
PDF generated on 30 September 2020

Note: British Art Studies is a digital publication and intended to be experienced online and referenced digitally. PDFs are provided for ease of reading offline. Please do not reference the PDF in academic citations: we recommend the use of DOIs (digital object identifiers) provided within the online article. These unique alphanumeric strings identify content and provide a persistent link to a location on the internet. A DOI is guaranteed never to change, so you can use it to link permanently to electronic documents with confidence.

Published by:
Paul Mellon Centre
16 Bedford Square
London, WC1B 3JA
https://www.paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk

In partnership with:
Yale Center for British Art
1080 Chapel Street
New Haven, Connecticut
https://britishart.yale.edu

ISSN: 2058-5462
DOI: 10.17658/issn.2058-5462
URL: https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk

Editorial team: https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/editorial-team
Advisory board: https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk/about/advisory-board

Produced in the United Kingdom.
Contents

Resurrection, Re-Imagination, Reconstruction:
New Viewpoints on the Hereford Screen, Ayla Lepine
Acknowledgements

To marshal this range of contributions and methods of engagement, there have been many supporters along the way to whom enormous thanks are due and they are registered here on behalf of the project’s contributors as a whole. At the V&A, Bill Sherman, Olivia Horsfall Turner, Angus Patterson, and their colleagues have been invaluable dialogue partners in the project’s developmental stages. At Hereford Cathedral, Christopher Pullin, Charlotte Berry, and Rosemary Firmin, along with the Dean and Chapter, have provided hospitality and generosity at every stage, and the partnership between the V&A and Hereford Cathedral in particular has been a great source of delight and interaction that exemplifies the best of institutional collaboration in research projects of this kind. For their expertise regarding aspects of the Hereford Screen and its wider institutional and historical contexts, and for their practical assistance with elements of the project’s development, thanks are also due to Marian Campbell, David Gazeley, Michael Hall, Peter Howell, Gavin Stamp, Gerard Beauchamp, Jon Law, Richard Hawker, Evan McWilliams, Rory O’Donnell, Tom Nickson, and the Cambridge staff and volunteers of the Churches Conservation Trust. None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of the Paul Mellon Centre’s expert team; special thanks are offered here to Martina Droth, Sarah Victoria Turner, Hana Leaper, Baillie Card, Tom Scutt, and Maisoon Rehani.

Cite as

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.
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.
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.
Licensing

The Publishers of *British Art Studies* are committed to supporting scholarship on British art and architecture of all periods. This publication is made available free of charge at https://www.britishartstudies.ac.uk. We ask users to identify the use of materials made available through this website and to provide an appropriate credit to the to the author and the publication, so that others may find and use our resources.

Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 UK: England & Wales Licence (CC BY-NC 2.0 UK). To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/uk/ or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

The Publishers fully support the protection of intellectual property and are committed to complying with, and strictly adhering to, all applicable copyright law. In many cases, copyright or other proprietary rights may be held by individuals or entities other than, or in addition to, the Publishers. If a work or a photographic image is still protected by copyright, you must cite the relevant copyright information when using the image and comply with all other terms or restrictions that may be applicable to that material.

In some cases, exceptions to copyright that permit limited use of protected works without the permission of the copyright owner may have be applied. We are confident that we have carried out due diligence in our use of copyrighted material as required, but we apologise for any inadvertent infringement of rights.

Digital copies of resources are made accessible for research for one of the following reasons:

- they are in the public domain;
- the rights are owned by the Publishers;
- we make them accessible under an exception or limitation to UK copyright law, as outlined in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended);
- we have permission to make them accessible;
- or, there are no known restrictions on use.

If you believe that we have made a mistake and wish for your material to be removed from our site, please contact us at copyright@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk.

Please include the following information with your request:

- Name and contact information, including email address and phone number.
- Identification of the resource for consideration of removal. Providing URLs in your communication will help us locate content quickly.
- The reason for the request.

The Publishers respond promptly, normally within 21 business days. We may remove the resource from our site while we assess the validity of the request. Upon completion of the assessment, we will take appropriate action and communicate that action to you.