Fourteenth-Century *Pulpitum* Screen at Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire”, *Antiquaries Journal* 78 (1998): 177–268. See also, David M. Robinson and Richard Lea, *Malmesbury Abbey: History, Archaeology, and Architecture to Illustrate the Significance of the South Aisle Screen*, English Heritage Reports and Papers 61 (2002).
- 26 See John Harper, “Music and Liturgy, 1300–1600”, in *Hereford Cathedral*, ed. Aylmer and Tiller, 384.
- 27 Garbett notes that the wooden doors of the central doorway were altered or removed “to obtain a view of nave and choir”. Thomas Garbett, *A Brief Enquiry into the Ancient and Present State of Hereford Cathedral* (London: J. Taylor, 1827), 41. This was done in 1726 by Thomas Willm, carpenter, in conjunction with repaving the floors. See Whitehead, “Architectural History”, 250.
- 28 Brown, “The Hereford Screen”, 10.
- 29 The literature on these issues is extensive. See John Frew, “Richard Gough, James Wyatt, and Late 18<sup>th</sup>-Century Preservation”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 38, no. 4 (1979): 366–74; John Frew, “The ‘Destroyer’ Vindicated? James Wyatt and the Restoration of Henry VII’s Chapel, Westminster Abbey”, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 134 (1981): 100–6; and John Martin Robinson, *James Wyatt: Architect to George III* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2013).
- 30 Wyatt was not the only significant Georgian architect who made alterations to great church screens. William Kent’s new “Gothick” screen at Gloucester of 1741 was removed by 1820, and his 1744 screen in Westminster Hall was down by 1825. See Roger White, “Kent and the Gothic Revival”, in *William Kent: Designing Georgian Britain*, ed. Susan Weber (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2014), 247–70, at 260–61, 263–64. A broader account of the screens of great churches in England in the post-medieval period is now much in need.
- 31 Richard Lockett, “Joseph Potter: Cathedral Architect at Lichfield Cathedral, 1794–1842”, *Transactions of the South Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society* 21 (1979–80): 34–47.
- 32 The fragments from the reredos have recently been rediscovered and will be the subject of a forthcoming paper by the author.
- 33 For fuller accounts of Wyatt and Potter’s work at Lichfield, see John Frew, “Cathedral Improvement: James Wyatt at Lichfield Cathedral, 1787–92”, *Transactions of the Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical Society* 19 (1977–78), 33–43; Richard Lockett, “The Restoration of Lichfield Cathedral: James Wyatt to John Oldrid Scott”, in *Medieval Archaeology and Architecture at Lichfield*, ed. John Maddison (British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions 13) (Leeds, 1993), 115–39.
- 34 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 292.

- 35 John Frew, "James Wyatt's Choir Screen at Salisbury Cathedral Reconsidered", *Architectural History* 27 (1984): 481-87.
- 36 Matthew M. Reeve, *Thirteenth-Century Wall Painting of Salisbury Cathedral: Art, Liturgy, and Reform* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008).
- 37 John Milner, *A Dissertation on the Modern Style of Altering Ancient Cathedrals as Exemplified at the Cathedral of Salisbury* (Winchester, 1798).
- 38 Whitehead, "Architectural History", 262.
- 39 Whitehead, "Architectural History", 261-62.
- 40 Scott, *Personal and Private Recollections*, 291-98.
- 41 Cited and discussed in Robinson, *James Wyatt*, 227.
- 42 Matthew M. Reeve, "Gothic Architecture, Sexuality and License at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill", *The Art Bulletin* 95, no 3 (2013): 411-39, at 415-17; Rosemary Hill, "Reformation to Millennium: Pugin's *Contrasts* in the History of English Thought", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 1 (1999): 26-41.
- 43 Rosemary Hill, "'The ivi'd ruins of forlorn Grace Dieu': Catholics, Romantics, and Late Georgian Gothic", in *Gothic Architecture and its Meanings, 1550-1830*, ed. Michael Hall (Reading: Spire Books, 2002), 159-84.
- 44 Cited in Rosemary Hill, *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 123.

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# The Medieval Choir Screen in Sacred Space: The Dynamic Interiors of Vezzolano and Breisach

Jacqueline E. Jung

## Abstract

*In their later medieval heyday, choir screens were pivotal centerpieces and focalisers of their sacred environments. Embellished with figural imagery; outfitted with platforms, pulpits, and altars; and rendered visually porous by the presence of large doors and windows, screens at once defined liturgical zones and provided a unifying bridge between them. This presentation offers an analysis of two extant screens: the early thirteenth-century structure in the abbey church of St Maria in Vezzolano, and the late fifteenth-century example in the church of St Stephen in Breisach. Though very different in format and decoration, both screens act as mediators – physical, visual, and conceptual – between the functional spaces and pictorial programmes in the apses (eastern ends) and exterior thresholds (western ends) of their respective churches. This presentation seeks to reveal the dynamic, mutually reinforcing relations among choir screens, the spaces they inhabited, and the liturgical objects that animated those zones.*

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### [Watch Video](#)

#### **Figure 1.**

Jacqueline E. Jung, *The Medieval Choir Screen in Sacred Space: The Dynamic Interiors of Vezzolano and Breisach*, video essay, 2017. Digital image courtesy of Recorded and produced by Jude Breidenbach / Yale Broadcast Studios

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# Sound and Vision in the Hereford Screen

Justin Underhill

## Abstract

*This article describes some recent digital documentation of Hereford Cathedral and the Hereford Screen, which I have developed as part of this "One Object" feature. Virtual reconstruction allows for the identification of significant standpoints within the cathedral that would have dramatically impacted on the appearance of the screen. The role of sound in structuring viewer experience at these standpoints is also explored. The reconstructions demonstrate that the Hereford Screen anticipated (and structured) the movement of the beholder in the cathedral, and that its sculptural programme served to visualize the very process of devotion for those who approached it.*

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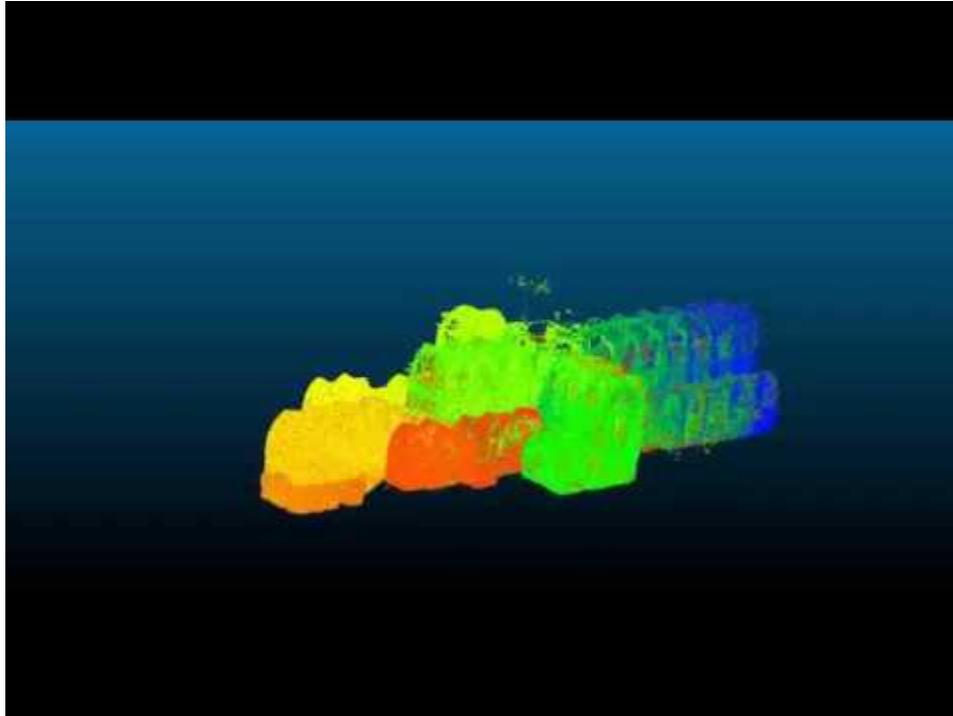
## **Objects and Embodied Experience**

The role of museums in structuring our perceptions of works of art is easy to take for granted. Gallery spaces are, after all, designed to maximize visual access to the objects displayed within them, with mute, low-contrast walls and high levels of ambient light that foreground visual details. However, these conditions can obscure how objects under observation tended to be experienced in their original contexts, designed as they were for diverse environments often strikingly different from the modern museum. Fortunately, contemporary technology allows us to reconstruct some of these occluded parameters.

In this essay, I use laser scanning and photogrammetry to demonstrate how the Hereford Screen was experientially anchored within the interior space of Hereford Cathedral. Additionally, I demonstrate how the significant visual qualities of the screen emerged within the soundscape of the cathedral. Since these effects fail to register in the standard documentary practices of art history, such as photography, the visualizations produced here are also an attempt to innovatively map out multimodal dimensions of embodied experience as they bear upon (and are in turn constructed by) a single artefact.

## **Digital Documentation of the Screen and Cathedral**

Although available plans and elevations provided sufficient data to model most of the flat surfaces in the cathedral, additional information was needed to model the complex vaulting seen throughout the building. When plans and elevations do not provide sufficient data to model all of the surfaces that comprise an architectural complex, laser scanning provides a means of digitally documenting a site in exhaustive detail. Laser scanners bounce pencils of focused light off nearby objects, and extract geometric data about these surfaces when light is reflected back. What we are seeing in [Figure 1](#) are the results of such scanning processed into a point cloud, a three-dimensional array of points in coordinate space that describe the surface geometry of one or more objects. It is colour scaled to highlight architectural components (nave in blue, Lady Chapel in yellow, tower missing from scan). Point clouds can be further processed to produce photorealistic three-dimensional models with continuous surfaces, such as those commonly seen in film, gaming, and related new media.

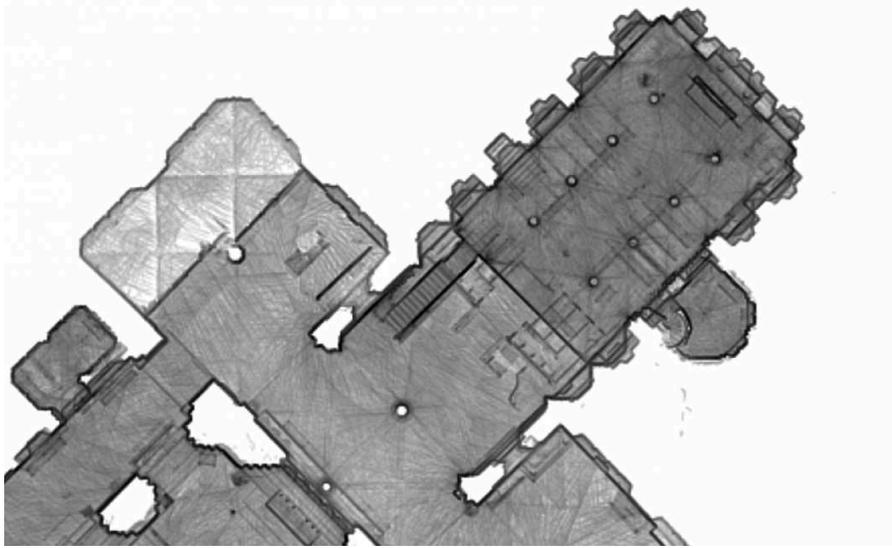


[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 1.**

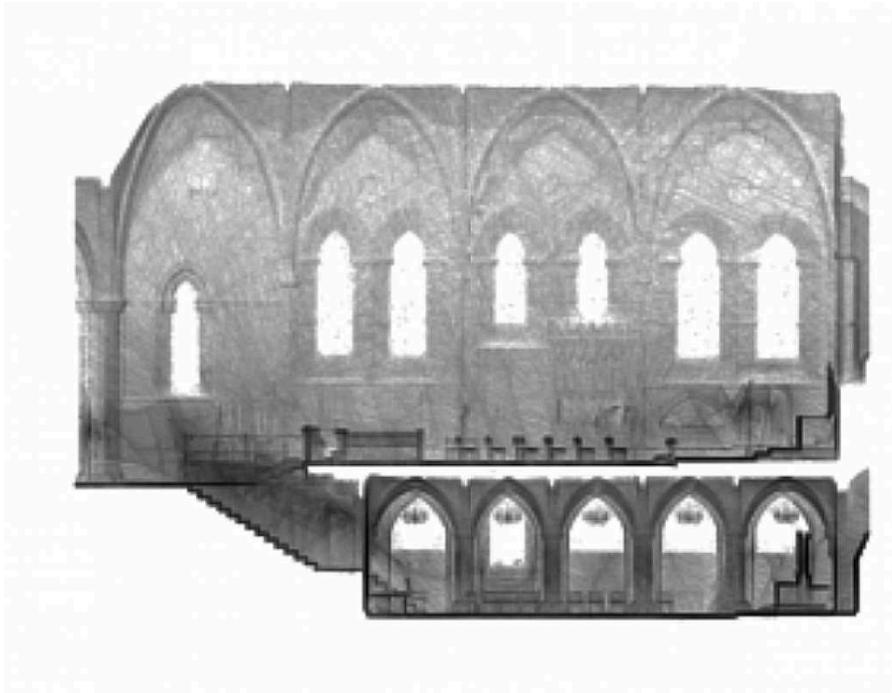
Point Cloud of Hereford Cathedral, colour scaled to highlight architectural components (nave in blue, Lady Chapel in yellow). (Tower missing from scan; modelled from plans and elevations). Digital image courtesy of Rendering produced by Justin Underhill.

In order to construct a replete digital model of Hereford Cathedral, it was laser scanned in October 2016 using the ZEB1 handheld scanner produced by GEOSLAM technologies. These results, shown in [Figure 1](#), were processed in PointCab software, capable of producing plans and elevations of any section of the point cloud that was selected (figs. [2](#) and [3](#)). These plans were used to construct a simplified model of the cathedral for processing in Odeon Room Acoustics Software.



**Figure 2.**

Plan of the Lady Chapel of Hereford Cathedral, generated by PointCab. Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill



**Figure 3.**

Elevation (with crypt) of the Lady Chapel of Hereford Cathedral, generated by PointCab. Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill



**Figure 4.**

Section of photogrammetric capture of Christ, Hereford Screen, generated by PointCab. Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill

This same process was used to record features of the Hereford Screen. Although detailed plans and elevations provided enough data to sufficiently model the major components of the screen, such as the columns, mandorla, and tracery, very little information about the sculptures on top of the screen was available. To supplement these results, digital photogrammetry was also used. When high-quality digital photos of an object are processed by photogrammetric software, recurring pixels are matched and surfaces are interpolated, providing a three-dimensional reconstruction of the object. Digital photogrammetry is particularly useful for documenting surfaces that are out of a scanner's range, or otherwise inaccessible. In early November, four hundred 36.3 megapixel photos of the Hereford Screen were taken using a tethered Nikon D800 mounted on a MegaMast 8.4-metre tripod. These photos were processed in RealityCapture software to produce high-quality meshes. A cross section of one of these meshes, a digital capture of the central figure of Christ, is shown in [figure 4](#). The digital models produced by

the processes described above allow us to develop a phenomenological understanding of the liturgical space that they defined. By simulating the perceptual affordances of the screen as it was installed in the cathedral building, we can better understand its formal structure, specifically in relation to the embodied practices of looking, moving, and listening as they were grounded in devotional practice.

## **Approaching the Screen**

Present-day visitors to the V&A must approach the screen from either side of the gallery (though the top portion of the screen is visible from the museum's main entrance) and the viewer's movement is presently constrained such that the screen can only be viewed from a maximal distance of 3.3 metres (unless they retreat to the stairwells that lead from the lobby of the museum to the second floor). The far more expansive cathedral interior, with a maximal viewing distance of about 48 metres, would have afforded a different viewing experience: one in which the optical detail of the screen emerged as viewers traversed the nave. Most importantly, motion parallax—the transformation of an object's apparent size and orientation as a function of the observer's motion—would have dramatically structured the viewer's experience of the screen.

The screen's central sculptural grouping is multiplanar: a rear plane consists of the crucifix and the decorative grillwork; the middle plane is occupied by Christ (the focal point of the entire ensemble); and on either side of the frontal plane, the attendant angels have been placed on pilasters. As seen in [figure 5](#), these planes notionally compress in distant viewing; from the rear portion of the nave, the angels would seem to look directly at Christ, with the exception of the leftmost one, who looks upwards analeptically towards the crucifix mounted atop the screen. However, as viewers approached the screen, moving from point A to point B in [figure 5](#), the distance between the sculptural figures would have become apparent, and the angle that subtends the gaze of each angel would have seemed to grow larger. The penetrating stare that three of the angels once directed at Christ would slowly seem to “swing up”, now directed towards the cross on the central axis of the rear plane. Moreover, from a viewing distance of about 8.36 metres—a space originally defined according to where the nave of the cathedral meets the crossing—Christ stares directly at the viewer. With Christ watching, a viewer would have their own visual experience of the sculptural group as they approached the crossing; the angels, looking up, turn their attention to the same symbol of the crucifixion that stood on the holy table, framed by the screen at the east of the choir.

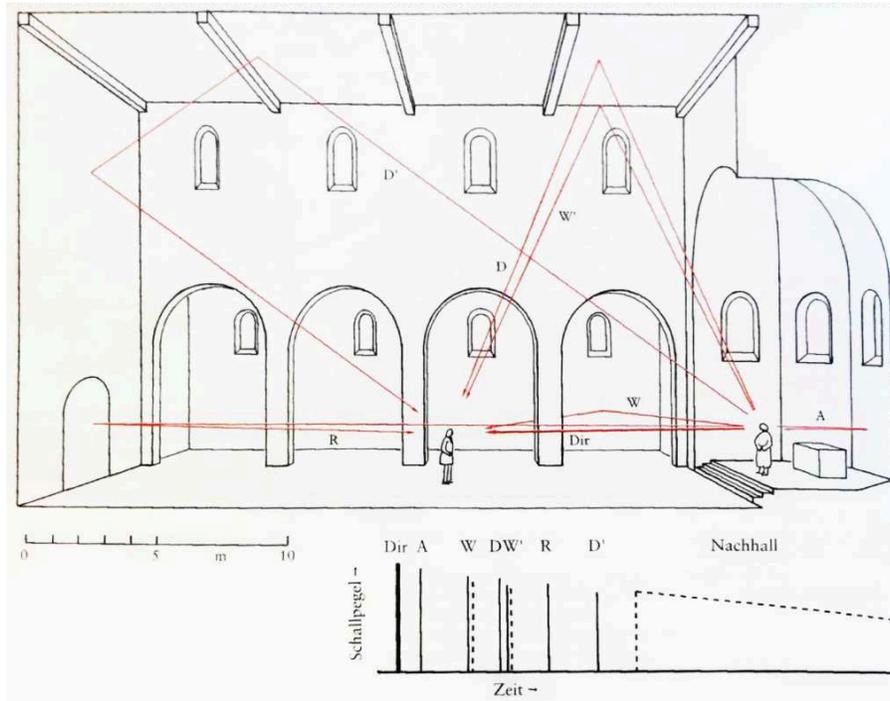


**Figure 5.**

Standpoint and the visual address of the sculptural figures of the Hereford Screen, Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill

## The Hereford Screen and its Soundscape

Just as significant information about the viewer's space can be derived from the construction of the sculpted figures, so too can the acoustic space of the cathedral be better apprehended from the model when relevant information about construction materials is known. Since churches are typically constructed out of materials with very low absorption coefficients—that is, surfaces that reflect far more sound than they absorb—observers tend to hear multiple reflections of a sound as it travels from its source to the ears of a listener. The timing and location of these reflections augment the listener's sense of a sound's quality and location. These parameters have been most exhaustively investigated in Jürgen Meyer's book *Kirchenakustik*; the paths of transmission that most commonly affect a listener's experience of sound in churches are shown in [figure 6](#). The first sound to reach the listener, *Dir*, arrives directly from the sound source. Shortly after the direct sound arrives, reflected sound from surfaces nearest the speaker reaches the listener (the path marked *A* in [figure 6](#)). This is followed by reflections that bounce off the lateral surfaces on either side of the listener (path *W*), the ceiling and wall-ceiling juncture (paths *D* and *W'*, respectively), and rear walls facing the listener (path *R*). Finally, longer paths of sound that has reflected off multiple surfaces reach the listener (path *D'*).<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 6.**

Diagram depicting typical patterns of sound transmission in a church, from Jürgen Meyer, *Kirchenakustik* (Frankfurt: Verlag Erwin Bochinsky, 2003), pp. 43–45.

Recent advances in acoustic computation allow for the simulation of the total number of paths through which a sound is relayed from its source to a given destination. The most advanced program, Odeon Auditorium, allows users to simulate the full range of ISO parameters that gauge an architectural configuration's suitability for musical performance. Using plans and elevations derived from laser scanning, a model of the cathedral was created in Odeon; acoustic absorption coefficients for each material used in the cathedral were assigned to the appropriate surfaces. Six sound sources were placed in the models of the choir stalls and assigned parameters consistent with human singers. The transmission of one singer's voice throughout the cathedral is shown in [figure 7](#). In the first thirty milliseconds, sound is transmitted throughout the choir; a great deal of it reverberates back and forth between the wooden choir screens. Sound is subsequently transmitted into the transepts (and reflected back into the crossing) and the nave, in which it is reflected off the columns and rear wall.



[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 7.**

Odeon Sound Visualization, Hereford Cathedral, (of human singers situated in the choir). Digital image courtesy of Rendering produced by Justin Underhill

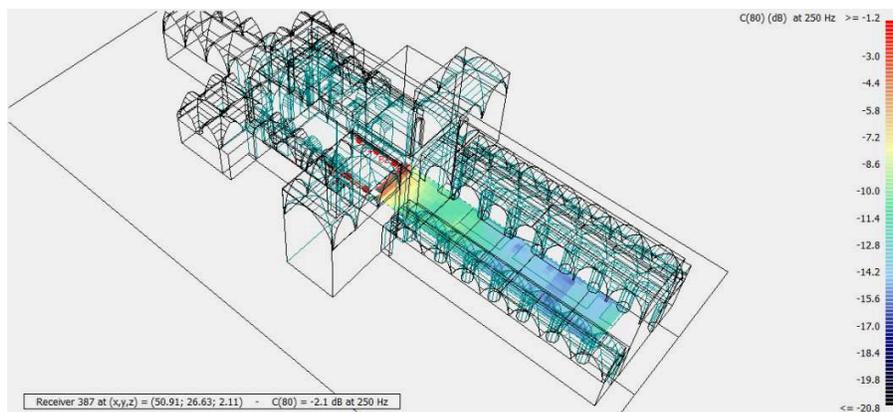
Further analysis reveals a striking correspondence between the visual spaces demarcated by the screen and the soundscape of the cathedral. Since an exhaustive catalogue of the cathedral’s acoustic ecology is beyond the scope of this study, I will restrict my discussion to parameters that impacted the visual reception of the screen. As is evident in figures 8 through 10, one of the most noticeable features of the soundscape for observers who approached the choir would have been the increased acoustic clarity (C80) of sound, objectively measured as the ratio of early to late energy; higher levels of clarity allow a listener to hear distinct notes and sound events without them bleeding into one another. Moreover, the proportion of sound reflected off nearby lateral surfaces relative to overall sound would have also increased. This parameter, commonly referred to as LF80, is shown in figure 11. In the blue and green segments, relatively little lateral sound is reflected; however, in the yellow and red areas, these levels approach those seen in concert halls. At these levels, the listener experiences a phenomenon known as *source broadening*, whereby the acoustic space occupied by a sound source seems to grow wider. And indeed, the screen itself seems to anticipate this effect in the bookend placement of the angelic musicians; on each side of the screen, they seem to nearly spill onto the wall of either transept. The screen thereby functioned both as a visual and an acoustic

frame for the choir and high altar; by virtue of their orientation and placement, the musical figures in the sculptural programme visualize the spatial properties of sounds originating behind the screen in the choir.



**Figure 8.**

Odeon grid map showing distribution of C80 in nave and crossing of Hereford Cathedral, (for human singers situated in the choir). Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill



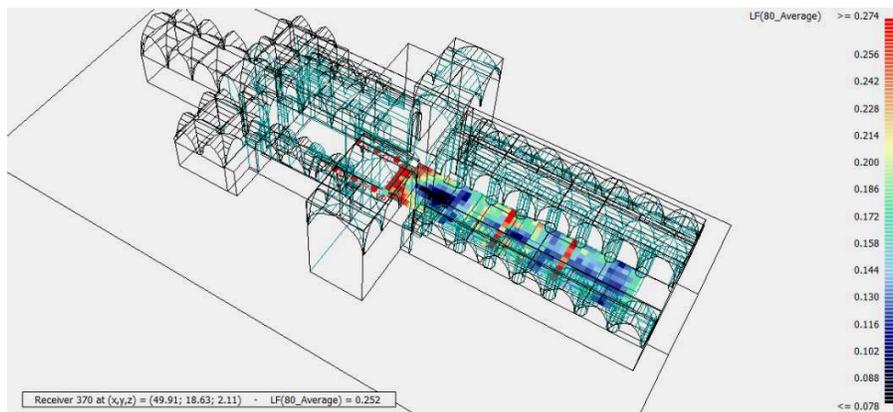
**Figure 9.**

Odeon grid map showing distribution of C80 in nave and crossing of Hereford Cathedral, (for human singers situated in the choir). Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill



**Figure 10.**

Odeon grid map showing distribution of C80 in nave and crossing of Hereford Cathedral, (for human singers situated in the choir). Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill



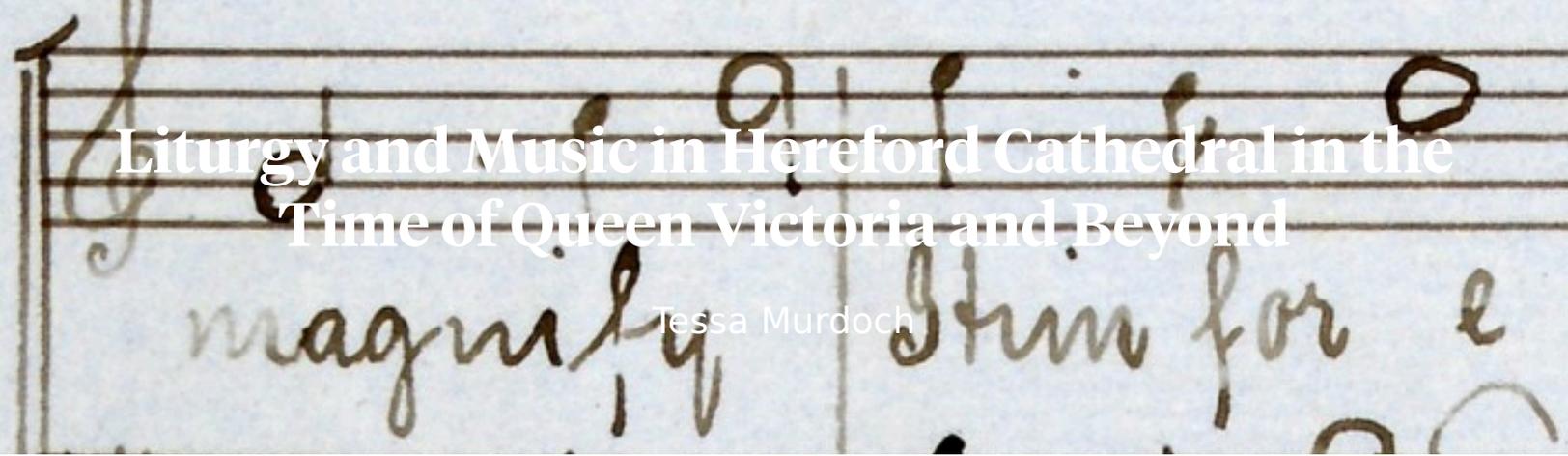
**Figure 11.**

Odeon grid map showing LF80 in nave and crossing of Hereford Cathedral, (for human singers situated in the choir). Digital image courtesy of Justin Underhill

The liturgical reforms of the nineteenth century precipitated not only an increase in celebrations of Holy Communion, but also a renewed focus on Anglican ritual space, which was itself in the process of architectural and decorative redefinition. Little surprise, then, that a screen as ornate as the one that once stood at Hereford Cathedral delicately paced the process of devotion for those who approached it. For celebrants of Holy Communion who met Christ's gaze as they approached the high altar, the sculptural ensemble would seem to pictorialize the sound reverberating around them, an acoustic correlate of the sense of presence that the screen so beautifully frames.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> This model is described in Jürgen Meyer, *Kirchenakustik* (Frankfurt: Verlag Erwin Bochinsky, 2003), 43-45.



# Liturgy and Music in Hereford Cathedral in the Time of Queen Victoria and Beyond

Tessa Murdoch

## Abstract

*The Victorian Gothic Revival and its focus on liturgical neo-medievalism inspired the 1860s restoration of the medieval Hereford Cathedral. In this restoration, the new screen played a central part. Designed by George Gilbert Scott and manufactured by the firm of Francis Skidmore in Coventry, the screen was commissioned in order to re-unite the choir with the nave. The symbolism and colours decorating the screen harmonized with the medieval and later features of the cathedral, including the high altar reredos, organ pipes, and floor tiles. Hereford Cathedral Library preserves historical accounts of the interior and original music manuscripts by Edward Elgar and Frederick Ouseley that illustrate, with the musical inserts provided, the rich tradition of choral music and liturgy which continues to this day with key liturgies and the annual Three Choirs Festival linking Gloucester, Hereford, and Worcester. Memorials and stained-glass windows dedicated to successive precentors embellish the musical vocabulary of the interior. In focusing on the musical culture connected with Hereford Cathedral, this essay seeks to enrich the interpretation of the restored Hereford Screen in its secular setting at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.*

## Authors

Deputy Keeper, Sculpture, Metalwork, Ceramics and Glass, and the Senior Curator responsible for the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Collection, at the Victoria and Albert Museum

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I would like to thank the following for advice and encouragement: Alicia Robinson, Ayla Lepine, at Hereford Cathedral, Canon Chancellor Christopher Pullin, Chapter Clerk and Chief Executive Glyn Morgan, the Librarian and Archivist Charlotte Berry and Rosemary Firman, also the Rt Revd John Oliver and Sir Roy Strong for facilitating introductions, and Christine Lloyd for her hospitality in Hereford.

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The Church of England's ceremonial and liturgical revival in the mid-nineteenth century, prompted by the Ecclesiological Society which was founded in 1839, reinstated traditional Catholic worship and musical traditions. The Ecclesiological Society was a group of laity and clergy who had been inspired by the Oxford Movement in Anglican theology. As High Anglicans, sometimes also called "ritualists" or "Puseyites" because of the principles and church figures they followed, the Ecclesiologists were determined to return the Church of England to its pre-Reformation roots through careful attention to the revival of medieval art, architecture, music, symbolism, and particularly liturgy. By 1860 the fabric of Hereford Cathedral urgently needed restoring and adapting in order to accommodate such liturgical renewal, but the cathedral Chapter were opposed to anything that emulated the Roman Catholic practice. A programme of restoration was begun that included the replacement of an existing stone screen with a new one. In 1862, responding to an appeal from the Dean and Chapter of Hereford Cathedral for the restoration of the cathedral, the architect George Gilbert Scott provided an estimate of £1,500 for a new choir screen. Scott explained that

instead of extending the Choir westward, through the Tower as formerly, and severing it from the remainder of the Church by a solid Screen of stone thus limited in length to its more natural position, the eastern arm of the Cathedral; an open unobstructed screen (has been) substituted for the close structure of stone, an arrangement already carried out with great practical advantage at Ely and Lichfield. When the screen is placed in its proper position beneath these glorious Norman Arches which support the Tower, it will be satisfactory to see that productions of modern art may be made to blend harmoniously with the types of beauty furnished by the taste and science of former ages. <sup>1</sup>

The Dean and Chapter responded that "The refitting of the Choir and the introduction of a magnificent open Screen of Metal-work, in lieu of the ancient Stone Screen" would have the effect of "opening out the Choir to the Nave and rendering nearly the entire church available for public worship, an alteration of the greatest practical importance". But they also noted that "the casing and decoration of the organ" was "as yet unprovided for". <sup>2</sup> The subsequent list of subscribers for the restoration was headed by Queen Victoria at £100. <sup>3</sup>

The 1863 *Guide to the "Restored Portion" of the Cathedral Church of Hereford* contains details of "the Metallic Rood Screen, Corona, [and] Stained Windows" and notes that the "Use of Metallic art in ancient Churches and

Cathedrals, and its fitness in a restoration” is evident from descriptions in various ancient treatises including William of Malmesbury’s records of Winchester and Coventry and Laud’s on Glastonbury and Waltham Abbey, which describe works of “gold, silver, precious stones, copper, brass of great magnitude, which were rendered into plaques of gold and applied to surfaces, capitals of columns, altars, and various other uses unapplied in the present day . . . it is a correct revival of ancient art. The metallic idiom is further developed by the colours of the illumination being derived from the oxides of the metals used in the construction of the screen” with the exception of the green.<sup>4</sup> Green was chosen, as for the floor tiles, as the liturgical colour dominant throughout the church calendar between Epiphany and Lent and between Trinity Sunday and Advent (excluding those two Sundays when white is used); as the colour of plants, green is the symbol of new life.<sup>5</sup>

An article published in *The Times* in May 1862, when the screen was exhibited in London at the International Exhibition at South Kensington, noted that “The colouring and the gilding have been applied only with a view to the effect of the whole piece when shown in the subdued light of a Cathedral interior.” Furthermore, the article noted that “the passion and everlasting flowers especially have been much used, and with admirable effect.” The brass work was “intermixed with broad masses of vitreous mosaic”, which were composed of “over 50,000 pieces of ironstone, marble etc involving 70 workmen over a period of 5 weeks from the end of March to May”.<sup>6</sup> The passion flower (*Passiflora*) had been adopted as a symbol of Christ’s Passion by Spanish Christian missionaries from the fifteenth century. Its physical structure was interpreted as representing Christ’s last days and crucifixion. The pointed tips of the leaves recalled the Holy Lance; the tendrils, the whips used in the flagellation of Christ; the ten petals and sepals, the ten faithful apostles; the radial filaments, the crown of thorns; the chalice-shaped ovary with its receptacle, the Holy Grail; the three stigmata, the three nails; and the five anthers below them, the five wounds (four inflicted by the nails and one by the lance). The blue and white colours of the flower came to represent Heaven and Purity.<sup>7</sup>

The description in *Murray’s Handbook*, produced for visitors to Hereford Cathedral and first published in 1864, endorses the newly installed Skidmore screen. “It may safely be said that this screen is the finest and most complete work of its class which has been produced in recent times.” It

affords a complete vindication of the advantage and beauty of metal-work for the purpose of which it is here applied. While the screen forms a sufficient division between the nave and the choir,

its extreme lightness permits the use of both tower and transept for congregational purposes. The heads of the arches and the spandrels between them are enriched with elaborate tracery, chiefly formed by flowers and leafage; and the design of the cornice and cresting is of similar character. Single figures of angels, holding up instruments of music, are placed on brackets, at the termination of the screen, North and South.<sup>8</sup>

They correspond to the angels with instruments of the Passion which surmount the reredos of the high altar (fig. 1). “Coloured mosaics have also been employed. The variety of metals are the source of colour; but the hammered ironwork forming the whole of the foliage has been painted throughout. No colours have been used, however, but those of the oxides of iron and copper—the metals employed in the work.”<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 1.**

N. J. Cottingham, *The reredos of the high altar, carved in Caen marble and Bath oolite by W. Boulton of Lambeth; Hereford Cathedral*. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

Ten years earlier, George Gilbert Scott had in fact voiced doubts about the removal of the stone *pulpitum* at Hereford Cathedral, which he regarded as a diocesan loss and an error from an antiquarian perspective. He explained that the metal screen came about because Skidmore “was anxious to have some great work in the exhibition of 1862 and offered to make the screen at a very low price. I designed it on a somewhat massive scale, thinking that it

would thus harmonize better with the heavy architecture of the choir. Skidmore followed my design but somewhat aberrantly. It is a fine work, but too loud and self-asserting for an English church.”<sup>10</sup>

*Murray's Handbook* notes that the screen's "projecting branches for lights, are unusual and picturesque".<sup>11</sup> The standard gas lamps were lit with more than fifty jets of gas, and with the great corona lucis designed by Scott and executed by Skidmore which was suspended from the centre of the tower, the effect was

of more than Oriental magnificence . . . the circlet of the crown sheds a soft and diffused light down upon the screen, and the standards surrounding the circle, which consist of groups of light enveloping a mass of crystals, produce a singular and gem-like appearance, suggestive of jewels on a crown, whilst serving the practical purpose of illuminating the upper part of the tower. Beyond all question, the time when the entire building appears to the greatest advantage is Sunday evening, when the Corona and Standards are lighted.<sup>12</sup>

After the re-opening in 1863, Sunday evening services were very popular. Scott compared the crowd of people waiting in the north porch to that "at a pit door at the theatre".<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the chancel screen, the focal point was provided by the earlier altar screen with its reredos of Caen marble and oolite Bath stone designed by Nockalls Johnson Cottingham and carved by W. Boulton of Lambeth. It was paid for by public subscription and created in memory of Joseph Bailey, Member of Parliament for Hereford, who died in 1852.<sup>14</sup> Above the altar the stained glass in the east window in the Lady Chapel was commissioned in memory of Dean Merewether, who died in 1850.<sup>15</sup> After the installation of the Skidmore screen, the new 1876 altar frontal, marking the 1,200th anniversary of the foundation of the cathedral, was embroidered with figures representing twelve saints particularly linked to Hereford Cathedral.<sup>16</sup> The elaborate tiled floor with its liturgical colours dominated by greens and reds harmonizes with the metallic colours used to decorate the screen. The tile pavement covers the whole of the interior eastward of the nave and includes a roundel depicting St Ethelbert ([fig. 2](#)), who is also represented in the altar frontal. The pavement was provided at a cost of £600 by William Godwin of Lugwardine, whom Gilbert Scott complimented by remarking that their tiles were closer to the medieval prototypes than those produced by Minton and Company ([fig. 3](#)).<sup>17</sup>



**Figure 2.**

The roundel in the choir pavement showing St Ethelbert, provided by William Godwin of Lugwardine; Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

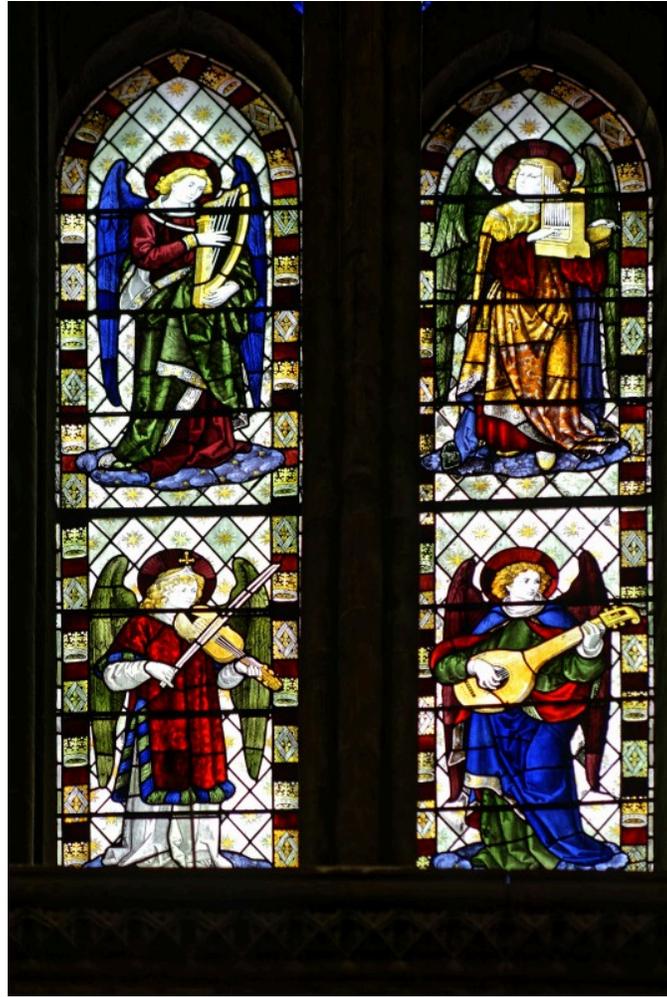


**Figure 3.**

Green tiles in the choir pavemen, provided by William Godwin of Lugwardine; Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

## **The Choral Revival at Hereford**

At Hereford Cathedral in the 1840s a choral revival drew on earlier musical traditions using manuscripts in the cathedral library. But in 1849 the condition of the choir left much to be desired. There were only eight members, most of whom lived outside Hereford. <sup>18</sup>



**Figure 4.**

Window dedicated to John Jebb, in the choir clerestory designed by John Burlison and Thomas Grylls; Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

Sir Frederick Ouseley (1825–1889), who was ordained priest in 1855 and was professionally trained as a musicologist, resolved “to raise the music in the Sanctuary”. Ouseley was determined to build on the musical foundations laid by the cathedral prebendary John Jebb (1805–1886), former rector of the parish of Peterstow, Herefordshire. Jebb was an important liturgist who had been appointed in 1858 and later became a canon. The window dedicated to Jebb’s memory in the choir clerestory shows four angels playing musical instruments, a harp, a portative organ, a violin, and a citole (fig. 4); it was designed by John Burlison and Thomas Grylls, who had trained in the studio of Clayton and Bell. <sup>19</sup> Jebb was inspired by the singing of German choirs and wrote from Dresden: “I think every Precentor and Choir Master ought to come and hear the boys here, both in the Roman Catholic and in the

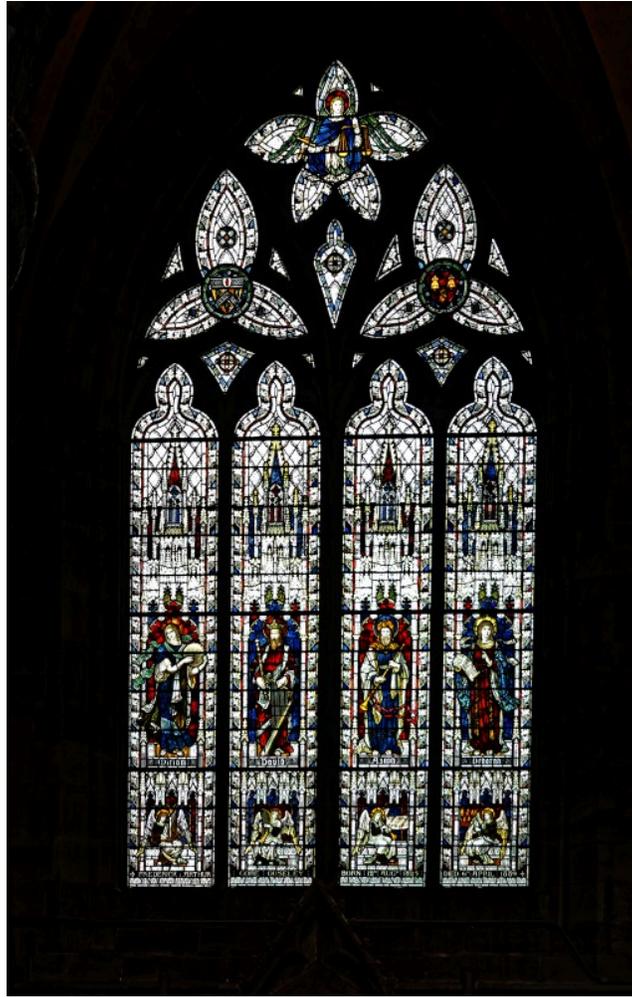
Lutheran Church I never heard anything equal or approaching to the excellence of their voices I wish I could catch a Saxon lad and import him! But I fear this is impossible. I assure you I am all agog about the matter.”<sup>20</sup>

Ouseley insisted on daily choral services and a model choir. In order to realize this ambition he founded the College of St Michael at Tenbury, Worcestershire, for training choristers. The college was inaugurated in 1856. That same year Ouseley formed a double choir. His *Te Deum*, *Benedictus*, *Kyrie*, *Credo*, *Sanctus*, *Gloria in Excelsis*, *Magnificat*, and *Nunc Dimittis* (fig. 5) were performed under his supervision at the reopening of the cathedral after its great restoration, on 30 June 1863. A window in Ouseley’s memory in the south nave aisle, made by Powell & Sons, Whitefriars, London (fig. 6), shows the four Old Testament musicians: Miriam with a timbrel, David with a harp, Asaph with a trumpet, and Deborah singing. At the foot are angels playing a portative organ, a harp, a shawm, and chime bells.<sup>21</sup> Ouseley’s legacy extended far beyond the major role he had at the cathedral. Indeed, historian Owen Chadwick has suggested that Ouseley did more than any other individual to raise the standards of Victorian church music. Ouseley admitted Percy Hull to the cathedral choir, who later served at Hereford Cathedral as organist from 1918 to 1949, and was responsible for the first Three Choirs Festival after the Second World War. The festival is both unique and culturally significant as it is the oldest non-competitive classical music festival in the world, established for the love of collaborative performance between cathedral choirs and the enjoyment of sacred music in itself to the greater glory of God, rather than for the pleasures of competing.

*Benedicite omnia Opera.* 33

View this illustration online

**Figure 5.** Frederick Ouseley, 1856 Service in C, Presentation manuscript copy. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives



**Figure 6.**

Powell & Sons, Whitefriars, London, Window dedicated to Frederick Ouseley, south nave aisle, Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman



**Figure 7.**

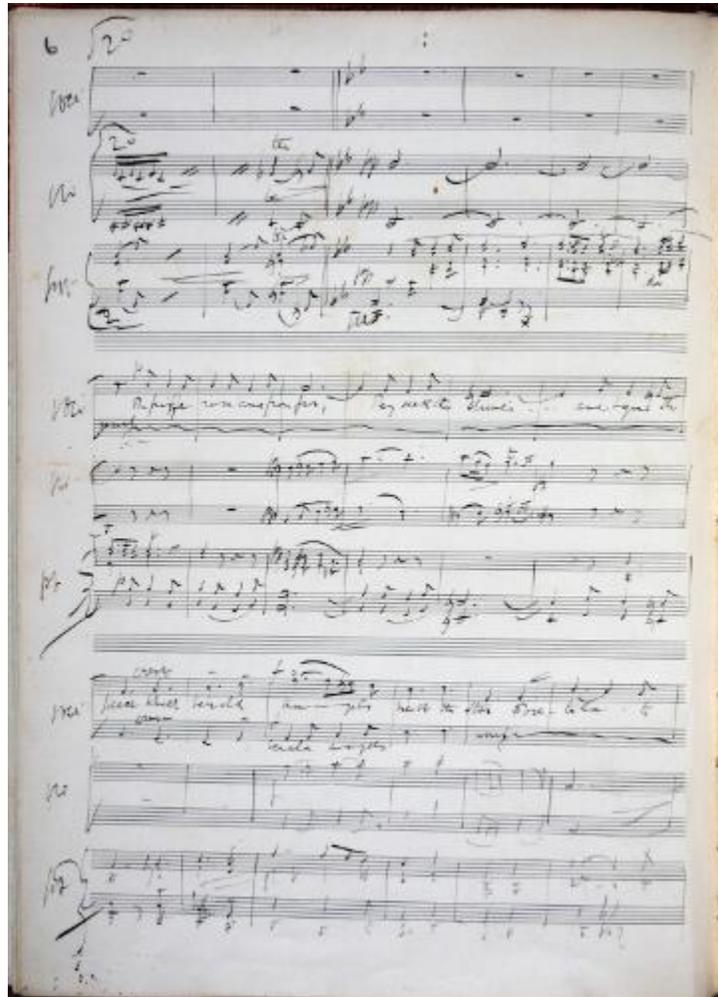
Hereford Cathedral organ, rebuilt by Henry Willis in 1879.  
Digital image courtesy of Tessa Murdoch

Though the cathedral archives do not contain a full run of all Victorian service sheets, those which do survive from the 1860s and 1880s demonstrate the range of sacred music performed that drew on English musical traditions, including anthems by Attwood, Boyce, Byrd, Croft, Gibbons, Goss, Handel, Purcell, Stainer, Tallis, and Wesley. This shows that the cathedral was fashionable in choosing works from diverse musical styles and periods, and had a part to play in the revival of early church music in the late Victorian period.<sup>22</sup> The Gothic Revival ideals of the Ecclesiologists were alive at Hereford not only in Scott and Skidmore's screen, but in the choral repertoire as well. In 1832 Samuel Sebastian Wesley, organist at Hereford from 1832 to 1835, wrote *The Wilderness* for the rebuilt Renatus Harris organ;<sup>23</sup> and for Easter Day in 1834 Wesley composed *Blessed be the God and Father*<sup>24</sup> at the Dean's request.<sup>25</sup> The Harris organ was then taken down from the crossing screen in 1841. Following the temporary re-siting of

the instrument at floor level at the eastern end of the north aisle of the nave after the *pulpitum* was removed, a new instrument (incorporating some elements of the old organ) was built by Gray and Davison. Used for the first time in June 1864, the organ was placed in the westernmost bay of the south choir aisle. Scott designed a wrought-iron framework to display the visible pipes rather than create a more substantial case, but had those pipes elaborately painted and gilded, at a cost of £154. The organ immediately proved unsatisfactory for a number of reasons, and less than ten years later the leading organ builder, Henry Willis, recommended a complete rebuilding (including lifting the whole case 1.5 metres higher up), for which work £1,300 was raised by public subscription (fig. 7). The organ therefore became a key element of the chancel renovation together with the Hereford Screen. In order to understand the aesthetic and symbolic aspects of the screen, it needs to be considered together with the 1860s Gray and Davison organ, for which Scott also designed decoration deliberately in keeping with the colours and patterns of the Hereford Screen.

## Performing the Sacred

Musical treasures in the cathedral library include the original manuscript of Edward and Alice Elgar's *A Christmas Greeting*<sup>26</sup> of 1907, dedicated to the Hereford Cathedral choristers (fig. 8).<sup>27</sup> A song for boys' voices, two violins, and a piano, it was specially composed for Dr G. R. Sinclair, who was the cathedral organist from 1889–1917. Sinclair was a chorister at Ouseley's College of St Michael in Tenbury for six years—so he was firmly part of the local tradition.<sup>28</sup> Elgar lived in Hereford from 1904 to 1911, and his friendship with Sinclair perhaps influenced his move to the cathedral city. Parts of Elgar's oratorio *The Apostles* were composed in Sinclair's house (in Church Street, almost under the shadow of the cathedral tower), and he dedicated *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4* to Sinclair (who celebrated by promptly arranging a transcription for organ).



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 8.**

Edward and Alice Elgar, *A Christmas Greeting*, manuscript, 1907. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives

Sinclair died unexpectedly at the age of fifty-three in 1917. An enamelled bronze memorial by Fanny Bunn, with a relief showing Sinclair at the organ console, was placed at the entrance to the south choir aisle (fig. 9).<sup>29</sup> He had already been immortalized as the bulldog in Variation XI of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*.<sup>30</sup> The words for *A Christmas Greeting* were written by Lady Elgar in Rome in December 1907 and sent to their friends instead of Christmas cards; these lines mark the re-emergence of Alice as a poet.<sup>31</sup>

Bowered on sloping hillsides rise  
In sunny glow, the purpling vine;  
Beneath the greyer English skies,  
In fair array, the red-gold apples shine.

. . .  
On and on old Tiber speeds,  
Dark with the weight of ancient crime;  
Far north, thr' green and quiet meads,  
Flows on the Wye in mist and silv'ring rime

. . .  
The pifferari wander far,  
They seek the shrines, and hymn the peace  
Which herald angels, 'neath the star;  
Foretold to shepherds, bidding strife to cease.

. . .  
Our England sleeps in shroud of snow,  
Bells, sadly sweet, knell life's swift flight,  
And tears, unbid, are wont to flow,  
As "Noel! Noel!" sounds across the night.  
To those in snow,  
To those in sun,  
Love is but one!  
Hearts beat and glow,  
By oak and palm.  
Friends, in storm or calm.

The setting is for high voices, with optional tenor and bass parts, and is in G minor and G major like the *Enigma* theme. The reference to pipers wandering far is a quotation from the "Pastoral Symphony" in Handel's *Messiah*.<sup>32</sup> It had been a difficult five months for the composer who was suffering from depression.<sup>33</sup> *A Christmas Greeting* was first performed at the Choristers' Concert in Hereford Town Hall on 1 January 1908. The original manuscript was given to the cathedral by the composer's daughter, Mrs Carice Irene Blake, before 1945, and it was performed again at the Three Choirs Festival on 26 August 1982.



**Figure 9.**

An enameled bronze memorial to George Robertson Sinclair, with a relief showing Sinclair at the organ console, signed by Fanny Bunn, at Hereford Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman

On 3 September 1933, Elgar opened the Three Choirs Festival by conducting the London Symphony Orchestra playing the *Imperial March*, originally written for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, and the *Civic Fanfare* composed for the Hereford Festival thirty years later. The performance was illuminated by lights attached to the top of the Skidmore Screen (fig. 10). The photograph recording this event shows Sir Edward conducting quietly from his seat, his snow-white hair contrasting with the black velvet of full court dress, with the scarlet robes of his Oxford doctorate put off momentarily from his back.<sup>34</sup> He died less than six months later.



**Figure 10.**

Sir Edward Elgar conducting his *Imperial March* at the Three Choirs Festival, at Hereford Cathedral, 3 September 1933, with the Hereford Screen shown in the foreground. Published in *The Times*, 3 September 1933



A Babe is born of maiden pure  
From Satan to deliver us  
This boon thus pray we to insure  
*Veni Creator Spiritus*  
To Bethlehem, The House of Bread  
Thereon may we be overfed  
The Bread of Life from Heaven did pass  
*O Lux beata Trinitas.*

Duncombe lived in the College Quadrangle of the Vicars Choral for fifty years and contributed as a singer, instrumentalist, and composer of music and harmonies for the Latin, English, and German chorales which formed part of cathedral worship. <sup>36</sup>

Hereford Cathedral continues musical celebrations when its choir joins those of Gloucester and Worcester for the Three Choirs Festival. The restored Skidmore screen, displayed above the main entrance hall in the Victoria and Albert Museum, also continues to function as a setting for musical performance. Evoking the liturgical and musical context of its earlier cathedral home, it still provides a setting for sacred music. A choir formed of staff from the South Kensington museums perform *a cappella* carols there every Christmas.

The Hereford Screen epitomizes the juxtaposition of tradition and innovation in mid-nineteenth-century architectural practice. Its exquisite colouring and jewel-like detail capture the symbolism and variety of tone associated with the liturgical calendar. Its lace-like tracery indicates the world beyond the screen. In Hereford Cathedral, the screen provided a prelude to the Eucharist at the heart of musical and liturgical celebration. At the Victoria and Albert Museum, its presence underlines this great museum's foundation in the Victorian era, and its superb condition, following intensive conservation, anticipates the V&A's restoration of the North and South Courts as a setting for nineteenth-century art and design of Europe, America, and beyond.

## Footnotes

- 1 Hereford Cathedral, *Appeal from the Dean and Chapter for Aid towards Completion of the Restoration of their Hereford Cathedral . . . with a letter from the architect George Gilbert Scott*, 1862, 6.
- 2 *Appeal from the Dean and Chapter*, 9.
- 3 *Appeal from the Dean and Chapter*, 11. Other contributors included Lord Saye and Sele, Canon Residentiary at Hereford, who contributed £333. Local nobility included Lord Bateman and Earl Somers, both subscribing £200, as well as the Earl of Powys and the Hon Robert Clive, across the Welsh border; and local landowners included Mr Arkwright, Mr Bulmer, Messrs Bodenham, Edward Foley (who also subscribed £200), and the celebrated antiquary Sir Samuel Meyrick; clergy were headed by the Archbishop of Canterbury at £50 and included the Rev. John Croft.
- 4 *Guide to the "Restored Portion" of the Cathedral Church of Hereford*, 2nd edn (Hereford, 1863), 11.

- 5 J. W. Legg, *Notes on the History of Liturgical Colours* (London: John S. Leslie 1882); W. St John Hope and E. G. C. F. Atchley, *English Liturgical Colours* (London: SPCK, 1918); "colours, Liturgical", in F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 379.
- 6 *The Times*, May 1862.
- 7 Beverley Seaton, *The Language of Flowers: A History* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1995).
- 8 Hereford Cathedral Archive, RES H 274 2446 KIN.
- 9 Hereford Cathedral Archive, RES H 274 2446 KIN.
- 10 Gerard Aylmer and John Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral: A History* (London: Hambledon Press, 2000), 276, quoting George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (London: Sampson Low, 1879), 280 ff.
- 11 Hereford Cathedral Archive, RES H 274 2446 KIN.
- 12 Anon., *Hereford Cathedral, City and Neighbourhood* (Hereford, 1867), 26-27.
- 13 Aylmer and Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral*, 276, quoting Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 162.
- 14 Aylmer and Tiller, *Hereford Cathedral*, 273.
- 15 The window is designed in the thirteenth-century style to match the date of the architecture of the chapel.
- 16 Flanking the figure of Christ in Glory on the left are represented St Margaret, St Anne, and St Catherine, with, below, St Mary Magdalene, St Agnes, the Virgin, and Baby Jesus. On Christ's right are St John the Baptist, St Stephen, and St Thomas of Hereford, with, below, St Ethelbert, St Nicholas, and St George. For a detailed description, see Daphne Nicholson, *Symbolism, Colour and Embroidery in Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford: Friends of Hereford Cathedral, 1983), 18-19. The altar frontal was repaired in 1987-90 and redisplayed in 1993.
- 17 Aylmer and Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral*, 276.
- 18 Aylmer and Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral*, 421-22.
- 19 Aylmer and Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral*, 320; *Hereford Cathedral Stained Glass* (Norwich: Jarrold, 2007).
- 20 H. G. Pitt, "Sir Frederick Ouseley and St. Michael's College, Tenbury", *The Three Choirs Festival Programme* (1982), 29-30 and 28.
- 21 Aylmer and Tiller, eds., *Hereford Cathedral*, 320; *Hereford Cathedral Stained Glass*.
- 22 Bernarr Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church, 1839-1872* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001).
- 23 Renatus Harris, master organ builder (c. 1652-1724).
- 24 Samuel Sebastian Wesley, *Blessed be the God & Father*, 1834, featured in *My Beloved's Voice: Sacred Songs of Love*, Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge, led by Mark Williams, Signum Records. Courtesy of Signum Records
- 25 Hereford Cathedral Library holds Wesley's autographs (and the earliest sources) of both *Blessed be* and *The Wilderness* (both in HCL C.9.12).
- 26 Edward Elgar, *A Christmas Greeting*, 1978, by Roy Massey. Courtesy of the Archive of Recorded Church Music
- 27 Hereford Cathedral Library, R.9 xxii L5 3890 (HCL R.9.22).
- 28 Christopher Pullin notes that Elgar and Sinclair considered Ouseley to have been very hidebound and unimaginative as far as composition was concerned. For his DMus at Oxford in 1855 he submitted an oratorio, *The Martyrdom of St Polycarp*, which has sunk without trace. But when Elgar had a holiday in Turkey he visited the tomb of St Polycarp at Smyrna and picked a wildflower; he sent the dried flower "from the tomb of St Polycarp" to Sinclair. I think it was a little joke at Ouseley's expense. The dried flower and Elgar's covering letter to Sinclair are preserved in the cathedral archives.
- 29 Aylmer and Tiller, *Hereford Cathedral*, illustrated at 359.
- 30 Sinclair's bulldog Dan attended every Choral Society rehearsal and one member immortalized him with a caricature, "The Metamorphosis of Dan", which is illustrated in Timothy Day, *The Hereford Choral Society: An Unfinished History* (Hereford Choral Society, 2013), 35.
- 31 Percy M. Young, *Alice Elgar: Enigma of a Victorian Lady* (London: Dobson, 1978), 162-63.
- 32 From notes by Michael Kennedy © 1987 on Hyperion Records [http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W12218\\_GBAJY8727206](http://www.hyperion-records.co.uk/dw.asp?dc=W12218_GBAJY8727206).
- 33 Young, *Alice Elgar*, 163.
- 34 Jerrold Northrop Moore, *Elgar: A Life in Photographs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 100.
- 35 Thanks to Christopher Pullin for this information.
- 36 The cathedral library has W. D. V. Duncombe's *A Collection of Old English Carols as sung at Hereford Cathedral, mostly traditional melodies harmonized*, First Series, and numbers 2, 3, 5, 7, and 10 from the Second Series, 1894 (ref. R.15.12). There are also MS part books of carols collected by him (R.11.24-40).

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# Collaborations Between Scott and Skidmore

Alicia Robinson

## Abstract

*This essay examines the collaboration between architect and designer George Gilbert Scott and metalworker Francis Skidmore. It compares their metalwork screens at the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury—projects which sometimes overlapped and were all completed in the relatively short time span between 1861 and 1870—within the wider context of Skidmore’s career. While Scott was lauded in his lifetime and has been much studied since, Skidmore has not often been written about, despite having achieved an impressive scale and pace of work in British cathedrals, parish churches, and town halls. This essay therefore shines particular light on Skidmore’s work as designer and maker, and particularly the high profile commissions for these great cathedrals, restored and enhanced with the aesthetics and ambition of the Victorian era.*

## Authors

## Acknowledgements

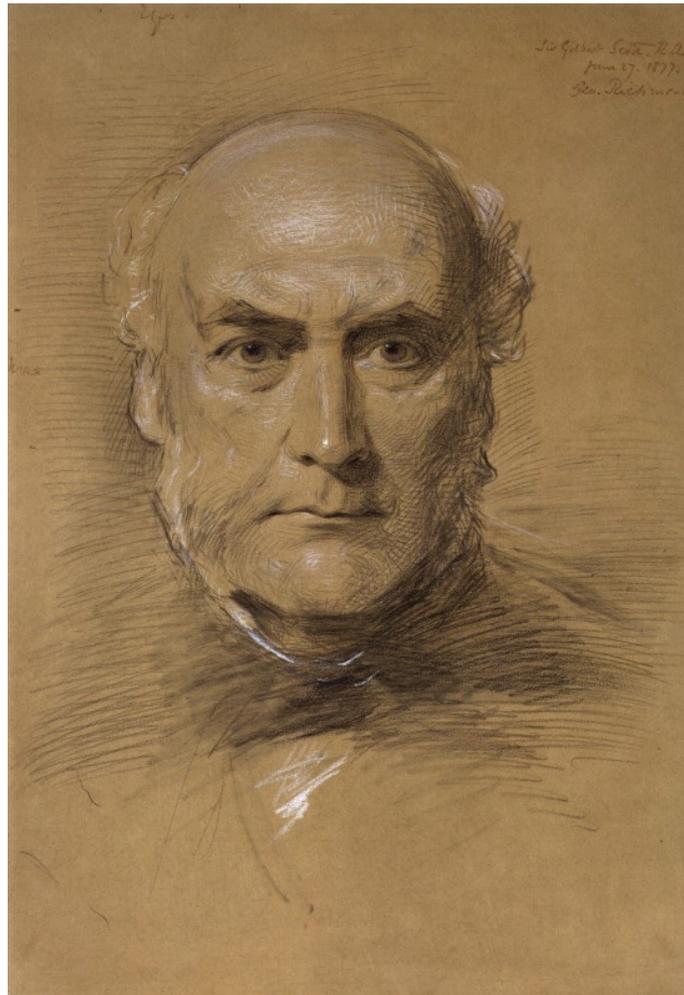
The author would particularly like to thank Ayla Lepine, Sarah Victoria Turner and all at the Paul Mellon Centre, The Rev. Christopher Pullin and Charlotte Berry (Hereford Cathedral and Archive), Jason Dyer (ex-Lichfield Cathedral), Antony West, and Tessa Murdoch, Angus Patterson, Eric Turner, and Veronica Bevan (V&A).

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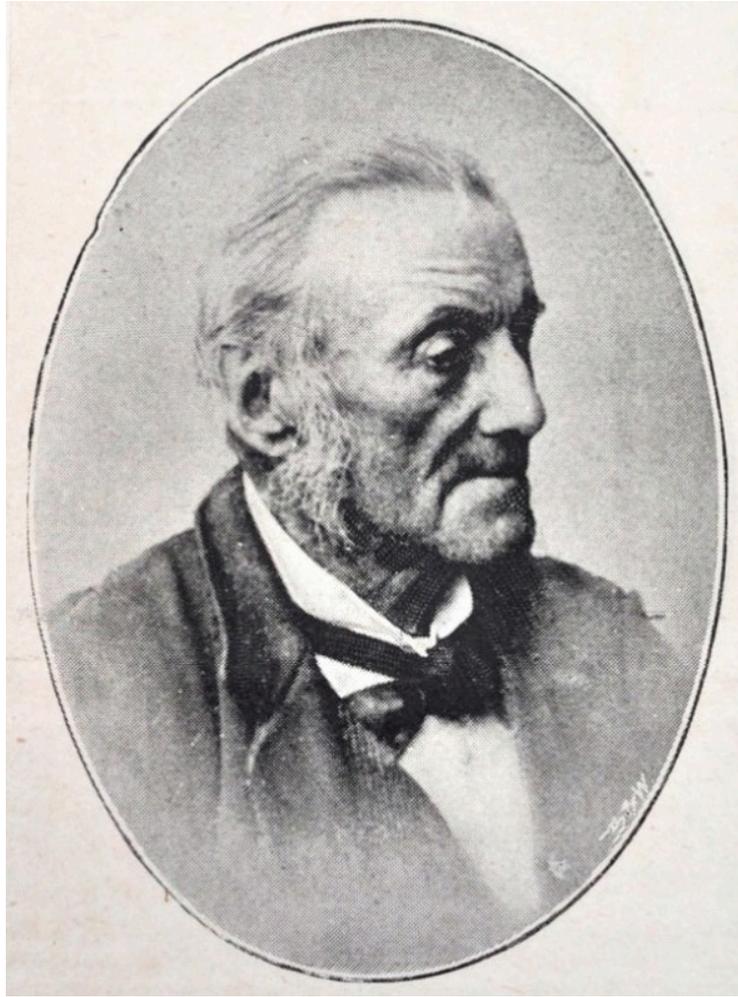
## Scott and Skidmore

The prolific architect and designer George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) ([fig. 1](#)) and now little-known metalworker Francis Skidmore (1817-1896) ([fig. 2](#)) met in the 1850s. At the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury, they collaborated on innovative and spectacular ironwork choir screens, made in the Gothic Revival style, and designed to complement and enhance the cathedral interiors in which they were situated ([fig. 3](#)). In Britain, the use of ironwork in this context was new. The screens synthesized medieval and modern aesthetics, and combined ambitious construction with meticulous craftsmanship.



### Figure 1.

George Richmond, Portrait of Sir George Gilbert, 1877, chalk, 47 × 31.8 cm. Collection of National Portrait Gallery, London. Digital image courtesy of National Portrait Gallery, London



**Figure 2.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, photograph from his obituary in the *Coventry Times*, 18 November 1896.

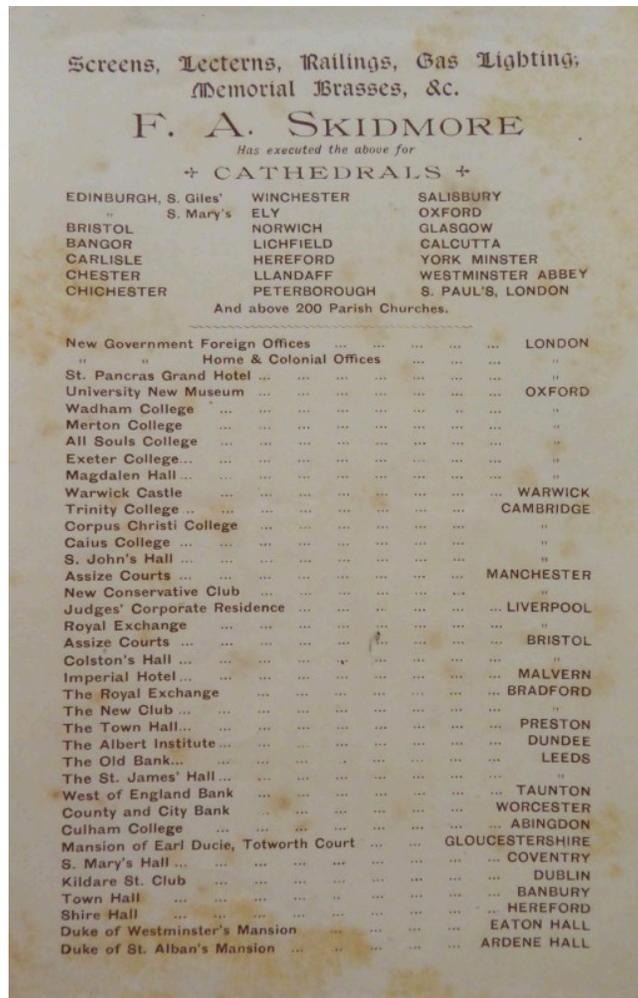
Scott often worked on a number of projects concurrently in different parts of the country and within tight timescales, and subcontracted the specialist craftsmanship required to realize them. <sup>1</sup> For metalwork, he usually recommended Skidmore, although he also worked with John Hardman and Thomas Potter (who were both considered for the Hereford Screen). <sup>2</sup> Sometimes the metalwork delegated was a major structural undertaking, as at Salisbury Cathedral where the civil engineer F. W. Shields used iron to brace the main tower. <sup>3</sup> Scott was lauded in his lifetime, even if he was not universally admired. Skidmore has not often been written about despite having worked in twenty-two cathedrals, three hundred parish churches, and twenty town halls. <sup>4</sup> On the reverse of “postcard format” photographs he produced of his work he proudly listed cathedrals and the other locations of his significant creations (fig.4). At the height of his career he employed over one hundred people, but he seems to have been a perfectionist and

destroyed work with which he was not satisfied, and therefore was not commercially successful; his firm went into liquidation in 1872.<sup>5</sup> Only a decade earlier, Scott and Skidmore's most successful collaboration had resulted in the Hereford Screen, described at the time as "the grandest and most triumphant achievement of modern architectural art . . . the most important and successful example of modern metalwork that has ever been executed".<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 3.**

Hereford Choir Screen in Hereford Cathedral, photochrome print, circa 1890-1900 published by the Detroit Publishing Company, 1905. Collection of the Library of Congress. Digital image courtesy of Library of Congress



**Figure 4.** List of highlights of work by Francis Alexander Skidmore, printed on reverse of photographic image of brass monument by him. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

The chronologies of Scott and Skidmore's work at the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury leading up to the production of the screens, were short and overlapped. In November 1854, Scott conducted a report of repairs needed at Hereford including the entire refitting of the choir, an early milestone in his association with the cathedral.<sup>7</sup> A year later, he started work at Lichfield, and in around 1858 he was appointed architect at Salisbury.<sup>8</sup> Scott's designs for new features for these cathedrals were usually created within the context of his wider involvement as a restoration architect, and as part of integrated interior schemes. At Hereford, the scrolling ironwork foliage relates to the curling foliate decoration and the red, green, and gold-yellow colour scheme of the contemporary floor tiles by William Godwin.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of cathedral screens, the benefit of using iron was that physical separation was achieved with greater visual porosity than was possible with either stone or wood. Scott promoted metal screens for this reason, as well as for their modernity. Of the proposed screen at Hereford, he wrote that he “strongly recommended that it should be of metal, as capable of uniting the greatest degree of lightness and of beauty, and as at the same time being the class of material most in accordance with the direction of the Art-progress of the present age”.<sup>10</sup> The Lichfield Screen was in fact the first commission of the three (fig. 5) and on 16 April 1857 it was resolved to take down the existing screen.<sup>11</sup> On 21 September 1859, Skidmore undertook to make a new one for £800, as per a now lost drawing.<sup>12</sup> On 29 November he received the go ahead, while on 4 October 1860 it was reported, “metal screen getting on very fast”, and on 21 December 1860 the first payment, of £400, was made.<sup>13</sup> Skidmore also made ironwork gates for the North and South aisles, as well as standards for gas lighting. On 22 October 1861, Lichfield Cathedral reopened, with the new screen and Skidmore’s other metalwork in place.<sup>14</sup>

At Hereford, Scott’s screen was approved on 31 December 1861, on the basis of a preliminary drawing he had provided. A much-reduced price of £1,500 was agreed—Scott said this amounted to at least £1,000 less than such a work could be produced for under any other circumstances—on condition that Skidmore be allowed to exhibit the screen at the 1862 International Exhibition, thus promoting his work to a large international audience.<sup>15</sup> The Hereford Screen was completed astonishingly quickly, and was ready to be exhibited in London from May to November 1862. Prominently positioned (fig. 6), the screen was trumpeted with a lengthy text in English and French and accompanying colour illustrations in the lavish publication on *Masterpieces* of the exhibition (figs. 7, 8, 9).<sup>16</sup> The production of the screen had been made possible by many subscribers including Scott himself, and the Bishop and the Dean, who each contributed £50.<sup>17</sup> On 6 February 1863 the first instalment of £1,000 was paid to Skidmore, and on 30th June 1863 the cathedral reopened, the screen having been erected inside earlier that year.<sup>18</sup> On 12 November 1863 the Chapter agreed the final £500 be paid to Skidmore, but only two months later the return sections at the two extreme ends of the screen were enlarged and Skidmore was reportedly very irked that changes of mind by the cathedral concerning the completion of the installation of the screen had led to a loss of income.<sup>19</sup> His bill was only finally paid on 12 November 1864.



**Figure 5.**  
Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, Lichfield Cathedral Crossing Screen, 1859-63. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Steve Cadman

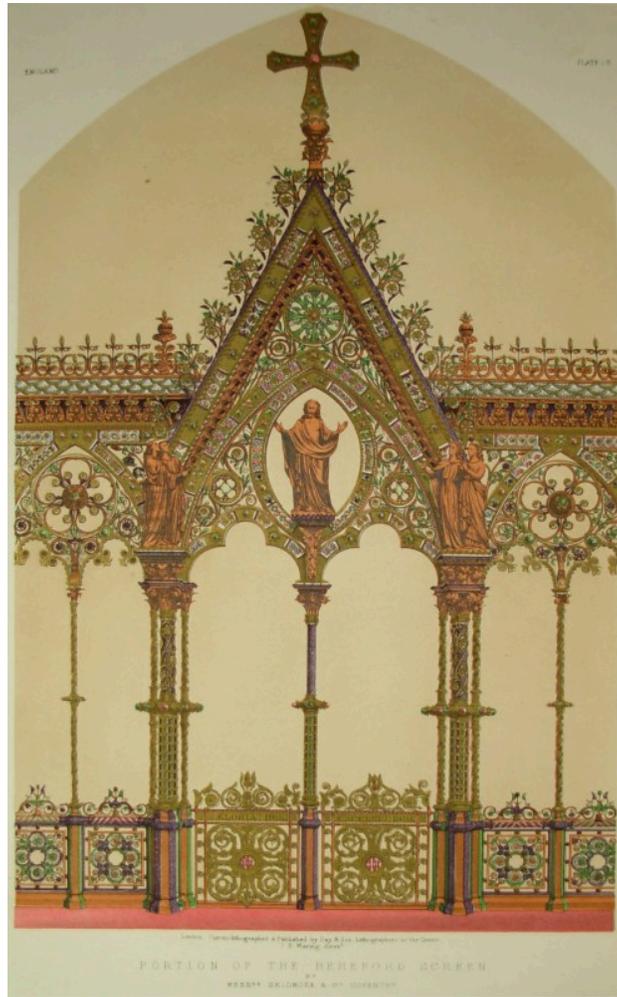


**Figure 6.**  
Hereford Screen, as displayed in the South East Transept of the International Exhibition, London, 1862. *Illustrated Times*, 7 June 1862, 92



**Figure 7.**

Hereford screen, illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son), 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 8.** Hereford Screen (central portion of screen), illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son, 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

## THE HEREFORD SCREEN.

THIS fine example of the smith's art was executed by Skidmore's Art-Manufactory Company, Coventry, from the designs of G. G. Scott, Esq., R.A. Its length is about thirty-six feet; the framework is of cast iron, plated with tarnished brass; the capitals and foliages are of copper; the panels at the base are of wrought iron, adorned with cuttings of the marble used in the composition; the delicate ornament of the columns, the roses, and filigree-work generally, are also of wrought iron; the figures of Christ in the centre, and the ministering angels each side, are of electro-copper; the iron-work is relieved by masses of marble, spar, and crystal; and the entire design is oxidized with colour and vitreous masses.

Of this company at Coventry Mr. Skidmore is the acting manager; there are six partners, who form a permanent committee, and employ a working staff of over 100 hands, by whom every branch of work in gold or silver, iron or wood, is produced in convenient workshops on the spot. Other important works executed by the use of their services at Lichfield and Ely, both designed by Mr. Scott; the iron-work of the Oxford Museum, Messrs. Dimsie & Woodcock, architects; the great Corona for Hereford Cathedral, which formed so striking a feature in the East Transept; two star-shaped gas-lights, about twelve feet high, for Lichfield and Hereford; an iron clock-tower for New Zealand; and the canopy tomb for Bishop Percocq, in Charter Cathedral, designed by Mr. Woodcock, architect. Besides these large works in iron, the Company executed, in Class 10, some very good jewelled, enamelled, and electro church vessels, and domestic furniture in the mediæval style.

The photo of the entire screen, which we have thought it desirable to give, affords necessarily no adequate an idea of the confidence of the detail, that we have given another illustration of a portion only. Very great praise is due both to the designer and artificers of this magnificent screen, although its use in a church where the Protestant service is performed seems more than questionable. In the Roman Catholic and Greek churches, the screen has always been, however, an important feature; its object being not so much perhaps to obtain effect and impart a peculiar respect to the chancel, as for the convenience of the officiating priests and choir; for in the earliest examples, the chancel was comparatively open, and the charge of excommunication cannot be brought against the system until a more recent period. Pugin, in his treatise on "Church-Screens and Hood-Laths," says: "From the time of Constantine's conversion, it is beyond doubt that the chancel was divided off from the other portion of the church by rods or screens." Rœnblin describes the choir of the Church of the Apostles, erected by Constantine at Constantinople, as inclosed by screens or iron-work, marvelously wrought;—"Inclosures adiu partem, unquam in ecclesiis christianis, velintus open or ante et ante adhiberi fuisse necessarii." The same writer speaks of the choir of the Church of Tyne, built and consecrated by the Bishop Paulinus, as being also a choir thoroughly inclosed, so that it should not be got at by the people, and adorned with screens (possibly, oak chancel) made of wood, and of an elaborate description as to delight the beholder. The Emperor Theodosius divided the church into three parts, one of which is "Sacrosanctus altar sanctis classibus;" and Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, describes three doors in the screens of the Church of St. Felix. Among the decrees of the second Council of Tours, A.D. 577, it is ordered that lay persons are not to enter the chancel which is divided off by screens, except to receive the Holy Communion; and St. Germain, Patriarch of Constantinople, thus explains the intention and meaning of the choir-screens;—"Screens mark out the place of prayer, up to which only outside come the people,—the middle, which is the holy of holies, being accessible to the priests alone." The space inclosed by the screens in those churches whose sides extended round the choir, was entered by three double gates: those in the west at the lower end of the choir were called "the holy doors;" the others were placed between the choir and the sanctuary, on the epistle and gospel sides. But in smaller churches, where the chancel alone forms the eastern extremity, there was only one pair of gates or holy doors at the west; and this most ancient arrangement has continued down to the present day, even in churches which have been fitted up with modern iron railings.

From the authorities above quoted, which are some cited by Father Thiers, in his treatise "Sur la Culture des Cloîtres," it will be seen that open screens existed from the earliest times of churches, and that they were composed of wood or metal,—most frequently brass. This style of inclosure prevailed universally in all classes of churches till the end of the 12th century, when, in the antichapel and collegiate churches, they were altered into solid walls.

[View this illustration online](#)

### Figure 9.

Hereford Screen (text accompanying image), illustration in John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of the International Exhibition, 1862* (London: Day & Son, 1863), vol. 2, Plate 112. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Scott and Skidmore thereby established the precedent of using iron for ecclesiastical screens in Great Britain, beginning with their collaboration at Lichfield. The screens were all enhanced with metal oxide paints and other materials: at Lichfield, with blackberries made of onyx; wild rose and currant seed-pods of carnelian; and white strawberries of ivory.<sup>20</sup> The Lichfield Screen also has sixteen much smaller music-making angels, eight on each side, in horizontal rows, modelled by the sculptor John Birnie Philip.<sup>21</sup>

At Hereford, the Lichfield precedent of an ornate ironwork screen was taken to an altogether different level in its dazzling, jewelled effect. The Hereford Screen, weighing over eight tons, is particularly notable for its more obvious profusion of different materials: polished brass, copper (for the leaves), one hundred and twenty mosaic panels with tesserae of marble; foil-backed glass, semi-precious stones, enamel, stencilled paintwork (added in 1863), and the use of a range of colours of metal oxide paints (figs. [10](#) and [11](#)). It also incorporated prominent figures of Christ in the centre, and pairs of angels with instruments, all made of electroformed copper (thin copper deposited in a mould using electricity), patinated to imitate sculpture.

At Lichfield, Skidmore then undertook to make an ironwork pulpit (completed in 1864) where he used the decorative techniques employed for Hereford two years earlier to striking effect on a smaller scale (fig. [12](#)): the structure is of iron, but it is richly decorated with enamelled plaques, clusters of hardstones, and vivid paint juxtapositions of deep red-brown, green, and blue, enhanced with gilding (figs. [13](#) and [14](#)). This combination of colours and gilding is equally vibrant in some of Skidmore's highly finished designs for light fittings (fig. [15](#)).<sup>22</sup>



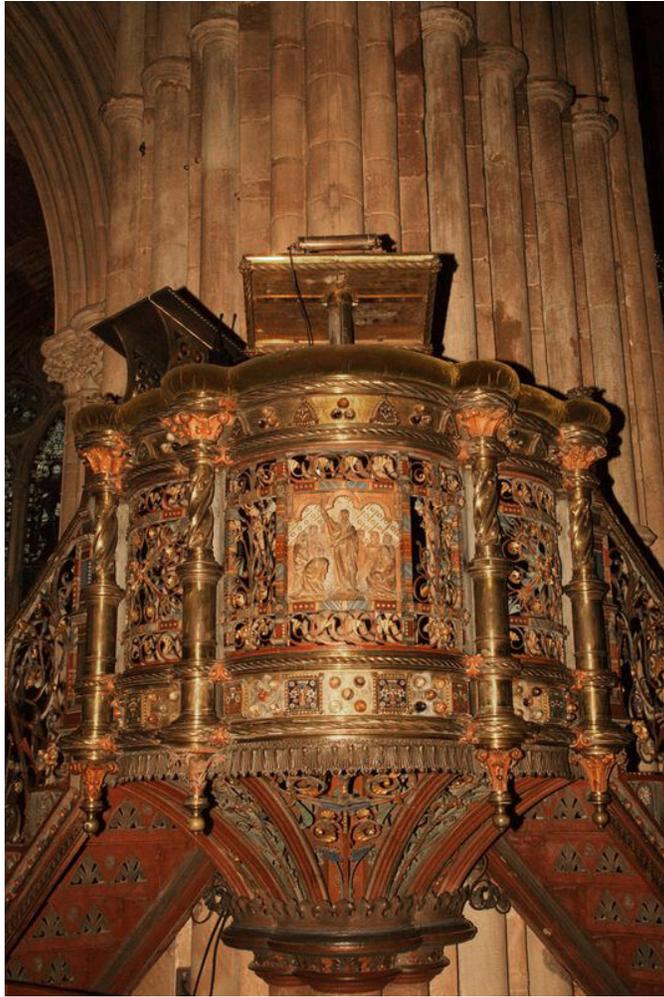
**Figure 10.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen (detail), 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry  
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 11.**

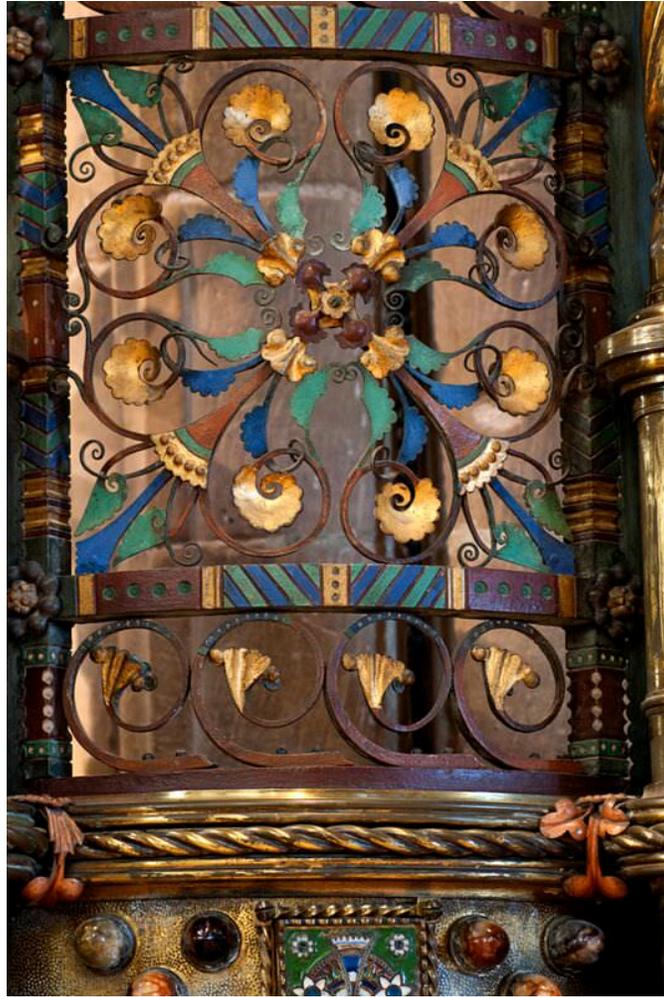
Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen (detail), 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 12.**  
Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield  
Cathedral, 1864. Digital image courtesy of Alicia  
Robinson



**Figure 13.**  
Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield Cathedral (detail), 1864.  
Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson



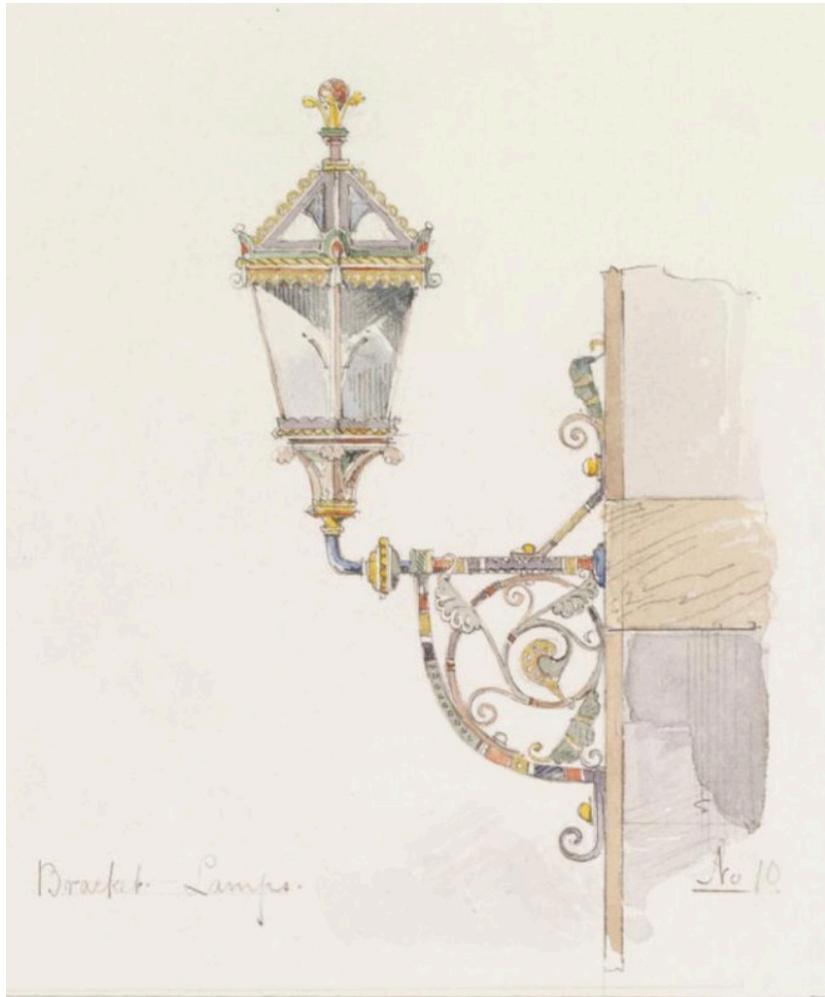
**Figure 14.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Pulpit at Lichfield Cathedral (detail), 1864. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

At Salisbury, the screen was much simpler in design than at Hereford, using a relatively restrained red and gold colour scheme.<sup>23</sup> Looking at its surviving wrought iron elements, Skidmore's skill in handworking hot iron in the forge to create elaborate twists and curls, seen even more impressively at Hereford, can be appreciated (fig. 16). The sides facing out appear to have been gilded, and the returns painted deep red.<sup>24</sup> The Salisbury gates show the influence of medieval models with repeated C and S scrolls (fig. 17).<sup>25</sup> Cast iron double-heart and lozenge decorative panels seen on the cross once at the very top of the Salisbury Screen and also horizontally across it at high level (figs. 18 and 19), are the same as panels used by Skidmore for other cathedral commissions at Chester and for the cross on the screen at Worcester,<sup>26</sup> showing Skidmore pragmatically either "recycling" left-over panels or using the same model across these different commissions, saving

on cost. More idiosyncratically, the Salisbury cross includes copper alloy leaves protruding at angles, a feature seen in more restrained form in the Hereford gates, and foil-backed glass on at least one element of the screen, a “vesica” (a pointed oval shape where two circles overlap).<sup>27</sup> By 1870, the Salisbury Screen was in place.<sup>28</sup> Worcester Cathedral, with its own ironwork by Skidmore, reopened in April 1874.<sup>29</sup>

Thus within just a decade, three huge and elaborate ironwork cathedral screens had been produced alongside other work by Scott and Skidmore, notably the high-profile Albert Memorial for which Skidmore’s ironwork was underway by May 1864.<sup>30</sup> Apart from very ornate surrounding railings by Skidmore, the Albert Memorial, like the Hereford Screen, has a cross with (in this case, imitation) hardstones at the very top, and winged angels modelled by Birnie Philip just below (fig. 20).



**Figure 15.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Design for a Bracket Lamp (detail of "No. 10"), 1865-1872, pencil, watercolour and gilt on paper. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.394-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 16.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Surviving section from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought iron painted red and gilded. Collection of Antony West. Digital image courtesy of Antony West



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 17.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Gates from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought iron, painted red and gilded, Coventry, c. 18701 (overpainted with bronze paint, 1970s). Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.4&A-1979). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 18.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Cross from Salisbury Cathedral Screen, wrought and cast iron and brass on a wood core, Coventry, c. 18701 (restored 2015/16). Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.5-2015). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 19.** Salisbury Cathedral Screen in situ (detail), shortly before it was taken down in the 1960s. Digital image courtesy of Antony West



**Figure 20.**

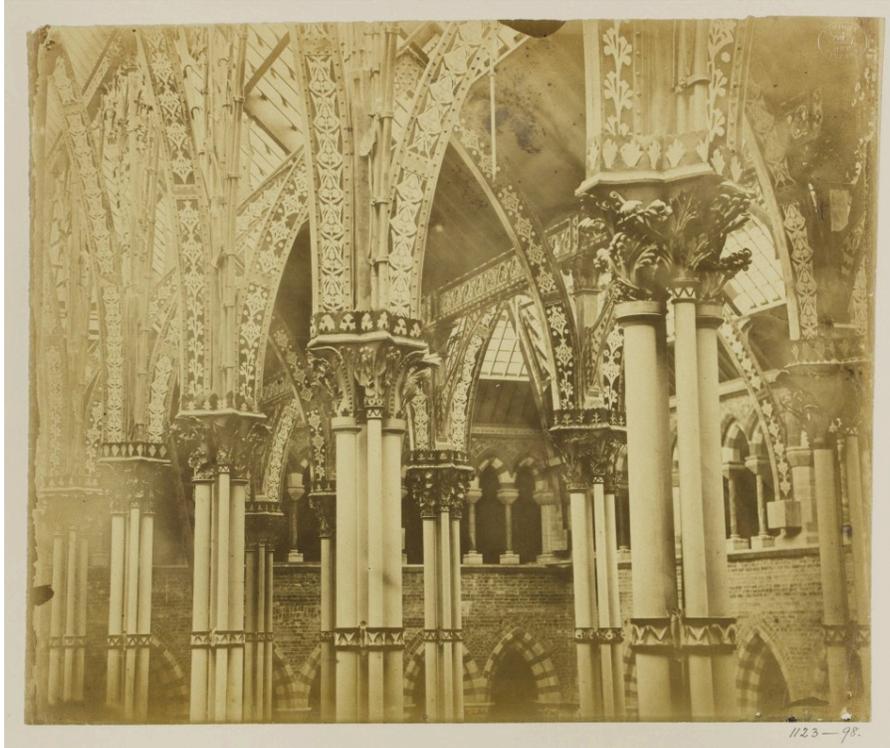
Sir George Gilbert Scott, Albert Memorial Cross (detail), 1872, Kensington Gardens, London. Digital image courtesy of Loop Images Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

## **The Career of Francis Skidmore**

Francis Skidmore trained in Coventry with his father as a jeweller and silversmith and learnt traditional techniques of engraving, casting, chasing, enameling, and mounting stones. Like Scott, he was influenced by medieval metalwork and particularly jewelled shrines. By incorporating a dazzling array of other materials into the Hereford Screen's iron structure, they effectively created jewellery on a large scale, and the result is unlike anything which had been seen before.

Skidmore had experimented with architectural ironwork in creating the Oxford University Museum roof, with mixed technical success. Made mostly of wrought iron, the roof, begun in 1857, started to collapse under its own weight and was largely rebuilt in cast iron. The new structure featured

colourfully stencilled columns ornamented with wrought ironwork in the spandrels representing branches of sycamore, walnut, and palms (fig. 21).<sup>31</sup> Here Skidmore established his naturalistic style, with curling foliate capitals and tendrils, seen later in his cathedral screens.



**Figure 21.**

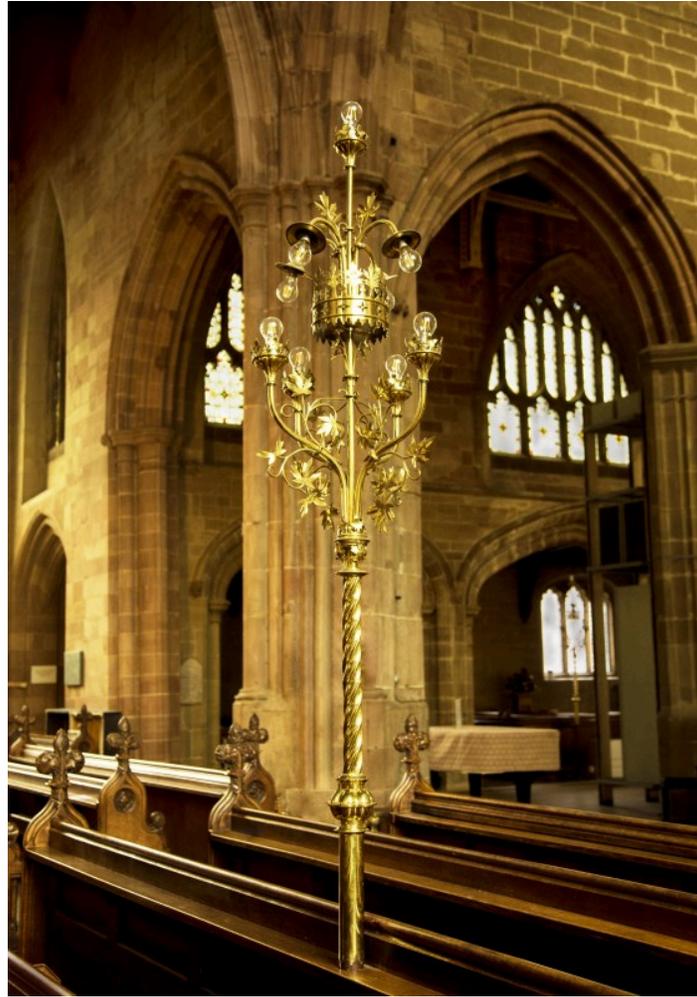
Oxford University Museum during construction, with roof by Francis Alexander Skidmore. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Although much influenced in style by metalwork of the past, Skidmore was a technical innovator. A chalice shown at the Great Exhibition of 1851 (fig. 22) featured the new technique of electroplating, which involved using an electrical current to deposit a thin layer of silver onto another metal.<sup>32</sup> He was also interested in newly invented gas lighting which he installed in several buildings including Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, in 1856, where his fourteen light fittings still provide the main light source for the interior (fig. 23).<sup>33</sup> These fittings were the precursor to those commissioned from Skidmore for Hereford Cathedral, no longer in situ but recorded in old photographs. Similar Skidmore fittings at Ely Cathedral feature his characteristic twisted columns and flamboyantly curling foliage, elements seen on the Hereford Screen.



**Figure 22.**

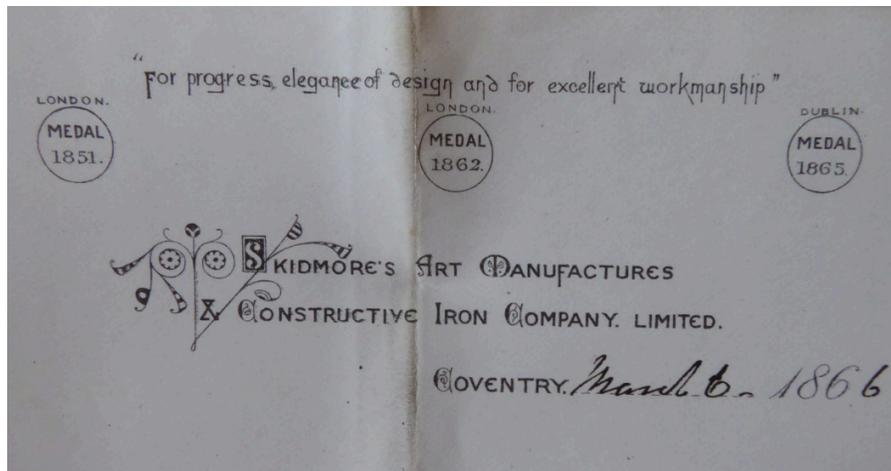
Francis Skidmore & Sons, Chalice, silver-gilt and enamel, 1851.  
Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (1329-1852).  
Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 23.**

Francis Skidmore, Light fitting in the Holy Trinity Church, Coventry, 1856. Collection of Holy Trinity Church, Coventry. Digital image courtesy of Ken Johnson

In the 1860s—the decade of these three screens—Skidmore’s career was at its peak. In 1865, his company in Alma Street, Coventry, employed seventy-four men and fifty-four boys, many apprentices from local charity schools, on an average wage of about £1 per week. The premises included an extensive showroom, drawing offices for designs and photographs, a large general workshop, pattern shops, a photographic studio, enamelling rooms, a furnace, a stamping room, an electrotyping room with bath and stone figure models, a boilerhouse, stores, a carpenter’s room, and a packing shop.<sup>34</sup> By 1865 “Skidmore’s Art Manufactures Limited” had expanded to become “Skidmore’s Art Manufactures and Constructive Iron Company Limited”, marking a shift to include larger scale construction. A new letterhead proudly included the wording used when Skidmore was awarded a medal in 1862 for the Hereford Screen: “for progress, elegance of design, and for excellent workmanship” (fig. 24).<sup>35</sup>



**Figure 24.**

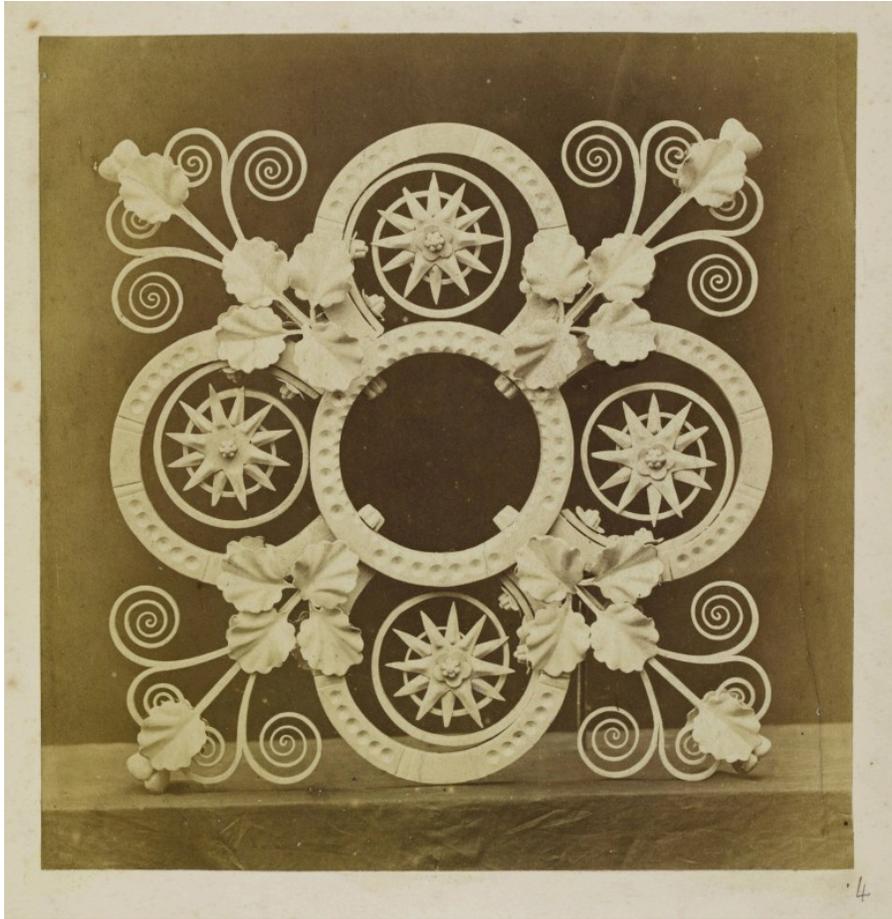
Letterhead of Skidmore Art Manufactures and Constructive Iron Company, 1866. Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

In its heyday, besides being used for manufacture, the Alma Street premises served to showcase Skidmore's design archive, as he kept not only original drawings but also photographic records of the best examples of his work. Skidmore recorded elements of the Hereford Screen including the figure of Christ, a pair of angels and a spandrel (figs. [25](#) and [26](#)), and the south aisle gates. These gates, and a pair in the north aisle, were erected in 1864 <sup>36</sup> and are still in situ, with colourful decoration over most of the surface, including characteristic incised diagonal lines and punched holes painted one colour against a background of another, twisting foliage of vivid polychromy, applied imitation hardstones and intricate decoration around their keyholes, a distinctive feature shared with the Salisbury Screen gates (figs. [27](#), [28](#), and [29](#)).



**Figure 25.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of figure of Christ from the Hereford Screen, Coventry, circa 1861. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.402-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum



**Figure 26.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of Spandrel of Hereford Screen, Coventry, circa 1861. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.430:4-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

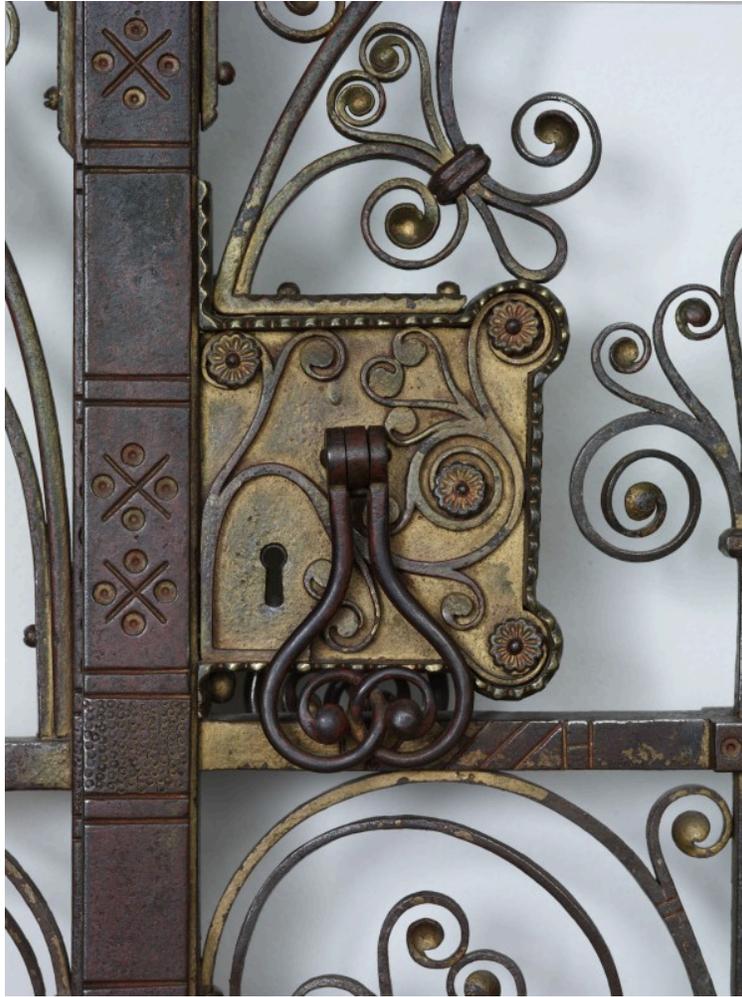


**Figure 27.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, North Aisle Gates, Hereford Cathedral, Digital image courtesy of Phil Chapman



**Figure 28.**  
Francis Alexander Skidmore, North Aisle Gates, Hereford  
Cathedral (detail of lock), Digital image courtesy of Phil  
Chapman



**Figure 29.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Gates from Salisbury Cathedral Screen (detail of lock), 1869–72. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (M.4-1979). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Skidmore was ambitious in recording the entirety of the Lichfield Screen photographically, but this new medium was much better suited to showing the crisp detail of his wrought iron close up (fig. 30).<sup>37</sup> Skidmore was also aware of the role of photography in terms of “property rights”, ordering at a critical stage that no person could photograph the Hereford Screen without his permission.<sup>38</sup> Finally, he used photographic images to present different options for commissions to clients, numbered and annotated with corresponding prices.



**Figure 30.**

Francis Alexander Skidmore, Photograph of wrought iron door fitting, Coventry, 1865-70. Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (E.416-2006). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

The Dean and Chapter commissioned Skidmore to create the Hereford Screen on Scott's recommendation, stipulating that the sketch Scott produced was to be further developed by Scott and Skidmore, indicating that they were to work, at some level, together. Scott was not always happy with Skidmore's interpretation of his ideas, recording later:

I have had one or two great works carried out, such as the choir screens at Lichfield and Hereford cathedrals. Both of these were designed in full by myself, and are carried out according to my designs in general; in both, however, as in all his works, Mr Skidmore has "kicked over the traces" wherever he has had a chance. In some cases the work has gained, and in some suffered from this. Original ideas have been imported but a certain air of eccentricity has come in with them. <sup>39</sup>

He also mentioned Skidmore taking "as usual with him a few liberties of his own". <sup>40</sup> Later he wrote of Skidmore and the Hereford Screen, "Skidmore followed my designs, but somewhat aberrantly. It is a fine work, but too loud and self-asserting for an English church." <sup>41</sup> These words were to be much quoted a hundred years later, to justify removing the screen from the cathedral.

Not only a preliminary pencil sketch, but also the detailed design by Scott for the Salisbury Screen has survived (fig. 31). <sup>42</sup> His exuberant curling decoration on the cross ended up as sequence of simpler cast panels, showing that Skidmore adapted the detail of Scott's design, presumably anticipating what would be easiest to create in metal. Scott and Skidmore seem to have worked most amicably on the canopy of the Albert Memorial.

<sup>43</sup> Scott wrote: “For the perfect carrying out of this idea I am indebted to the skill of Mr Skidmore, the only man living, as I believe, who was capable of effecting it, and who has worked out every species of ornament in the true spirit of the ancient models.” <sup>44</sup> Skidmore proudly (albeit also desperately) later quoted this praise by Scott in a petition for funds. <sup>45</sup>

As a postscript to Scott and Skidmore’s collaboration, there were inevitable delays in communications as the two worked and employed workmen all over the country. They used the services of the Electric and International Telegraph Company (incorporated in 1846) who priced transmission of messages from on foot locally, to the “upwards of 700 stations in Great Britain and Ireland” ([fig. 32](#)). On at least one occasion, and probably several others, Skidmore was obviously irritated by his workmen being kept waiting (at his expense) for Scott’s instructions. <sup>46</sup>



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 31.**

Sir George Gilbert Scott, Design for choir screen for Salisbury Cathedral: plan and elevation, c. 1869, pen on card, 56 x 44 cm. Collection of RIBA. Digital image courtesy of RIBA / RIBApix



**Figure 32.**  
Letterhead of The Electric and International Telegraph Company (incorporated 1846), Collection of Lichfield Cathedral. Digital image courtesy of Alicia Robinson

Looking back when writing his recollections, Scott summarized his views on Skidmore's work: "metalwork has, during the period in question, made considerable progress, though it has suffered from its share of eccentric mania of the day. Mr Skidmore can claim an eminent place both in skill, progress and eccentricity."<sup>47</sup> Despite the modifications Skidmore made to Scott's designs, often simply because of the properties of the metals he was working with, but also in keeping with his own ideas, Scott evidently had great admiration for Skidmore. Skidmore was understandably proud of his collaboration with Scott given that it resulted in some of the most ambitious and spectacular ironwork ever produced.

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See Gavin Stamp, "Sir George Gilbert Scott, 1811–2011", *The Victorian* 37 (July 2011): 5, for an overview of Scott's prolific and hectic output, or Gilbert George Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), ed. Gavin Stamp (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995).
- <sup>2</sup> George Gilbert Scott, letter to the Dean of Hereford Cathedral describing and detailing general estimates and proposed works to the choir, 9 November 1857 (see Hereford Cathedral Chapter Acts 1857, 406, Hereford Archive ref 7031/20).
- <sup>3</sup> Claudia Marx, "A Conservative Cathedral Restorer", *The Victorian* 37 (July 2011): 8–9.
- <sup>4</sup> See Skidmore's obituary in *The Herald*, 13 November 1896; also his obituary in *The Builder* 71, 21 November 1896, 430.
- <sup>5</sup> Peter Howell, "Francis Skidmore and the Metalwork", in *The Albert Memorial*, ed. Chris Brooks (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 252–85.
- <sup>6</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 30 August 1862.
- <sup>7</sup> Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts 9 November 1854 (ref 7031/20), 306–7.
- <sup>8</sup> Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 487.
- <sup>9</sup> Godwin began production of encaustic tiles at Lugwardine near Hereford in 1852 and his tiles were also used by Scott at Salisbury. Many of the tiles were based on medieval prototypes.
- <sup>10</sup> George Gilbert Scott, Letter to the Dean and Chapter, 7 November 1862, Hereford Cathedral Archive.
- <sup>11</sup> Lichfield Cathedral Archive, Chapter Acts Vol. 12, May 1852–April 1866, 71 (ref D30/2/1/12). The cathedral archival material is housed, well-indexed and available via Lichfield Record Office, in the public library nearby.
- <sup>12</sup> Lichfield Cathedral Archive, correspondence ref D30/2/7/72.
- <sup>13</sup> Lichfield Cathedral Archive, Chapter Acts Vol. 12, 133–34; 150; and 164 respectively.

- 14 Lichfield Cathedral Archival papers include a programme for the service on Tuesday 22 October 1861 (loose inside back of Chapter Acts Book 13, 1866-76 (NB should be in Vol. 12), and an entry ticket to the service (within correspondence D30/2/7/72).
- 15 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 31 December 1861.
- 16 John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition, 1862*, 3 vols. (London: Day & Son, 1863), 2: Plates 112 and 113, each with full-page caption in English (and also given in French).
- 17 The list of subscribers was published in the *Hereford Journal*, Saturday 21 February 1863.
- 18 Their names and roles handwritten on a slip of paper were found when the screen was dismantled in 1967 (copy in Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- 19 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 23 January 1864 (ref 7031/21), 166-67.
- 20 See Jane Davies Conservation, "Lichfield Cathedral, Skidmore Ironwork, Architectural Paint Research Report" (October 2000), for an analysis of paints used on the Lichfield screen and pulpit, and later overpainting of the former.
- 21 This is according to Nikolaus Pevsner in *The Buildings of England: Staffordshire* (1974; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), 184.
- 22 The V&A has a good collection of Skidmore designs, photographs, and other material. For more on Skidmore himself as an artist and designer, see Howell, "Francis Skidmore", 262.
- 23 On the Salisbury Screen, see Alicia Robinson, "Lauded, Lambasted, Lost and Found: The Salisbury Cathedral Screen Cross by George Gilbert Scott and Francis Skidmore", *Journal of the Antique Metalware Society* 23 (2015): 2-17.
- 24 My thanks to colleagues Donna Stevens and Zoe Allen in V&A Conservation for investigations and work on the Salisbury ironwork; also to Mr Antony West of Wiltshire, who retains some parts of the screen which Mr Bert(ram) Shergold, with whom he worked at the time, dismantled.
- 25 These are inspired by twelfth to thirteenth-century ironwork, such as the grille thought to be from the shrine of St Swithun, in Winchester Cathedral.
- 26 These heart and lozenge panels are clearly visible in a black-and-white photograph of the upper portion of the screen sent by Mr West (see above) to the author (fig. 14), and on the Worcester cross. On the Chester cross, see Robinson, "Lauded, Lambasted, Lost and Found", illustrated as fig. 28.
- 27 A vesica from the Salisbury Screen, then in the possession of Mr Shergold, was displayed at the V&A, and described by Shirley Bury in *Victorian Church Art*, exh. cat. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1971), 58-59 (no. F7).
- 28 The date of the screen's erection is disputed. Peter Howell, *Victorian Churches* (London: RIBA, 1968), 6, Plate 17, says this happened in 1869. Sarah Brown, *Sumptuous and Richly Adorn'd: The Decoration of Salisbury Cathedral* (London: Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments, 1999), gives 1870 as the date. Scott proposed a double screen supported by marble columns in *The Architect* in 1870 (vol. 3, 115). This provides the terminus post quem for the ironwork screen; a terminus ante quem is provided by Scott writing in the past tense about the screen in a section of his *Personal and Professional Recollections* written in July (or August) 1872. *Brown's Shilling Handbook and Illustrated Guide to Salisbury and Neighbourhood* (1874), 11, mentions Skidmore's screen in situ.
- 29 See Elizabeth Yarker, "The Victorian Restoration of Worcester Cathedral", *Worcestershire Recorder* 66 (Autumn 2002): 11-15, also available online: <http://worcestershirearchaeologicalsociety.org.uk/Worcs%20Recorder%20Issue%2066.pdf>.
- 30 See Howell, "Francis Skidmore"; also "Albert Memorial: The Memorial", in *Survey of London*, Vol. 38: *South Kensington Museums Area*, ed. F. H. W. Sheppard (London County Council, 1975), 159-76. Also available via British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38/pp159-176> (accessed 19 August 2016).
- 31 See "The Architecture of the Museum"; <http://www.oum.ox.ac.uk/learning/htmls/arch.htm>. Also Huw Jones and Annette Wickham, *Francis Skidmore: A Coventry Craftsman* (Coventry Arts and Heritage Service, 2003), 9.
- 32 V&A, Museum no. 1329-1852. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O68999/chalice-skidmore-francis-alexander/>
- 33 These light fittings were adapted for use with electricity when the branches drooping down were added (they are now used with LEDs). Before these branches were added, they can clearly be seen in a lithograph of the interior of the church (image emailed to the author by a parishioner), and an original fitting survives in the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry.
- 34 A description of the Alma Street factory and its employees is given in a prospectus of 1865, quoted more fully than here in Jones and Wickham, *Francis Skidmore*, 9-10.
- 35 In May 1864 "Skidmores Art Manufactures Limited" was the printed letterhead. By November 1865 Skidmore added by hand "and Constructive Iron Company Limited", and by March 1866 this addition was printed, marking the expansion of his business (evidence in letters/letterheads in Lichfield Cathedral Archive).
- 36 This is according to F. T. Havergal's *The Visitors Hand-Guide to Hereford Cathedral* (Hereford, 1865).
- 37 Lichfield Screen, photographed in 1861 (V&A, museum no. E.3008-2007).
- 38 Hereford Cathedral, Chapter Acts, 15 August 1863 (ref 7031/21), 161.
- 39 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 216.
- 40 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 486 (originally Appendix I, Vol. 4, 51).
- 41 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 291.

- 42 George Gilbert Scott pencil sketch captioned "For Salisbury", RIBA Collection, SKB 293(1). The RIBA Collection includes various plans and an elevation by Scott for Salisbury Cathedral, including a double screen as originally proposed, and a single screen as created (refs PA 1129/4; PA 1727/ScGGs[122]1,2&3).
- 43 The V&A has Scott's architectural model for the memorial, Museum no. A.13-1973. See <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O11741/albert-memorial-national-prince-consort-model-scott-george-gilbert/>.
- 44 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 265.
- 45 Skidmore's petition (incomplete) is in the V&A, E.396:1-2006.
- 46 On 16 December 1864, Skidmore telegraphed to Scott: "Pulpit. Workmen standing still two days . . . [awaiting] orders from Scott. Immediate. (cost 3/6)". See Lichfield Cathedral Archive (ref D 30/2/7/72).
- 47 Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 216.

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# “A triumph of art” or “blatant vulgarity”: The Reception of Scott and Skidmore’s Screens

Alicia Robinson

## Abstract

*This essay provides a broad narrative of how the screens designed by architect and designer George Gilbert Scott and made by metalworker Francis Skidmore for the cathedrals of Hereford, Lichfield, and Salisbury, have been regarded since they were produced. It examines debates surrounding removal, retention and rescue, and the twists and turns in the reception history of the Hereford Screen in particular. The article quotes lesser-known voices who influenced the fate of the Hereford Screen, and draws on new research conducted in the archives of Hereford Cathedral and Lichfield Cathedral. An index describing some of the documentation relating to the history of the Hereford Screen in the cathedral archive is available at the bottom of this article as a [downloadable appendix](#).*

## Authors

## Acknowledgements

The author would particularly like to thank Ayla Lepine, Sarah Victoria Turner and all at the Paul Mellon Centre; The Rev. Christopher Pullin and Charlotte Berry (Hereford Cathedral and Archive), Jason Dyer (ex-Lichfield Cathedral) and Veronica Bevan (V&A), and to pay tribute to those who masterminded, worked on, and funded the resurrection of the Hereford screen at the V&A.

## Cite as

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The Reception of Scott and Skidmore’s Screens”, *British Art Studies*, Issue 5,  
<https://dx.doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-05/arobinson2>

## Objects of Debate

At the time of their making, exhibition, and first installation, the three major ironwork cathedral screens created by George Gilbert Scott in collaboration with Francis Skidmore, for Hereford (1862), Lichfield (1861), and Salisbury (1870), were regarded as magnificent creations.<sup>1</sup> However, by the middle of the twentieth century they aroused strong and sharply divided opinions. The three screens had contrasting fates and afterlives. Many views were aired in public, and there was also much debate behind the scenes.

The role of screens in cathedrals and churches has been fiercely debated for centuries. They have been variously in and out of favour in terms of style, and as a means of providing separation and visual porosity—or indeed the opposite—depending on material and construction. When the Hereford Screen was exhibited at the 1862 International Exhibition in London (prior to its installation in the cathedral), its caption in the accompanying publication considered the screen in the context of the long early history of open screens, from Constantine’s conversion until the twelfth century, after which “they were altered into solid walls.”<sup>2</sup>

In erecting the new screen at Hereford in the position he chose, Scott recorded that he felt “at liberty (I am not sure how justified) to adopt an arrangement founded rather upon utility than history”, clearly giving priority to the way the cathedral worked at the time over historical authenticity.<sup>3</sup> Scott’s promotion of ironwork as a suitable material in this context was also thoroughly modern, and was generally well-received by contemporaries when the screens were unveiled and in the decades immediately following. Writing in about 1880, the author of a guidebook to the region is one of many at the time who admired the Hereford Screen, describing it as “one of the greatest works in metal in the world”; and as an innovative work of art that served liturgical needs while also respecting its historical surroundings:

The Screen, which is entirely of wrought metal work, the metals used being iron, brass and copper, is a triumph of art. It illustrates the Ascension of our Lord; and the beauty of the work, its position and office in the Cathedral, and its structural qualities, cause it to harmonise well with the grand Norman work by which it is surrounded . . . It is one of the largest works of art, in metal, in the world, and redounds to the credit of both its designer, Sir G. G. Scott, and its maker, Mr. Skidmore.<sup>4</sup>

The debate about cathedral screens heated up in the twentieth century and three key factors combined to mitigate against the preservation of screens in general, and of the Hereford Screen in particular: taste, function, and condition. In *Country Life* an article in 1960 was entitled “Screens or Vistas in Cathedrals?”, followed by one on the “cleavage of opinion about cathedral screens”.<sup>5</sup> Reservations about aesthetics came to a head, combined with changes of liturgy, meaning that the separation created by screens was no longer thought desirable. Moreover, the cleaning and maintenance of screens posed a difficulty from very early on. At Hereford, Skidmore was asked to quote for cleaning and repairs of the screen as early as 25 June 1875 (presumably largely from the effect of gas light). Cleaning the lower and upper parts of the screen was added to the duties of the verger and under-sexton respectively.<sup>6</sup> By the mid-1960s, the Dean reported that the screen was “thoroughly dilapidated and corroded”.<sup>7</sup>

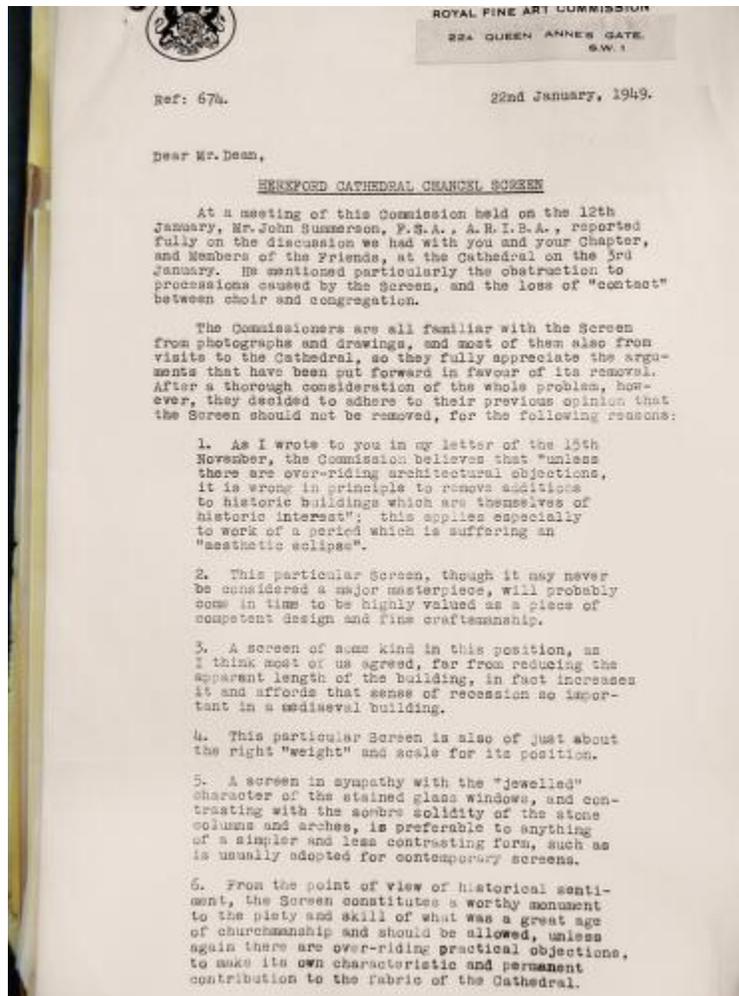
## **The Removal of the Hereford Screen**

Reservations about the Hereford Screen were expressed from the outset, including by Scott himself.<sup>8</sup> In the publication accompanying the 1862 International Exhibition mentioned above, the designer and maker were praised, but it was commented that the use of the screen “in a church where the Protestant service is performed seems more than questionable”.<sup>9</sup> References to its possible removal were made as early as 1934, when the Central Council for the Care of Churches advised the Dean, following his request for their counsel, that it “would not view with favour the removal of the screen”.<sup>10</sup> But the Friends of the Cathedral vigorously lobbied the Dean from 1935, keeping up the pressure for the removal of the screen. While the Dean was clear that the debate was “too much an issue of national importance to allow ourselves to be guided by local opinion”,<sup>11</sup> the Bishop described the screen as “a great many shams”.<sup>12</sup> In 1936 the Central Council urged extreme caution, and expressed the view that the removal of the screen might be approved if considered as part of a wider scheme to reinstate the choir in the position which it originally occupied.<sup>13</sup> The Central Council visited in 1939, at the request of the Dean and Chapter, and reported that they were:

strongly and unanimously of the opinion that the screen ought not under any circumstances to be destroyed [*sic*]; preferably it should be retained in an honourable position in the Cathedral, or removed to another building if this were not possible. It is a characteristic production of a famous architect and well-known

metal craftsman, designed for the Cathedral, carried out in lavish manner, and worthy of preservation as a fine piece of work of its period. Future generations may well appreciate it more highly than many to-day. <sup>14</sup>

By 1952 the Central Council had “an enormous file” on the screen. <sup>15</sup> The Royal Fine Art Commission was also consulted, recording their discussion at a meeting in January 1949 with the Dean about the screen obstructing processions and causing a loss of “contact” between choir and congregation. Later that month, however, the commissioners wrote a letter adhering to their opinion that the screen should stay in situ (figs. 1 and 2). They cited reasons for its suitability, such as its “sympathy with the ‘jewelled’ character of the stained-glass windows” and the ability of a screen to create “that sense of recession so important in a mediaeval building”. Exhibiting perhaps a heightened sense of historical self-awareness, they also mentioned the importance of protecting building elements of historic interest, a principle that they argued “applies especially to a work of a period which is suffering an ‘aesthetic eclipse’”. <sup>16</sup>



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 1.**

Letter from Royal Fine Art Commission to the Dean of Hereford Cathedral, page 1 of 2, 1949. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives

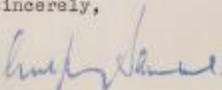
7. The removal of the Screen to another site would be difficult and costly, and as no building of less than cathedral scale could appropriately accommodate it, it would almost certainly be lost if detached from its present position.

The Commissioners agree with you that the appearance of the Screen as it stands is unsatisfactory, but in their opinion this is mainly due to its poor and tarnished condition. The changes in colour from that of the original design may have been ill advised, but some degree of restoration making a compromise with the probably too garish original, should be practicable.

The Commission therefore recommends that the Screen should be retained in its present position, that missing parts should be made good, and that with skilled advice the entire structure should be cleaned and redecorated.

On the question of obstruction, it must be admitted that these recommendations do not overcome the objections that have been put forward, and indeed imply the continuance of an inconvenience that has been presumably endured in one form or another virtually since the foundation of the Cathedral. With liturgical changes in emphasis, however, the inconvenience may now be greater than it was. The only practical suggestion the Commission can offer is that some adjustment to the west end of the Stalls might help to strengthen that contact between choir and congregation referred to earlier in this letter. Any professional advice that may be sought on the Screen itself could no doubt be extended to include such an adjustment.

Yours sincerely,



(Godfrey Samuel)  
SECRETARY

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**Figure 2.**

Letter from Royal Fine Art Commission to the Dean of Hereford Cathedral, page 2 of 2, 1949. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives

From  
THE DEAN OF HEREFORD  
Telephone: 2523

THE DEAN'S LODGING  
THE CLOISTERS  
HEREFORD

24th August, 1965.

Sir,

The main factor that has weighed with us in our desire to remove the metal-work screen from Hereford Cathedral has not been the cost of its restoration, but the incongruity and ever-obtrusiveness of this large Victorian-Gothic work in a Norman Cathedral. Its designer, Gilbert Scott, himself said in his later years that it was "too loud and self-asserting for a English church" (Personal and Professional Recollections, 1879).

Many of us feel with a former Bishop of Hereford that it is a real obstacle to worship. Expressions of relief at the prospect of the disappearance of the screen from the Cathedral have been as numerous as the protests. *And* at the Annual Meeting of the Friends of the Cathedral earlier this summer, not a voice was raised in opposition to a resolution to vote a sum of money toward the cost of its removal.

The offer of the authorities at Coventry to give it a home ensures its preservation.

Yours faithfully,

[View this illustration online](#)

### Figure 3.

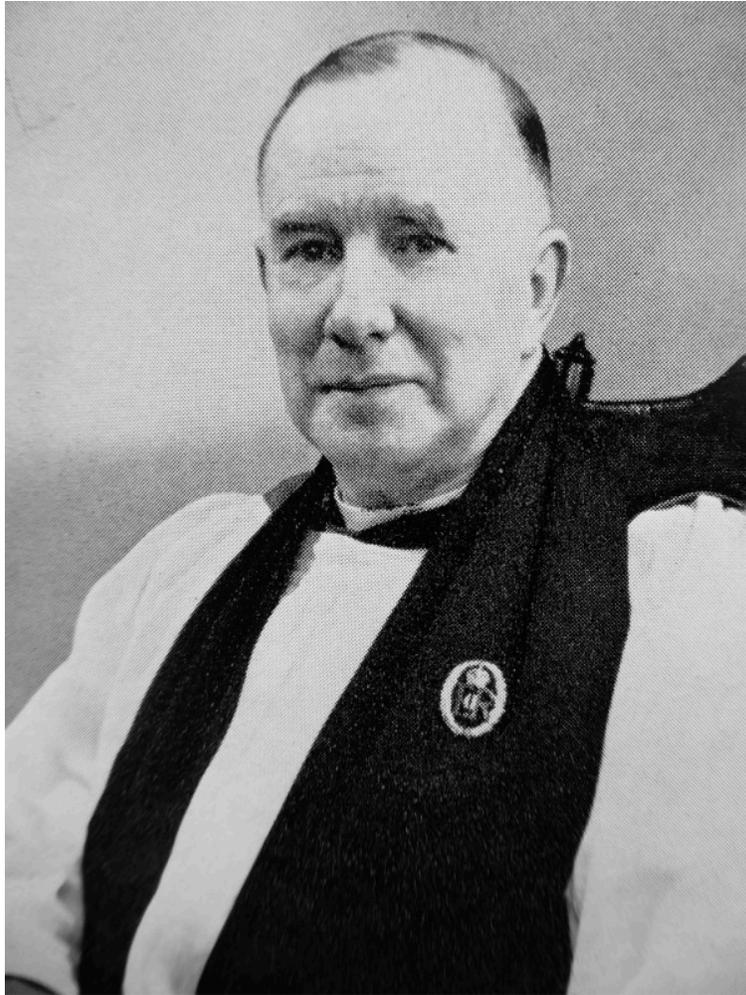
Letter from Dean Robert Peel Price, Hereford Cathedral, to the authorities at Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry, 29 August 1965. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives

In April 1959, after a parallel campaign arguing for its own removal, Salisbury's screen was taken down, establishing a significant precedent for Hereford. Canon Ralph Dawson, the Treasurer, had the decisive role and seems to have been proud of his influence.<sup>17</sup> Momentum surrounding the Hereford campaign accelerated, and in July 1964 the intention to remove the Hereford Screen was first announced at a meeting of the Friends of the Cathedral. In June 1965 the decision was agreed, provoking widespread and heated public debate. A letter written by the Dean of Hereford in August 1965 (fig. 3) reports that the Friends of the Cathedral had unanimously

approved the decision, and gives two main reasons: that the screen was “a real obstacle to worship” and the “incongruity and over-obtrusiveness of this large Victorian-Gothic work in a Norman Cathedral.” <sup>18</sup>

On 10 June 1965 Cyril Scott of the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum in Coventry wrote that he was anxious to acquire the screen. The £2,000 purchase price requested was almost entirely for dismantling and transport. On 9 March 1966 Jane Fawcett of the Victorian Society wrote that they could “only contemplate removal if preservation in entirety” was assured, and the Art Gallery confirmed by a letter of 15 July 1966 that they wanted the entire screen as the highlight of a new museum on the industrial history of Coventry.

The Cathedrals Advisory Committee (CAC) Chair wrote to the Dean about the “spate of protests”, but the Dean of Salisbury confidentially lobbied the Dean of Hereford against the CAC. Quoting Canon Dawson, he reported that the Salisbury Screen was “still in Salisbury and cherished by the Sarum ironworks”, run by Mr Shergold. <sup>19</sup> Numerous letters sent to *The Times* in February and March 1966 included those by Sir John Betjeman and Sir Nikolaus Pevsner writing in favour of the screen. A local architect passionately argued for its restoration, and Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, Architecture Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, wrote a bitter and long article headlined “Hereford’s Pride and the Destroyers”, <sup>20</sup> while the Architectural Correspondent of *The Times* described it as “a most beautiful example of its kind and in very good condition”.



**Figure 4.**

Photograph of Dean Robert Peel Price, reproduced in the *34th Annual Report of the Friends of Hereford Cathedral, 30th April 1968*. Collection of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives. Digital image courtesy of Hereford Cathedral Library and Archives

However, the Vicar of Holt in Norfolk represented the opposing view in his relief to have clergy in charge and not “the cacophony” of Victorian societies. Canon Dawson wrote to *The Times* of the “depressing enormity” of the screen, describing it as “a purely Victorian fabrication which was a mistake when it was put up and is a mistake now”, and of its “spiky, blatant vulgarity”.<sup>21</sup> Using the wider context of Scott and Skidmore’s careers to undermine their aesthetic judgment, he also argued that “the fact [they] placed the same type of screen in such diverse settings as Salisbury, Hereford, Worcester, Durham, Ely and else in itself proves their own architectural insensitivity.”<sup>22</sup> Early in February 1967 the screen was taken down. Some expressed relief. Mary Moorman, wife of the Bishop of Ripon, wrote, “Thank heaven the Dean and Chapter of Hereford are at last removing

the monstrosity which has long disfigured the Cathedral there.”<sup>23</sup> In the opinion of the current Canon Treasurer, Dean Price was left “a broken man” by the whole issue. He resigned on 30 April 1968 to work in Bournemouth and it was reported that “Local people will know that the controversy this event caused was much greater in London than in Hereford.”<sup>24</sup>

Henshaw & Son of Edinburgh was asked to dismantle the screen, and they packed the approximately 14,000 component parts with newspaper and straw into forty-six crates which they delivered on 16 March 1967 to the Herbert Gallery. However, the industrial history display in which the screen was to be included was never realized, and the screen remained in store in Coventry before once again being brought to public attention in the early 1980s. Shortly thereafter, it was given to the V&A, arriving still in its original crates in 1983, and found to be in need of considerable work.

Thus began the most expensive fundraising campaign ever mounted by the V&A for the restoration of one object: in the region of £850,000 was needed, with a further £25,000 for the lighting scheme that was installed. As part of the fundraising campaign and the 1991-4 project to redisplay the ironwork galleries with the screen at the central point, the V&A commissioned a stencil to be designed and painted on the wall for which the screen was destined, with just its electroformed figures on display (fig. 5). By 1999, the necessary funds had been raised and the restoration, reassembly, and redisplay of the screen was then carried out. Almost four decades after its removal from Hereford Cathedral, the resurrection of the screen was completed, and celebrated with an “unveiling” on 24 May 2001.



[View this illustration online](#)

**Figure 5.**

John Ronayne, Design model, to scale, for redisplay of Hereford screen, and for a full-size mural of screen to be stencil-painted onto gallery wall, pen and brown ink, relief figures in card painted with gold paint, mounted within thick white cardboard box frame, London, 1992 (part of V&A Ironwork galleries re-display project 1991-94), Collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, London (Inv. NCOL.93-2017). Digital image courtesy of Victoria and Albert Museum

Having survived a complicated reception history, the screen is now the highlight of the ironwork galleries at the V&A, directly overlooking the Main Entrance (fig. 6). After decades of debate and controversy, this collaborative creation, visually referencing the past but modern in much of its manufacture, is once again considered a masterpiece of metalworking. The screen is regarded, studied, and enjoyed as a magnificent work of art within an international context, as it had been when first exhibited in 1862.



### Figure 6.

Francis Alexander Skidmore and Sir George Gilbert Scott, The Hereford Screen, 1862, painted wrought and cast iron, brass, copper, timber, mosaics, and hardstones. Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, Given by Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Coventry (M.251:1 to 316-1984). Digital image courtesy of Victoria & Albert Museum

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See, for instance, in *The Builder*, 10 May 1862 and *Illustrated London News*, 30 August 1862. They also collaborated on screens elsewhere, such as Worcester Cathedral, but these three have the most metalwork.
- <sup>2</sup> John Burley Waring, *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture at the International Exhibition, 1862*, 3 vols. (London: Day & Son, 1863), 2: Plate 113; text describing the screen which is illustrated as Plate 112.
- <sup>3</sup> George Gilbert Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), ed. Gavin Stamp (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1995), 479.
- <sup>4</sup> D. R. Chapman, *Hereford, Herefordshire and the Wye* (c. 1880), 37 and 38 (copy in Hereford Cathedral Archive, ref 5891/19).
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Mount, "Screens or Vistas in Cathedrals?—An Old Controversy Revived", *Country Life*, 29 September 1960, 672-73.
- <sup>6</sup> Hereford Cathedral Archive, ref 7007/1, 447-48.
- <sup>7</sup> Dean Price in "Thirty First Annual Report of Friends of Hereford Cathedral" (1964-5), 8.
- <sup>8</sup> Scott described it as "too loud and self-asserting for an English church." See Scott, *Personal and Professional Recollections*, 291.
- <sup>9</sup> Waring, *Masterpieces*, 2: Plate 113.
- <sup>10</sup> Letter from the Central Council for the Care of Churches (hereafter CC) to Dean, 11 December 1934 (Hereford Cathedral Archive, ref 5891/2).
- <sup>11</sup> Dean letter to Mr Lee, 11 January 1936 (handwritten copy in Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- <sup>12</sup> The President (i.e. Bishop) in "6<sup>th</sup> Report to the Friends of the Cathedral" (1938), 10 (Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- <sup>13</sup> CC letter to Dean, 9 May 1936 (Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- <sup>14</sup> On page 1 of the three-page report by the sub-committee of the CC following their visit to the cathedral on 7 July 1939, for consideration at the CC meeting in October 1939 (copy of report sent to the Dean on 24 July 1939; Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- <sup>15</sup> Letter from CC to Dean, 15 August 1952 (Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- <sup>16</sup> Royal Fine Art Commission's letter to the Dean, 22 January 1949, 1.

- 17 Canon Ralph Dawson, Treasurer of Salisbury Cathedral 1958–68, wrote guides to the cathedral including *Guide Yourself Round Salisbury Cathedral* (1962). He was interviewed by Malcolm Southan in 1967 and recalled by Southan in 2015; see Alicia Robinson, "Lauded, Lambasted, Lost and Found: The Salisbury Cathedral Screen Cross by George Gilbert Scott and Francis Skidmore", *Journal of the Antique Metalware Society* 23 (2015): 11. On 23 April 1967 Dawson wrote to the Chapter Clerk at Hereford, for circulation to the Dean and Chapter, describing events at Salisbury and his role and criticizing the Cathedrals Advisory Committee (Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- 18 Letter from the Dean of Hereford, 24 August 1965 (Hereford Cathedral Archive).
- 19 "The Sarum Iron Works, Proprietor B. Shergold, 13 Guilder Lane, Salisbury, Wilts: Distinctive Hand-forged Ironwork" (letterhead on photocopied letter from Shergold to Jane Fawcett, Secretary of the Victorian Society, offering to make new items, at a range of costs, from parts of the screen for its members; V&A Metalwork Department archive). Bert(ram) Shergold set up the ironworks in the early 1920s. He died in 1976 (information given to the author by Antony West who worked with him from 1965).
- 20 Peter Fleetwood-Hesketh, "Hereford's Pride and the Destroyers", *The Daily Telegraph*, 16 August 1965.
- 21 (Canon) R. S. Dawson, letter to *The Times*, 25 February 1966.
- 22 Dawson, letter to *The Times*, 25 February 1966.
- 23 Mary Moorman, letter to the *Church Times*, 24 February 1967. Mary Moorman was the daughter of the historian G. M. Trevelyan.
- 24 "34<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of Friends of Hereford Cathedral", 30 April 1968, 9.

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# Conserving and Restoring the Hereford Screen

Diana Heath

## Abstract

*In this film, the Victoria and Albert Museum's Head of Metals Conservation, Diana Heath, describes her involvement in the intricate conservation and restoration of the Hereford Screen over a number of years. From her first encounter with the screen in 1983, as its fragments arrived in the conservation studio packed in cases stuffed with straw, to the return of the screen to its former glory when it was installed as a whole object in the Metalwork Galleries above the main entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum, Diana Heath guides us step-by-step through the restoration process of one of the most significant pieces of nineteenth-century metalwork.*

## Authors

Head of Metals Conservation at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London

## Acknowledgements

The V&A is immensely grateful to all of those without whom the restoration of the screen would have been impossible.

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For other support the Museum thanks Rupert Harris, John Ronayne, Robert Thorne of Alan Baxter Associates and the Victorian Society; Plowden and Smith Ltd (Conservation/Restoration), Purcell Miller Tritton and Partners (Project Management), CJ Design (Lighting), and the V&A team: Marian Campbell (Lead Curator/Project Manager), Eric Turner (Curator), Annette Wickham (Assistant Curator), and Diana Heath (Lead Conservator), along with the individual conservators and specialists who planned and carried out the work.

**Cite as**

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[Watch Video](#)

**Figure 1.**

Diana Heath, *Conserving and Restoring the Hereford Screen*, video essay, 2017. Digital image courtesy of Film by Jonathan Law

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