Issue No.4 Summer 2012

Research Journal

Edited by Angela McShane

Research Journal

Research Journal: Issue No.4 Summer 2012

Edited by Angela McShane

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

© Victoria and Albert Museum,
London, 2024

Contents

Editorial – *Angela McShane* 0

A portrait of the 'Raphael of silk design' – *Lesley Ellis Miller* 0

Encounters in the Archive: Reflections on costume – *Donatella Barbieri* 0

A study of a Ming dynasty ceramic pillow – *Kirstin Beattie* 0

Another dimension: Integrating music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries – *Stuart Frost, and Giulia Nuti* 0

William Bower Dalton: Potter and teacher – *Lily Crowther* 0

The silent traveller: Chiang Yee in Britain 1933–55 – *Anna Wu* 0

Room 38A and beyond: post-war British design and the Circulation Department – *Joanna Weddell* 0

The Silvern Series: Photographs from the collections of the South Kensington Museum – *Zoe Hendon* 0

Review of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art at the V&A – *Raymond Lam* 0

Contributors 0

Editorial

Angela McShane, Victoria and Albert Museum

Angela McShane

Welcome to the fourth edition of the V&A Online journal! This year's edition draws upon a broad array of topics particularly inspired by the V&A's gallery projects and collections departments, past and present, and offers some thoughtful insights into innovative curatorial practice and historical methodologies. Lesley Miller, lead curator of the new Europe 1600–1800 galleries, gives us a small taste of the kinds of scholarship that is informing curatorial decisions about displays and interpretation for that project as she explores the social distinctions between wearing and retailing French silks in eighteenth-century France. Focussing on the vast extent of the V&A’s Theatre Collection archives, theatre costume designer, Donatella Barbieri makes a case for a new methodological approach to a sadly neglected element in theatre studies. She shows how using filmed, immediate responses from scholars and artists can recover the histories of performance that are embedded in archived costumes. Placing it in a rich historical context, she reveals and explains its multifaceted social meanings.

Staying with the performance arts, educational interpreter, Stuart Frost and musicologist, Giulia Nutti, discuss the important innovations in curatorial interpretation and technologies that enabled pieces of music to be included as objects in their own right in the new Mediaeval and Renaissance Galleries. A classic example of the V&A’s characteristic combination of ‘accident and design’, Jo Weddell outlines the fascinating history of the Circulation

Department. She tells how from the period after the war until its closure in the 1970s, ‘Circ.’ waged a one department campaign to disseminate design inspirations through a web of touring exhibitions and study collections, and promoted British design and designers through their collecting practices. The success of their efforts is marked by the tremendous array of objects currently on show in the current British Design Exhibition. Finally, Raymond Lam offers us a wonderfully illuminating review of the Buddhist sacred art in the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Gallery.

Reassessments of several lesser known works and artists to be found in the collections are offered by Anna Wu, Kirsten Beattie, Zoe Hendon, and Lily Crowther. Anna Wu revisits early twentieth century illustrated travel narratives created by Chinese artist and writer Chiang Lee, whose work will be included in the forthcoming Chinese Masterpieces exhibition. Kirsten Beattie, a recent graduate of the V&A/RCA History of Design Course, closely investigates the design and materiality of a single ceramic pillow from the V&A's Asian collections. Hendon investigates the role of Arthur Silver's nineteenth-century photographic design studio, while Lily Crowther assesses the work and influence of English potter and teacher, William Dalton.

The V&A Online Journal aims to provide a forum for research papers from scholars inside and outside the museum, in a bid to promote dialogue and open up new ways of interrogating material culture, current design practice, histories of design and all other related fields. Provided that submissions meet the academic standards set by our Editorial team and peer reviewers, we welcome articles for future issues on the history of art, architecture and design relating to the V&A's collections, public programme or institutional history; features focusing on new acquisitions or objects linked to V&A exhibitions; reflections on the educational or creative industries role of the Museum and reviews and previews of V&A publications, conferences or displays.

Further details on submission are available on the Submission Guidelines page and we can be also contacted at vandajournal@vam.ac.uk.

I would very much like to thank our authors and all who have contributed to the successful production of this issue:

Journal production and design

Editor: Angela McShane

Sub-Editor: Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin

Assistant Editors:

Elaine Tierney

Ruth Mason

Jan Sibthorpe

Katherine Elliott

Soersha Dyon

Research Department: Helen Woodfield

Digital Media: Keith Hale and Joanna Jones

Editorial Advisors

Glenn Adamson

Jeremy Aynsley

Christine Guth

Lucy Trench

Ann Eatwell

Luisa Mengoni

Mary Brooks

Alun Graves

Jane Pritchard

A portrait of the ‘Raphael of silk design’

Lesley Ellis Miller, Victoria and Albert Museum

Abstract

Jean Revel (1684–1751), the ‘Raphael of silk design’, had his portrait painted in 1747 in Lyon. This article focuses on the dress and furniture in this portrait, investigating the message the artist and the sitter conveyed consciously or inadvertently.

Introduction

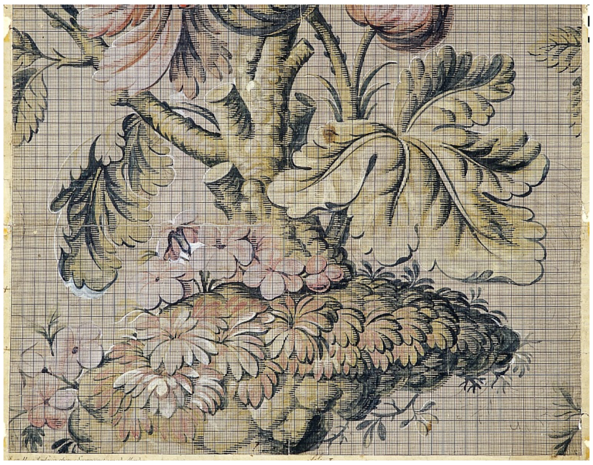


Figure 1 - Mise-en-carte (or draft), Jean Revel, France, 1733, gouache on paper. Musée des Tissus, Lyon Inv. no. 40932

In 2014, the V&A will open newly refurbished galleries devoted to design and art made and used in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe. The exhibits are among the most glamorous and luxurious in the Museum's collections, far removed from the experience of most twenty-first century museum visitors' everyday lives. The gallery team's ambition is to make them physically and intellectually accessible to many audiences. One method of doing so is to offer insights into the lives of those who knew these objects intimately, whether as makers or consumers. Among the exhibits will be some of the finest fashionable silks manufactured in the highly regarded and much copied French silk manufacturing centre of Lyon in south-east France. Designers and makers from that city were acknowledged trendsetters from the late seventeenth century onwards and are credited with establishing the seasonal fashion cycle in dress which continued into the late twentieth century.[1]

The V&A has collected French eighteenth-century silks since the Museum was founded in the second half of the nineteenth century because of their aesthetic and technical excellence. Between the 1950s and 1990s, two eminent curators of textiles, Peter Thornton and Natalie Rothstein, devoted much time and energy not only to collecting European silks and silk designs that complemented those already in the Museum, but also to delving deeper into the context from which these silks originated – the methods by which they were designed and woven, the places in which they were made, the people involved in their manufacture, and the consumers who acquired them, either for dress or for furnishings.[2] In the course of research for his pioneering monograph Baroque and Rococo Silks (1965), Peter Thornton, then Assistant Keeper of Textiles, sought 'to trace the general development of the patterns which appeared on the richer classes of silk material' between 1640 and 1770.[3] The V&A's collections acted as a starting point for his research which then extended to many archives and museums in Europe, and provided a chronology that, with minor modifications, is still widely used today. During his research, Thornton's curiosity was piqued by the silk designer Jean Revel (1684–1751), partly because his was one of the few names that could be attached to surviving designs, notably a signed and dated technical drawing (mise-en-carte) in the Musée des Tissus in Lyon (fig. 1), two annotated freehand designs in the

Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and an anonymous set of French freehand designs in the same style in Prints and Drawings at the V&A (fig. 2).

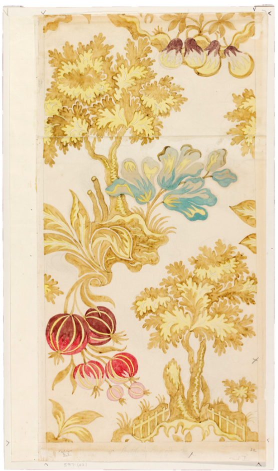


Figure 2 - Sketch for silk, France, about 1734, watercolour on paper, 52.4 x 31.4 cm. Museum no. 5974.7

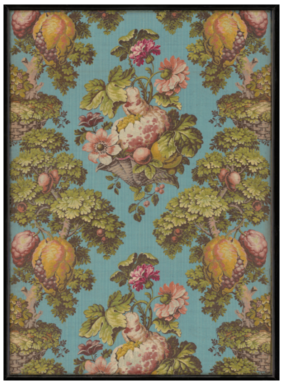


Figure 3 - Panel of silk, France, about 1735, brocaded silk, 119.38 x 54.61 cm. Museum no. T.187-1922

Thornton was also well aware of a panel of silk which he reattributed to Revel (fig. 3), chose for the dust jacket of his book, and subsequently exhibited in the 1970s in the galleries currently being refurbished. He chose to follow up all the relevant primary sources then available for Revel, and published a seminal article on the designer in 1960.[4] His, and more recent, research on the naturalistic silks created by Revel and his contemporaries reveals that the many variations on luxuriant foliage in surviving designs and fabric were used in both women's and men's dress in the 1730s and beyond.[5] Some of these silks were made into nightgowns, which were depicted on the backs of nobles at home and abroad (figs 4 and 5). Moreoever, these silks were accessible from prestigious retailers in major cities, and many of them would have been within the financial reach of silk merchants and manufacturers. These men presumably had privileged access as they provided the raw materials and designs for the silks, commissioned their weaving up, and inspected the end products when they came off the looms in Lyon, before dispatching them to retailers, who added a considerable mark-up to the price.

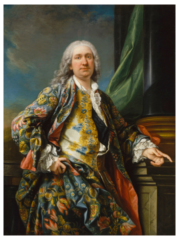


Figure 4 - Portrait of an unknown man, Carle Van Loo, France, about 1730–40, oil on canvas, 145 × 109 cm. Château de Versailles. Inv. no. MV 4484. © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris

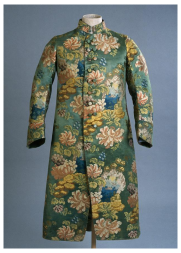


Figure 5 - Banyan, France, 1735–40, cut about 1780, silk. Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, inv. no. 909.33.1

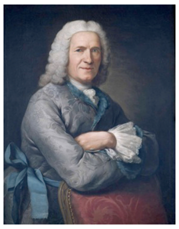


Figure 6 - Portrait of Jean Revel, Donat Nonnotte, France, 1748, oil on canvas, 79 x 64 cm. Lyon, Musée des Tissus et des Arts Decoratifs. Inv. no. 1398

Intriguingly, in the only known portrait of Revel (fig. 6), the designer wears a fabric that, although it is patterned, is a far cry from his own elaborate designs. This portrait was painted some years after these particular silk patterns were the height of fashion. Nonetheless, brocaded highly patterned silks were still in vogue. Revel's decision to wear something simpler, therefore, begs the question, why? Does his choice tell viewers something about the taste and attitudes of men of his means, station and age, and thus more broadly about the patterns of consumption of the mercantile bourgeoisie and the meanings they attached to the highly decorated silks they created? Through a rigorous analysis of the dress and furniture in this portrait, this article begins to address the wider context for the consumption of brocaded silks, and the difference between aristocratic opulence and bourgeois respectability. This analysis aims to help twenty-first century viewers to understand the man behind the designs – and the circles in which he moved. It is dependent not only on methodical analysis, but also on new documentary evidence, found and published in the 1980s and 1990s.[6]

Portrait, sitter and

portraitist

For many generations, historians have described Revel as an artist who achieved great success and wealth through the application of his painterly skills to silk design.[7] By the time of his death in 1751 he was certainly a well-heeled Lyonnais bourgeois.[8] Within six years he had been hailed the 'Raphael of silk design' and commended as a role model for his successors in the trade.[9] Revel commissioned this portrait around 1747 at the age of 63, choosing the Royal Academician Donat Nonotte (1708–85), as his portraitist. The half-length oil painting, signed and dated 1748, represents an alert elderly man in fine linen shirt, floral patterned nightgown and shoulder-length grey wig, standing behind a carved walnut Louis XV chair, his crossed arms resting on the frame. Only three years later, on Revel's death, the painting passed to his principal heir (héritier universel), his second daughter Jeanne-Barbe Revel (1713–85), wife of Jean-François Clavière (d. 1789), a wealthy merchant manufacturer who rose to the status of city magistrate.[10] It remained in the family until about 100 years later when it was donated to the Musée d'Art et d'Industrie in Lyon. Today it hangs in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Lyon in its original impressive gilded frame.[11] Fortuitously, the inventory of Revel's possessions taken at his death includes a description of the clothing and furniture he owned just three years after the portrait was painted. It is therefore possible to consider the portrait against this surviving documentary evidence in order to set it in a broader cultural context of sitter and portraitist.

Evidence for Revel's work as a painter is still frustratingly elusive. There is no doubt however that he had knowledge of and contacts in the trade through his father, the history painter Gabriel Revel (d. 1712). He subsequently became deeply involved in the silk manufacturing community although he never apparently became a member of the silk weaving guild.[12] An immigrant to Lyon, he arrived around 1710 aged 26, and by 1720 was already gainfully employed as a merchant. In 1747, when Revel commissioned this portrait, he was widowed, with four daughters, to each of whom he had given an impressive dowry of 33,000 livres between 1738 and 1746. At this time, in Lyon, only about 4.55% of marriage settlements exceeded 10,000 livres.[13] In 1742 he had purchased property in the country (a sign of gentrification in eighteenth-century Lyon),and in the wake of his wife's death in 1746, he and his son-in-law had bought a house in the prestigious rue Sainte Catherine in the main business quarter of the city.[14] He also owned a share of a house in Paris from which he earned rent.[15] When Revel was dying he dictated his will, which is the only written testimony of his way of thinking. It followed the impersonal conventions of such legal documents, revealing little of the man other than his stated religious faith, his involvement in a local confraternity, and his relationship with his close-knit family who were his only legatees apart from his seven servants. He expressed no particular attachment to his belongings. There was nothing progressive or exceptional in his stated intentions, any more than there was in the living spaces that emerge from the inventory taken after his death.[16]

Revel lived well. His surroundings were spacious and comfortably appointed; none of the furnishings was brand new; many were possibly a little old-fashioned, in so far as may be deciphered from an inventory. He had four rooms and a closet to himself, including the kitchen where his housekeeper slept. Most of his furniture was made of limewood or walnut, the latter a wood commonly used in the south of France, well-suited to carved ornament and with an attractive grain.[17] Made of wool, his upholstery fabrics and hangings were needlework on canvas, tapestry, green goffered plush and brown serge. His green plush chairs did, however, have printed calico (cotton) case covers.[18] Many paintings and several mirrors, all with gilded frames adorned his walls in town and country, he had a small number of silver dishes and cutlery as well as crockery, about a hundred books on history and religion, games tables and games, and two valuable musical instruments. Indeed, the objects with which he surrounded himself were those of a Lyonnais bourgeois – good quality, hard-wearing, not necessarily the height of fashion.[19] The only way in which he differed from most bourgeois was in the sheer number of paintings he owned, some 75 in total (23 in town and 52 in the country).[20] This scale of ownership was consistent with that of artists, and a little lower than that of dedicated (and wealthy) collectors.

Revel may have inherited some of these paintings; he may have painted or acquired others; he evidently commissioned the portrait under discussion here. His choice of Donat Nonnotte was discerning on a number of levels. As Sylvie Martin has noted, both men were artists so already had something in common.[21] However, the parallels in their experience ran deeper, for Revel, originally from Dijon, an immigrant to Lyon, still had good connections with Paris, and had adapted his skills in painting to make a good living. Nonnotte, peintre du roi since 1741, resident in Paris for ten years, had been born and bred in Besançon, and was to adopt Lyon as his home definitively in 1750. He, too, had adapted his professional expectations, shifting from an emphasis on history painting to portraiture. The change was well judged for, like Revel, he was to make a very respectable career for himself and to die amid bourgeois trappings.[22] Shared experience, ambition, and pragmatism apart, Nonnotte was already known in Lyon by 1747 when he painted Revel. He had portrayed some of Lyon's élite both in Paris and during previous long sojourns in Lyon – of seven months in 1745 and 1746 and 22 months between 1746 and 1747. Clearly, he had begun to build up the client base that was to serve him for the rest of his life and was to have an impact on the nature of his output. It comprised the commercial bourgeoisie or business elite, as well as the city magistracy, who were happy with far simpler (and cheaper) compositions than some of Nonnotte's previous more affluent aristocratic clients in Paris.The latter were often complemented by complex compositional backgrounds and foregrounds, whereas the former stood out against plain grounds, uncluttered by props.[23]

Thus, in 1748 when Nonnotte completed Revel's portrait, he was at the start of his career as a portraitist, already had excellent credentials, and may have been contemplating moving to Lyon. He was developing his ideas on his chosen genre. By 1754 he had become a member of the Académie de Lyon, by 1756 the first director of the Ecole Gratuite de Dessin, a school intended to train designers, and by 1762 the city's official painter. Later, in 1772, he was to express his views on portraiture in his sixth discourse to the Académie de Lyon thus, 'Portraits… serve to preserve and express sentiments of respect, esteem, friendship and love. It would be a mistake to believe that the likeness of the features was the only merit of a portrait'.[24] If such sentiments suited Revel's intent, then surely his dress and pose were likely to have been consistent with the respect and esteem appropriate to his age and status, just as the framing of the portrait was in keeping with his interior decoration. Whether he wished to announce his artistic leanings is another matter.

Revel's pivotal role in silk design has ensured that this painting appears in most articles written on him since the mid-twentieth century, in the scarce literature on the portraitist Donat Nonnotte, and in some publications on famous Lyonnais. When not used purely as a likeness of the sitter, it has been discussed in art historical terms as a fine example of the artist's style and accomplishment. The dress and chair, as well as the facial expression, have merited comment because Nonnotte reveals a penchant for, and sensitivity in, the realistic representation of textiles. Moreover, in this particular case, there are no other props, the background being shades of black and grey. As early as 1915, Félix Desvernay identified Revel relatively uncontentiously as, 'bewigged, dressed in a lined nightgown, in grey silk, with large motifs, he looks out at the spectator with a smile and stands with his arms crossed on the back of a red chair'.[25] More daringly, seventy years later, in the only serious catalogue of Nonnotte's work to date, Sylvie Martin drew attention to the way in which the clothing might reflect the sitter's reputation or act as an attribute. She focused on the textiles because of Revel's reputation as a painter/designer of flowers, noting:

> *'[Revel is] dressed in a lined and grey brocaded nightgown, encircled by a blue sash. He looks at the spectator smiling and has his arms crossed on the back of a red chair… Everything*

> *in this picture recalls the activities of the painter [Revel]: first, his brocaded nightgown with its floral motifs to which he was particularly attached, then the upholstery of the chair which presents a similar decoration to the painter's nightgown.'*[26]

This attempt to read the dress in the context of the sitter's predilections is welcome, yet leaves fertile territory for exploration by cultural and social historians with a firm grasp of textiles, dress and furniture. Revel is, indeed, wearing a nightgown with a stylised floral pattern, but it is not made of brocaded silk, a particularly luxurious, often polychrome, textile for which Revel designed and which Nonnotte depicted with bravado elsewhere.[27] Instead, what is shown is a grey fabric with a monochrome pattern, possibly silk, wool or worsted damask.[28] The nightgown's lining is made of a blue fabric with long pile, while its sash, of the same shade of blue, seems to be silk taffeta. The shirt worn beneath the nightgown is worthy of attention, too, for Nonnotte has taken care to demonstrate the fineness of its linen and the delicacy of the whitework embroidery with which its neck and cuffs are edged. The style of textile patterns, cut of garment, form and materials of the chair are all pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that give the portrait meaning. Each individual element and the way in which the elements are combined, need to be fitted together methodically in order to reach a nuanced interpretation of what the artist and sitter conveyed. First, are the clothes and furniture real? Did they belong to the sitter or to the artist, or were they imagined, or even borrowed from another visual source such as an engraving? How do they relate to the rest of this particular artist's oeuvre, to conventions in contemporary and historic artistic production, and to the etiquette, performance and dissemination of contemporary fashion? To some extent, the answers may be found by relating the depiction to objects, images and texts of the period.[29]

On clothes and chairs

Revel's clothing, as recorded in his inventory, was that of an older man of a certain status (tables 1 & 2). Everything with the exception of one full ensemble was worn or old or imperfect, but nothing was absolutely worn out or turned.[30] The name of the main outer garment (justaucorps or close coat) denoted a fashion most readily associated with the late seventeenth and the early eighteenth century.[31] The textiles were good and durable quality, wool dominating for his suits, some silk evident for more prestigious occasions, the finest Holland trimmed in muslin (mousseline) for his good shirts.[32] The dominant colours were the black and grey typical of the sombre palette of the first half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, red and blue were the only other colours present. Notable was a substantial amount of linen, whether shirts or handkerchiefs, and a good supply of stockings of different qualities (silk, wool and linen). If this were the wardrobe that represented his life - and, of course, it does not account for clothing worn out, given away, or filched before the inventory was taken - then Revel had acquired a suit at least once every five years since his majority and two shirts every year. Of ten formal coats (justaucorps), three were made of silk, of his 11 pairs of breeches, three were made of silk velvet and three of the ribbed silkgros de tours, and of his nine waistcoats, seven were of silk. He also owned 23 pairs of stockings, 31 nightcaps, two pairs of boots, five hats, and 26 handkerchiefs. His eight coats probably represented suits which had originally had two or three pieces. The likelihood is that Revel had owned in his life other suits that had been worn out. The total value of his clothes, all of which were used, was low at 235 livres 10 sols, approximately the cost of two to three new cloth suits.[33] Regardless, his outer garments represented about double what a master weaver might have amassed in a 40-year life span. At that point, a Lyonnais master weaver's wardrobe was calculated at a coat every eight years, work clothes every four years, a hat every three, a shirt and handkerchief, a pair of stockings, a cap, and a pair of shoes every year.[34] While the weaver's coat may have been fashionably cut, his work clothes were very different from the garments in Revel's wardrobe. Revel's accessories, too, were suitable to a bourgeois appearance and to observing social etiquette: two old wigs, four hats, a pair of silver buckles for his shoes, a silver watch, and a cane with a gold knob. In town, he kept all his finest pieces and those required for formal occasions. He still had enough in the country to cut a fine figure, albeit most of his underwear was in rougher cloth. In his clothing, as in his living space, then, Revel revealed his interest in good quality, respectability being the keynote rather than flamboyance. He owned no courtly lace, brocade, nor extravagant jewellery.

Table 1: Clothing kept in town**

(Source: ADR BP2187: Inventory, 14 December 1751)

Where items had matching counterparts, these are noted in the third column (hence the disparity in numbers)

Garment	Total	Disposition and fabrics
Boots (bottes)	1	
Breeches (culottes)	4	1 in grey cloth (drap) – see under coat, waistcoat and nightgown
Buckles (boucles)	1	1 pair in silver
Cane/walking stick (cane)	1	1 with gold knob
Coat (justaucorps)	3	1 with matching waistcoat of Belleville cloth with copper buttons 1 of black cloth 1 with two pairs of matching breeches in black gros de tour (i.e. silk)
Handkerchiefs (mouchoirs)	38	35 (colour) + 3 (white) cotton and linen
Hats (chapeaux)	4	4 of poil (i.e. with nap, velvety)
Muff (manchon)	1	1 of fur
Neckcloths (cols)	20	20 muslin (mousseline)
Nightcaps (bonnettes)	7	7 finest linen, Holland

(robes de chambre)	2	1 with matching waistcoat and breeches of callimanco lined in swanskin (calemande et moleton) 1 of satin
Shirts (chemises)	23	20 Holland trimmed in muslin (hollande garnie en mousseline) 3 homespun cloth (toile de menage)
Shoes (souliers)	0	
Stockings (bas)	16	8 silk 2 wool 6 linen
Waistcoats (vestes)	5	1 with matching breeches of patterned velvet (velours cizelé) 1 of plain velvet (velours uni) 1 of blue gros de tour trimmed with a little gold braid
Watch (montre)	1	1 silver
Wigs (perruques)	2	2

Translations into contemporary English: Chambaud, Louis. *Nouveau dictionnaire françois-anglois & anglois-françois: contenant la signification des mots, avec leur différens usages, les constructions, idioms, façons de parler particulières, & les proverbes usités dans l'une et l'autre langue, les termes des sciences, des arts, & des métiers, le tout receuilli des meilleurs auteurs anglois & françois.* London: John Perrin, 1778.

Table 2: Clothing kept in the country

(Source: ADR BP2187: Inventory, 14 December 1751)

Where items had matching counterparts, these are noted in the third column (hence the disparity in numbers)

Garment	Number	Disposition and fabrics
Boots	0	
Breeches	2	2 velvet
Coat	5	1 grey camblet (camelot) with gold buttons with matching breeches 1 grey broadcloth (drap gris) 1 black camblet 1 grey silkdrugget (droguet de soie) 1 red cloth (drap)
Handkerchiefs	4	4 cotton (toile cotton)
Hat	1	1 beaver edged with an old gold braid
Neckcloths	49	49 muslin
Nightcaps	24	24 linen from Rouen

Nightgowns	2	1 flannel (flannelle) 1 callimanco
Shirts	60	17 holland trimmed with muslin 1 homespun cloth 42 linen (from Troyes) and holland trimmed with muslin
Shoes	0	
Spatterdashes (guêtres)	1	1 wool
Stockings	9	4 linen 5 silk (different colours)
Under waistcoat (camisole)	1	1 material not specified
Waistcoats	2	2 silk (étoffe de soie)
Wigs	0	

For a half-length portrait that obscured his body from the waist down, Revel could therefore have chosen a formal coat and waistcoat to wear with his fine linen, or a nightgown – unless he opted for something in the realms of fantasy. He chose a nightgown. Nonnotte represented its textile design exceedingly carefully, so contemporary viewers would have understood that its wearer paid attention to fashion – the types of motif and their disposition were new in the 1740s.[35] The nightgown fits Revel's body snuggly. Tied in place with a sash, its buttons at the neck and at the end of the sleeves suggest further methods of fastening. It reveals a well laundered linen with its whitework embroidery. While the 'light-touch' of this embroidery looks forward to the 1750s, it may well also represent a more sparing bourgeois investment, a simpler version of the exquisitely complex pieces that survive in museum collections today.[36] The wig that finishes off Revel's rig-out is formal and conservative, its style having been fashionable in the 1720s. By the 1740s, the bag wig had become popular among fashionable men whose hairdressers dressed them in short curls above the ear, pulling the length back into a queue which was often kept in a black silk bag – similar to the style worn by Nonnotte in his self portrait (fig. 9).[37] Overall, then, Revel's attire speaks of an aging man of means rather than an extravagant young fop.

All of this dress could have belonged to Revel and relates to items in his inventory. His two wigs were deemed 'old', an adjective that may refer to style as much as to wear and tear.[38] All of his best shirts were made of holland and trimmed in muslin, and he owned four nightgowns, three warm woollen ones and one of satin (presumably silk). The callimanco (calemande) nightgown he kept in town, with its matching waistcoat lined in swanskin (molleton) and breeches made of swanskin, seems to be a likely contender as a match for the one depicted in the portrait – although the colour is not specified in the inventory and the hairiness of the surface may be too great.[39] This ensemble was the only one valued separately from other garments and at the relatively high sum of 20 livres (one tenth of the total value of his wardrobe), and it was the only one not described as old or worn.[40] While this identification is not definitive, what is important is the fact that portrait and wardrobe echo each other convincingly.

The chair falls into a similar category, since its wood fits with what Revel favoured for his two smaller rooms in town. One boasted six walnut chairs, a matching armchair and stool, the other twelve armchairs, their stool being in another, possibly larger, room (table 3). The colour of the upholstery of the chair in the portrait is, however, at odds with his actual possessions, being red rather than green, possibly worsted or silk damask or goffered velvet for upholstery, but definitely not needlepoint or calico. Red and green were the two colours most favoured for interiors in the first half of the century in Paris, red being the more expensive dye and largely restricted to royal interiors after about 1715.[41] The form of the chair was so up-to-date that it most likely belonged to a Parisian household or to a Lyonnais one with close links with Paris. Its carved frame and brass nailing, indicative of fine craftsmanship, bear a marked similarity to the chair in Nonnotte's later self-portrait (fig. 9). It is very similar to known examples of the work of Pierre Nogaret (1720–71), the best known of Lyonnais cabinet-makers who had arrived in Lyon from Paris in 1744. He became a master craftsman there in 1745, around the time

Nonnotte visited the city.[42] Artists, of course, had chairs as props (as well as nightgowns), just as photographers did at a later date, so perhaps this one belonged to Nonnotte. He may have chosen to colour his upholstery to harmonise with the overall palette in his paintings.[43] In some respects, of course, whether the clothing and furniture belonged to the sitter is academic: they are significant because Revel selected them and because they are in the spirit of his actual possessions.

Table 3: Seating in Revel’s town flat, first floor, rue Sainte Catherine

Room	Type of chair	Number	Description
Kitchen	chaises (chair)	5	limewood, covered in rush
	fauteuil (armchair)	1	covered in cloth
Room 1 (chambre)	chaises	5	Limewood
	chaises	6	walnut, stuffed with horsehair and covered in needlework

	tabouret (stool)	1	walnut, stuffed with horsehair and covered in needlework
	fauteuil	1	walnut, stuffed with horsehair and covered in needlework
Closet off Room 1	fauteuil prie (prie-dieu)	1	covered in moquette
Room 2 (chambre)	fauteuils	12	walnut, stuffed with horsehair and covered in green goffered plush, with printed cotton case covers
Room 3 (salle)	chaises	6	limewood, covered in rush
	tabouret	1	walnut, covered in needlework

Artists, merchants and nightgowns

Did these items allude to Revel's life in design, or suggest he thought he belonged to a painterly elite? The nightgown merits closest inspection, not just its cut and textile, but also how it is worn and with what. Originally a garment donned in the privacy of the home, a nightgown offered relaxation from the formal structured coat as well as warmth in draughty interiors.[44] By the mid-eighteenth century, men wore nightgowns en famille and for welcoming visitors. Some men, including merchants, even decided to be portrayed in a nightgown, perhaps because the intimacy of the garment suited the context in which the portrait was to be hung.[45] Nightgowns had, however, also gained currency as a sign of artistic or intellectual leanings. The many portraits presented by artists as their reception pieces as peintre du roi exhibited at the Salon reveal artists' affection for the voluminous folds that allowed them to emulate classical drapery and show off their skill at painting the sheen of plain and shot silks. Some such gowns were, of course, studio props from the portraitist's own collection.[46] Such was the case with the one worn in Louis-Michel Van Loo's portrait of the art critic and philosopher Denis Diderot in 1767 (fig. 7).[47] Diderot thought the lustrous silk altogether too luxurious, noting it gave him the air of a minister of state rather than a philosopher. In all other respects, the painting shows a lack of concern with the usual social etiquette: no wig is worn and collar and cuffs are very clearly unfastened in a slovenly way.[48] Van Loo had represented himself in the same garment in much the same spirit, artistic yet showy (fig. 8). Diderot, however, equated his literary and artistic independence, his domestic and vestimentary comfort, with his old callimanco nightgown, which hugged his body and did not deter him from wiping his ink-stained hands on its folds.[49] The different textiles had very clear associations for him, as they, no doubt, did for Revel, a silk manufacturer who owned both silk and callimanco nightgowns. It seems unlikely, however, that Revel would have wiped dirty hands on such a pristine item as the one in the portrait.

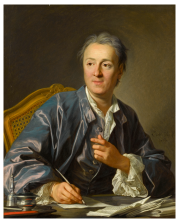


Figure 7 - Portrait of Denis Diderot, Louis-Michel Vanloo, France, 1767, oil on canvas, 81 x 65 cm. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Inv. no. RF 1958. © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris

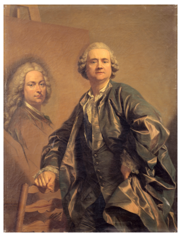


Figure 8 - Self-portrait, Louis-Michel Vanloo, France, 1763, oil on canvas, 129.5 x 98 cm. Versailles, Château de Versailles et Trianon, Inv. no. MV 5827. © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris © Réunion des musées nationaux, Paris

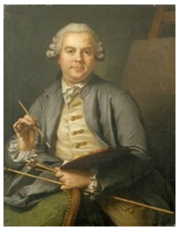


Figure 9 - Self-portrait, Donat Nonnotte, France, 1758, oil on canvas. 93 × 73 cm. Besançon, Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie. Inv. no. 843.6.1. © Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie, Besançon, (Photo: Charles CHOFFET) © Musée des beaux-arts et d'archéologie, Besançon, (Photo: Charles CHOFFET)

Nightgowns are not common in Donat Nonnotte's oeuvre, a fact which may in itself be an indication of the taste of his Lyonnais bourgeois clients who may have preferred to be represented in more formal attire, which hugged the body more closely than nightgowns did. Nonnote's own self portrait of 1756 (fig. 9), painted when he had already lived in Lyon for eight years, is reminiscent of the 'artistic' drapery of academic portraits. The palette and brush in his hands and the easel in the background underline his identity as an artist. This presentation is quite different from his depiction of Revel, despite their shared heritage, place of residence and choice of garb.[50] Nonnotte's nightgown is a plain silk, apparently lined in a lightweight fabric, a fact emphasized by the excess material draped over the chair. The artist's body language is open, the nightgown revealing his smart and fashionable beige waistcoat with gold buttons and buttonholes; his cuffs and collar are of lace, not simply embroidered muslin – and his shirt is artfully, rather than carelessly, open at the neck. In contrast, Revel, while apparently at ease, has his gown pulled tightly around him, his waistcoat is concealed, his austere neckcloth tied tight. The fabric design is up-to-date, the demeanour is formal. Perhaps his pose related to where the painting was to be hung, as dress and painting decorated body and wall respectively, but also presented a message to their viewers.[51] Knowledge of this portrait's intended or likely audience is therefore crucial in reaching a rounded understanding of its message.

Revel's portrait was not for public consumption, in the sense that it was not to be exhibited at the Salon in Paris, and Lyon did not yet have any such public forum for displays of art.[52] Instead, it was destined for Revel's home where it was to hang among many other gilded framed paintings. It was one of seven family portraits he owned at the time of his death: five were kept in the same bedroom on the first floor of the main house on his country estate, while two hung in the living room (salle) in town. Both were spaces in which he probably entertained only privileged friends. The bailiffs who listed the furnishings did not extract these family items for special valuation at the end of the inventory as they did paintings in other genres. They were part and parcel of the furnishings rather than having any intrinsic artistic or financial value.[53] In these spaces, they were for the consumption of family, friends and servants – those who were invited into the home where Revel might quite decorously have greeted them in one of his nightgowns.

Conclusions

Donat Nonnotte's portrait of Jean Revel is a treasure because so few portraits of the eighteenth-century Lyonnais bourgeoisie apparently survive - in public collections, at any rate. Reading it as a contemporary would have done, however, requires the expertise of dress and furniture historians. As Claudia Brush Kidwell has underlined, interpretation ought always to be a collaborative process drawing on expertise from different disciplines.[54] In this case, the happy coincidence of the survival of complementary textual evidence, has made the task more straightforward, as has the relatively full documentation of the background of both sitter and painter. As a model of his age, rank and means, Revel presents a surprisingly modest figure – his wealth was such that he could have afforded more lavish dress or some artistic licence – a nightgown made of the kind of silk which he had designed. Instead, Revel chose an ensemble which visitors to his home in the rue Sainte Catherine might have recognised, suitable for that private space where he socialised with his own circle.[55] He wore it wrapped around him, tied close and with formal accessories, all buttoned up. Indeed, in this pose, the difference between formal coat and nightgown would have been minimal. By the age of 63, after more than 25 years as a merchant, Revel probably chose a nightgown to reflect his current preoccupations rather than his artistic past – he was now semiretired, still in contact with silk manufacturing but also in charge of a country estate. He had authority and responsibilities, and was ageing. He also belonged to the Lyonnais middling ranks, who tended to eschew excessive and eye-catching personal adornment, lavishing more income on their domestic interiors than on their own appearance, and leaving the city's nobility and its liberal professions to buy more extreme fashions.[56] Fashion and conservatism, formality and informality, frugality and flair meet in the portrait. Revel shows that he was not out of touch, even if he retained certain accessories from his youth; the fabrics were up-to-date but not overly expensive and the combination of colours suited his shrewd blue eyes. The very specificity of the garments, accessories and furniture and their relationship to his actual wardrobe and apartment reveal behaviour that is all too easily lost in the lists of clothing found in inventories.

In this portrait the clothes suggest how a particular provincial bourgeois wished his nearest and dearest to see and remember him. The message and conventions are not transparent now, but methodical analysis of such images pays dividends and offers some insights into how the French eighteenth-century bourgeoisie thought about their appearance, its appropriateness and impact. Rapid comparison of Van Loo's portrait of an unknown man with Nonnotte's of Revel underlines the chasm between aristocrats and bourgeois (figs 5 & 6). The gorgeous brocaded silks Revel had manufactured were indeed suitable for nightgowns and acquired by the aristocracy. The merchants who conceived them did not attempt to emulate that aristocratic brilliance or expenditure in their dress – nor, one suspects, the deliberately dramatic attitudes and gestures with which they showed off their opulence in the three-quarter or full-length canvasses they commissioned.

Appendix: Revel in Brief (A biographical overview)

Jean Revel, second son of Gabriel Revel (1643–1712) and Jeanne Boudon, came of a long line of painters from Château-Thierry in the Champagne.[57] His father, a portrait and history painter, moved to Paris in the early 1670s where he worked under the patronage of Charles Lebrun (1619–90) for the Court, becoming a member of the Académie Royale in 1683, the year before Jean's birth. Jean was born and baptised in Paris in St Hypolite, the parish that served the Gobelins, as had been his siblings Marie (1678–1755) and Gabriel (1679–1749).[58] When Jean was just eight years old in 1692, Revel senior established himself in Dijon, though he kept a virtual foot in the capital as a peintre du roi by writing dutifully to the Académie once a year throughout his life.[59] Dijon, the centre of the

Burgundian Parlement, was dominated by the legal aristocracy. This environment provided the springboard for Gabriel senior's career as he spread Lebrun's doctrine, practising almost without competition. He was wealthy enough by 1698 to acquire a country estate in Longvic near Dijon, where he set up a studio in which to work.[60] He was 55 and his son Jean was 14, the usual age to start an apprenticeship.

Unfortunately, there is no record of any apprenticeship nor of Jean's actions until 1712 when he and his elder brother Gabriel are first recorded in Lyon, one of them registered as a master in the painters' guild (corporation des peintres et des sculpteurs). Whether this was Jean or his elder brother is not clear.[61] They may both have trained in their father's workshop, which would explain why neither is recorded in any other guild records. They were by then already married to Marguerite (d.1746) and Marie Chaillot Delessinet (d. before 1714), daughters of Gaspard Chaillot Delessinet, a barrister at the high court of appeal of Grenoble (avocat au Parlement de Grenoble). Marguerite bore Jean four daughters and two sons between 1712 and 1717. The girls survived beyond their majority and married into the upper echelons of Lyon's manufacturing families. They in turn parented grandchildren who achieved material and social success.[62]

Revel's stated occupation altered over time, the baptismal records in 1712 and 1713 called him – probably mistakenly - a barrister (avocat en parlement).[63] By the time of his first son's birth in 1715 he was described as a freeman (bourgeois), in 1716 and 1717 as a marchand or marchand bourgeois.[64] The last was a Lyonnais term which corresponded to the Parisian négociant in the early years of the eighteenth century. It implied business dealings of different sorts, often of a fairly capital intensive nature.[65] The trades of his children's godparents echoed the profession accorded to Revel at the time of their baptisms. Thus, in 1712 and 1713, a bias towards the legal confraternity was evident, whilst in the following years godparents were from the bourgeois or merchant classes. Presumably this was a reflection of the circles in which the Revels were moving at the time. Increasingly, the emphasis fell on the type of society for which Lyon was famed - the middling, commercial classes whose families were often deeply involved in silk manufacturing.[66] As they became his main associates, he moved from the densely populated central presqu'île amid a heterogenous range of trades to the the heart of business in the northern presqu'île, and from the parish of St Nizier in 1712 to St Pierre et St Saturnin by 1716.

The only actual evidence of Revel's business activities dates to the 1730s and 1740s when they seem to have revolved around the production of metal yarns for silks (dorures). In the hierarchy of business activities in Lyon such production was at the top amongst the transactions of the powerful providers of raw silk, the marchands de soie.[67] It involved the making of real gold and silver into yarns for weaving into particularly elaborate and costly silks, which required substantial capital investment. It was therefore an occupation of great prestige, undertaken by the richest merchants in Lyon, who mixed their dealings in raw materials with banking services. It did not necessitate registering with the silk weaving guild (Grande Fabrique). On a small scale, some merchant manufacturers also made such threads in workshops on the premises in which they stored raw materials and finished goods. In 1731, Revel (marchand de dorures in this contract) agreed to take into his business Marguerite-Etiennette Laurent, the daughter of another Lyonnais merchant, and teach her all about the business of dorures.[68] Subsequently, in the early 1750s, when Revel went into partnership with his sons-in-law, Jean-François Clavière and Louis Rambaud (Clavière, Revel et Rambaud), he and his partners rented two workshops for working the gold and silver necessary for the making of their fabric.[69] It was also during this partnership that Revel took on a design apprentice who was the son of an architect from Dijon, surely no coincidence given Revel's own background and likely social circles in Dijon.[70]

Revel's application to design first surfaces late in his career – in the early 1730s, when he was already in his late forties and had lived in Lyon for nearly two decades. Four designs dated to around 1733 bear his name: two sketches in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and a sketch and a technical drawing (mise-en-carte) in the Musée des Tissus in Lyon.[71] None of these drawings reveals precisely Revel's role in its creation, whether he was indeed the designer/author, or, as is quite possible, their owner, the merchant who commissioned them. He could have been both designer and owner.[72] The inscriptions are tantalising. The first reads, 'Fond argent de Mr Buisson et Revelle en chenille les feuilles des trois vert chenille les fruits argent frisé et sans liage découpé par une soye rentré en ponceau marqué par les traits'.[73] The twinning of Buisson with Revel suggests the drawing is the product of a partnership. In the context of the Lyonnais manufacturing community, such a partnership could have been a design studio or a silk manufacturing firm. Buisson was, no doubt, the Benoît Buisson bourgeois, who was important enough in the Revels' life in 1716 to become godfather to Revel's first son.[74] It seems that fifteen or so years later, he – or a member of his family, perhaps his son – was still in Revel's life, as a Buisson signed just below Revel's brother on the marriage contract of Revel's second daughter.[75] The second sketch is similar in appearance so presumably dates to around the same year. It bears the mysterious words, 'Revelle a vous seule' ('Revel for you alone' or 'Revel to you alone'), a decided exclusion of Buisson which may be significant in determining who had actually authored the design. In contrast, the third was annotated simply,'Gros de tours fond blanc. Revel'.

The fourth design is an altogether different affair. It represents the technical application of drawing, for it is a mise-en-carte. The luxuriant motif is executed in water colour on ruled paper (paper divided into squares that represent groups of warp and weft threads on the loom, with the name of the engraver at the foot). In the Lyon tradition, on the back are certain written instructions: a number (No. 49), below which is a key to the treatment of the colours on the loom, and then the place and date, and the name of its owner ('a Lyon 22e decembre 1733. J. Revel.') (fig. 1). The owner here has signed, and his signature conforms to that of Jean Revel on the many rites of passage discussed above. Again, this signature does not confirm beyond the shadow of a doubt the actual authorship of the design, as many firms traded under the senior partner's name and, as the investor of most funds, he was the main signatory on all business papers. The design work attributed to Revel, whether as author or owner, evidently introduced certain innovations, notably points rentrés or what might now be called berclé. This involved creating subtle shadings in woven motifs, often fruit or flowers, by interlocking two different shades rather than having them meeting edge to edge and thus creating a hard line. It is impossible at two centuries' distance to be sure that Revel was the first to introduce such shading into silk design. Other designers, such as Monlong, Deschamps and Barnier were already attempting to create more naturalistic designs which seem very similar to those by Revel.

Revel's consolidation of his links with silk manufacturing led him to present substantial dowries of 33,000 livres to each daughter, including merchandise to a greater or lesser extent, and establishing business partnerships with his sons-in-law. This consolidation harked back to his choice of career for his only son, Louis, who had been registered as an apprentice in the silk-weaving guild in 1734. When Louis died prematurely in 1740, he was already a journeyman.[76]

Revel was wealthy when he died - in Lyonnais bourgeois terms, if not in Lyonnais or Parisian noble terms.[77] At a conservative estimate, he was worth about 182,300 livres. He owned a country estate on the Ile Barbe, three leagues from Lyon, a flat in the rue Sainte Catherine in the heart of the quartier des Terreaux, and a third of a building in rue de l'Oursine in Paris in the faubourg St Marcel, as well as movable possessions of high monetary and cultural value.[78] His executors paid off the legacies in his will over a number of years, the smaller ones within a month or so of his death: 500 livres for pious works, 100 livres for each of his six servants (probably the equivalent of about six months worth of wages), and 1,200 livres for his housekeeper (gouvernante). The major beneficiaries were his daughters and grandchildren: 45,000 livres for Claudine, femme Lescallier's children; 12,000 livres for Marguerite and 33,000 livres for the children of her marriage with Jordain; and 45,000 livres for the children of Marie-Catherine, femme Rambaud. He left the rest of his estate to his second-oldest daughter Jeanne-Barbe, femme Clavière. With her share, the estate was worth considerably more – at least a further 45,000 livres, if Revel were being even-handed in his treatment of his daughters as he had been at the time of their marriages. The country house and its land remained in the hands of the Clavière branch of the family until it was confiscated during the French Revolution.[79]

Endnotes

1. This article is an extended version of a short piece published in a festschrift in honour of Dr Ann Saunders in 2010, Miller, Lesley E. 'An Enigmatic Bourgeois: Jean Revel Dons a Nightgown for his Portrait'. *Costume* 44 (2010): 46–55. I am grateful to Verity Wilson and Penny Byrde, the editors of Costume, for encouraging me to publish the more detailed version. I thank my colleagues Clare Browne, Sarah Medlam, Susan North and Moira Thunder for their helpful comments as I prepared this text; Sylvie Martin-de Vesvrotte for providing information from her unpublished dissertation; Audrey Mathieu at the Musée des Tissus, Gérard Bruyère and his colleagues at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, both in Lyon, for their willing assistance; and the Royal Ontario Museum where I spent a month as Veronika Gervers Fellow in Textile History, in particular to Alex Palmer, Anu Livandi and Nicola Woods for facilitating my ongoing requests. Angela McShane, editor of the Online Journal has been a thoroughly encouraging and rigorous editor.

2. Their monographs are: Thornton, Peter K. *Baroque and Rococo Silks*. London: Faber and Faber, 1965; Rothstein, Natalie. *Eighteenth-century Silk Designs in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: V&A/Thames and Hudson, 1991.

3. Thornton. *Baroque and Rococo Silks*. 15.

4. Thornton, Peter K. ‘Jean Revel, Dessinateur de la Grande Fabrique’. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1960) : 71–86. Thornton. *Baroque and Rococo Silks*. 15. The rich documentation on Revel available now in the Archives Départementales du Rhône was not readily accessible in the 1950s.

5. The most thorough and impressive investigation derives from research into the collections of the Abegg-Stiftung in Switzerland. Jolly, Anna. *Seidengewebe des 18. Jahrhunderts II, Naturalismus*. Riggisberg: Abegg-Stiftung, 2002. The banyan in fig.4 and the sack back gown Museum no. T.193-1958 reveal the use of this style of silk two or more decades after it was originally made, either in France or elsewhere.

6. Miller, Lesley E. ‘Designers in the Lyons Silk Industry, 1712–87’. Unpublished PhD thesis, Brighton Polytechnic, 1988; Ibid. ‘Jean Revel: Silk Designer, Fine Artist, or Entrepreneur?’. *Journal of Design History* 8:2 (1995): 79–96; Ibid. ‘Dressing down in eighteenth century Lyon: dress in the inventories of twenty-seven silk designers’. Costume 29 (1995): 25–39.

7. Most eighteenth-century authors reiterated almost verbatim the comments in Pernetti, Jacques. *Les lyonnais dignes de mémoires*. Lyon, 1757; Leroudier, Émile.‘Les dessinateurs de la soierie lyonnaise au dix-huitième siècle’. *Revue d’Histoire de Lyon*. 1908: 241–266; Thornton. ‘Jean Revel, Dessinateur de la Grande Fabrique’: 71–86.

8. Miller. ‘*Jean Revel: Silk Designer, Fine Artist, or Entrepreneur?*’.

9. Pernetti. *Les lyonnais dignes de mémoires*: 350.

10. AML St Pierre et St Saturnin : Sépulture 8 avril 1785, no. 921; St Nizier : 11 janvier 1789 Sépulture Noble Jean-François Clavière.

11. On the back is written: ‘Nonnotte pinx. 1748’. I am grateful to Audrey Mathieu of the Musée des Tissus in Lyon for confirming that the painting entered the museum some time before 1914. Opened in 1864, the Musée d’Art et d’Industrie took the name Musée Historique des Tissus in 1891, its partner institution becoming the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. François Breghot de Lut indicated that it was hanging in the director’s office at the time he was editing the text of *Le livre de raison de Jacques-Charles Dutillieu*. Lyon:1886, so it must have arrived in the museum before that date. Breghot de Lut, 24.

12. Miller, ‘Jean Revel: Silk Designer, Fine Artist, or Entrepreneur?’: 79–98. This is the most up-to-date account, and a

chapter in my forthcoming book, *Portraits in Silk*, will present the evidence discovered since 1995. There is no evidence of him joining the guild, but the relevant guild registers have not all survived.

13. Miller. 'An Enigmatic Bourgeois': 86. Based on Maurice Garden's sampling of three decades of inventories: Garden, Maurice. *Lyon et les Lyonnais*. Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1970.

14. Perez, Marie-Félicie. 'La maison de campagne d'un échevin lyonnais au XVIIIe siècle'. *In Lyon et l'Europe. Hommes et Sociétés. Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Richard Gascon*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1980: 113.

15. Archives Départementales du Rhône (hereafter ADR) 3E2999 Bourdin (Lyon): 8.08.1742 Vente d'un domaine et fonds Mr Ranvier/Mr Revel. He had paid off the full amount of 20,000 livres; 3E3904 Debrye (Lyon) : 31.03.1746 Vente d'une maison à Lyon Appelée l'hôtel des quatre nations et dépendances Sindics des créanciers du Sr Duport/Srs Revel et Clavière. He paid 58,218 livres in cash for his share. ADR BP2187, f. 56. For the status of the rue Sainte Catherine, see Bayard, Françoise. *Vivre à Lyon sous l'Ancien Régime*. Lyon: Perrin, 1997: 242. ADR BP2187: 14.12.1751 Inventaire après-décès Revel, f. 56.

16. ADR 3E6913B Patrin (Lyon): 25.11.1751 Testament Revel; Archives Municipales de Lyon (hereafter AML) St Pierre et St Saturnin, 1751, no. 954: Enterrement de Jean Revel marchand

17. Viaux-Locquin, Jacqueline. *Les bois d'ébénisterie dans le mobilier français*. Paris : Léonce Laget, 1997: 141–3. Its popularity decreased in the later eighteenth century.

18. ADR BP2187, ff. 39–44. See also, Pardailhé-Galabrun, Annik. *La Naissance de l'Intime. 3000 foyers parisiens XVIIe – XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988: Chapter 10 on interior decoration of Parisian houses. Revel's interiors fits the profile for the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century.

19. Garden, *Lyon and Lyonnais*, 405ff.

20. ADR BP2187, ff. 51–3.

21. Martin, Sylvie. 'Vie et œuvre de Donat Nonnotte, peintre du XVIIIe siècle'. Unpublished mémoire de maîtrise, Université de Lyon II, 1984. tome 2, 60.

22. The first record for Nonnotte in Lyon is in 1751. He had married Marie-Elisabeth Bastard de la Gravière in Paris in 1737. Audin, Marius, and Amable Vial. *Dictionnaire des artistes*

et des ouvriers d'art du Lyonnais. Paris : Bibliothèque d'art et d'archéologie, 1918–1919: Vol. II: 73; Martin, 'Vie et œuvre de Donat Nonnotte, peintre du XVIIIe siècle'; ADR 3E3876 Dalier (Lyon): 4.03.1783 Testament Nonnotte. The inventory taken after his death on 17.03.1785 is in the ADR Série BP.

23. Martin, Sylvie. 'Les portraits de femmes dans la carrière de Donat Nonnotte'. *Bulletin des musées et monuments lyonnais* 3–4 (1992): 35. It was not uncommon for Parisian artists to visit Lyon for several months at a time, sometimes en route to or from Rome, though Nonnotte himself did not make that pilgrimage. Few stayed permanently in Lyon, although the most eminent artists active there between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries came from outside the city. Chomer, Gilles and Marie-Félicie Perez. 'Un foyer artistique'. In *Histoire de Lyon des origines à nos jours*, edited by André Pelletier et al: 550–580. Lyon: Éditions Lyonnaises d'Art et d'Histoire, 2007.

24. 'Le portrait… sert à conserver et à exprimer les sentiments du respect, de l'estime, de l'amitié et de l'amour. On se tromperait si l'on croioit que la ressemblance des traits fit tout le mérite d'un portrait', cited in *Les peintres du roi 1648–1793*. Exhibition Catalogue. Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000: 162.

25. Desvernay, Félix. *Le vieux Lyon à l'Exposition Internationale Urbaine, 1914. Description des œuvres, objets d'art et curiosités; Notices biographiques et documents historiques inédits*. Lyon, 1915: 57, cat. 179 : 'en perruque, vêtu d'une robe de chambre fourrée, en soie grise, à larges dessins. Il regarde souriant le spectateur et tient ses bras croisés sur le dos d'un fauteuil rouge'.

26. Martin. 'Vie et œuvre de Donat Nonnotte'. tome 2, cat. no. 31, 58–60 : 'vêtu d'une robe de chambre fourrée et brochée de couleur grise, entourée d'un cordon bleu. Il regarde souriant le spectateur et tient ses bras croisés sur le dos d'un fauteuil rouge…Tout dans ce tableau rappelle les activités du peintre: d'abord, la robe de chambre brochée avec ses motifs floraux qu'il affectionnait particulièrement, puis la tapisserie apparente du fauteuil qui présente une similitude de décoration avec la robe de chambre d'intérieur du peintre.'

27. A number are shown in Martin. 'Les portraits de femmes dans la carrière de Donat Nonnotte': 26–49.

28. A number of silk, wool and worsted damask nightgowns survive in museum collections in France, UK and USA. See, for example, Swain,

Margaret. ‘Nightgown into Dressing Gown. A Study of Men’s Nightgowns in the Eighteenth Century’. *Costume* (1972): Appendix, 19–21; *Modes en miroir. La France et la Hollande au temps des Lumières*. Paris: Paris Musées, 2005. cats. 85 & 123. Worsted was a wool cloth, sometimes glazed and often made with patterns imitating those on silks. It was not quite so expensive and probably warmer. According to Savary des Bruslons (1688), it was made in northern France and the Low Countries, in Antwerp, Lille, Tourcoing, Roubaix and Tournai in the late seventeenth century. Cited in Havard, Henri. *Dictionnaire de l’Ameublement*. Paris: Maison Quantin, 1887–90: I: 530. Interestingly, not a cloth named in the inventories of textile retailers in Lyon as studied by Françoise Bayard for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Many other types of woollen cloths were available, drap being valued at 3 livres per ell in 1730, other woollens at 10 – 60 sols. Silk damask was valued at 7 – 17 livres per ell in 1725; satin at 3 – 8 livres. ‘De quelques boutiques de marchands de tissus à Lyon et en Beaujolais aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles’. *«De la fibre à la fripe». Le textile dans la France méridionale et l’Europe méditerranéenne XVII-XXe siècles*. Actes du colloque du 21 et 22 mars 1997, edited by Geneviève Gavignaud-Fontaine, Henri Michel & Elie Pélaquier. Montpellier: Conseil Général de l’Hérault, Conseil régional du Languedoc-Roussillon et Conseil Scientifique de l’Université de Montpellier III. Paul Valéry, 1998: 450–3.

29. Brush Kidwell, Claudia. ‘Are Those Clothes Real? Transforming the Way Eighteenth-Century Portraits are Studied’. *Dress* 24 (1997): 3–15. On method, see, too, Taylor, Lou. *The Study of Dress History*. Manchester: MUP, 2002; Ribeiro, Aileen. *The Art of Dress Fashion in England and France 1750–1820*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995.

30. Turning clothes was a method of prolonging their life. It involved the unpicking of all seams and the turning inside out of the garment so that the less worn side became the outer side. This laborious form of economy was common practice at all levels of society in this period, as the fabrics cost more than sewing labour. Accordingly, fabrics were recycled till no longer usable.

31. *Justaucorps* (rather than the more up-to-date and less specific habit). The latest reference I have to the use of this word in an inventory for these men is 1770. See Miller. ‘An Enigmatic Bourgeois’.

32. It contained no fabrics from the very top level of the textile hierarchy as

defined in a petition drawn up for De Gournay in 1751. Cited in Godart, Justin. *L'ouvrier en soie*. 1899, reprint Geneva: Slatkine, 1976: 390.

33. ADR BP2187. Some ten years later, on 19 November 1760, a tailor advertised suits for autumn and winter in the *Affiches de Lyon*, no. 47: 192. The cost of a full suit of cloth lined in cotton was 74 livres, while a suit lined with silk cost 125 livres. A surtout and breeches of velvet cost 180 livres.

34. Petition of 1786 cited in Godart. *L'ouvrier en soie*: 410. It should be noted, however, that the consumption of clothing and rapidity of change had increased considerably by the end of the century, and that Revel belonged to the first half of the century. Roche, Daniel. *The People of Paris*. Oxford: Berg, 1981: Chapter 6; Ibid. *The Culture of Appearances*. London: Berg, 1996: Chapters 6 & 7; Bayard. *Vivre à Lyon*: 258–9.

35. For a similar design for silk damask, by Anna Maria Garthwaite, dated 1748, see Rothstein. *Silk Designs of the Eighteenth Century*: 238. A number of other designs from 1743–51 are in a similar idiom.

36. On eighteenth-century whitework, see, *The Art of the Embroiderer by Charles Germain de Saint-Aubin Designer to the King*. Translation and annotation of text of 1770 by Nikki Scheuer. Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum, 1983: 57 & 126. See, too, Bleckwenn, Ruth. *Dresdner Spitzen-Point de Saxe*. Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden Kunstgewerbenmuseum, 2000: cat. 40, dated to 1730 - 50. Here, the whole flounce is covered with stitching, whereas Revel's is only decorated round the edge. The nature of the design is similar.

37. Ribeiro, Aileen. *Dress in Eighteenth-Century Europe*. London: B.T. Batsford, 1984: 89. Marcia Pointon devotes a whole chapter to the significance of wigs in her seminal work on English eighteenth-century portraiture. Pointon, Marcia. 'Dangerous Excrescences: Wigs, hair and masculinity', in *Hanging the Head: portraiture and social formation in eighteenth-century England*. Marcia Pointon. London: Yale University Press, 1993:107–136. Lyon had its own guild of barbiers, perruquiers, baigneurs et étuvistes, established formally by royal decree in 1673. Between 1711 and 1774, the number of offices available rose from 60 to 101. Caillat, Gilles. 'Les Perruquiers de Lyon au XVIIeme et XVIIIeme siècle'. Unpublished mémoire de maîtrise, Université Lumière Lyon II, 1992: 20. This increase was probably in line with the increase in population and therefore demand for wigs. This level

was about nine times lower than for the much bigger city of Paris.

38. Revel also owned many nightcaps which would have been perfectly congruous to wear with a nightgown. ADR BP2187.

39. Callimanco was a fine worsted, usually patterned; swanskin a soft woollen cloth. Chambaud, Louis. *Nouveau dictionnaire françois-anglois & anglois-françois: contenant la signification des mots, avec leur différens usages, les constructions, idiomes, façons de parler particulières, & les proverbes usités dans l'une et l'autre langue, les termes des sciences, des arts, & des métiers, le tout receuilli des meilleurs auteurs anglois & françois*. London: John Perrin, 1778. All translations are taken from this dictionary which describes the textile briefly before giving the equivalent in the other language. Florence M. Montgomery offers the English translation of calemande, with a fine explanation by Postlethwayt whose dictionary drew heavily on that of Savary des Bruslons, published in France in 1723–30. See *Textiles in America, 1650–1870: a dictionary based on original documents, prints and paintings, commercial records, American merchants' papers, shopkeepers' advertisements, and pattern books with original swatches of cloth*. New York: Norton, 1984: 184–5. *Molleton* in 1750 was valued at 38 – 39 sols per ell in 1730 and 55 sols in 1789 in Bayard's inventories for the region, so was neither a very cheap nor very expensive fabric. Bayard. 'De quelques boutiques de marchands de tissus': 451.

40. ADR BP2187, ff. 41 and 14. A Lyonnais tailor advertising in the *Affiches de Lyon* ten years later, promoted garments of much more expensive fabric in three pieces, the cheapest being a redingote à l'Ecuyère, veste et culotte de Camelot mi-soie, galonée d'argent avec les jarretières de même at 70 livres (brand new, this three piece suit, whose coat would have required substantial interlining and shaping, was made of a wool and silk mix camblet, and had a fancy metal trimming). *Affiches*. 1761: 72.

41. Pardailhé-Galabrun. *La Naissance de l'Intime*: 398–401.

42. ADR BP2187, f. 40. I am grateful to Sarah Medlam for her help in identifying the style and its implications at this date. Ferrier, André. 'Nogaret et sa manière de galber un siège Louis XV'. *Connaissance des Arts* 1 (1959) : 114–7; Kjellberg, Pierre. *Le mobilier français du XVIIIe siècle. Dictionnaire des ébenistes et menuisiers*. Paris: Les Éditions de l'Amateur, 1989 : 603–7. The chair in the portrait conforms in

style to the surviving piece shown in, Pallot, Bill G. B. *L'art du siège au XVIIIe siècle en France*. Paris: A.C.R.-Gismondi Éditeurs, 1987: 251. This chair was made in walnut around 1760 by the top furniture makers, Nicolas Heurtaut and Jean-Baptiste Tilliard.

43. John Hardy's appraisal of the furniture of the English portrait painters Joshua Reynolds and Richard Cosway makes a useful contribution to the subject. Hardy, John.'The Discovery of Cosway's Chair'. *Country Life* (March 15, 1973): 705–6. Cosway's chair, made about 1765–8, is in the V&A collection and was used in portraits into the 1770s. Armchair, M.Lock, ca.1755. Museum no. W.1-1973.

44. On significance of nightgowns, see Swain. 'Nightgown into Dressing Gown': 10–21; Cunningham, Patricia A. 'Eighteenth Century Nightgowns: The Gentleman's Robe in Art and Fashion'. *Dress* 10 (1984): 2–11; Maeder, Edward. 'A Man's Banyan: High Fashion in Rural Massachusetts'. *Historic Deerfield magazine* (Winter 2001); Fennetaux, Ariane. 'Men in gowns: Nightgowns and the construction of masculinity in eigtheenth-century England'. *Immediations. The Research Journal of the Courtauld Institute of Art* 1 (Spring, 2004): 77–89; Ibid. 'Du boudoir au salon: l'inimité et la mode en Europe au XVIIIe siècle'. In *Modes en miroir. La France et la Hollande au temps des Lumières*. Paris: Paris Musées, 2005: 72–3; Thunder, Moira. 'An Investigation into Masculinities and Nightgowns in Britain, 1659–1763'. Unpublished MA dissertation, University of Southampton, 2005.

45. See, for example, the Netherlandish textile merchant in similar garb, Willem Van Mieris le Jeune, Gamaldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden. Inv. 1752.

46. *Les peintres du roi 1648–1793; Citizens and Kings. Portraiture in the Age of Revolution 1760–1830*. Exhibition Catalogue. London: Royal Academy of Art, 2007; especially 'The Cultural Portrait' and 'The Place for Experimentation: Artists' Portraits and Self-portraits': 128–80. Nonnotte's work can be compared with that of his Parisian contemporaries François-Hubert Drouais, Maurice Quentin de Latour, Jean-Baptiste Perronneau, Louis-Michel Van Loo and Louis Toqué, all of whom enjoyed depicting the specificity of fashionable dress – usually in an indoor setting.

47. It had been used in the artist's self-portrait four years earlier. On Louis-Michel Van Loo's studio props, see Rolland, Christine. 'Louis Michel Van Loo (1707–1771): Member of a Dynasty of Painters'. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of California, Santa

Barbara, 1994: Chapter 3; Ribeiro. *The Art of Dress*: 15–18.

48. Ribeiro. *The Art of Dress*: 18, citing Diderot.

49. Diderot, Denis. 'Regrets sur ma vieille robe de chambre ou avis à ceux qui ont plus de goût que de fortune'. 1772. Accessed May 30, 2012. https://www.bmlisieux.com/archives/diderot.htm. Diderot's essay is a masterpiece in associating different levels of nightgown with other objects and how comfort could be lost as status rose. His comfortable favourite nightgown from previous years was, like Revel's made of callimanco (calemande).

50. The addition of a collar was in line with the addition of a collar to the formal coat towards 1760; the fabric is a plain silk – perhaps more like the satin nightgown mentioned in Revel's inventory.

51. For example, McNeill, Peter. ' "That Doubtful Gender": Macaroni Dress and Male Sexualities'. *Fashion Theory* 3: 4 (1999): 411 – 47; Ibid. 'Macaroni Masculinities'. *Fashion Theory* 4:4 (2000): 373–404; Munns, Jessica and Penny Richards (eds). *The Clothes That Wear Us*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999.

52. The first public exhibition in Lyon was in 1786. Perez, Marie-Félicie. 'L'exposition du Salon des Arts de Lyon en 1786'. *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (décembre 1975): 198–206.

53. ADR BP2187, f.45 in town; f. 13 in country. It seems likely that Revel had a pendant of his wife painted or that it already existed. They were valued as a pair at 8 livres (f. 45). At 4 livres a piece, they were more highly valued than many of the landscapes, history and religious paintings valued separately by an expert (ff. 51–3).

54. Brush Kidwell. 'Are Those Clothes Real?'. In this respect, much British scholarship over the last thirty years, has acknowledged the need for teamwork, especially when exhibitions on portraiture have been staged. The most recent example of a relevant exhibition in London was Van Dyck and Britain. London: Tate Britain, 2009, which included as exhibits examples of dress, sound catalogue entries by the dress curator Susan North and an essay on men's fashion by the eminent fashion historian, Christopher Breward. The leading exponent of the interpretation of dress in art has been Aileen Ribeiro, who first collaborated in this way on the Batoni exhibition held at Kenwood House in 1982, and has since been called upon regularly to participate in similar projects in the UK and USA. This approach does not seem to have been adopted in French scholarship, perhaps because the academic study of dress has yet to be

established in French universities. Here, I would like to note my own debt to my colleagues in the Furniture, Textiles and Fashion Department at the V&A, as Sarah Medlam gave useful insights into the chair, while Clare Browne and Susan North shared their views of the textiles and dress respectively. Sylvie Martin's art historical work is essential as a basis for understanding Nonnotte's practice. My own research on the social and cultural environment of eighteenth-century Lyonnais silk designers complements all of this expertise and scholarship.

55. Ribeiro makes the point that deshabillé in French portraits was 'of the most lavish kind with emphasis on the beautiful fabrics of the costume', citing François-Hubert Drouais, Group Portrait, 1756 in the National Gallery of Art, Washington as an example (Ribeiro. *The Art of Dress*: 35). Revel offers an interesting contrast from a different social class.

56. Garden. *Lyon and Lyonnais*: 405.

57. His father and uncles were all painters, as had been his grandfather, although his father elevated himself by becoming a Royal Academician. Brême, Dominique. 'Gabriel Revel (1643–1712): Un peintre de Château-Thierry au temps de Louis XIV'. In *Mémoires de la Fédération des Sociétés d'Histoire et d'Archéologie de l'Aisne*. t. XXVII, Noyon, 1982 : 13–25 ; Ibid. 'La peinture en Bourgogne au XVIIe siècle: Gabriel Revel (1643–1712) et la diffusion de l'art officiel'. In *Mémoires de l'Académie des Sciences, Arts et Belles-Lettres de Dijon*. t.CXXV, 1983 : 91–101.

58. Sadly, the registers for 1684 were destroyed by fire at the Hôtel de Ville in 1871, but the baptisms of his siblings Marie and Gabriel offer the first impression of the family. Gabriel went to Lyon with Jean and died there two years before him. Marie's godfather was a deputy procurator general to the Grand Conseil (substitut du procureur général au Grand Conseil), her godmother was the wife of an official in the household of the Princess Royal (officier de Mademoiselle) and a relation of her mother's. The young Gabriel's godfather was his uncle, the painter Claude Revel, whilst his godmother was the daughter of a joiner by appointment to the Royal buildings (menuisier ordinaire des bastimens du roy). For details of Gabriel Revel's career, see Brême. For details of baptisms of Marie and Gabriel, see Bibliothèque Nationale de France (hereafter BN) N.A Fr. mss. 12178, 2 Mai 1678 and 20 août 1679. The names of the godparents were Jacques Genard, Barbe Boudon (wife of Jacques), Claude Coutan; AML St

Pierre et St Saturnin : no. 420, 22 mai 1749: ‘Sr Gabriel Revel négotiant décédé hier montée du Grifon agé d’environ septante ans a été inhumé dans l’eglise de St Pierre.’

59. Brême.‘Gabriel Revel’: 99. Coural, Jean. *Les Gobelins*. Paris, 1989: 10–19.

60. Brême. ‘Gabriel Revel’: 100.

61. It is unlikely that it was another Revel as the name was fairly uncommon in eighteenth century Lyon unlike Revol, Rival and Rivet. AML HH174 Corporation des peintres et des sculpteurs. Revel was one of the guild members who contributed to the repairs made to the guild chapel on 1 December 1712. Records of the deliberations of the silk weaving corporation do not mention Revel as a member and none of the surviving registers of apprenticeships or masters in the Archives Municipales de Lyon indicate his presence.

62. The marriage acts and contracts have not been found yet, but Jean’s first child was baptised in the parish of St Nizier in Lyon in 1712, as was Gabriel’s (AML, St Nizier:18 juin 1712 Baptism of Catherine, Gabriel’s daughter by Marie Thérèse Delessinet, and 15 juillet 1712 Baptism of Claudine, Jean’s daughter). Marie Thérèse subsequently died between 1713 and 1714, Gabriel remarried in 1717 this time in the parish of Sainte Croix, for which he required permission from the parish priest in St Nizier. AML St Nizier: 7 juin1717 Remise pour Sainte Croix; Sainte Croix: 8 juin 1717 Mariage Gabriel Revel/Marguerite Charessieu, fille de me Claude François Charesieu, ancien procureur ès cours de Lion et de dame Antoinette Bussière. Jean was a witness at the wedding. This was the cathedral parish. He and his brother were both marchands on this entry. AML St Pierre et St Saturnin: 1 mars1746, f. 55 Enterrement Marguerite Challiot Delessinet, femme de Jean Revel.

63. Parish registers are not always totally reliable, although why a newcomer to Lyon, such as Revel, should claim a totally different trade from the one he practised is difficult to explain. At this juncture, even if he were not a barrister (avocat), he obviously moved in those circles and would therefore have been aware of the law worked with regard to policing guild disputes. See, Michael Sonenscher for further details of the way in which the different layers of the legal system worked in eighteenth-century France. Sonenscher, Michael. *Work and Wages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989: 53–6.

64. AML, St Nizier: 15 juillet 1712 Baptême de Claudine Revel 24 juin 1713 Baptême de Barbe Jeanne, 21 mars 1715 Baptême de Benoît; St Pierre et

St Saturnin: 26 août 1716, f.132 Baptême de Marguerite Gabrielle Revel; 9 septembre 1717, f.147 Baptême de Louis Revel. Benoît was apparently the only child to die within the first couple of years of his life. (St Nizier: 29 août 1717 Enterrement de Benoît Revel)

65. Later in the century, the Lyonnais began to use the Parisian word. See Garden, Maurice, *Lyon et les lyonnais au dix-huitième siècle*. Lyon : Flammarion, 1976: 367.

66. Claudine's godparents were François Riverieulx, ancien échevin et ancien président de l'éléction de Riverieux and Claudine Riverieux, wife of Mr Foy de St Maurice, conseiller du roy, président à la cour des monnoyes et commissaires. Barbe Jeanne's godparents were Antoine Michel, écuyer and Barbe Collemieu, daughter of Jacques Collemieu, marchand. Benoît's were Benoît Ruisson, bourgeois and Reine Durand, wife of Lambert Laurent, marchand. Marguerite's were her uncle Gabriel Revel, a marchand bourgeois and his wife-to-be, Marguerite, daughter of François Charessieux procureur ès-cours de Lion. Louis' were Louis Vandercabel marchand bourgeois and Marie Elizabeth Mayer, wife of César Sonnerat bourgeois. Both Vandercabel and Sonnerat belonged to the corporation des marchands et maîtres ouvriers en soie, came of successful Lyonnais merchant stock and were members of the silk weaving guild. Louis Vandercabel marchand bourgeois died on 28 February 1729 in rue Lafont, aged 60, and was buried in the church of the RR. PP. Carmes. He left a considerable number of paintings as well as merchandise in his home. AML 1GG612: St Pierre et St Saturnin, 1729, f. 59; ADR BP2117: 8.03.1729 Inventaire-après-décès Louis Vandercabel. César Sonnerat died in January 1755, having made a will in 1751. He reckoned that he was worth more than 343,599 livres. ADR 3E4698 Pachot (Lyon): 30.09.1751 Testament César Sonnerat marchand fabriquant en étoffes d'or, d'argent et de soye, bourgeois de Lyon. He owned his house at the corner of rues Buisson and Gentil in Lyon and a country house.

67. From the publication of the first *Almanach de Lyon* in the late 1740s, the marchands de soie were cited as an independent group who did not belong to any corporation.

68. ADR 3E4686 Durand (Lyon): 9 avril 1736 Aprentissage Marguerite Etiennette Laurent/Revel.

69. 'ouvroirs pour écacher et filer l'or et l'argent nécessaires à la fabrication de leurs étoffes' (ADR 3E6913A, Bail op.cit., but also 3E6913B: 21 janvier

1751 Louage Revel, Clavière et Rambaud/Dumont).Additional accommodation for the same purpose was rented from the Bureau des petites écoles et du séminaire de St Charles on the Grande Côte des Capucins in 1751.

70. ADR 3E6913B Patrin (Lyon): 30.09.1751 Certificat Revel Clavière Rambaud/Gérard Masson.
71. Several other drawings by the same hand or after this hand are to be found in the BN, MT, Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and Victoria and Albert Museum. See, Thornton. 'Jean Revel, Dessinateur de la Grande Fabrique'.
72. Thornton. *Baroque and Rococo Silks*: 175, Plates 68 & 69; Rothstein. *Eighteenth-century Silk Designs*: 126–8 & relevant plates; MAD Collection Galais, Vol. 1. The English silk designer, Anna Maria Garthwaite, evidently owned and copied key elements of the technique within a couple of years.
73. BN Lh44 – microfilm M253787. Note that Peter Thornton transcribed Buisson as Ruisson, a transcription I followed in my article of 1995. On revisiting the design, it has become clear that Buisson is the correct transcription. It is also a surname that appears a great deal in the registers of the Grande Fabrique.
74. AML St Nizier: 21 mars 1715 Baptême Benoît Revel; 29 août 1717 Enterrement. Like the godfather of Revel's other son, Buisson was substantially older than Revel (twenty years older in his case).
75. Or a member of his family. ADR 3E2977: last folio. He died in 1744 at the age of 80, two years before the marriage of the last of Revel's daughters. AML St Pierre et St Saturnin: 2 mai 744 Enterrement Benoît Buisson, died in rue de la Cage. Witnesses at funeral were Lescallier, Federy fils, Federy père and Jacques Buisson.
76. Louis Revel registered as apprentice with Jean Monmarché on 26 November 1732 at the age of 15.He completed his apprenticeship in five years and registered as a journeyman in 1737. AML, HH598 Registre des apprentis (1725–37), f. 227 and HH588 Livre des compagnons 1735–45, f. 66: 4.12.1737.
77. Garden. *Lyon and Lyonnais*: 355–87.
78. His universal heir honoured all minor and major legacies immediately. This may, of course, be more of an indication of Jeanne-Barbe's husband's solvency than of the state of Revel's the finances.
79. Charléty, S. *Documents relatifs à la vente des biens nationaux*. Lyon, 1906:

141.

Encounters in the Archive: Reflections on costume

Donatella Barbieri, London College of Fashion /
V&A Research Fellow in Design for Performance

Abstract

Encounters in the Archive will be shown in the Tapestries Court at the V&A in 2012 as part of Transformation and Revelation, a series of displays produced by the Theatre and Performance Department in collaboration with the Society of British Theatre Designers. Funded by a research grant awarded by London College of Fashion, and produced with the support of Theatre and Performance and the Research Departments at the V&A, the project was selected for the V&A after it appeared in an earlier guise in Cardiff at the National Exhibition of Theatre Design 2011. The film has also been screened at the PQ2011, Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space as part of the OISTAT History and Theory Commission.

conserved state as fragments of past performances.

Introduction

This paper discusses and reflects upon aspects of the practice-based research project led by the author and titled Encounters in the Archive, which resulted in a 17 minute film depicting artist/researcher interactions with theatre costume and other archived, difficult to access objects in the V&A. The paper highlights the current lack of discourse on theatre costume, which prompted the Encounters in the Archive project and its specific methodological approach.[1] It shows how the camera can be used as a mechanism for enquiry, in this case via the expert filming and editing of film-maker Netia Jones. [2] Finally, it focuses on the responses to particular costumes in the V&A's Theatre and Performance Collections by three expert participants, and shows how such interactions can help to articulate the performativity of costume, retained in their collected and

Ambiguities and absences, discourse on costume

The Actor in Costume (2010), by Aofie Monks, is the only recent book to explore the centrality of costume to live performance reading the actor-in-costume from a cultural and performance studies point of view. Indeed, such is the vacuum in discourse on costume that it has been filled by re-publications of old classics, such as James Laver's *Drama - Its Costume and Décor* (1951) and *Costume in the Theatre* (1964), which are limited in approach. A historian of art, dress and theatre, Laver dealt exclusively with historical material. More recent publications do explore the subject from the perspective of Museum collections, such as *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes* (2010), a collection of essays written to accompany the eponymous V&A exhibition and edited by museum curators Jane Pritchard and Geoffrey Marsh. The costume within the museum context is afforded protection, conservation and value within an institutional context, while also providing each costume/object with a carefully researched and constructed history. As museum object, the costume becomes precious, guarded and also, by necessity, removed from the notion of performance.

Even in the broad field of scenographic discourse the costumed, performing body is sited, somewhat ironically, in the background. The audience's relationship to the performance space, to sound and to lighting is now being debated in some detail in critical discourse on theatre, particularly as these spatial and experiential concerns connect with the more established academic field of architecture. This is particularly evident in publications such as *Performance Design* (2008), edited by architects and scenographers Dorita Hannah and Olav Harsolf, and in Arnold Aronson's *Looking into the Abyss: Essays on Scenography* (2005). Yet, in this debate the sensory, visual presence of the dressed body of the performer remains conspicuous by its absence. This seems particularly odd, given that an audience's engagement with the performance is through the performer's body - at the centre of the scenographic construct.

The field of dress and fashion studies has also developed enormously, particularly since Elizabeth Wilson's seminal *Adorned in Dreams* (1985). Scholars and curators such as Lou Taylor, Amy de la Haye, Christopher Breward, Caroline Evans, Joanne Entwistle, Claire Wilcox and Judith Clark have together banished unequivocally the taint of frivolity that kept dress invisible as a scholarly research subject for much of the twentieth century. Over the last twenty years, these authors have exposed dress, and occasionally costume, as a complex historical, cultural, political and social construct that articulates the body and identity. They have shown how it can be read and decoded as a visual sign, understood as shared, embodied and cultural memory - aspects that have also inspired visual and performance artists.

The idea that dress carries memories and histories and that it acquires individual qualities through personal interactions with its wearer and viewers was of particular relevance to the Encounters research project. This idea was central to A Family of Fashion, The Messels: Six Generations of Dress (2010), in which de la Haye, Taylor and Thompson write about Jill Ritblat (who donated 300 high society dress outfits dating from 1964–98 to the V&A) and her relationship with her garments: she 'began to feel affectionate towards them, as towards old friends'. During one of the 'encounters' orchestrated as part of this research project, curator Janet Birkett too spoke about the costumes in her care in terms of levels of familiarity and intimacy, commenting that 'some are friends, others merely acquaintances'.[3] Another of the key conceptual drivers to this research project was the notion that the absent body and the traces it leaves behind in the lived in and performed in costume are not only memories but acquire agency in the 'dialogue' with an engaged viewer in the here and now. In an‘encounter’ discussed at length below, Amy de la Haye spoke about how ‘lives lived and performances performed’ were embodied in the costume that stood in front of her. By gathering together these perceptions of the material object from a unique, informed, engaged and personal perspective, the film enables a cumulation of specific insights which can begin to address the absence of discourse on costume.

In the field of performance studies the body has become increasingly prominent, building on phenomenological aproaches and on theories initially explored by sociologists Chris Shilling and Helen Thomas. The more recent work of cross-disciplinary philosopher and cognitive scientist Alva Noë, whose sense that ‘the world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction’ also profoundly influenced the methodological approach of the Encounters project.[4] This is particularly evident in the staging of the encounters, which privileged responses inspired by a spontaneous and close-up dialogue with the object, and downplayed responses couched primarily in intellectual terms, informed by disciplinary rigour. In the absence of the body of the performer, the ability to touch, move and view the object close up elicited responses from participants that helped to articulate the performative qualities of the objects.

Without its own scholarly discourse, theatre costume is subsumed into the performer’s body and its contribution to the performance, its ‘complex work’ and that of the hands that make it, remains un-remarked upon. As implied by Aofie Monks, ‘Theatre scholarship has a tendency to approach the actor as “already dressed”, or indeed “already undressed”, rather than acknowledging the complex work that costume does in producing the body of the actor.’[5] The costume worn by the actor is read in theatre scholarship as integrated into the essence of the construct that is the actor-on-stage. The methodology of Encounters in the Archive proposed the costume, an archived object, as ‘undressed’ from the body of the performer, yet still in conversation with its viewer. For this reason participants to the project were all interested experts, whose work is with costume, dress, performance and artistic practice. They included costume designer Nicky Gillibrand; a specialist costume pattern-cutter, Claire Christie; fine artist working with dress, Charlotte Hodes; author and curator of dress, Amy de la Haye; photographer Paul Bevan and fashion designer and academic Darren Cabon, accompanied by postgraduate student Marios Antoniu.

The agency of costume

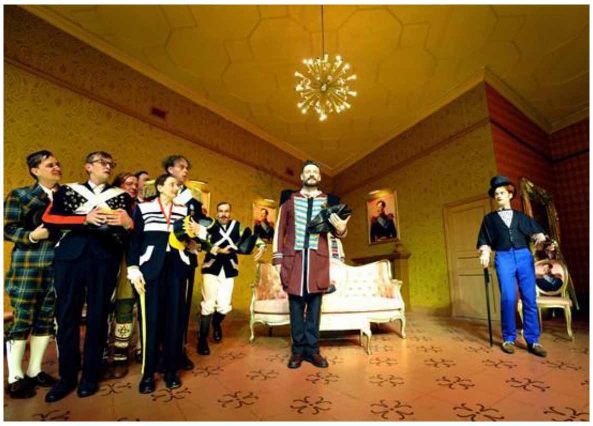


Figure 1 - Government Inspector at the Young Vic, June 2001, costume designer Nicky Gillibrand. Photograph by Keith Pattison

Little attention is drawn to costume by critics of live performance in reviews published in broadcast and printed media. Yet images of costumed performers are routinely deployed as photographic representations of the performance itself, often serving as embodiment of its visual identity. In June 2011, for example, photographer Keith Pattison was commissioned by the Young Vic to photograph the production of Government Inspector. His striking images were then used by the Theatre, as part of the advertising campaign for the performance.

They eloquently reflected the absurd quality of the performance through composition, angle, colour, lighting and environment, but largely through the visual identity - eclectic, inventive and hilarious - constructed by costume designer Nicky Gillibrand. Yet of the ten reviews that were published alongside these images, only two mentioned her name.[6] Miriam Beuther, the set designer, whose work was certainly worthy of praise, seemed to absorb much of the credit for the aesthetics of the performance as a whole, her name being mentioned in eight of the articles surveyed. Given that the vivid nature of Gillibrand's costumes was very difficult to ignore, the failure to mention her vital contribution to the show is rather puzzling. The 'already-dressed' actors depicted here also draw attention to the inability of theatre critics to discuss dress on stage.

Images of costumed bodies from ubiquitous productions such as *Les*

Misérables, *The Phantom of the Opera*, Matthew Bourne's *Swan Lake* and *Billy Elliot*, are now permanently embedded in the collective memory, yet their designers remain largely unnoticed.

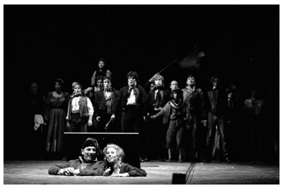


Figure 2 - Les Miserables, Royal Shakespeare Company, October 1985, costume designer Andreane Neofitou. Photograph by Douglas H. Jeffery

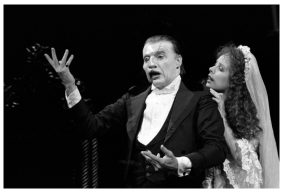


Figure 3 - Phantom of the Opera, Her Majesty's Theatre, October 1986, costume designer Maria Björnson. Photograph by Douglas H Jeffery.

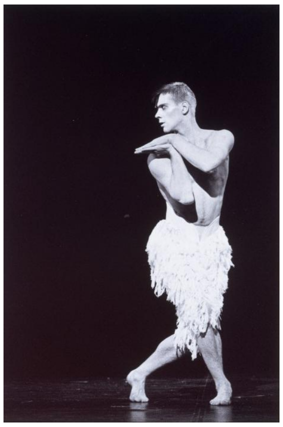


Figure 4 - Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake, November 1999, costume designer Lez Brotherston. Photograph by Graham Brandon.

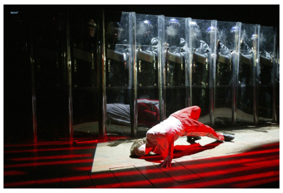


Figure 5 - Billy Elliot, Victoria Palace Theatre, May 2005, costume designer Nicky Gillibrand. Photograph by Graham Brandon.

Their design work nonetheless contributed to the national and international success of these productions, woven seamlessly into the identity of the show. Assimilated into the necessary branding of the performance, the costumed body, arguably a theatrical, artistic and cultural construct, is reflective of a shared memory and understanding of dress. The costumed body can be seen as a sign, indicating specific aspects of the role of the individual performer, their presence in the show and the type of performance. Read primarily as a pragmatic sign, however useful to the narrative and to the marketing of the show, costume can be reducible, reproducible and can ultimately be taken for granted and become unnoticed. Ironically within its success lies its downfall. This project aims to reverse this process, not only in terms of encouraging research into costume,but also in terms of raising the profile of costume designers, and improving understanding of 'the complex work that costume does in producing the body of the actor'.

The complex interaction inherent to the creative process in 'producing the body of the actor' on stage gives costume its unique effectiveness. The visual and material embodiment of specific ideas about the performance, and the communication of these notions in the here-and-now experienced by the audience, is arrived at through layered and nuanced process, involving several bodies, hands and eyes. Beyond the definition of the role of the actor in the play, costume can be at the very core of the process of inhabiting the performance moment. This effectiveness is communicated to a sentient, perceiving audience in the experienced and shared moment of the performance. Costume has agency as intermediary between performer and the spectator, not only through a visual response, but also a sensory one, projected via surface, colour, form, textiles, movement and weight. It draws attention to the body, by what it reveals or conceals, through fit, by the way it organizes the body's composition and proportion. It can highlight or even generate gesture and movement. It responds to the on-stage world, created by both the space in which it moves and by the other costumed bodies it encounters there. Costumes on stage create an ongoing sensory and visual dialogue with the spectator, whose own embodied sense of what it is like to be a 'dressed body' comes into play, as 'the activity of watching is an on-going physical adjustment and response to other physically present bodies.'[7]

The 'work' of the costume, is therefore vital in the creation and in the reception of performance where agency is sited in a shared visual and tactile understanding of dress, eliciting a sensory, experienced response alongside a reading and decoding of visual signs. The exploitation of shared, embodied and cultural memory that can be posited in costume plays a central role in the creation and communication of meaning in live performance. As a consequence, the crafting of the costume for performance requires both designers and makers to role-play the co-authoring, responsive audience at every stage of the creative process. The form costume takes is determined by the desire to project into the moment of the performance, as much as from a balancing act of artistic synthesis and practical concerns. Costume is inscribed with the performance from its conception. In its ideal state, while it is being conceived, it only exists for that performance, for that performer, in that particular moment in time. Separated from its context costume becomes redundant, yet as an object it is marked with a creative process which mediates between performance, its crafting, the body and the gaze of the audience. As such, a costume contains several different performances, inscribed into it through the work that made it.

Elizabeth Wilson remarks‘that garments so close to our bodies also articulate the soul’; and claims that ‘we experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship to human beings’, implying ambiguity in the way garments no longer in use may impact upon the experience of encountering them.[8] In Encounters in the Archive, it was intended to exploit the absence of the performer’s body and to articulate the performative soul in collected and archived costume through interaction with selected participants. The permeable nature of costume, its in-between state, susceptible to being appropriated and overlooked, could then be turned to an advantage as a perspective from which costume can look outwards from its unique point of view, to the complexities that it embodies, even when little is left of the performance that gave origin to it.

Filming in the archive

Among the stated aims of the V&A is the desire to inspire creativity by way of access to its collections. Encounters in the Archive investigates the nature of costume through the archive in a film-based exploration, by placing the costume-objects in dialogue with invited artists, designers and writers in 'staged' encounters, thus expanding in ever increasing circles the creative inspiration offered by the objects filmed in the archive. Edited down from eighteen hours of filming to seventeen minutes, it is a creative response to the experience of the archive and the interaction with the object. Netia Jones, who shot and edited the film, is a film maker and visual artist working in theatre and site specific installations, who often combines video, music and theatre using the camera as an expressive, artistic tool. This results in productions that are multilayered and profoundly visual experiences. Her recent *Everlasting Light* at Aldeburgh Festival in June 2011 was lauded by, amongst others, Richard Morrison of *The Times* in unequivocal terms: 'Such all-encompassing artworks make what normally goes on in concert halls, theatres and galleries look tame and prehistoric'.[9]

The generous filming schedule enabled the capture of interactions between the invited interlocutors and the objects that had been chosen with them. The meetings between Netia Jones and myself established a methodology that applied a phenomenological approach, where the intention is:

> *To redirect attention from the world as it is conceived by the abstracting 'scientific' gaze (the objective world) to the world as it appears or discloses itself to the perceiving subject (the phenomenal world); to pursue the thing as it is given to consciousness in direct experience; to return perception*

> *to the fullness of its encounter with its environment.*[10]

If the costume / object is a cultural construct – qualified by the context of the original performance – then, when separated from the performer and collected by the museum, its perception becomes mediated by the institution. Rather than dispensing knowledge, Encounters in the Archive seeks to immerse its participants into the experience of the moment, and to engage their imaginative responses to the one-to-one archive experience, specifically designed for each individual encounter. The unmediated costume/object, naked of interpretation, constituted a discovery in the moment of the encounter. These encounters took place within the vastness of Blythe House, which, alongside a number of national design archives, holds the V&A's enormous Theatre and Performance archive collection. Originally built to house the Post Office Savings Bank in the early 20th century, the monumental scale and architectural style of this civic building create a convincing scenographic space for the archive. Absorbed in its environment, one perceives both the institutional protection granted to the objects that are selected for posterity through the collecting process, and the necessary exclusion and control systems that this implies.

Kate Dorney, curator in contemporary Theatre and Performance, lent her words to these shots, thus becoming the voice of the archive. The scale of the archival space resonates in her spoken list of the quantitative data by which the Theatre and Performance archive can be measured. Holding 'sixty thousand files of Arts Council material… twenty thousand stage designs… twenty thousand pieces of costumes… three million photographs', the theatre and performance archive is 'the biggest collection of its kind in the world, in terms of its scope, chronologically and in its richness and complexity', and despite the seemingly limitless space, it is 'nearly full'.[11]

Engaging in an encounter that fore-grounded experience and perception, the camera itself took a subjective position, moving through the interminable corridors of shelves piled neatly with acid free boxes, and communicating the vastness of the 'layers upon layers' of nearly a century of collecting. Jones' insight is that through the process of filming and editing, the moving of the camera in the space 'interrogates the meaning of the space itself'. The corridor shots hint implicitly at the contradictions inherent in a static archive of performance,rendered vivid through Netia Jones's editing andusing of continuously moving, overlaid backgrounds.[12]

In a post-project meeting on the process of filming, Netia Jones reflected that the presence of camera into the unfamiliar space of the archive increased the intensity and the focus on the here-and-now of the moment by purposefully placing the subjects and the objects under a metaphoric and real spotlight. Both the camera and the careful preparation for the encounters emphasised the qualities of the object in the moment of its discovery by the viewer.This dynamic process was intended to evoke an instinctive response, with the one-off nature of the filming process enabling these responses to be documented, and to then begin to articulate the complexity of the object that is costume through the editing process. In Netia Jones' filming the protagonists, viewers, objects and spaces, are interwoven. Meanings are not inscribed but are revealed through interaction, in the dance-like movement that takes place through the layers of editing. In Noë's words 'the world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction', as the camera, moving through space and gazing into the objects, immerses the audience of the film into the experience of the encounter with the object.[13]

The costume object / the costume subject

The invited participants were selected for their range of expertise and perspectives on dress and the body. Prior to the filmed visit to the archive, a process of identifying costumes, collected by the V&A, relating to their practice was put in place. As such, each encounter was curated while access to the archive at Blythe house was negotiated in discussion with the archivists. The participants, who had been involved in the selection process, were invited to concentrate on the object as it came into focus rather than prepare a presentation about the object. The intention was that they should gain insights specifically inspired by the object in the specific moment of encounter. If perception is a skilled activity, relying on embodied knowledge, then each individual would bring to bear their unique way of looking at and engaging with the object.

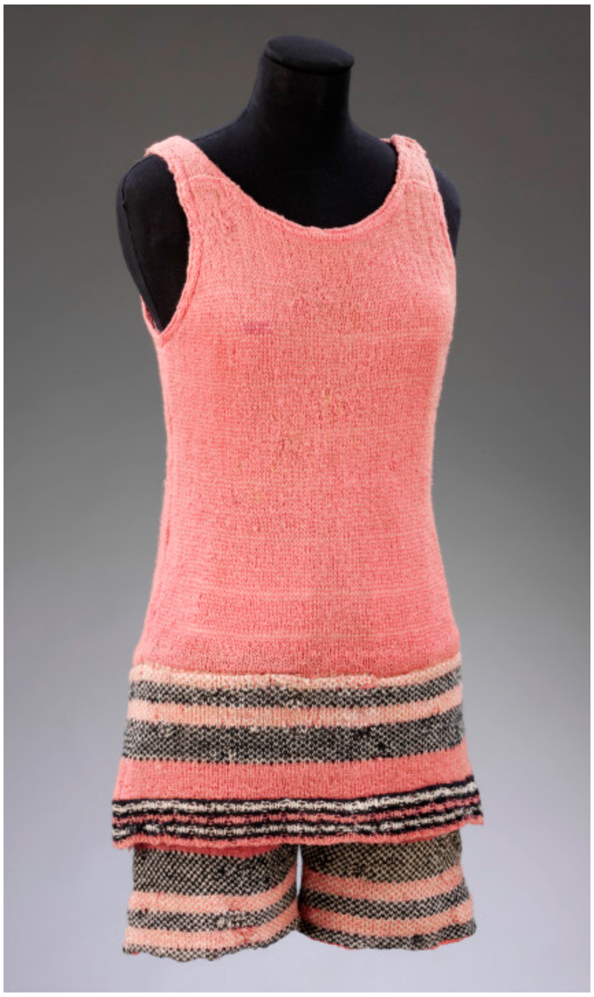


Figure 6 - La Perlouse in Le Train Blue, 1924. Museum no. S.836-1980

Professor Amy de la Haye, Rootstein Hopkins Chair of Dress History and Curatorship at London College of Fashion, has written extensively on fashion and material culture and Coco Chanel's costumes. She was also, for several years, a curator of historical dress at the V&A. A highly valued international scholar in her field, she spoke in great detail about the historical and cultural context of the costumes she encountered. This contextual material however has not made it into the final edit, as the research project was not about establishing factual contexts. Instead the focus was on her responses to her first ever close-up viewing of the costume for La Perlouse in *Le Train Bleu* designed by Chanel for the Diaghilev Ballet in 1924.

She remarked how this knitted costume evoked the dancer as it had adapted 'to accommodate the shape of the body'and was 'imprinted by the wearer'. She concluded that the costume was 'entwined with life lived and performances performed'.[14] On close inspection she commented in surprise 'it is mended all over... you'd have thought they might have got new ones', particularly given the projection of luxury inherent to the context of this high-profile production and of Chanel's designs, whose costumes, as Lynn Garafola has observed, appeared to the audience as if they 'might come from her customers' wardrobes'. [15] Yet, more than purely fashionable, prima ballerina Lydia Sokolova felt 'quite radical' dancing in this costume, demonstrating the integral role costume plays in the way the dancer perceives herself on stage.[16] The costume here is inextricably linked to the impact of Sokolova's dance, which would have been entirely different in a classic tutu. The effort poured into the mending of this knitted, on-stage swimsuit - to keeping it intact - may well have played a key role in the successful performances of *Le Train Bleu*. Making a direct comparison with Chanel's fashion work, de la Haye comments on the quality of the knit, the colour and the proportions confirming that she had not seen 'anything like this in [Chanel's] fashion collection', thus placing the garment in a quite separate category from those in Chanel's customers' wardrobes. 'It is extraordinary that it really is quite a vibrant rose pink', she had expected it to be 'much more like everyday swimwear and it's absolutely not, because women's swimwear was made with machine knitted jersey or machine knitted wool'. De la Haye suggests that 'It looks much more artisan than I'd imagined – I'd imagined it was going to be modernistic and quite a smooth knitted jersey, but it actually looks hand-knitted.' She also notes how discretion would have determined that the cut of the vest be longer in everyday swimwear, again reflecting on the unique nature of the costume for the specific performance and performer. Thus the La Perlouse costume draws attention to itself and its wearer through not only its vibrant colour, but also the noticeable hand-knit texture, which would have been far more responsive to light and movement than a smoother machine knit, while making evident the articulation of the dancing body through adjustments in cut and proportion. In de la Haye's words, 'a different kind of performativity from everyday fashion' is at work here. 'This is the beauty of looking at the real thing, it just opens your eyes', notes de la Haye, then, adding as an aside, 'it must have been itchy as well'.

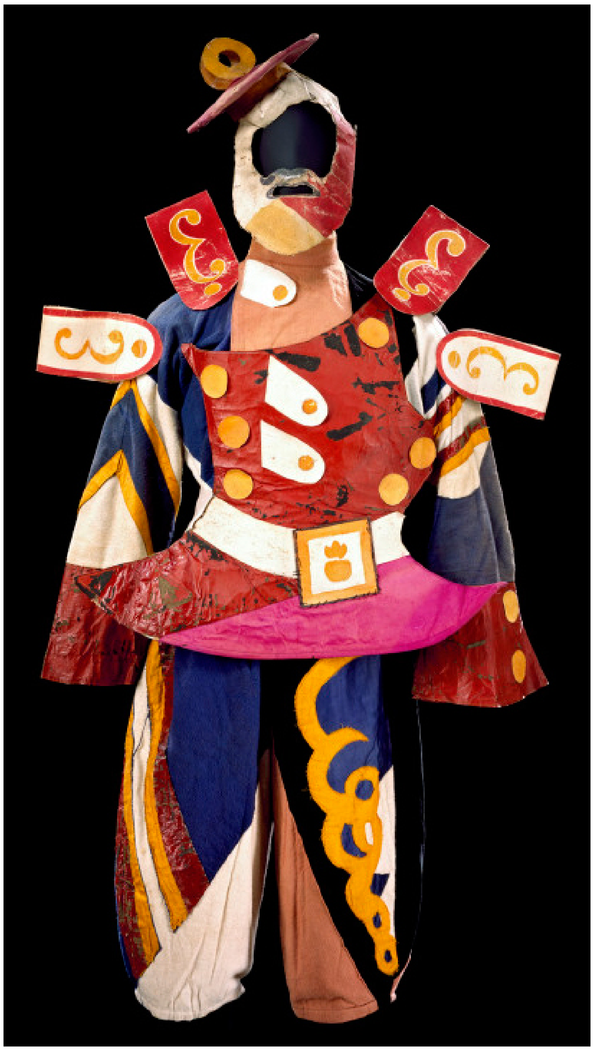


Figure 7 - Costume for a Soldier in Larionov and Slavinsky's ballet Chout designed by Mikhail Larionov, Diaghilev Balllet, 1921. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2012.

The sensory qualities, visual and tactile, that are communicated by costume are something to which Nicky Gillibrand, as a highly valued international costume designer, would also be finely attuned. On encountering The Soldier in *Chout*, 1921, also a Diaghilev Ballet, designed by Mikhail Larionov, Gillibrand's first response was surprise at the 'unbelievable amount of clothing' to dance in, and that the layered, stiffened clothing would be 'an absolute killer for a dancer'.[17]

The costume presented a combination of high-contrast, painted and appliquéd heavy cotton and buckram, including a long sleeved tunic with wired epaulettes projecting outwards from the upper arms and shoulders, a painted buckram breastplate with wired skirt, trousers, mask, wired buckram beret and 'those giant boots!'. The dancer's movement, inevitably, would have been choreographed around the costume and what they could do in it, rather than displaying the full articulation of the dancer's own moving body. Whereas La Perlouse made evident the dancing body by deliberately adjusting the fashion cut of the costume, here the costume almost entirely absorbs the body into itself by extending it through space, whilst simultaneously concealing it, in wired and stiffened buckram.

As a fine artist, Larionov clearly treated this dance piece as a work of art that moves. His designs were developed intermittently over a number of years, ultimately even sharing the choreography credits with Thadée Slavinsky.[18] In her encounter with the costume, Nicky Gillibrand suggests that Larinov's hand may well have been at work even in the realisations of the costumes. Not only would it appear that Larionov carefully chose the complex combination of fabrics and painted surfaces, deliberately creating the effect he was after, but, observing closely,Gillibrand noted how the still present pencil lines, appeared as if 'they have just been drawn on' and gave the garment a sense of being 'almost not quite finished'. The pencil lines mark the spacing between the bold intersecting shapes that dissect and reconstruct the body of the soldier in a neo-primitive Cubist composition. Gillibrand felt that these were 'quite child like'. 'I rather love the crudeness of it, it's the beauty of it'. Looking at this costume the direct involvement of the designer was evidenced by the uncompromised boldness of the forms and lines, 'makes me feel like the artist was involved. You kind of know what you want to it to look like, whereas costume makers tend to want to make it look beautiful. ’By visually upstaging the performer’s body, this costume serves as a means through which the designer claims authorship of the work - an authorship that extends to co-choreographing the movement. The direct intervention of the designer’s hands in the making process reinforces that sense of authorship.

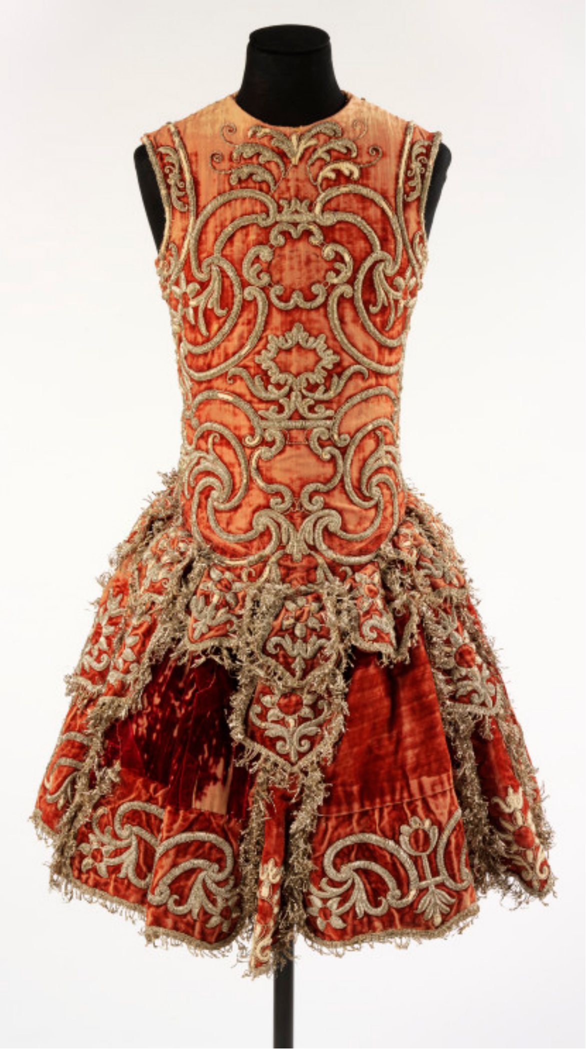


Figure 8 - Meleto Castle Costume, Italy, mid 18th century. Museum no. S.92-1978

The Meleto Castle costumes, dating from around 1750, were selected for Charlotte Hodes, Reader in Fine Art at the University of the Arts, London. These lack either a named ‘author’ or even any reference to a specific performance, though they would have been used for private performances.[19]

In encountering this costume Hodes, in whose paintings the female form is juxtaposed with complex, layered surfaces, immediately noticed the way her eye was invited to travel across and around the sides of the torso by the 'surprisingly bold pattern' of the embroidery. The 'luscious' and 'swirling' raised silver and gold embroidery 'exists as its own object' in a structured composition of enlarged scrolls and flowers, 'resplendent' while contrasted against the red velvet, on which it is 'encrusted'. Hodes claims that, 'The other wonderful contrast you have is the tight stitching, which you probably wouldn't see on stage… you can see the directional changes of the stitching… which is very beautiful and very tightly stitched. Then you get the contrast with… the little flickery bits that are around the edge like fronds'.[20]

The Meleto Castle costume would have reflected candlelight very effectively, through the changing lines of the threads in the embroidery pattern, the moving, fringed, peplum pieces and the shape of the velvet garment itself which, by absorbing and reflecting the light in different ways and in different directions, emphasise both movement and structure. Notwithstanding the weighty impression of this costume, which was made on a hessian base with furnishing velvet and precious metal embroidery, the 'swirling' motion materialized in the raised pattern of the embroidery against the velvet, echoes the pattern and movement of baroque dance. ‘You really sense a sort of atmosphere, the music, the ambience, all that is contained within the garment’, concludes Charlotte Hodes. The relationship with space, light and movement are all embedded into this costume, which seems to be holding the dance within itself. When brought out momentarily into the light, the Meleto Castle costume maintains the spatially and historically sited performative effectiveness that shaped it.

Conclusion

The complex object that is costume - constituted through craft and performance and re-contextualised in its archived and collected state - once taken out of the necessary but forbidding acid-free archive box, can offer new ways to articulate its performative values. By placing the non-interpreted costume object in conversation with an engaged, informed and perceptive interlocutor in unmediated and uncommented upon encounters, this project has been able to draw out some key findings about costume. Amy de la Haye’s response to Chanel’s La Perlouse makes clear the relationship between costume, the body and the performer, but questions any easy connection between everyday fashion and theatre costume. The presence of the artist’s hand at work on the costume as a co-author of the performance is evidenced in Nicky Gillibrand’s close-up viewing of The Soldierin Chout. The performative qualities of costume detected by Charlotte Hodes in the embroidery of the Meleto Castle costume, articulate the spatial presence, movement and atmosphere that costume can embody. Moreover, the camera in Encounters in the Archive became the facilitator for the research and the encounters as well as providing documentation for further analysis. The resulting film immerses the viewers in the archive, connecting them with the context of costume as an archived object, a context from which it can look outwards to future perspectives.

The research methodologies developed in this project do not aim to replace those currently deployed by ‘design for performance’ scholars, but to balance existing approaches within a context of interdisciplinarity that places the dressed body very much at the centre of the enquiry. As such it contains a multiplicity of expert voices and a multiplicity of performances, which, in the case of poorly debated areas of ‘design for performance’ such as costume, can begin to articulate the complexity of this subject.[21]

Video: Blythe House - Encounters in the archive

This film was developed and produced by Donatella Barbieri and filmed and edited by Netia Jones. It captures the interaction between the researcher and the object in the archive. It has acted as a catalyst for the creative process of its participants, designers, artists and researchers who have made use of the experience as a way of furthering their own practice through research. For more information about the participants’ own projects and about this film-based research project, please view www.encountersinthearchive.com.

View transcript of video

Participants:

> *Dr Kate Dorney, Curator of Modern & Contemporary Performance at the V&A*
> *Paul Bevan, Photographer and visual artist*
> *Cathy Haill, V&A curator and circus specialist*
> *Amy de la Haye, Curator and fashion historian*
> *Claire Christie, Costumier and senior lecturer*
> *Nicky Gillibrand, Costume designer*
> *Charlotte Hodes, Fine artist*
> *Marios Antoniou, MA fashion student*
> *Darren Cabon, Fashion designer*

Transcript:

Kate Dorney: Sixty thousand files of Arts Council material, ten thousand stage plans, twenty thousand stage designs, twenty thousand pieces of costume, three million photographs, two hundred venues where we systematically collect the programs, around five thousand production boxes of material, around two hundred and fifty thousand production files, about two thousand index cards detailing individual performances...

Paul Bevan: Architecturally, what I find quite interesting about this space and the way that it's laid out. It is sort of organised - I'm sure it's all terribly organised - and it also looks quite chaotic. But nevertheless there's a huge physical structure to the way this space is laid out and I think it's an interesting location in which to engage with knowledge, empirical knowledge.

Kate Dorney: It's the biggest collection of its kind in the world in terms both of its scope chronologically and in terms of the richness and complexity. We don't just collect theatre, dance and opera but also musical, circus, rock and pop and pantomime. From beautiful sixteenth century ballet décor and designs for a very rarefied audience to a twenty-first century pantomime.

Cathy Haill: The wonderful thing is that we've been given these trunks that Edwin wore; they were such working clothes and weren't kept in a way that many actors and actresses kept their costumes but if you look at the workmanship in them it's just beautiful, and this [referring to the embroidery in gold and silver thread] would obviously have shone a lot more. They would have been just worn just with a leotard.

Kate Dorney: We have about three million photographs, twenty thousand stage designs, twenty thousand pieces of costumes going from tiny bits of paste jewellery and ballet shoes up to huge head-dresses and complete outfits. Everything from anonymous designers to Dior and Picasso and Cecil Beaton.

Amy de la Haye: Here we have a dress that Cecil Beaton designed for the stage production My Fair Lady which was shown in London in 1958. He was critically acclaimed for these costumes which he designed as a sort of nostalgic interpretation of dress from just before the First World War. I've never seen this before.

Kate Dorney: You're looking at the accumulation of only a century of collecting which is not very long in museum terms, but because of the subject matter it's lots of different people bringing their collections together. One man's collection of 18th century prints meets another man's collection of 18th century books which meets a solicitor's collection of carte-de-visite photographs from the 19th century. It's layer upon layer of material. The last forty years that the department has existed it's really just the very top layer.

Claire Christie: Evening Standard 1954… Fabulous Lady… this is obviously a 'special' on her…

Kate Dorney: Before we were a museum and when lots of people wanted a museum [of theatre], they started out by only collecting [material from] London and only collecting 'legitimate' theatre, completely ignoring musical and popular entertainment, the kind of things that people on the ground would understand. We were much more like a fine art style collection. Then gradually, in order to make us into a museum, people started to collect costume like the Ballets Russes Costume for example.

Nicky Gillibrand: That's amazing… isn't that just the nicest thing…it's beautiful… In a way it's quite amazing that it survived so long, you can't imagine that the designer thought they [the costumes] would still be alive with us now.

Kate Dorney: The founding collections of the museum are the result of Gabriella Enthoven who was an amateur actress, dramatist and society lady, who decided that there must be a Theatre Museum and she went round successively lobbying every museum and government, she did it for thirteen years, and then the V&A made the mistake of holding an exhibition of international stage design, and she pounced on them and eventually inveigled her way in with a collection of flat material and the V&A very kindly let her stay and let her employ two assistants from her own private income. She got no money, and she paid for everything she acquired, and during that period we acquired lots of really amazing 18th century stage designs, some very early material.

Charlotte Hodes: This is 'Italian Jupiter', late 18th century, wonderful. This is a wonderful, hand coloured print of different types of dances. It's like the whole world on a stage and everything is contained within it and although it suggests that it goes beyond the page, you get the feeling that this world exists here, that there's nothing else, everything you want to know about the world is all in here.

Kate Dorney: [Regarding visitors to the archive] We have a pretty even split between practitioners and academics so if you include academics as right down to undergraduates. We have also set designers, costume designers, tv researchers.

Marios Antoniou: For my MA proposal I am working to the theme of the clown, performance and circus. I am looking to early costumes in order to draw inspiration, and my aim is to transform costume into contemporary fashion.

Darren Cabon: There's so much about this that refers to Comme des Garçons. They did a collection in the early 90s which was all wool tailoring, not pressed at all. When the garments were cut and frayed and then put together without any pressing at all, you got this very same effect.

Charlotte Hodes: I've never actually seen a costume lying flat. I've only ever seen costumes either vertically or on people and in order to animate I have to sense that somebody was in it. My instinct is to project the figure into it and actually to put it vertically and try and imagine how the garment would function on a moving body. Even here, lying here like a carcass you really sense a sort of atmosphere and almost the kind of music and the ambiance that would be there, all that is contained within the garment.

What's interesting about embroidery from the point of view of a fine artist is that it is essentially not always a kind of linear process. Obviously you can block in areas but you have still got the stitch and the thread so it's very much like a drawing. It is a drawing really, it's a drawing with thread and that's what so thrilling about it. In the equivalent as a painting you can then see the drawn thread and then you see these wonderful rich, dense, sort of velvet reds as painted areas. I can project it as a painting.

[On drawing objects in the museum and in the archive] You undo the distance that you have when you look at an object in a museum. There is a kind of distance and an awe and quite rightly because these objects that we're looking at are absolutely wonderful and so one is in awe of them but I think that drawing allows you to get over that, so that you can look much more directly at the artefact and connect much more closely. You can almost say this is just you and the object and there's nothing between you.

Kate Dorney: [On viewing objects] It's a very rich world. You can see things on the internet and you don't necessarily have to come and physically see something. But usually what happens is that if someone comes in with a yen to see a particular thing it will be because they have seen it on the internet so there's a kind of reversed Benjaminian aura, the mechanical reproduction is not good enough you must come and worship at the real thing.

Amy de la Haye: I'm so excited to see this costume because I know it's pink, and I've written about it, but all the photographs are black and white so in my mind's eye it's still black and white and beige, so I've been really, really looking forward to seeing how pink the pink is. It looks much more artisanal than I'd imagined, I'd imagined it was going to be modernistic and quite a smooth knitted jersey but it actually looks like something hand knitted that someone's grandmother could have made. And as dance costume actually it's quite surprising that it has survived when you think how much it would have been worn.

It's really exciting to see these costumes because they've come from possibly one of the most famous Diaghilev productions, *Le Train Bleu* from 1924, that was shown in London, Paris and Monte Carlo. For me seeing these is extraordinary because I have done a lot of work on Chanel and I've looked at her fashion collections and from everything I have read I believed that these costumes would be almost indistinguishable from the sort of sportive designs that she created for her fashion clientele in the 1920s but actually they are completely distinctive.

I have always known it was pink, because all the photographs you see contemporaneously are in sepia tones or in black and white, in your mind's eye, the costumes are in neutral colours and I think the biggest treat for me is to see quite how rose pink the pink is.

All clothes have got some sort of imprint of wear but the exciting thing about knitwear is perhaps more than any other type of clothing is that it adapts to the shape of the body and so it really is sort of entwined with lives lived and performances performed.

What's intriguing is the fact that this was a really high profile production but they still mend the costumes, whereas you might think the lead dancer would get new ones but it's mended all over which also really adds to the human connection of the garment.

Nicky Gillibrand: I can't believe I'm actually standing in front of them, sorry, it's quite an emotional moment. The back is just unbelievable; I love the fact the decision not to have a sleeve as a full sleeve of the beige grey wool. The fact that it is a two piece sleeve but they have done it out of two different fabrics, it is really interesting people don't often think like that.

I love the fact that it stops there [points at panels on the arm] and you've got a seam there, and a there and it's beautiful, it's really beautiful.

[Looking at flat costume on table] It's an unbelievable amount of clothing for a dance costume, plus he's got those giant boots on as well… I just want to see the whole thing on stage now really. This bit here almost looks like it's something that was a process, I suppose it's not quite finished, I love the pencil lines.

Kate Dorney: If you're a researcher you can access flat material in the reading room or the things that on display in the museum. You don't get to see all the things that are in deep storage or have access to set models or costumes or swords or a pair of acrobats' trunks, which for some people is very important - just to see the movement, how things changed, how they wear. It's very difficult to have access to those kinds of things.

Darren Cabon:...and interesting that all of the embroidery was placed on afterwards, after the construction of the garment.

Amy de la Haye: Is it silk lined all the way up?

Susana Hunter: I think the trousers are.

Amy de la Haye: So they wouldn't be itchy?

Nicky Gillibrand: It's got this all the way through, has it?

Susana Hunter: Yes, it's a multilayered skirt.

Charlotte Hodes: Also the fact that it's raised, it's tactile it's coming up, it's more than decoration its ornamentation it's absolutely very, very physical.

Claire Christie: So can you see that that's cut straight like that on the shoulders? It causes it to be a cowl and it's actually not straight across, its cut slightly curved up... again its slightly high waisted and has got diamond [shaped pattern pieces] in... so this is on the straight coming around from the back, on the hip it's on the straight. On the front panel of the skirt it's all bias as well, isn't that beautiful, how clever is that.

Kate Dorney: Most of the people that come here have been coming since they first found it and keep finding new things. I guess my use of it is about trying to encourage other people to use it.

Endnotes

1. The author's research for this paper and her placement at the V&A are both intended to question how costume has been easy dismissed, and to re-claim it as a complex and highly charged material object. For this purpose, she is currently writing a book to be jointly published in 2013 by Berg and the V&A, entitled *Costume in Performance*.
2. Netia Jones. Accessed November 23, 2011. https://netiajones.com/
3. Quoted from interview with Janet Birkett on 14 May, 2010.
4. Noë, A. *Action in Perception*. Massachuttes: MIT Press, 2004: 1.
5. Monks. A. *The Actor in Costume*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010: 9.
6. List of reviews accessed on line on January 30, 2012. *The Telegraph*, June 10, 2011; *The Guardian*, June 10, 2011; *What's on Stage*, June 10, 2011; *The Independent*. Monday 13 June, 2011; *Time Out*, Monday June 13, 2011; *The Arts Desk*, June 10, 2011; *The Stage*, June 13, 2011; *The Observer*, June 12, 2011; *The London Evening Standard*, June 10, 2011; *The Financial Times*, June 13, 2011.
7. Shepherd, S., and M. Wallis. *Drama/Theatre/Performance 2004*. London: Routledge, 2004:194.
8. Wilson, E. *Adorned in Dream*. London: I B Tauris & Co Ltd; Rev. edition 2003.
9. Morrison, R. "At Sizewell I saw the future glowing in the dark". *The Times*, June 24, 2011.
10. Garner, S. B. *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance in Contemporary Drama*. University of Michighan: Cornell University Press, 1994.
11. Quoted from interview with Kate Dorney, April 28, 2010.
12. Quoted from interview with Netia Jones, July 6, 2011.
13. Noë, A. *Action in Perception*. Massachuttes: MIT Press, 2004: 1–35.
14. Interview with Amy de la Haye, May 13, 2010.
15. Garafola, L. *Diaghilev Ballet Russes*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1987: 108.
16. de la Haye, A. *Chanel: Couture and Industry*. London: V&A Publishing, 2011:48 – 50; de la Haye, A. and S. Tobin. *Chanel: The Couturiere at Work*. London: Overlook Press, 1997: 46 - 48.
17. Quoted from interview with Nicky Gillibrand, May 13, 2010.

18. Pritchard, J. and G.Marsh, eds. *Diaghilev and the Golden Age of the Ballets Russes 1909–1929*. London, V&A Publishing: 2010; Theatre Costume for a Solider in Larionov and Slavisky's ballet *Chout*, designed by Mikhail Karionov, Diaghilev Ballet, 1921. Victoria and Albert Museum, S.755-1980.

19. Theatre Costume form Meleto Castle in Tuscany, mid-18th century. Victoria and Albert Museum, S.92-1978.

20. Interview with Charlotte Hodes, on April 28, 2010.

21. More information about Encounters in the Archive can be found on the website www.encountersinthearchive.com

A study of a Ming dynasty ceramic pillow

Kirstin Beattie, V&A/RCA History of Design Graduate

Abstract

Chinese ceramic pillows are certainly very different in form to their Western equivalents. Seemingly straightforward in function, this type of object has been easily overlooked by art and design historians. This essay analyses the social value and multiple functions of ceramic pillows in Ming dynasty China, in relation to a pillow in the V&A collections.

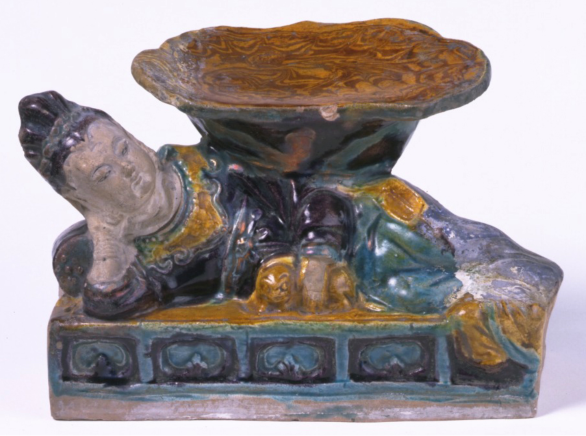


Figure 1 - Ceramic pillow, China, Ming dynasty, 1450–1550, fahua ware. Museum no. C.46-1911

Introduction

An unusual Chinese ceramic pillow from the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) serves as the focus of this essay. Produced in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), between 1450 and 1550, this pillow is made of a fahua-type ware (fig. 1). It has been moulded into the shape of a woman reclining on a rectangular base and a small concave headrest rises from her waist as a separate part of the object. The female figure is lying on her side and directly under her head is a miniature cylindrical pillow. She wears a headdress, necklace, bracelets and earrings and holds a small dog under one arm. Her robe is tied high at the waist with cord and attached to this is a rectangular object which could be a fan. The base, face and hands are unglazed, but the eyes have been painted in black after firing. The colour palette of amber, deep purple and blue is typical of fahua wares, which were produced extensively in the provinces of Shanxi and Jiangxi between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries.[1] This ware was made using a distinctive technique. Lead fluxed glazes were painted directly onto the fired body, omitting the usual colourless porcelain glaze. Enamels were held in place through use of surface divisions; in this case the surface has been incised. A short-cut, this method of production is similar to that used for cloisonné enamel wares and is consequently known as the "enamel-on-biscuit" technique.[2] Fahua wares were produced for, and consumed by, wealthy rather than imperial buyers and there is no evidence that they were made for export. Items were generally utilitarian; this type of ware was commonly used for architectural pieces like roof tiles, though other large-scale items such as vases are typical.

This ceramic pillow was bought by the Museum in 1911 from dealers S. M. Franck & Co., an importer of goods from the Near and Far East during this period. Regular dealings with this firm had been conducted since 1883.[3] The acquisition files indicate that large numbers of objects were being dug up from graves as a result of newly-built railway lines in China in the early years of the twentieth century.[4] Chinese burial wares, which were previously unknown in the West, were unearthed and removed by foreign engineers such as Johan Gunnar Andersson (1874–1960).[5] Collectors and museums in Britain began to acquire these wares through dealers. It therefore seems likely that these were the circumstances in which this object was found. According to archaeological evidence, ceramic pillows are still commonly retrieved from tombs.[6] As a result, it was previously assumed in Western scholarship that pillows were used only within the grave. Probably perceived to be uncomfortable, the need to lie relatively still upon a ceramic pillow made the argument for tomb use logical. Historian Robert Paine argued against this and suggested over fifty years ago that it is, above all, the subject matter of pillows which firmly established their original use for the living.[7] Indeed, a pillow played a significant role in both environments; it is even possible that they were consciously manufactured for both. The high volume of pillows found in tombs is the principle reason for their preservation and high survival rate; there are many examples of Chinese ceramic pillows in museums worldwide today.

First manufactured in the Tang dynasty (618–907), ceramic pillows became a familiar and popular domestic item for the middle to upper classes of Chinese society by the Ming dynasty. Despite this, relatively little is known about their function within this society and they have been curiously neglected by historians. A lack of primary sources connected to this type of object has led to varied speculation about their original use.[8] As a result, the existing secondary literature on ceramic pillows concentrates heavily on aesthetics and the physical qualities that relate each pillow to a certain kiln or method of production. In contrast, this essay investigates the possible uses and social values of ceramic pillows in the Ming dynasty, in relation to the pillow held in the Victoria and Albert Museum collection (hereafter the “V&A pillow”). It draws on sources such as literature, illustrations, examples of contemporary discourse on the living environment, as well as other examples of material culture. While these forms of evidence cannot be said to be representative of Ming dynasty society at large, they can be used to tentatively place a ceramic pillow in context. As an object used during sleep, the pillow’s mere functionality associates it with the bedroom. This space was separated from the domestic environment at large by its function, the material culture which furnished it and the people who used it. The V&A pillow will be analysed within this context, in order to understand what kind of meanings it may have had as an object placed and used in this room. The symbolism and iconography of the female form represented on this pillow will be closely considered to further link it to this space, and in order to generate an argument that it would have been viewed as an object connected to personal and familial concerns. Although different in date, comparisons with other similarly-shaped pillows provide further insights into the purpose of this type of object. Indeed, a pillow might even be regarded as an object which was designed to affect the environment around it.

A rest for the head

Pillows made from fahua-type wares are relatively unusual. The vast majority of surviving pillows are made of cizhouware, several of which are used as comparative examples in this essay. This was a type of sturdy stoneware produced in various kilns throughout the northern provinces of Hebei, Henan and Shaanxi, largely in the Song dynasty (960–1276), but continued into the early Ming dyansty.[9] Cizhouwares were usually decorated with a creamy coloured base and iron-based line patterns.[10] Though distinctly different to fahua, it is clear that pillows were regularly made from more popular and utilitarian ceramic wares, rather than those that were more expensive. Unlike the V&A pillow, the vast majority of these objects were made of a box-shape with flat surfaces on which the decoration was painted.[11] Indeed, there are only a few known examples of ceramic pillows in the shape of a woman reclining. This design seemingly indicates how the object itself should be used; it is a rest for the head while a person was lying or sleeping. The shape of the rest protruding from the base of the V&A pillow is small and concave, and does seem to be suitable for a head. Such a small surface area implies that the sleeper would have to remain relatively still. At 15.9 cm, the height of this pillow meant that the head rested upon it in a semi-upward position. Unglazed and roughly painted at the back, the V&A pillow was clearly meant to face the front. It was perhaps designed to fit into another structure such as a bed or coffin, thus hiding the back of the object and providing more stability.

In physical qualities, a Chinese ceramic pillow is certainly dissimilar to its equivalent in the West. Perhaps they were used to encourage a better sleeping position for the body, or to maintain the highly complex hairstyles worn by women during the Ming dynasty.[12] Contemporary literature certainly suggests that these objects had a function beyond that of the simply supportive. Guides to elegant living were popularly printed in the latter part of the Ming dynasty and provide an insight into which objects were thought necessary for an upper-class lifestyle. GaoLian was the author of one such guide, the Zun sheng bajian (Eight Discourses on the Art of Elegant Living), which was published in 1591. In it, he stated that, ‘porcelain may be used to make pillows… It has power to brighten the eyes and benefit the pupils’.[13] In this case, the material qualities of ceramics were thought to have health benefits for the sleeper. According to the same source, pillows might have another effect on the user. The Immortal Yao used three scrolls with significant writings piled-up to make a pillow and, ‘thereby he dreamed pure and elegant dreams’.[14] Despite the difference in material, this extract shows that pillows were thought to influence and guide dreams. This was made possible by virtue of the object’s close proximity to the head. Dreams were perceived in China to have significant meaning; often they were taken as omens, and dream interpretation was customary.[15] Extensive research by Joseph Needham has shown that there was no sharp dichotomy in the division between the two states of spirit and matter in Chinese popular thought.[16] Ghosts, spirits and visions in dreams were part of the material world and deemed to be interchangeable with life. Thus the pillow could be a material object of great importance, which mediated between the conscious and unconscious, between reality and the illusionary. The use and placement of a pillow within the

Chinese domestic environment, as well as the people who might have used it, must be carefully considered.

The ‘inner’ sphere

As an object used primarily for sleeping, the natural setting of a pillow was a bedroom. In Ming dynasty China, domestic space was divided according to gender, and the bedroom was where women spent the majority of their time. The structure of the Chinese house was governed by ideas about proper social relations, which stemmed from Confucian ideology. Domestic space was structured in order to facilitate hierarchal relationships based on age, status and gender. The Yang Zhongmin gong yibi (Final Instructions),a letter written by Shandong province official Yang Jisheng (1516–1555) to his wife, was widely circulated in the Ming dynasty as a ‘model for managing family life’.[17] An extract from this text can be used to demonstrate the prescribed segregation of space:

> *As for day-to-day life at home, the most important thing is that the boundaries between inner and outer must be kept with strictness and vigilance. Girls above the age of ten sui must not be allowed to pass out of the central door. Boys above the age of ten must not be allowed to enter the central door. Women from outside**[the family], even the closest relatives, must not be allowed to be visiting all the time. Partly this is to avoid gossip that leads to disharmony in the family; partly it is to avoid having them become the go-betweens for licentiousness and thievery.*[18]

Although it is impossible to know the extent to which such tenets were enforced, this text gives a good indication of the strict ideal of gender segregation between the “inner” (nei) and “outer” (wai) spheres within the house. Women rarely left the house, let alone entered the front part of it. Only men of the family had free access to the women's quarters, where they went to sleep at night with a wife or concubine.

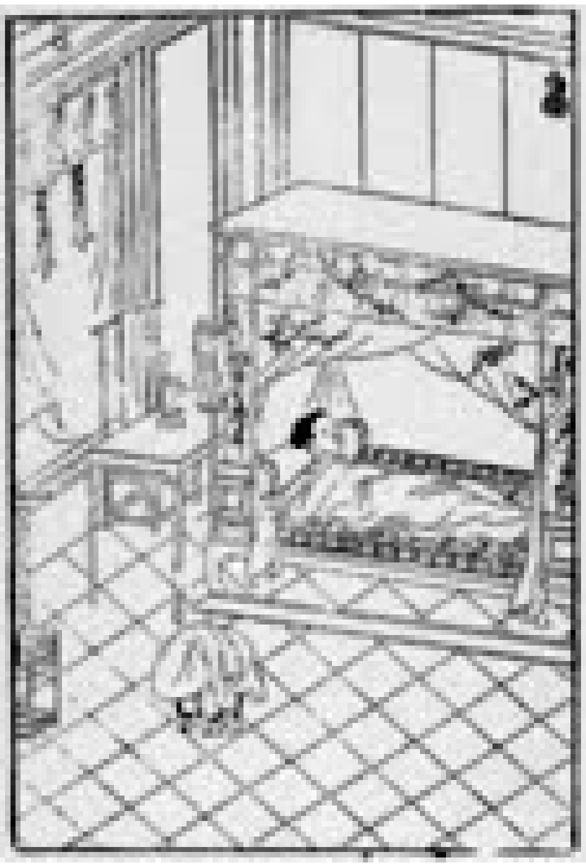


Figure 2 - Woodblock print illustrating Shih yu huapu ('More Illustrations to Poems'), China, Ming dynasty, 1450–1550, (Wanli Edition)

In the popular late Ming dynasty novel, Jin ping mei (The Plum in the Golden Vase), the protagonist's first four wives reside in the rear compound of the house. Each has a bedroom, in the centre of which is a canopy bed.[19] Indeed, Ming dynasty literature and illustrations regularly represent the canopy bed and the bedroom as the locus of the female apartment and of femininity itself (fig. 2). Historian Sarah Handler suggests that, 'just as the desk was the focal point of a man's studio, the bed was at the centre of a woman's bedroom'.[20] The bed was a space in which the women gathered or sat alone to work, eat or pursue leisurely activities such as reading, writing, sewing or playing music. In wealthy families the bed formed part of a bride's dowry and was paraded along the streets on the way to the groom's house, in order to demonstrate her family's wealth and possessions. Once in place at her new home, it stood as a symbol of the woman's position as a legitimate partner of the master. Other objects that came in a bride's dowry were bedcovers and curtains, other furniture, clothes and make-up.

These were usually the property of the woman while she remained in the household and furnished her apartment.[21] As an integral part of the furnishings of a bed, it seems possible that a pillow could be part of the dowry. Thus the bed itself was certainly an object that was associated with women. This strong link can be demonstrated by scholar and author Li Yu (1611-c.1680), who wrote that, 'if wives and concubines are the human counterparts of beds, beds are the inanimate counterparts of wives and concubines'.[22] Even if this part of the house was used by men during the night, it was primarily a focus for feminine concerns.

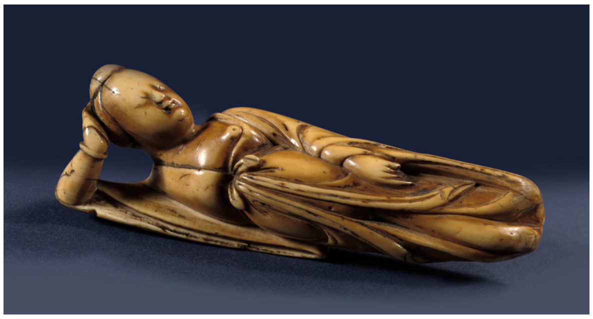


Figure 3 - 'Doctor's Lady', China, late Ming dynasty, carved from Hippopotamus ivory. Collection of Ferry Bertholet

Modelled as a woman lying on her side, the form and iconography of the V&A pillow is certainly associated with femininity. This imagery provides insight into the separate roles of men and women in Ming dynasty China. A man is rarely represented lying down; his role is active, and common domestic portrayals are situated at the scholar's desk, meeting and discussing politics and philosophy with friends, eating and drinking. Symptomatic of this is the absence of pillows in the shape of a man reclining, which demonstrates that this is an iconography more familiar to women (fig. 2). This imagery is surprisingly similar to small ivory carvings of female figures, produced in China from the Ming dynasty until the nineteenth century (fig. 3). The function of these items has been hotly debated by historians; once thought to be a medicinal aid, they are more likely to be erotic toys.[23] It was recorded by Ming scholar ShenDefu (1578–1642) that ivory carvers, 'made small figures of pairs in sexual congress which were of the highest artistic quality'.[24] These figurines were produced for the local market but gained notoriety for their popularity among foreign sailors. Historian Craig Clunas has argued that representations of females were frequently linked to pleasure, 'as the object of male regard, as the locus of fantasies about interiority and access to hidden places, as the passive bodies in a discourse of the erotic'.[25] It is possible, therefore, that the V&A pillow was intended as an erotic image. The representation of a woman lying down would have been readily installed within this imagined language of sexuality. Perhaps such imagery was also used within the bedroom as an indication of how to behave and how to act. Certainly, few objects would be more suitably located for delivering this type of message.

Erotic literature was widely circulated in Ming dynasty upper-class society.[26] The bed and its furnishings formed part of the discourse of romance and erotica that was centred around a woman's room. Sarah Handler states that, 'sexual encounters usually took place in the women's private quarters. Thus novels and their illustrations, as well as erotic paintings, tend to depict the women's part of the house'.[27] A poem written by concubine ShenCai (b. 1752), from Zhejiang province (Jiangnan), demonstrates the centrality of the bedroom as the presumed location of sexual and romantic relations:

> *On pillows designed with mandarin ducks, calls of "little darling",*
>
> *As songwriters of love we truly have passion.*
>
> *We sing again the melody of Fish Playing in Spring Water,*
>
> *Keeping the perfumer lit and candles trimmed until dawn.*[28]

Historian Grace Fong describes this piece as, 'replete with conventional images of sensuality and romance, the poems reproduce the scene of the lovers ensconced in the warm intimacy of the boudoir'.[29] The poem also demonstrates that a pillow was a key object within this environment. As mandarin ducks mate for life, they were a common symbol of happy matrimony in China. Thus they were a popular motif for wedding presents and decoration for the bedroom.[30] This iconography is used to allude to romance in the poem and also within the bedroom itself. Clearly, the symbolic and visual messages of a pillow could be important; perhaps they were used as a prompt, or indeed a focus of discussion.

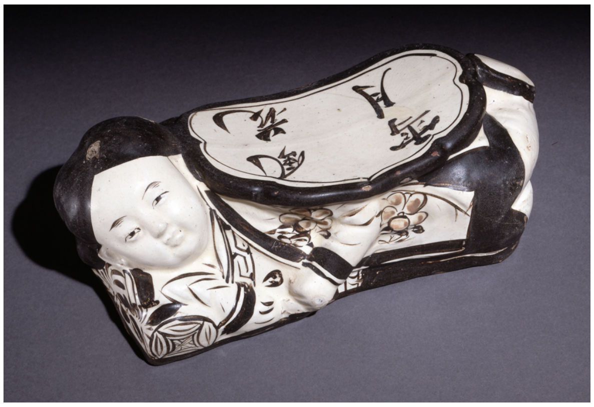


Figure 4 - Ceramic pillow, China, Jin dynasty, 1115–1234, cizhou ware. © The Trustees of the British Museum © The Trustees of the British Museum

A cizhou pillow in the British Museum, made between 1115 and 1234 (fig. 4), appears to demonstrate this. It is decorated with an inscription of a poem, which has been painted on the concave part of the pillow on which the head rests. Although of a simpler form than the V&A pillow, this object has also been modelled in the form of a reclining woman, who rests her head above a miniature circular pillow. The inscription, alluding to romance, reads, ‘The wind rustles flowers under a snow white moon’.[31] Certainly it is possible to imagine that such a poem was meant to be read and discussed. Perhaps to abate the feeling of discomfort imagined by using a hard pillow, Western scholars have in the past suggested that they were wrapped and padded with cloth.[32] Evidence of this has been found in the form of a miniature canopy bed excavated from a Ming dynasty tomb dated to 1613, which belonged to a high official by the name of Wang Xijue in Suzhou. The bed was found equipped with a pillow in a peony-patterned satin cover, and quilts and bed curtains with similar patterns.[33] Unfortunately textiles do not generally survive well, and so further evidence of pillow coverings is scarce. It seems unlikely, however, that some pillows were covered, as the decoration was clearly meant to be seen and appreciated. Certainly this is the case with the V&A pillow; covering it would make the form and decoration almost obsolete. It is of course possible that pillows were wrapped only for sleep and unwrapped for view at any other point.

Another cizhou ceramic pillow from the British Museum has been decorated with a design which was clearly meant to be seen and understood by those who used it. Made in the thirteenth century, it illustrates the story of Wang Zhaojun, a Han dynasty princess who was married to a nomad from the north-west of China for political reasons (fig. 5). Although she did not want to marry this man, she obeyed her parents' wish. This popular story of filial piety was well known in the Ming dynasty and exemplified the typical situation of arranged marriage in Chinese culture.[34] In looking at this pillow, the occupant of the bedroom might be forcibly reminded of parental obligation, which outweighed any personal feelings in matrimony. The visual nature of these messages would be particularly significant for women, as levels of female literacy were relatively low. In this case, 'non-verbal methods of presenting to a woman paradigms of behaviour and expressions of cultural norms deemed appropriate to a subordinate position assume much greater importance'.[35] Domestic marital themes such as this would thus be entirely appropriate for the bedroom, as a visual reminder of the female role in Chinese family and society.

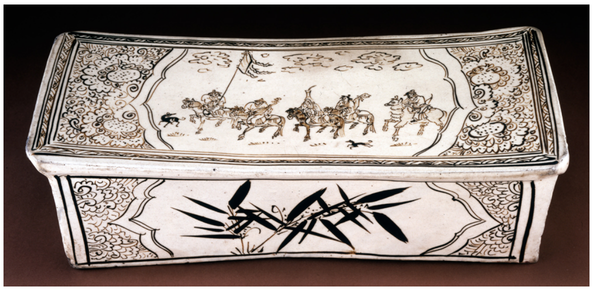


Figure 5 - Ceramic pillow, China, Jin dynasty, 1115–1234, cizhou ware. © The Trustees of the British Museum © The Trustees of the British Museum

Other examples of pillows in the form of women reclining can be related to the theme of procreation. A pillow made of Qingbai ware and produced between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, belongs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (fig. 6). The headrest is much larger than that of the V&A pillow and is incised with a design of two boys crawling amongst peony sprays.[36] Male children were a common decorative motif which referred to the typical

Chinese family wish for successive male heirs. Another example, made of ting ware and produced in the Song dynasty, can be found in the Royal Ontario Museum (fig. 7). It has been badly damaged, but art historian Helen Fernald has suggested that it did at one point support a headrest.[37] The modelled female figure is breast-feeding a child, which is a clear reference to the nurturing, maternal role of women. She rests her head on a miniature pillow while she does this, demonstrating the use of a pillow during the activities of the women's quarter. Though rare, these extant pillows in the form of women reclining have a similar theme of romance, sexual union and family. This sets a clear precedent, providing strong evidence that the V&A pillow may be similar in this regard. Such decoration may have been intended as a prompt for the production of male children, especially considering the object's mediatory role between illusion and reality through dreams. An extract from volume 34 of the Tang dynasty commentary Tang shu (History of the Tang) stated that a younger sister of the Empress Wei used one pillow in the shape of a leopard's head, 'in order to ward off evil influences' and another with an image of a bear on it, 'in order to insure the birth of sons'.[38] Symbolism was clearly an important decorative device, which conveyed good wishes and even mediated wish fulfilment.

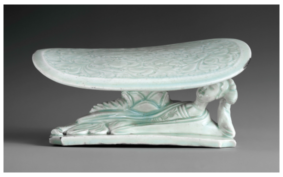


Figure 6 - Ceramic pillow, China, Southern Song dynasty, 12th-13th century, qingbai ware. Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

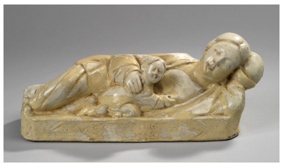


Figure 7 - Ceramic pillow, China, 12th-13th century, ting ware. With permission of the Royal Ontario Museum © ROM © ROM

Other furnishings of the bed, as well as the bed itself, were often generously ornamented with auspicious symbols relating to family and procreation. Canopy beds were sometimes carved with cloud, dragon, peony, plum blossom or peach motifs. All were suitable for the bedroom and to these messages: plum blossoms have implications of sexual pleasure and imply the presence of pretty women; clouds suggest 'cloud and rain', which is a euphemism for sexual union; the dragon is an emblem of male vigour and fertility.[39] The bed would often be hung with curtains or surrounded by a screen that also displayed context-specific symbols and certain meanings. A bed hanging from the V&A's collection is a good example of such an object; made between 1800 and 1900, this silk embroidered cloth is patterned with a theme of boys (fig. 8).[40] Thus the objects of the bedroom shared a common language of symbolism, and each had a significant relationship to others around it. Linked by auspicious symbols, the objects in the bedroom form a whole and suggest to the couple the appropriate usage and purpose of the room. The V&A pillow may simultaneously have been emblematic of themes of domesticity and of procreation, concurrent with other objects found within the female quarter.

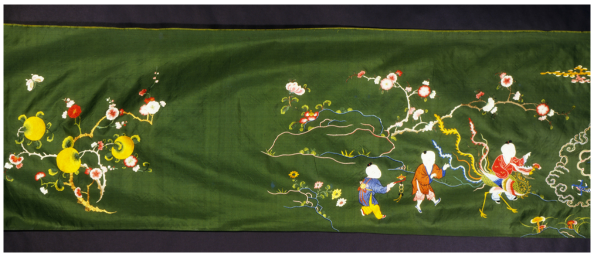


Figure 8 - Bed hanging, China, Qing dynasty, 1800–1900, embroidered silk. Museum no. T.26-1952

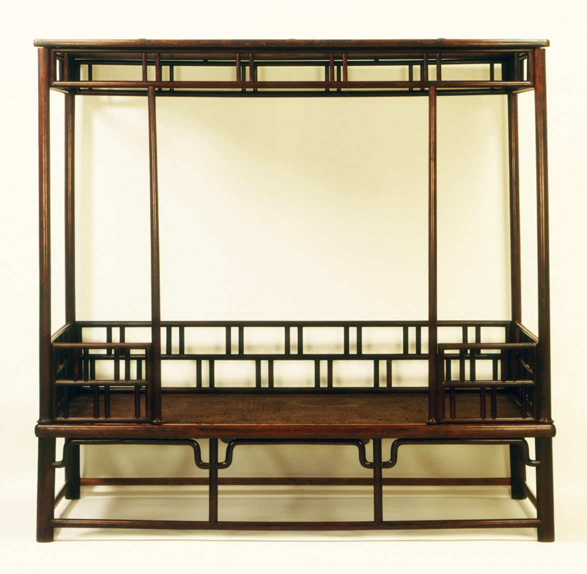


Figure 9 - Canopy bed, China, Ming dynasty, about 1600, huanghuali wood with a lattice design. Museum no. FE.2-1987

The bed was the symbolic and actual location of procreation, of the woman's main role of providing male heirs for the ancestral line (fig. 9). In Chinese history, the birth of sons was particularly wished for; a woman's position within her husband's family might become vulnerable if she was unable to do this. As procreation was perhaps the single most important form of family production, great care was taken in the construction and placement of the bed. KlassRuitenbeek notes that in the Ming dynasty carpenter's manual, the Lu Ban jing (Manuscript of Lu Ban), it is the only domestic object with specific construction measurements.[41] These measurements were dictated by cosmological considerations that determined the auspicious directions within the house as a whole. The manual also included a long list of auspicious dates for installing the bed and hanging its curtains. Popularly printed in this period, such manuals were not intended for the carpenter, but for the owner of a new house as a guide to supervision of building and labour.[42] Clearly, the bed had enormous symbolic significance; its construction, placement and decoration was influenced by elements of ritual and magic. In turn, these elements might affect the lives of those who used it. If such an object was indeed carefully chosen and prepared for the bedroom, it is not inconceivable that its furnishings were also subject to the same rationale. These objects must have had a function beyond decoration or comfort; personal hopes and aspirations were simultaneously invested in them, and possibly even affected by them.

An afterlife in the tomb

Domestic messages relating to procreation were more commonly found in the woman's quarters and as such, these messages were also associated with femininity. Evidence of this can be found in tombs; a textile buried with the principle wife of the Wanli Emperor (r. 1576–1620) was decorated with the motif of the 'Hundred Boys', expressing the wish for many sons.[43] This was a message, and therefore an object, which was associated with a woman and not a man. Items which were buried with men during the Ming dynasty were related to their trade: scholars' tools; doctors' implements; soldiers' arms.[44] Objects which were placed in the male tomb and part of the house did not on the whole include objects with an interior domestic message; his tomb and his part of the house prioritised a public life. Yet while the V&A pillow might have a strong association with the females by virtue of its iconography and placement, the message of procreation that it might carry was pertinent to both genders. The production of sons was essential to the continuation of the family lineage. Additionally, both men and women actually used pillows and there is no indication that pillows found in tombs are located in a gender-specific way. As a small and light object, the pillow could be easily transported to different parts of the house – to a scholar's couch for example. Therefore in terms of its usage as opposed to its powers of representation, the pillow may not necessarily belong solely to the bedroom. Indeed a pillow must be an object with multiple functions and meanings, if it was ultimately used in the grave.

In Chinese popular culture, the head of the deceased was thought to be the most important place within the grave.[45] This places a pillow in an extremely strategic position. Wealthy Chinese buried their dead with all the objects and food that they would need for comfort in the afterlife, a practice which began during the late Warring States period and developed during the Han dynasty. In later periods, some objects, such as large and expensive pieces of furniture were made in miniature model form and placed around the coffin. Other smaller items, mainly textiles and crockery, which were used while the person was alive, were interred as evidence of the deceased's daily life. Pillows fall into this latter category, as they were not made specifically and solely for use in the grave.[46] As relatively luxurious objects, only wealthy families would have owned and used ceramic pillows; they can therefore be understood as desirable status symbols. Sometimes exquisitely beautiful and highly crafted objects, a ceramic pillow would certainly have been a decorative addition to the tomb. Objects such as this were used to glorify the deceased, and to demonstrate individual wealth, status and success to the ancestors. The iconography of a pillow might also impart visual testimony about the life of the deceased. In the case of the V&A pillow, it refers to the suitable female sexual and reproductive role in the Chinese family and within the bedroom. It may have been used to demonstrate success in fulfilment of this familial role.

Other iconographic elements of the V&A pillow attest to the status and life of the deceased; the jewellery, fan and dog are each clear symbols of wealth. Owning a pet was one of the more fashionable pleasure pursuits during the later Ming dynasty.[47] Historian Timothy Brook argues that there was a rise in conspicuous consumption during this period, in which luxury, and representations of luxury became popular.[48] Although images of dogs are not commonplace in Chinese media, this could explain the meaning of its depiction on the V&A pillow. This female figure is therefore likely to represent a secular woman of middle to upper class status. Imagery and representations of women, particularly servants and singing girls, were often found in the tomb as markers of social prestige. Stoneware figurines were commonly made for the tomb in order to serve the deceased in the afterlife. They were not intended to be individual portraits, however, but generic representations of people.[49] The V&A pillow could be just such a representation. Certainly it would fit into a larger context of female representation in the grave, as another object which might be symbolic of personal and social status.

Conclusion

The V&A pillow evidently had multiple meanings within the bedroom and its primary message must be related to its function in life. However, this should not negate any possibilities of significance and meaning within the grave. The object's entire life cycle must be analysed as a whole, as it is possible that it was manufactured with the afterlife in mind. The ownership of a pillow, and the representation of luxurious accessories on it,attest to the person's status in life and in death. As a reminder of the female role within the family, the pillow may be a prompt for the dreamer in the hope of producing male heirs. In the tomb this may have demonstrated success and worth to the ancestors in the fulfilment of this role. The physical significance of the object in life and in death was achieved through its close proximity to the body; this object was a visual stimulant in the bedroom, a vehicle for dreams, and a support for the head in life, and in death.

Endnotes

1. Vainker, S. J. *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*. London: British Museum Press, 1991: 166.
2. Medley, Margaret. *The Chinese Potter: A Practical History of Chinese Ceramics*. Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1980: 207.
3. Wilkinson, Liz. 'Collecting Korean Art at the Victoria and Albert Museum 1888–1938'. *Journal of the History of Collections* 15 (2003): 241–256.
4. Victoria and Albert Museum acquisition file: S. M. Franck & Co. Ltd, MA/1/F1203./2.
5. Pierson, Stacey. Collectors, *Collections and Museums: The Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain 1560–1960*. Bern: Peter Lang AG, 2007: 82.
6. 'Tombs of the Sui and Tang Dynasties at Fengxiang of Shaanxi province: The Excavation Report 1983–1990'. *Kaogu*. Accessed December 12, 2009. https://www.kaogu.cn. This report states that 'pillows in most of coffins are untraceable, with the exception of

three tombs: a tri-colour glazed pillow… a brick pillow…and a tile pillow'. Clearly, pillows are an ordinary find.

7. Paine, Jr., Robert Treat. 'Chinese Ceramic Pillows: From Collections in Boston and Vicinity'. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 3 (1955): 8.
8. *Chinese Ceramic Pillows From Yeung Wing Tak Collection*. Osaka: The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, 1984: 16. This comprehensive source states that it has so far been impossible to confidently determine the use of pillows. The range of possible uses that are listed indicate this: '1) funerary models, 2) arm-rests, 3) "pulse" pillows [support during medical examinations], 4) "sleeve" pillows, 5) neck-rests'.
9. Vainker, S. J. *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*. London: British Museum Press, 1991: 115–116.
10. Paine, Jr., Robert Treat. 'Chinese Ceramic Pillows: From Collections in Boston and Vicinity'. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 3 (1955): 2.
11. Mino, Yutaka. *Freedom of Clay and Brush through Seven Centuries in Northern China: Tz'u-chou Type Wares 960–1600 A.D.* Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1980: 224.
12. Kerr, Rose.ed. *Chinese Art and Design*. London: V&A Publications, 1991: 48.
13. GaoLian. 'Eight Discourses on the Art of Living'. Chapin, Helen B. trans.; Paine, Jr., Robert Treat. 'Chinese Ceramic Pillows: From Collections in Boston and Vicinity'. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 3 (1955): 9–10.
14. Ibid: 11.
15. Ko, Dorothy. *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China*. California: Stanford University Press, 1994: 83–87.
16. Needham, Joseph. *Science and Civilisation in China, Vol. VII, Part II: General Conclusions and Reflections*. Cambridge, 2004: 85.
17. Bossler, Beverly. 'Final Instructions by Yang Jisheng'. In *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, edited by Mann, Susan, and Yu-Yin Cheng. California: California Press, 2001: 119.
18. Yang Jisheng 'Final Instructions'. In *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, edited by Mann, Susan, and Yu-Yin Cheng. California: California Press, 2001: 127.
19. Handler, Sarah. *Ming Furniture in the Light of Chinese Architecture*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2004: 61.

20. Ibid: 61.

21. Ko, Dorothy. *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*. California: University of California Press, 2001: 50.

22. Li Yu in Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. California: University of California Press, 2001: 146.

23. Bertholet, Ferry M. *Concubines and Courtesans: Women in Chinese Erotic Art*. Ferry M. Bertholet Collection. Brussels: Mercatorfonds, 2010: 108–110.

24. Gillman, Derek. ‘Ming and Qing Ivories: Figure Carving’. In *Chinese Ivories from the Shang to the Qing*, edited by William Watson. An exhibition organised by the Oriental Ceramic Society and the British Museum, May 24 to August 19, 1984. London: British Museum Press, 1984: 41–43.

25. Clunas, Craig. *Empire of Great Brightness: Visual and Material Cultures of Ming China 1368–1644*. London: Reaktion Books, 2007: 158.

26. vanGulik, R. H. *Sexual Life in Ancient China: A Preliminary Survey of Chinese Sex and Society from ca. 1500 B.C. till 1644 A.D.* Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003: 268.

27. Handler, Sarah. *Ming Furniture in the Light of Chinese Architecture*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 2004: 133.

28. Fong, Grace S. *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency and Writing in Late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008: 78.

29. Fong, Grace S. *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency and Writing in Late Imperial China*. Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2008: 78.

30. Bartholomew, TereseTse. *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*. San Francisco: Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, 2006: 53

31. Cizhou ware pillow. Jin dynasty, twelfth century. British Museum inv no Franks.2440.e. Accessed 24 November, 2009

32. Fernald, Helen E. ‘Chinese Mortuary Pillows in the Royal Ontario Museum’. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 1 (1952): 2.

33. Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. California: University of California Press, 2001: 154–155.

34. Vainker, S. J. *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: From Prehistory to the Present*. London: British Museum Press, 1991: 117.

35. Clunas, Craig. *Superfluous Things*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991: 56.

36. Valenstein, Suzanne G. *A Handbook of Chinese Ceramics*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989: 112.

37. Fernald, Helen E. 'Chinese Mortuary Pillows in the Royal Ontario Museum'. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 1 (1952): 7–8.

38. *Chinese Ceramic Pillows From Yeung Wing Tak Collection*. Osaka: The Museum of Oriental Ceramics, 1984: 18.

39. Handler, Sarah. *Austere Luminosity of Chinese Classical Furniture*. California: University of California Press, 2001: 148–150.

40. Silk Embroidered Cloth, about 1800–1900. Museum no. T.26-1952. Accessed November 15, 2009.

41. Ruitenbeek, Klass. *Carpentry and Building in Late Imperial China: A Study of the Fifteenth-Century Carpenter's Manual Lu Ban jing*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993: 35.

42. Ledderose, Lothar. *Ten Thousand Things: Module and Mass Production in Chinese Art*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000: 134–137.

43. Clunas, Craig. *Superfluous Things*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991: 56.

44. Harrison-Hall, Jessica. *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Press, 2001: 45.

45. Ibid: 46.

46. Fernald, Helen E. 'Chinese Mortuary Pillows in the Royal Ontario Museum'. *Far Eastern Ceramic Bulletin* 1 (1952): 1–3.

47. Harrison-Hall, Jessica. *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Press, 2001: 37.

48. Brook, Timothy. *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. California: California Press, 1998: 1–7.

49. Harrison-Hall, Jessica. *Ming Ceramics in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Press, 2001: 544–545.

Another dimension: Integrating music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries

Stuart Frost, Head of Interpretation, The British Museum
Giulia Nuti, Research Associate, Conservatorio della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano.

Abstract

The Listening Gallery was a collaborative project between the Royal College of Music (RCM) and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A). This paper, written by a former member of the galleries concept team and the research associate on the 'Listening Gallery's' project, focuses on the innovative integration of new recordings of period music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries, covering Europe 300–1600. Many of the pieces had not been recorded previously and all had direct

relationships with individual objects in the displays.

The Medieval & Renaissance Galleries at the V&A opened in December 2009. The project began with an initial meeting of the concept team in July 2002. This long gestation period provided the curatorial team developing the displays with an invaluable opportunity to revisit the collections and undertake new research that informed the final displays seen today in a myriad of ways. Alongside traditional museum scholarship, recent museological, visitor, and audience research played an equally significant role in shaping the project. Quantitative evaluation of the previous displays of medieval and Renaissance art at the V&A, showed that they needed radical reinterpretation and redisplay.[1] Front-end focus groups were particularly informative in establishing visitors' levels of knowledge about the medieval and Renaissance periods, their perceptions and misconceptions, and their aspirations for the new displays.[2]

From the earliest stages of the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries project, the team aimed to develop a layered interpretation that could meet the needs of different audiences. This approach was inspired by the work of learning theorists and other academics who have transformed the way museums conceptualise visitors by highlighting diversity in learning style, preference, intelligence and motivation.[3] A multi-sensory framework was devised for the new galleries, incorporating opportunities for tactile experience, active hands-on learning and varied strategies for helping visitors to decode medieval and Renaissance art actively. Each element of the interpretive framework for the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries was a project in its own right but it is the audio provision, and more specifically the music, that is the main focus of this paper. Audio, along with film and other digital media, was also planned from the beginning, informed by evaluative studies that have clearly demonstrated the benefits of such an approach in improving visitor experiences.[4] In the case of the new galleries, however, the final provision of music far exceeded the expectations of the project team and, it will be argued here, represents a unique approach in the museum sector.

In the last ten years the use of recorded music in museums has become increasingly prevalent as technologies required to deliver it have become more sophisticated and affordable, and as museums have become more audience-focused. Naturally, museums whose mission is music-focused and whose collections are comprised of musical instruments, manuscripts and printed music have been particularly innovative in integrating recorded music with cased displays.[5] Both the Musical Instruments Museum in Brussels and the Museum of Music in Paris have made imaginative use of digital technology to make sound part of the visitor experience.[6] The Music Gallery at the Horniman Museum, in south-east London, also provides a good example of a smaller institution that makes effective use of digital table-top interactives that allow visitors to hear the instruments in the displays.[7]

Yet, as observed by Linda Phyllis Austern, ‘commercially designed mood-altering soundtracks are everywhere’, and so it is hardly surprising that a wide variety of non-specialist museums of various kinds have also turned to music to support exhibition narratives and shape visitor experiences.[8] The use of period music to help visitors imaginatively immerse themselves in a historical period is relatively common. The Great City Gallery at the Discovery Museum, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, is an example of an older display that uses music in this way. Here popular music is used to help define key decades in the city’s history throughout the twentieth century.[9] For The Sacred Made Real exhibition (October 2009-January 2010) at the National Gallery, audio-guide users were able to view the paintings and sculptures while listening to specially commissioned music performed by a string sextet.[10] In other instances commissioned music is used in order to influence the emotions or moods of visitors by evoking an appropriate atmosphere. For The Book of the Dead: Journey to the Afterlife (November 2010-March 2011), a temporary exhibition at the British Museum, a musical soundtrack was commissioned to heighten emotional effect at a key moment in the exhibition narrative.[11]

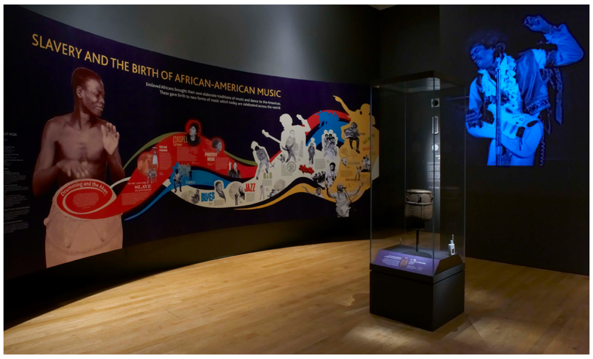


Figure 1 - The Akan Drum exhibition, 2010. Photograph courtesy of the British Museum

In most instances then, non-music specialist museums primarily use music to create an atmospheric background to visiting and viewing, with no obvious or strong connection between the pieces of music and specific objects, and with little information given about the music itself. However, exceptionally, some non-music museums have also used music recordings as a central part of a display; to make a specific intellectual point or to deliver key exhibition messages. For example, The Akan Drum exhibition at the British Museum (August-October 2010), utilised a soundtrack comprised of extracts from fifteen different music recordings to help communicate to visitors the impact of slavery on twentieth-century Afro-American music.[12]

While generally there appears to be little meaningful visitor research in the public domain that provides detailed insights into the impact of music on museum visitors, the limited evaluation of temporary exhibitions at the British Museum that have incorporated music suggests that visitors responded most positively to ambient music where there is an obvious connection between the soundtrack and the themes of the display.[13]

The final strategy for integrating music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries was certainly informed by other museums' approaches, but it was most directly influenced by the At Home in Renaissance Italy exhibition, held at the V&A in 2006.[14] This exhibition focussed on the domestic context and function of decorative art objects, paintings and sculpture in Tuscany and the Veneto. The emphasis was on the socio-cultural context to which the objects belonged, in contrast to traditional art-historical approaches, offering, through new original research, fresh and innovative insights into the Renaissance home.

The exhibition included a section on entertainment in the home including a display about music incorporating musical instruments and printed music books.[15] The ensemble Trictilla were commissioned to record 24 pieces of music contemporary with this display, which were then played in rotation through fixed speakers placed at high level.[16] All 24 pieces (more than an hour of music and some never recorded before) were contemporary examples, that could have been performed and heard in a Renaissance home, and also reflected the range of instruments that would have been found there. Several of the pieces performed could also be seen in opened manuscripts on display.

The exhibition brought this music and its performance into the public domain for the first time. Visitors were able to listen to a reconstruction of the domestic Renaissance sound-world that was as accurate as possible and to which the objects in the displays also belonged. The attention to detail was also reflected in the attempt to capture the acoustic environment of a Renaissance interior by making the recordings in the music room of the Palazzo Budini Gattai in Florence. Visitor experience was also extended by making extracts of five of the recordings available on the exhibition's microsite.[17]

The methodology and rationale employed for At Home in Renaissance Italy was equally applicable to the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries and a dialogue began, initially between the exhibition and gallery teams at the V&A, and then also with the RCM. Initial discussions soon developed into a formal collaboration between the V&A and the RCM that was funded by an award from the Arts and Humanities Research Council through the Knowledge Transfer scheme. The project, christened the 'Listening Gallery', was conceived with two phases.[18] The first phase was focused on integrating music within the temporary V&A exhibition Baroque 1620–1800: Style in the Age of Magnificence (April-July 2009).[19] Giulia Nuti, the Research Associate for the 'Listening Gallery' project, in liaison with the Baroque curatorial team at the V&A and staff at the RCM, explored the potential for using existing recordings and the making of new recordings. In total 29 pieces were chosen. Twenty-four new recordings were made by staff and students of the RCM, and three commercial recordings of major

Baroque orchestral works were also included in the exhibition. The recordings were delivered ambiently in five different zones within the exhibition through directional speakers. In addition, two further recordings were added to the exhibition microsite.[20] Like the objects in the displays, each piece of music was given its own label, which explained the significance of the recordings. This not only gave the music object-like status, it also served to promote the website where visitors were able to download the recordings in full.[21]

Evaluations demonstrated an overwhelmingly positive response to the music from the visitor's point of view. However, the Baroque exhibition phase also highlighted valuable lessons about the challenges of delivering high quality ambient recordings throughout the temporary exhibition space, especially given the limitations of using the existing available hardware. These findings directly informed the planning for the medieval and Renaissance phase of the 'Listening Gallery' project.

Figure 2 - Lute back, Laux Maler, Bologna, Italy, about 1540. Museum no. 194:1, 2-1882

The incorporation of music within the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries was partly motivated by a desire to broaden accessibility and to enhance visitor engagement. The initial concept was to use pre-existing commercial recordings of period music that could help visitors to imagine the medieval and Renaissance worlds and to convey emotion and feeling. Music was also envisaged as part of a strategy to communicate the overall theme of a room and to signal changes between them; underlining for example, the shift from a devotional focus in one gallery to another focussed on noble life. At the same time, two of the most significant pre-1600 European instruments in the V&A's collections, a harpsichord made in Venice by Giovanni Baffo and a lute-back by Laux Maler, one of the most prestigious lute-makers in 16th-century Italy, had been selected for the new displays.[22] These instruments too provided a natural opportunity for incorporating music directly connected to objects in the galleries, as they had done in the At Home in Renaissance Italy exhibition.[23] It was only as the partnership with the RCM developed, and research progressed, that multiple connections between the displays and music became clearer and the possibilities for seriously integrating music into the displays multiplied.

Decisions about which pieces of music to select were governed by a series of overarching principles that informed the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries project as whole. The concept team felt strongly that the musical presence should represent different areas of Europe; the broad timeframe covered in the galleries; and pieces created for both sacred and secular contexts. This meant that recordings would need to be distributed reasonably evenly throughout the galleries; it was felt that each of the ten rooms should have at least one audio point. The chronological range of the pieces of music was discussed at length and it was decided not to include any music that predated 1000. This was primarily an acknowledgement of the strengths of the V&A's collections since there were only a comparatively small number of objects from the period AD 300–1000 and none of the displays in the gallery that contained these objects had a strong connection with music. These criteria helped the 'Listening Gallery' project team at the RCM begin to assemble a large body of possible pieces of music from which a final selection could be made by the Listening Gallery Advisory Group and the concept team at the V&A.

The final choice of pieces was underpinned by rigorous musicological research: the recordings had to follow the performance practices of the time and the instruments used in them had to be either originals or faithful copies. For these reasons, many of the pieces used in the galleries are new recordings made at the RCM by staff, students and professional performers. However, where large numbers of singers or musicians would have been required, existing high quality recordings were used. The intention was not to offer a linear history of medieval and Renaissance music, or even a coherent musical narrative reflecting chronological developments (as can be found, for example, at the Musée de la Musique in Paris). Rather, the aim was to provide moments where visitors could encounter music at a small number of suitable points throughout the galleries.

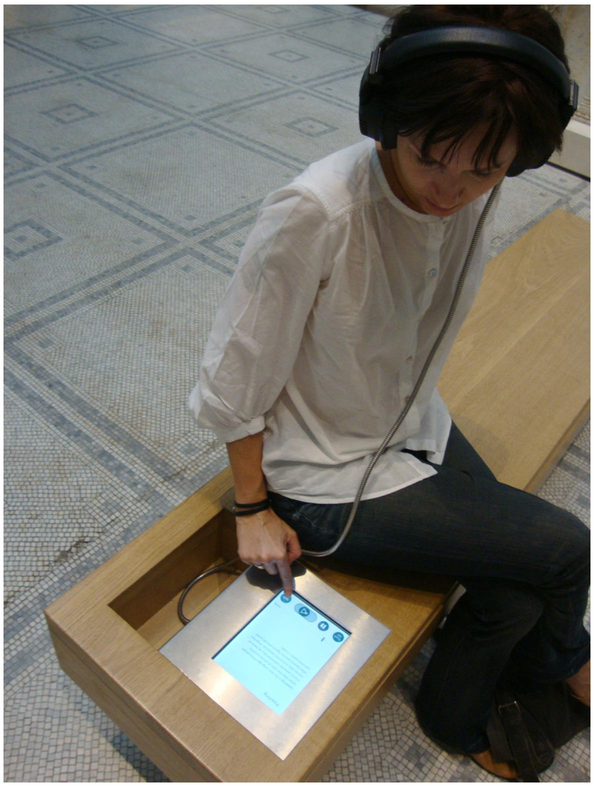


Figure 3 - Audio point screen in Room 50b at the V&A, about 2009. Photograph by Stuart Frost

In practice, the final selection was also influenced by more mundane factors. Evaluation of audio provision in the V&A's British Galleries demonstrated that audio-tracks were less effective without a strong connection to immediately adjacent objects or displays.[24] The implication of this was that the music chosen for each audio-point would need to relate to objects that visitors could see from the seat.

Music can be delivered to exhibition spaces in numerous ways and, after lengthy discussions, it was decided that delivering audio via small touch-screens and headphones for the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries would be the most appropriate method and offered several very practical benefits. In the first place, this would allow visitors to choose whether or not to engage with the music content, as ambient audio is not universally appreciated by visitors or gallery staff, particularly in permanent displays. Secondly, the fixed audio-point approach has been tested and evaluated over a number of earlier gallery projects, allowing the Museum to develop and refine the approach with confidence. In addition to these practical concerns, the project was committed to obtaining recordings of the highest quality and using handsets with poor sound reproduction (a type used elsewhere in the V&A at that point), would have been counter-productive. Headphones would provide visitors who chose to listen with a reasonably high sound-quality and an immersive, personal experience. Finally, 14 audio-points were created, at least one located in each of the ten main Medieval &

Renaissance Galleries. Each consists of a small touch-screen computer built into a bench, and headphones, offering visitors a number of options.

Although the galleries, and the audio-points, are arranged in a loosely chronological sequence, few visitors will encounter the displays in their entirety in this way during a single visit. The first audio-point in chronological order is in Room 8, 'Faiths & Empires 300–1250', at the heart of the 'Great Churches and Monasteries 1000–1250' subject display. The recordings here relate to the Great Monasteries theme and include sung prayers written on the leaves of choir-books in an adjacent display. The last is Room 62, 'Splendour & Society 1500–1600' and includes the latest recordings in the project; music related to the surrounding displays about the Mannerist style and the patronage of the Medici family in Florence during the 16th century.

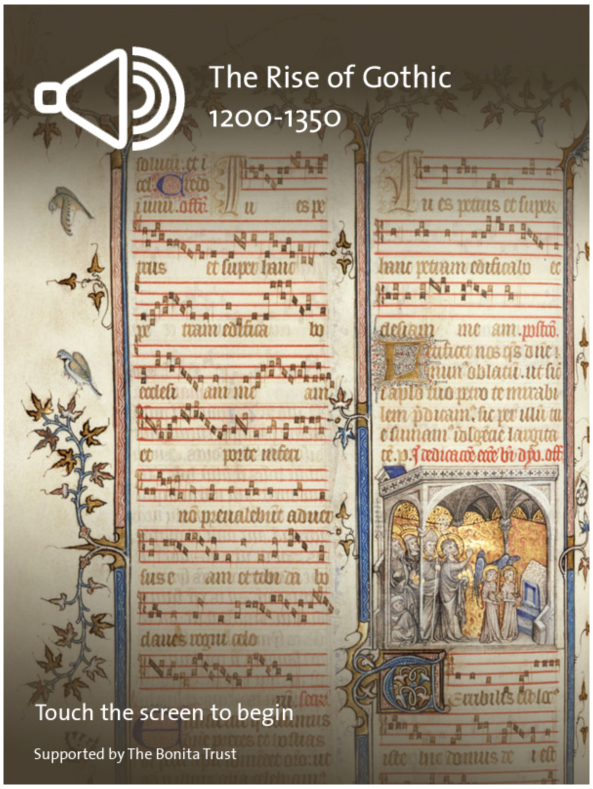


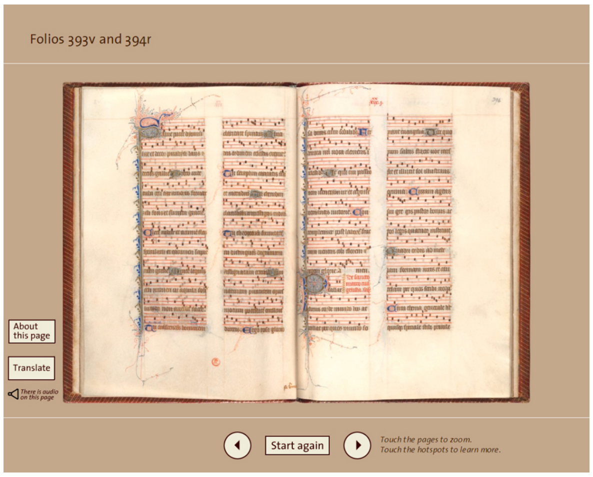
Figure 4 - Attractor screen for the audio point in Room 9 at the V&A

Many of the musical tracks in the galleries are introduced with a short spoken commentary, providing a brief context to the piece of music. These commentaries, lasting no more than a minute and a half, help reinforce the connection between the music and the object or display to which it relates. Several of the pieces of music selected for the project are quite long and so, in the version used in the galleries, it was decided to fade them out after two to three minutes. This was partly a response to visitor research about optimum length but also to ensure a reasonable turn-over in use at busy times. However, all the recordings made specifically for the project are available online via the V&A's website.[25] Here visitors can access the full recordings and listen to the pieces in their entirety without the spoken commentary provided in the galleries. While each piece of music and its commentary (and each of the fourteen audio-points) stands alone, collectively they give a real sense of the richness, development and diversity of music in this period.

A key part of the new audio-points was the new touch-screen interface. This was specifically developed in order to give visitors (and the Museum) greater control than was previously possible using manual controls. The touch-screen allowed details of the objects to be used as attractor screens both to draw visitors to the audio-point, and to reinforce the connection between the pieces of music and the objects in the galleries (figs 4 and 6). It also allowed a transcription and translation of the words to be provided.

In what follows, the rationale for connecting particular pieces of music with specific objects is explored through a brief overview of three case studies. They each represent three broad categories of connections that were made in the new galleries between music, subjects and objects. The first includes objects with musical notation, whether service books for churches or private devotion, or objects with short inscriptions. The second relates to musical instruments, incorporating actual instruments as well as depictions of them. The final category is a broad one, incorporating objects which have a contextual connection with specific pieces of music that is not immediately obvious from appearance alone. For example, altarpieces now in the Museum's collections once belonged in church contexts where music would have been performed as part of the liturgical calendars. In other instances, themes such as hunting or courtly love were represented as strongly in music and poetry as they were in the visual or decorative arts.

Musical notation



Touch the pages to zoom.
Touch the hotspots to learn more.

Figure 5 - Explore the St Denis Missal interactive, Room 9 at the V&A

Case Study 1: A missal from the Abbey of Saint-Denis, Paris

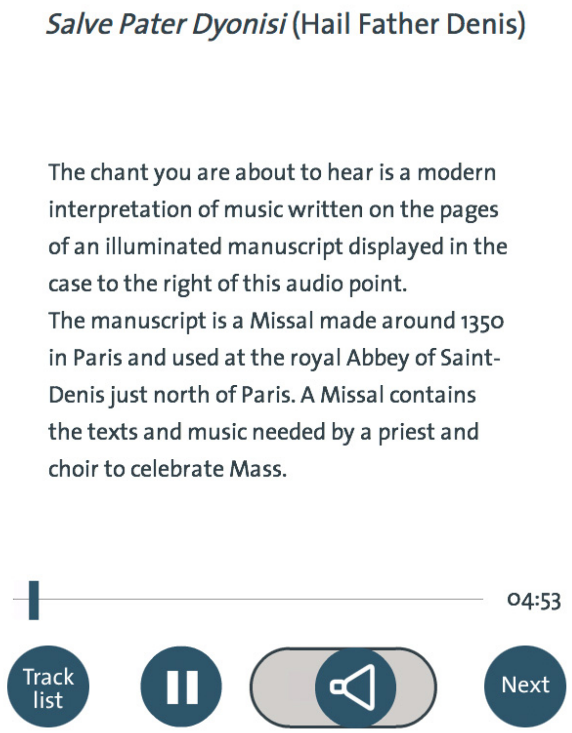
This missal, made for use in the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis in Paris in 1350, is one of the most beautiful and historically important manuscripts in the National Art Library's holdings at the V&A.[26] The book contains exquisite examples of 14th-century illumination and it was primarily for this reason that the Saint-Denis Missal was originally acquired by the Museum. One of the central aims of the redisplay of the galleries was to set art and design within a more meaningful cultural context for visitors and the benefits of including a recording of the music preserved on the Missal’s pages were evident. The Missal is a key object in Room 9, ‘The Rise of Gothic 1200–1350’, where displays focus on the origins and characteristic elements of the Gothic style in Paris, and its development as it was adopted across Europe.

Interpretation of this object drew on existing research by Professor Anne Robertson, who has studied the notation for the chants or prayers in the Missal and other service books of Saint-Denis. However, the music itself had not previously been recorded.[27] Robertson’s work focussed the project’s attention on one particular chant, ‘Salve Pater Dionysus’ (Hail Father Dionysus), which would certainly have been performed in the Abbey on the feast day of St Denis (the patron saint of France). Along with several other pieces, this chant was performed and recorded in a local church by students from the Royal College of Music with professional singers under the direction of Jennifer Smith.[28]

Audio: Salve Pater Dionysus (3 mins 41 sec)

Download: mp3 | ogg

The Saint-Denis Missal is now displayed in its own case with a touch-screen page-turning interactive alongside it (see fig. 3 above), that also allows the visitor to listen to the music written on the opening of the book in front of them, underlining both the original purpose of the book and the sacred context in which it was used. The music recording is also available via the audio-point located in a central gallery seat, which faces a display of illuminated stained glass from Gothic churches. Observation and tracking studies elsewhere indicate that most visitors will not use both pieces of interpretation, so in this case repetition is an effective strategy.[29]



Salve Pater Dyonisi (Hail Father Denis)

The chant you are about to hear is a modern interpretation of music written on the pages of an illuminated manuscript displayed in the case to the right of this audio point.
The manuscript is a Missal made around 1350 in Paris and used at the royal Abbey of Saint-Denis just north of Paris. A Missal contains the texts and music needed by a priest and choir to celebrate Mass.

Figure 6 - Information screen for the audio point in Room 9 at the V&A

To ensure that both secular and sacred music were represented,the audio-point in the seat (see fig. 4 above) also included pieces of music that were performed for courtly entertainments, reflecting nearby displays about knighthood, heraldry and chivalry - the more secular side of the Gothic style. Visitors can listen either to the 14th-century Lamento di Tristano (The Lament of Tristan), or a faster-paced, more energetic and complex piece called La Rotta, both of which relate to a popular chivalric-romance story of the period. Located in the same gallery is a vast Italian quilt on which fourteen scenes from the legend of Tristan and Isolde are illustrated.[30] In this case, pre-existing high quality recordings were used.[31]

The majority of recordings in the ‘notation’ category related to manuscripts from monastic or ecclesiastical contexts, predominantly individual leaves. However, there were two notable exceptions: the first is a vast, complete Florentine choirbook made around 1380 for the Camaldolese order. The second is an extremely rare serving knife with a broad-blade that was inscribed on both sides with notations dated to about 1550.[32]

The pointed end of the knife was designed to skewer meat or bread, which could then be offered to a fellow diner. One side of the blade carries an inscription and notation related to a sung blessing before a meal, while the other side of the blade is decorated with a sung thanksgiving for afterwards.**[33]**The recordings made of the pieces on this knife demonstrated, for the first time, that this music was not simply decoration but could actually have been performed. The serving knife recordings were used as an integral part of a touch-screen interactive about the Renaissance home, while the serving knife itself was included in a nearby display about dining. This interactive also included recordings of domestic music-making, linked to a number of musical instruments on display.

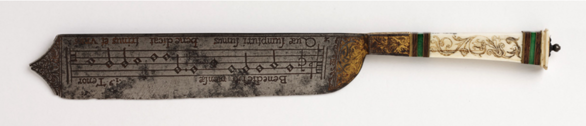


Figure 7 - A serving knife with notation, Italy, about 1550. Museum no. 310-1903

Musical instruments

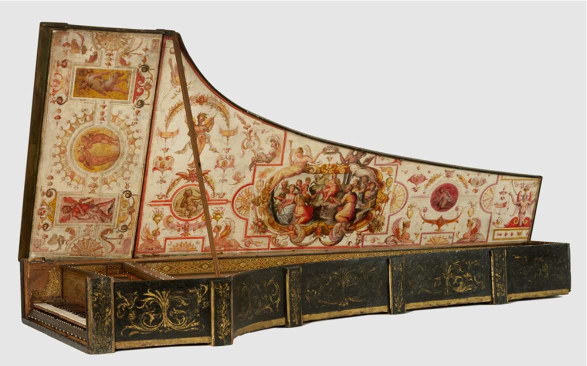


Figure 8 - Harpsichord, Giovanni Baffo, 1574. Museum no. 6007-1859

Case Study 2: A Harpsichord made in Venice by Giovanni Baffo

Though relatively few in number, the musical instruments that are displayed in the new galleries are all of outstanding importance. For example, a harpsichord made by Giovanni Baffo is one of the very finest that survive from the 16th century.[34]

Its lavish decoration includes fashionable classical motifs and half-moons; the crest of the wealthy Florentine Strozzi family. Indeed, like most instruments in the V&A's collections, it was acquired because of the superlative quality of its rich and elaborate decoration. The harpsichord, once displayed in the musical instruments gallery, now forms part of a subject that explores both the furnishing of the Renaissance interior and the social activities and rituals that took place within the home. The first harpsichords were made in Venice at the beginning of the 16th century and the instrument became increasingly popular within wealthy Italian households as the century progressed, reflecting a proliferation of domestic music-making.[35]

Two recordings were made to accompany the harpsichord in the gallery, giving visitors both an impression of the sound of the instrument and a feeling for the type of music produced by amateur musicians within the home. The first, Venetiana Gagliarda (Venetian Galliard), published in Venice in 1551, is an instrumental dance and a type of music that might be performed on a social occasion at home, rather than for a more formal occasion at court or in a grander setting.

Audio: Venetiana Gagliarda (1 min 6 sec)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Passemezzo di nome antico (Passemezzo in the old style) is also a dance, one that would usually have been improvised on the bass line. It was first written down in 1586 by Marco Facoli, a Venetian-born composer who flourished in the late 16th-century. The musical notation for Passemezzo di nome antico is preserved in a manuscript in the library of the RCM, an exceptional example of a complex piece of solo music written at length in a manuscript.[36] The style of composition of the piece is such that the right hand carries the melody and the left hand the rhythm of the dance. The recording, made for the project by Giulia Nuti, is the first to have been made of this piece.[37]

Although the Baffo instrument has been played in living memory, it is no longer in playing condition. The recordings for the gallery used an Italian harpsichord, made around 1678, and owned by the RCM. This was not ideal in some ways, as the RCM's harpsichord, attributed to Onofrio Guarracino, not only dates to around one hundred years later than the Baffo harpsichord, it is

Neapolitan rather than Venetian. On the other hand, alongside Venice, Naples was a major harpsichord producing centre in Italy during the 16th century. Moreover, there are very few harpsichords made before 1600 that are in playing condition, and none are in original condition, having been adapted subsequently. Therefore, while it is sadly the case that the sound of a 16th century Venetian harpsichord can no longer be heard or recovered, the recordings made for the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries are arguably as close as it is possible to get today.

It was important to the galleries project to cover as broad a geographical reach as possible which was provided by a lute instrumental by Hans Neusidler, first published in Nuremberg in 1536 – a piece of music that would have been performed in a northern Renaissance interior.[38]

Audio: Washa mesa, Der Hupff Auff, Gassenhauer (1 min 57 sec)

Download: mp3 | ogg

As part of the project, some additional short recordings of unaccompanied instruments were made to augment the online catalogue record of objects that were decorated with representations of instruments. A ceiling formerly in Casa Maffi, Cremona, painted around 1500, provides a good example of an object where representations of musical instruments are an important part of the iconography.

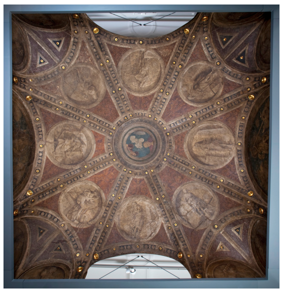


Figure 9a - Ceiling from Casa Maffi, Cremona, about 1500. Museum no. 428-1889

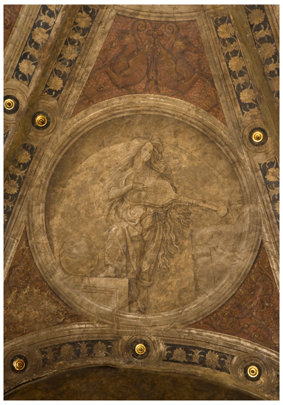


Figure 9b - Detail from the Ceiling from Casa Maffi, Cremona, around 1500. Museum no. 428-1889

The decoration of the Casa Maffi ceiling includes the Nine Muses, seven of whom are depicted holding musical instruments such as the viol, organ, trumpet, double-flute, trumpet and tambourine.[39]

Medieval and Renaissance instruments, such as the viol, shawm, sackbut and gittern, are hardly commonplace in modern music, and their distinctive qualities and timbre are unfamiliar to the majority of today's museum visitors. The short recordings of instruments were intended to expose visitors to the distinctive sound that each instrument makes and to evoke a different world.[40]

Audio: Medieval and Renaissance instrument - The Shawm (15 secs)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Audio: Medieval and Renaissance instrument - The Sackbut (11 secs)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Audio: Medieval and Renaissance instrument - The Harp (23 secs)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Audio: Medieval and Renaissance instrument - The Gittern (18 secs)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Contextual connections

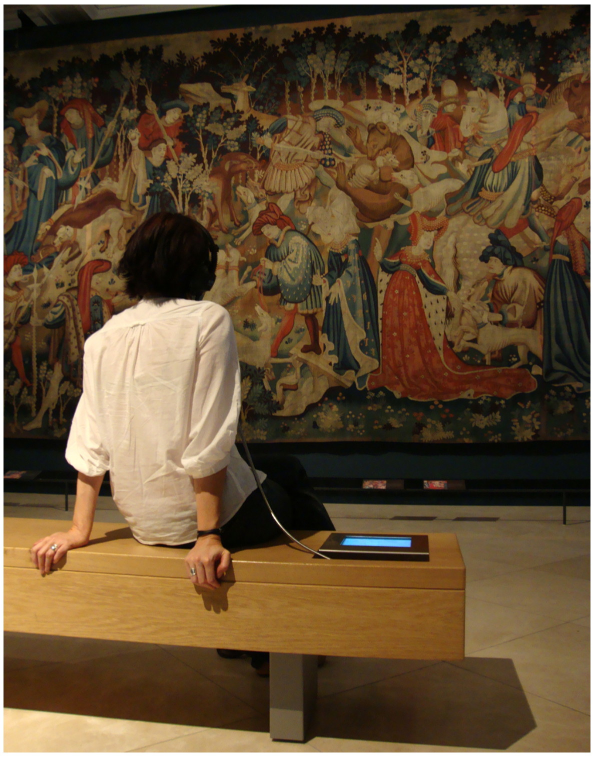


Figure 10 - Audio point in Room 10a at the V&A. Photograph by Stuart Frost

Case Study 3: A tapestry with scenes of a boar and bear hunt, about 1425–30

This category of connections between objects and music is the most diverse and the most numerous in terms of the recordings that were made. Some of the recordings were chosen because they related to specific events depicted on an object, such as Andrea Gabrieli's Asia Felice (Joyful Asia), a madrigal composed in 1571 for the official celebrations of the Venetian victory of the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto, an event also depicted in a German broadsheet of the same year.[41] However, most recordings reflected the themes depicted on an object, or evoked the context to which the objects once belonged. A large tapestry depicting hunting scenes is the dominant object in 'Gallery 10a', Noble Living 1350–1500 and provides a representative example (fig. 9). **[42]**The dominance of this object in the room dictated that it was the most obvious point of inspiration for the music. Two pieces were chosen to reflect the themes of hunting and courtly love, both of which are depicted in the tapestry and the wider displays within the room.

An anonymous 14th-century caccia, Seghugi a corta e can per la foresta (Hounds at Court and Dogs in Forest), was chosen to underscore the hunting theme.[43] Caccia is Italian for ‘hunt’, or ‘chase’, and represents one of the principal musical forms of the 14th century. Caccie reflected the popularity of hunting cultivated by the nobility at that time, reflected in the tapestry and much of the literature and visual arts of the period. Like images of hunting scenes in visual arts, the words of caccie are also often allegorical, amatory texts. Both literary and musical elements contribute to the definition of a caccia. The words of Seghugi a corta e can per la foresta are extremely realistic: throughout the song the words describe, and evoke, barking dogs, hunters shouting, horns calling, and storms. Bears and foxes also feature. Musically, the caccia consists of two voices in canon at the unison (in melodic imitation at the same pitch), creating a chase between the two voices. There is also a composed third part, which is not part of the canon and is made up of long notes. In this recording made for the project, the instrumental third part was played on a lute.

O rosabella, a piece by Johannes Ciconia (around 1370 - 1412), was chosen to represent courtly love. Ciconia was a Franco-Flemish composer, active principally in Italy. More music, with more stylistic variety, by Ciconia survives than by any other composer active around 1400. O rosabella was chosen partly because it is one of the most popular, beautiful and remarkably forward-looking ballatas of the period to have survived, but also because it is representative of the type of song that was written for the enjoyment of the elite courtly circles and probably performed by professional male singers. The piece was recorded with two male voices and a lute, played with a plectrum, as was the practice in the 14th century.

Audio: O rosabella [extract](2 mins 32 sec)

Download: mp3 | ogg

Conclusion

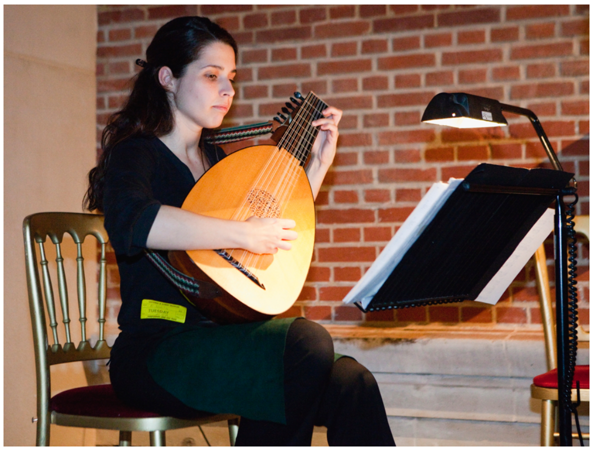


Figure 11 - Live performance of music recorded for the V&A taking place in Room 64b, Medieval & Renaissance Europe 300–1600 galleries. Photograph by Maike Zimmermann

Although music has great potential for creating atmosphere, communicating feeling and stimulating visitors' emotions, reproduction in a museum setting inevitably carries limitations. The interaction between players, instruments and audiences, or the excitement and physicality of a live performance, are difficult to communicate through recordings alone. A summative evaluation of the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries completed in 2011 showed that a high percentage of users engage with the audio-points, a strong indication that they are valued by visitors.[44] However the evaluation had a wide remit and of necessity there was no scope to explore visitors' responses to the music in detail. The precise impact of each audio point and specific pieces of music on visitors' engagement with individual objects and displays requires further research. How strongly do visitors make a connection between objects, displays and the piece of music? Does the music enhance visitors' engagement with the display and deepen their understanding of it? What impact does the music have on peoples' overall perceptions of the medieval and Renaissance periods, which visitor research suggests are usually characterised as difficult, distant and remote? No matter how thoughtfully the pieces were selected or how carefully the audio-points were juxtaposed with the displays, prior knowledge and individual experience will, of course, play a significant role in shaping each visitor's response.

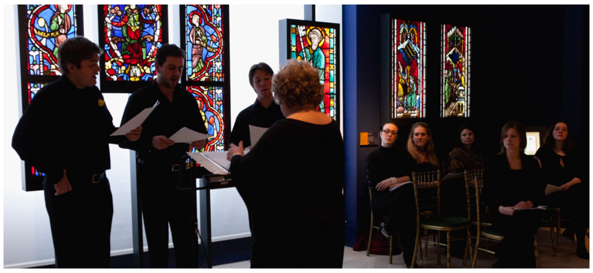


Figure 12 - Live performance taking place in Room 9 of the Medieval & Renaissance Europe 300–1600 galleries. Photograph by Maike Zimmermann

Other aspects of the project are easier to quantify and assess with confidence. Those institutions and individuals involved in the Listening Gallery project benefited in numerous ways. Over forty students at the Royal College of Music had the opportunity to study, rehearse and perform music that usually falls outside of the traditional curriculum (fig. 10). The process of performing, recording and working with professional musicians gave the students valuable experience for their future professional careers. The V&A obtained over 50 high quality recordings of pieces music, 21 for the Baroque exhibition, and 30 for the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries. For the latter these pieces of music had direct and tangible connection with objects in the displays which the Museum had neither the expertise nor resources to obtain independently. The project also made a significant contribution towards enriching curatorial knowledge of a number of objects in the collection. The fruits of this research have been made available to an international audience through the physical displays and associated online content, as well as through published articles and conference papers.

The 'Listening Gallery' project has established a model and approach that has the potential to be refined and applied to future projects at the V&A and other museums. The increasing ownership of smartphones and MP3 players is rapidly increasing the options for museums to deliver music in gallery spaces and the number of ways in which visitors can choose to engage with it. Importantly, the Museum has the option to use all of the recordings made by the RCM in future online and digital applications and to further extend the reach and impact of the project.

Acknowledgements

The ‘Listening Gallery’ project would not have been possible without the contributions of numerous people. In particular, thanks are due to: the students from the RCM who participated both in performances at the V&A and recordings at the RCM; Jakob Lindberg, Jennifer Smith, Bill Lyons and Terence Charleston at the RCM who led rehearsals, coaching sessions, performances and who also contributed research; Aaron Williamon, Ashley Solomon, Paul Banks, David Burnand, Jenny Nex and Lance Whitehead for scholarly input and shaping the project; Seb Durkin and Jon Rule for their help in making the recordings; Flora Dennis and Clifford Bartlett for advice. At the V&A the following people were also key: Carolyn Sargentson and Chris Breward; Eric Bates for developing the interface and hardware used in the galleries; Peter Kelleher and Maike Zimmermann for documenting the project with film and photography; Andrea Carr for building web-content; Meghan Callahan for translating the Latin and Italian words for many of the pieces; James Yorke for advice about the musical instruments collection at the V&A and the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries project team including Glyn Davies, Kirsten Kennedy and Peta Motture

Endnotes

1. Victoria & Albert Museum. Creative Research, *‘Medieval and Renaissance Galleries: Front-end research, May 2003’*; Victoria and Albert Museum. Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, *‘Engaging or Distracting – Visitor Responses to Interactives in the V&A British Galleries, June 2003’*; Victoria & Albert Museum. Creative Research, *‘Summative Evaluation of the British Galleries, September 2002’.* Accessed May 31, 2012.
2. Victoria and Albert Museum. Fisher, Susie. *‘What do Medieval and Renaissance really mean to people? –*

Front End Qualitative Research, December 2002'. Accessed May 31, 2012.

3. Falk, J. H. and L. D. Dierking. *The Museum Experience*. Washington, DC: Whalesback Books, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly and Kim Hermanson. 'Intrinsic motivation in museums: why does one want to learn?' in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, edited by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. London: Routledge, 1999; Davies, Jessica and Howard Gardener. 'Open Windows, Open Doors', in *The Educational Role of the Museum*, edited by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. London: Routledge, 1999.

4. Victoria & Albert Museum. Creative Research, '*Summative Evaluation of the British Galleries, September 2002'.* Accessed May 31, 2012.

5. Music in museums has not been the focus of detailed study or writing. Musical instrument museums are an exception. See, The International Committee of Musical Instrument Museums and Collections guidelines on interpreting musical instruments: Birley, Margaret, Heidrun Eichler, and Arnold Myers. *Voices for the Silenced: Guidelines for Interpreting Musical Instruments in Museum Collections.* 1998. Accessed 31 May, 2012.

6. Museum of Musical Instruments, Brussels. Accessed May 31, 2012. Malou Haine ed. *Musical Instruments Museum – Visitor's Guide*. Belgium: Mardaga, 2000; The Musée de la musique, Paris, has recently been redisplayed: The Musée de la Musique. Accessed May 31, 2012. See also de Visscher, Eric. 'From Instrument cabinet to Museum of Music' in *Musée de la Musique*, by Philippe Bruguière et al, 12–19. Paris: Somogy Art Publishers, 2009; Carla Zecker wrote about the older displays in: Zecker, Carla. 'Musical Instruments, Glass Cases and Headsets: Sound and Sensation in France's Museum of Music' in *Music, Sensation and Sensuality: Cultural and Critical Musicology*, edited by Linda Austern, 245–63. New York: Garland Press, 2002.

7. Horniman Museum, London. *Music Gallery*. Accessed May 31, 2012.

8. Austern, Linda. 'Introduction' in *Music, Sensation and Sensuality: Cultural and Critical Musicology*, edited by Linda Austern. New York: Garland Press, 2002: 3.

9. Thanks to Kylea Little, Keeper of History at the Discovery Museum for providing information about the Great City exhibition.

10. Bray, Xavier (curator). *The Sacred Made Real - Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600–1700*. London: The National Gallery, 2009.

11. Taylor, John (curator). *Journey through the Afterlife – Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. London: British Museum, 2010/2011.

12. Romanek, Devorah(curator). *Akan Drum*. London: British Museum, 2010. For details of the soundtrack: The British Museum. ‘Akan Drum: Playlist’. Accessed May 31, 2012.

13. This statement is based on unpublished summative evaluation of the following British Museum special exhibitions: Taylor, John (curator). *Journey through the Afterlife – Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*. London: British Museum, 2010/2011; Romanek, Devorah (curator). *Akan Drum*. London: British Museum, 2010; McDonald, Mark (project manager). *The Sámi Magic Drum*. London: British Museum, 2009; McDonald, Mark (project manager). *Gamelan – Music of Java*. London: British Museum, 2009.

14. Dennis, Flora; Marta Ajmar-Wollheim (co-curators). *At Home in Renaissance Italy*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2006.

15. Dennis,Flora. ‘Music’. In At Home in Renaissance Italy, edited by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, 228–243. London: V&A Publications, 2006.

16. The recordings were made by Lucia Sciannimanico, mezzo-soprano; Valerio Losito, violin and lyra da braccio; Marta Graziolino, harp; André Henrich, lute, Giulia Nuti, harpsichord.

17. Victoria and Albert Museum. *‘At Home in Renaissance Italy: Music’*. Accessed June 1, 2012.

18. Royal College of Music. *‘The Listening Gallery’*. Accessed June 1, 2012.

19. Snodin, Michael; Joanna Norman (co-curators). *Baroque 1620–1800 – Style in the Age of Magnificence*. London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 2009. Llwellyn, N. and M. Snodin, eds. *Baroque 1620–1800 – Style in the Age of Magnificence*. London: V&A Publications, 2009.

20. Victoria & Albert Museum. *‘Baroque 1620–1800 – Style in the Age of Magnificence: Music’*. Accessed June 1, 2012.

21. Ibid.

22. Lute, LauxMaler, about 1540. Museum no. 194:1, 2-1882; Harpsichord, Giovanni Baffo, 1574. Museum no. 6007-1859.

23. Dennis, Flora. ‘Music’ in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, 228–243. London: V&A Publications, 2006.

24. Victoria & Albert Museum. Fujishiro, Satoko. *‘Evaluation of Audio*

Programmes and Film Rooms in the British Galleries, August 2005'. Accessed June 1, 2012.

25. Victoria and Albert Museum. *'Medieval Music 1000–1400'.*; Victoria and Albert Museum. *'Renaissance Music 1000–1400'*. Accessed June 1, 2012.
26. Missal from the Abbey of Saint Denis, 1350. Museum no. MSL/1891/1346. See also, Watson, Rowan. *Illuminated Manuscripts and their Makers*. London: V&A Publications, 2003: 90–91.
27. Robertson, Anne. *The Service-Books of the Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis: Images of Ritual and Music in the Middle Ages*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991.
28. A short film documenting the recording of Salve Pater Dyonisi can be viewed online. Victoria and Albert Museum. *'Music from a missal from the abbey of Saint Denis'.* Accessed June 1, 2012. Recordings related to individual leaves from other service books were also made: leaf from a choirbook, about 1250. Museum no. 1517; leaf from a choirbook, about 1250. Museum no. 1519; Leaf from a choirbook, later 12th century. Museum no. 244.2 A short film about these recordings can be viewed online. Victoria and Albert Museum. *'Music from choirbook leaves'.* Accessed June 1, 2012.
29. This is borne out by a number of studies at the Victoria and Albert Museum and elsewhere. Victoria and Albert Museum. Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre. *'Engaging or Distracting – Visitor Responses to Interactives in the V&A British Galleries, June 2003'.* Accessed 1 June, 2012; Victoria and Albert Museum. Creative Research. *'Summative Evaluation of the British Galleries, September 2002'.* Accessed 1 June, 2012.
30. The Tristan Quilt, about 1360–1400. Museum no. 1391-1904.
31. From the CD *'A L'Estampida - Medieval Dance Music'*. Performed by: Dufay Collective. Label and release date: Avie, 2004.
32. Choirbook, Florence, about1380. Museum no. MSL/1868/5836. Notation knife, about 1550. Museum no. 310-1903. A short film about the recording of the notation on the knife can be viewed online. Victoria and Albert Museum. *'The notation knife'.* Accessed June 1, 2012.
33. Dennis, Flora. 'Scattered Knives and Dismembered Song: Cutlery, Music and the Rituals of Dining' in *Renaissance Studies* XXIV (2010): 156–84.
34. Harpsichord, Venice, 1574. Museum no. 6007-1859.

35. Dennis, Flora. ‘Music’ in *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, edited by Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Flora Dennis, 228–243. London: V&A Publications, 2006; Dennis, Flora. ‘Medieval and renaissance music’. In *Medieval and Renaissance Art – People and Possessions*, edited by Glyn Davies and Kirstin Kennedy, 296–297. London: V&A Publications, 2009.

36. Facoli, Marco. *Passmezzo di nomeantico*. London, Royal College of Music, MS 2088, late 16th century.

37. A short film about the harpsichord recordings can be viewed online here. Victoria and Albert Museum. *‘Passemezzo di nomeantico’.* Accessed June 1, 2012.

38. The piece, ‘Washa mesa – Der Hupff Auff – Gassenhauer’, is from a book by Hans Neusidler published in Nuremberg in 1536, *Ein Newgeordnet Kunstlisch Lauteenbuch, In zwen theyl getheylt*.

39. Ceiling from Casa Maffi, Via Belvedere, Cremona, about 1500. Museum no. 428-1889.

40. These short recordings were made under the direction of William Lyons. The shawm was played by Sarah Humphries, the gittern by Arngeir Hauksson and the harp by Jon Banks.

41. True Likeness of the beheaded Turkish officer Ali Bassa, woodcut, about 1571. Museum no. E.912-2003.

42. Tapestry with scenes of a Boar and Bear Hunt, about 1420–1425. Museum no. T.204-1957.

43. Anonymous 14th century caccia, *Seghugi a corta e can per la foresta*. Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichiano 26, fol. 99 (3/2); London: British Library, Additional 29987, fol. 77v (3/2).

44. Victoria and Albert Museum. Fusion Research and Analytics. *‘Case Study Evaluation of FuturePlan: Medieval and Renaissance and Ceramics Galleries Phase I and II, March 2011’.* Accessed June 1, 2012.

William Bower Dalton: Potter and teacher

Lily Crowther, Research Assistant, British Design 1948–2012, Victoria and Albert Museum

Abstract

William Bower Dalton (1868–1965) was a pioneer of studio ceramics in Britain. His work was particularly noted for its sophisticated and subtle glaze effects. He was also an influential educator, head of Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts from 1899 until 1920, and simultaneously curator of the South London Art Gallery. This article examines his life in detail for the first time.

Introduction

Amongst the glamorous and charismatic pots in the V&A's gallery of twentieth-century studio ceramics nestle two small bowls, so quiet and restrained that they might easily be overlooked (figs 1 and 2). One is glazed in a warm dusty brown, with a hugely varied texture, like a landscape in miniature. The other has an irregular pattern of dark and light splashes on a green ground covered in black flecks, the result of layering glazes over one another. In both, the modest simplicity of the form is complemented by the surprising complexity of the surface. These bowls are by William Bower Dalton, a pioneer in British studio ceramics and an important figure in the history of craft education. Dalton was among the first generation of ceramic makers to take inspiration from early Chinese ceramics, before the widespread popularity of Japonisme in Britain. Along with his contemporaries in France and America, he experimented with the possibilities of stoneware bodies and high-fired glazes in an attempt to rediscover forgotten techniques.

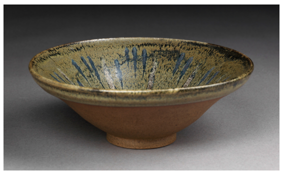


Figure 1 - Bowl, William Bower Dalton, 1933. Museum no. C .413-1934

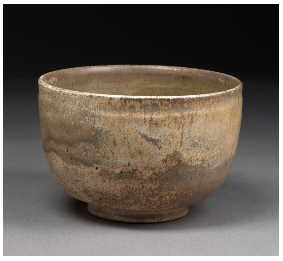


Figure 2 - Bowl, William Bower Dalton, 1933. Museum no. C.412-1934

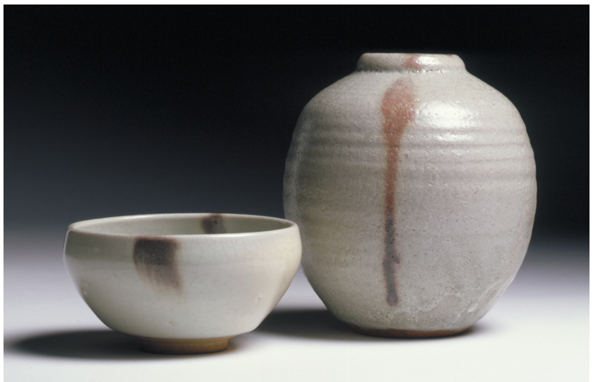


Figure 3 - Bowl and vase, William Staite Murray, 1924 and 1927. Museum nos. C.1455-1924 and CIRC.677-1927

Dalton served as Principal of Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts from 1899 to 1920, during which time notable students of ceramics at the School included William Staite Murray (fig. 3), Charles Vyse, Roger Fry and Reginald Wells (fig. 4). Dalton exhibited with Bernard Leach, Michael Cardew and other leading figures in the studio pottery movement in the 1920s and 1930s. He was curator of the South London Art Gallery for more than twenty years, and a member of several influential societies and committees in the fields of industrial art and education. Yet despite his central position in the establishment of his day, he is now largely forgotten. This is a shame, because to look at his life and work is to gain an insight into the educational and aesthetic ideals of his age.

This article sketches his biography for the first time, and attempts to set his life in the context of late 19th and early 20th century craft education and production.

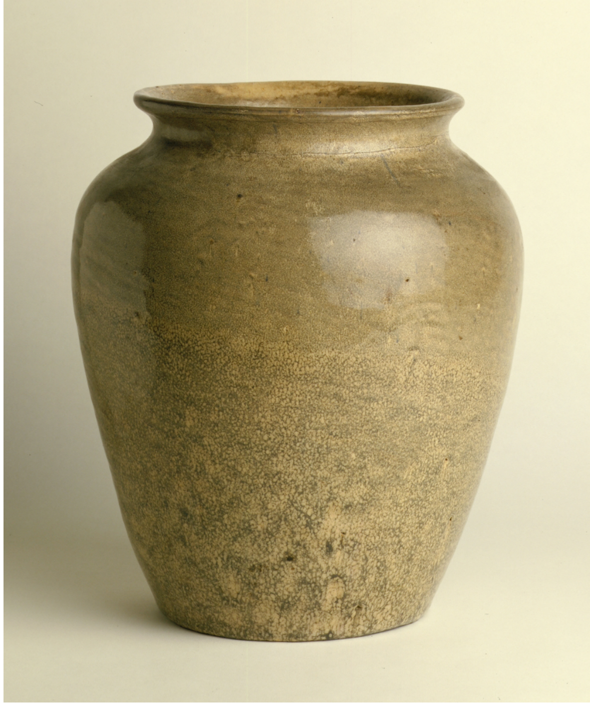


Figure 4 - Jar, Reginald Wells, 1910–14. Museum no. C.531-1919

Dalton's early life

William Bower Dalton was born in Wilmslow, Cheshire, on the 29th of February 1868.[1] He was the second child of Thomas Dalton, a lithographic artist, and his wife Sarah. It was not until the 1880s that lithography became affordable for use in magazines, so at the time of William's birth Thomas would have been working on upmarket illustrated books or prints. One can imagine that this was a household in which youthful artistic talent was encouraged. By the time William reached the age of 13, his parents must have been finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. They were now supporting seven children at home, in addition to William's older sister Mary Bower, who was at boarding school.[2] The family no longer kept a servant,[3] as they had done ten years earlier.[4] But the Daltons made no compromises in the education of their eldest son. William began his studies at Stockport Grammar School, and then in 1888 moved on to Manchester School of Art.

Manchester School of Art had begun life in 1838 as a Government School of Design, becoming the School of Art in 1853 and moving to its present home in Cavendish Street in 1880. The school enjoyed close links to the artistic establishment and in particular the Arts and Crafts movement. Its direction was influenced by Charles Rowley, picture frame maker, patron of the Pre-Raphaelite artists and a leading figure in Manchester art circles; Rowley offered the post of Director of Design at Manchester to the illustrator and designer Walter Crane in 1892, and Crane took up the post the following year.[5] The school's Gothic building, completed in 1880 by G. T. Redmayne, pupil and brother-in-law of the prominent Gothic architect Alfred Waterhouse, also contributed to the atmosphere. Dalton's time there may have shaped his attitude to arts education and the value of craft skills: he took his first lessons in throwing on the potter's wheel at Manchester, and throughout his career he was a passionate advocate for the importance of the applied arts.[6]

While many of his younger siblings worked for a living, William was to continue his studies until he was almost 30 years old.[7] Around 1892 he quit Cheshire for London and the National Art Training School (soon to become the Royal College of Art). At that time, the School was part of the Victoria & Albert Museum, so studying there gave Dalton access to unparalleled collections of Asian and European ceramics; it was perhaps here that his mature interest in pottery was first sparked, although his early work focused on painting. He was clearly a promising student – in 1894, he was granted a travelling scholarship to Italy. His four years at the National Art Training School would have left Dalton with an invaluable network of friends and contacts, providing the foundations of his future life in the London artistic community.

Shortly after his graduation in 1896 Dalton was appointed as a lecturer at Huddersfield School of Art, where he remained for two years. Then, in 1899, an opportunity arose in London: Cecil Burns, the Headmaster of the newly founded Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, left his post after only a year to take charge of the Sir J. J. School of Art and the Victoria & Albert Museum in Bombay.[8] Dalton took his place, and went on to lead Camberwell for 20 years.

Dalton at Camberwell

When he arrived at Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts in 1899, Dalton was still just 31 years old. He had done well to get the job in a competitive field – there were 71 applicants, and the final shortlist included John Williams, head of the

Artistic Crafts department at the Northampton Institute in Clerkenwell (now City University), and Archibald H. Christie, an architect who had taught at the Central School of Arts and Crafts.[9] As well as Headmaster of the school, Dalton also became curator of the South London Gallery next door.[10] This was a separate appointment, but the two posts had been held by the same person since the establishment of the twin institutions, and it was felt to be in the best interests of the school that this should continue to be the case.

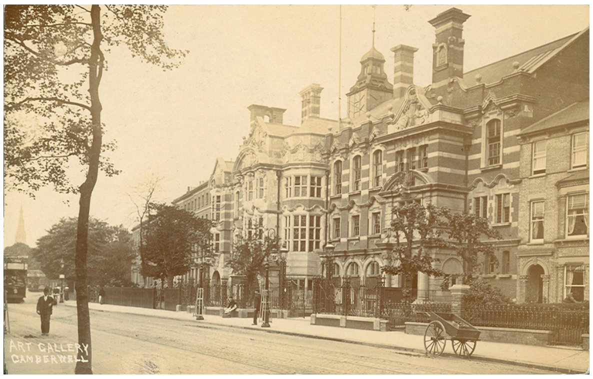


Figure 5 - Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts, about 1910. From the Southwark Local History Library & Archive

The South London Gallery had opened in 1887 with a small collection of pictures on loan from various artists; its President was the Aesthetic movement painter Lord Leighton. In 1892 the Gallery's fortunes were transformed by the philanthropist John Passmore Edwards. Passmore Edwards had made his fortune as a newspaper proprietor, and devoted his profits to charitable causes, taking a special interest in projects relating to workers' education and self-improvement. He gave £3,000 to build a library and lecture-hall alongside the Gallery. By 1896, the scale of the enterprise had become too great for the Gallery's founders to manage, and control was transferred to the local authority, Camberwell Vestry. Camberwell thus became the first local authority in London to run an art gallery under the Public Libraries and Museums Act. Passmore Edwards went on to fund a new building to house the Gallery and a new school of arts and crafts, which opened in January 1898 (fig. 5).[11]

As the dignitaries at the opening of the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts remarked, ‘Camberwell was now placed at the forefront of the municipal life in London, because it was the first parish in which there was an art gallery and technical institute under the control of the vestry’, and although ‘they could hardly boast that in Camberwell today they were the possessors of any great quantity of beauty… they were deeply grateful for the generosity which made accessible things of beauty to crowds of hard-working people.’[12] [13] This last comment reaches the heart of the philanthropic impulse behind the founding of the Gallery and School. Both were intended primarily for the benefit of the local working-class population. Unlike many public collections, the Gallery was open in the evenings and on Sundays to allow working people to visit. The School, meanwhile, taught young people during the day, and in the evenings ran courses enabling older students, already working in relevant industries, to improve their skills. The painter and designer Sir Edward Poynter, then Director of the National Gallery, President of the Royal Academy and former head of the National Art Training School, suggested at the opening ceremony that:

> *Schools of art might be of greater value if their proper purposes were kept in mind, and if it was remembered that a dilettante admiration for old art and enthusiastic talk about beauty of form and feeling for colour went for nothing… They had in this country designers enough and to spare… What they wanted were fine and thorough*

> *handicraftsmen who would put their best work into all they did for the love of art.*[14]

The School was thus run with the aim of improving the standard of workmanship in London's industries, as well as the level of personal satisfaction which the workers derived from their occupations. The evening classes in particular allowed production-line workers to 'master all the details of the handicraft which is their life's work, instead of only the one isolated and specialized feature to which they are generally confined by the rigour of the modern industrial system'.[15] This ideal owes much to William Morris, although with a less ambitiously utopian aim – Camberwell graduates were not supposed to retreat to a peaceful workshop in the countryside, but to deliver better, more beautiful industrial products for mass consumption. The course fees varied 'according to occupation and income', and classes were free for 'persons under 21 years of age qualified for admission to the school and bona fide engaged in the trade.'[16] Despite this incentive for young learners, the student body was dominated by older men and women attending evening classes – by 1912, they outnumbered the day-students by 500 to 200.[17]

If Dalton's new role carried considerable responsibility, it also brought commensurate rewards. He earned £400 per annum as Headmaster, and a further 50 guineas as Curator, making a total of £452 10s.[18] After his years as a student, Dalton was finally in a position to support a household of his own. Early in the summer of 1900, he married Mabel Plummer.[19] Mabel was 24 years old, the daughter of Henry Plummer, a Manchester insurance manager, and his wife Lucy. She was well educated – while her older sister Ethel and their three brothers had remained at home, Mabel had been sent to boarding school.[20] The Plummers occupied a somewhat higher social stratum than Dalton's parents: they kept a nursery-maid as well as a general servant.[21]

By 1901, William and Mabel Dalton had set up home at 20 Solway Road, East Dulwich, about 25 minutes walk south of the art school. A general impression of the area is provided by Charles Booth's 'Inquiry into the Life and Labour of the People in London', a survey of working class life conducted between 1886 and 1903.[22] In his 'Descriptive Map of London Poverty' of 1898–9, in which all streets in the capital were assigned a colour ranging from yellow for 'wealthy' to black for 'vicious, semi-criminal', Booth classified Solway Road as 'fairly comfortable'. His notes describe it as being newly built on the gardens of East Dulwich Road, a method of infill typical of London's increasingly dense suburbs; the houses each had eight rooms, and were let at £40 a year.[23] According to local historian H. J. Dyos, the district of East Dulwich included 'a number of well-to-do streets occupied mostly by professional people', but was largely working class at the turn of the century. Generally speaking, 'the longer and straighter and flatter the street, the fewer pretensions it normally had'; by this measure, Solway Road, being extremely short and curving round a sharp corner, must have been near the top of the social scale.[24] The street's residents included a journalist, an upholsterer's salesman, a draper, a caterer, a tailor and a builder, showing the mixed nature of the area.[25] Unlike most of their neighbours, the Daltons were able to keep a servant.[26] Both of their daughters were born in Dulwich: Helen Mabel in 1905, and Rotha Holroyd in 1908.[27]

As the working class population of the district of Camberwell grew, the School of Arts and Crafts was gradually expanding to serve this new community. New courses were introduced each year, following demand or the perceived needs of local employers. The decision to set up a ceramics course was taken in July 1907; a natural local constituency of students would have been provided by the nearby Doulton factory in Lambeth. Richard Lunn, head of ceramics at the Royal College of Art, was brought in to head the new course, which took in its first students in September of the same year. The course was on a modest scale at first – Lunn taught one evening per week, with the assistance of a professional thrower who made vessels for the students to decorate; it was only later that the students themselves learned throwing.

In its early years the ceramics course attracted a number of students who went on to make important contributions to studio pottery. One of the first was Reginald Wells, who trained as a sculptor at the Royal College of Art but began making pottery around 1900. Wells' early work drew inspiration from traditional English wares, but after the First World War he was particularly influenced by Chinese ceramics, experimenting with high temperature firing and textured glazes. Wells was followed by William Staite Murray, who was at Camberwell from about 1909 to 1912. Inspired by Japanese ceramics and Zen Buddhism, Staite Murray became the leading advocate of pottery as a form of fine art. He gave his large pots expressive titles, showed them in Bond Street galleries, and priced them accordingly. Following Staite Murray, Charles Vyse studied at Camberwell in 1912, and Roger Fry in about 1912–13. Vysehad been an apprentice at Doulton before studying sculpture at the Royal College of Art from 1905 to 1910. Together with his wife Nell, he made popular slip-cast figurines, but also developed an interest in Chinese Sung pottery and experimented with glaze chemistry. Fry, a member of the Bloomsbury Group, founded the Omega Workshops in 1913, where he and others made boldly coloured ceramics in strong shapes, alongside other household goods and furnishings. Clearly the course attracted students of a high calibre, and fostered an appreciation for the elegant simplicity and striking glaze effects of East Asian pots.

By 1917, Camberwell School offered day, afternoon and evening classes in subjects ranging from building construction and cabinet making to bookbinding and dress design. Students' work was regularly exhibited at the South London Gallery, and seems to have been well received by audiences. In 1911, a reviewer described the annual exhibition as, 'an arresting proof of the value of the work which is being done under the London County Council and Mr W. B. Dalton in providing instruction in those branches of design and manipulation which directly bear on the more artistic trades'.[28] Two years later, the quality of the work on display was praised as a testament to ‘the intelligence of the students and the activity and wisdom of the principal, Mr W. B. Dalton, and his assistants’.[29]

As well as showcasing students’ work, the Gallery had an active programme of temporary exhibitions designed to appeal to the student body and to local audiences more generally. The displays focused on craft skills and techniques as well as finished artworks; for example, to accompany an exhibition of Japanese prints in 1898, there was, ‘a demonstration by Mr [Frank] Morley Fletcher on the methods of printing in colour from wood blocks’.[30] An exhibition of British watercolours in 1904 included sketches and studies to demonstrate the artists’ methods. Alderman C. T. Harris, speaking at the opening of the exhibition, noted that, ‘The exhibits included works by Cox and Turner, both men of poor parentage. It might happen that men might be attracted to that gallery who were equally gifted and who needed only the opportunity to develop into great artists.’[31]

Despite the interrelationship of the two institutions, it was not always easy for Dalton to head the School and Gallery simultaneously. It appears that not all of the local councillors appreciated the demands on his time and expertise exerted by his curatorial work. In 1906, the council held a very public dispute about his pay, eagerly reported in the local newspaper.[32] It was proposed that his salary as Curator should be increased from 50 guineas (the level at which it had been set since he took up the post) to £75 per annum. The justification for this substantial increase was that the local council was in a better financial position since London County Council had taken over the Art School; on the other hand, Dalton’s salary as Principal of the Art School was generous enough for some councillors to dispute whether any increase in his second income was justified. When the council declined to approve the raise, Dalton submitted his resignation, generating a further flurry of disagreement among the councillors, who eventually resolved to offer him £60. Dalton declined this offer, but evidently some compromise was reached, because he was to remain at the Gallery long after his retirement from the Art School.

Dalton the studio potter

It is difficult to be sure exactly when Dalton began to make pots, or how quickly they became the dominant element of his work. In his early years at Camberwell he worked in a variety of media, following the pattern set by the luminaries of the Arts and Crafts movement. His contribution to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show in 1906 was a pair of chairs (both 'executed' by H. Martin), and when he joined the Art Workers' Guild in 1908 it was as a 'designer'.[33] He continued to exhibit paintings until at least the 1950s, and also had a lifelong interest in lettering design.[34]

In 1920, Dalton left Camberwell School to spend more time at Garrow, the house and studio in Longfield, Kent, which he had designed for himself ten years earlier.[35] Although he continued as curator of the South London Gallery for another decade, he was increasingly dedicated to studio pottery. By the early 1920s, he was exhibiting his ceramics in high-profile forums – in 1923, a bowl and a figurine entitled 'The First Dip' were shown at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in an exhibition organised by the British Institute of Industrial Art (BIIA); the BIIA had been set up in 1920 by the then director of the V&A, Cecil Harcourt-Smith, to collect and show the best modern design.

In 1924, Dalton became President of the Potters' Guild. He was also active in promoting good design in industrial ceramics. He served on the juries of several exhibitions, such as those held by the Ceramic Society at Stoke in 1919 and at Hanley in 1920 which were praised for promoting, 'a remarkably high standard of refinement and good taste' through criticism as well as praise: 'For educational reasons pottery which is below the accepted standard is included, the adjudicators clearly stating the nature of the defects'.[36]

Dalton was interested in a wide variety of historical ceramics, particularly Hispano-Moresque and Turkish pieces, of which he had a personal collection. But he admired early Chinese ceramics above all others, and devoted his energies to emulating their precise, sober forms and sophisticated glazes. Knowledge of early Chinese pottery only became widespread in the West in the early 20th century, following the first European scholarly publications on the subject in the 1880s. With no way to establish exactly how potters in China had achieved their glaze effects, Dalton and his international contemporaries embarked on extensive experimentation. Dalton relished the unpredictability of his medium, and kept diligent records of the effects of every variation in glaze recipes and firing. He would later say, 'One must record mistakes, whether reasonable, experimental or stupid'.[37]

He was particularly interested in combining different glazes and observing their interactions, and some of his most attractive surface effects were achieved by dipping a completed piece into one glaze and then another, creating a pattern of contrasting streaks reminiscent of a traditional East Asian 'hare's fur' glaze. As one would expect from a maker engaged in an extensive programme of trial and error, some of Dalton's pots appear to be failed experiments. For example, one piece in the Cuming Museum collection (formerly housed at the South London Gallery) has a thick white glaze, which crawled drastically during firing, leaving wide channels of bare clay. It is a testament to Dalton's enquiring mind that this pot survives as evidence of the results of a particular combination of glaze and heat; perhaps he intended it as a teaching aid for young potters.

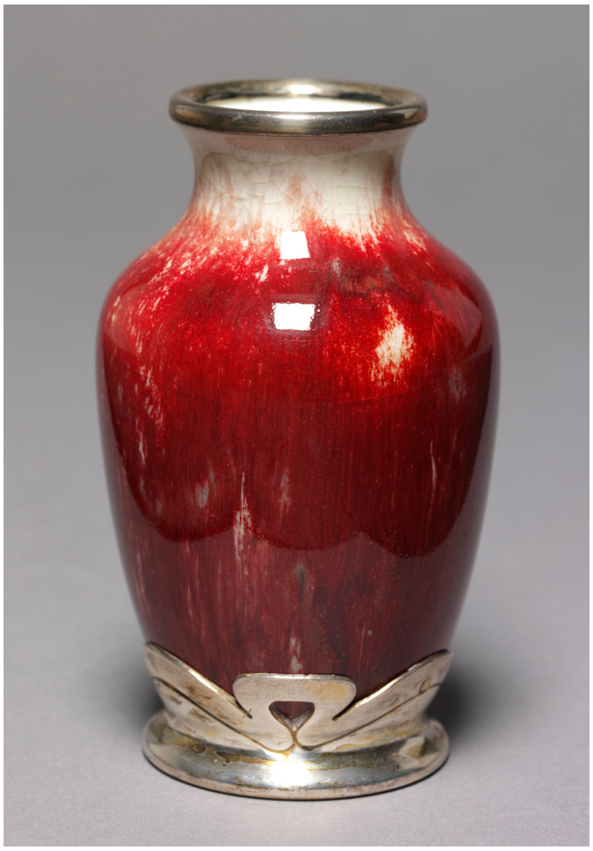


Figure 6 - Vase, Ernest Chaplet, about 1895. Museum no. C.1280-1917

Much important experimentation in glaze techniques was done in France. The pioneer of the field was Ernest Chaplet, famous for his mastery of spectacular flambé glazes (fig. 6). Chaplet was also important in establishing stoneware as a suitable alternative to porcelain for art pottery, having seen examples of Japanese stoneware at the Paris Exhibition of 1878 (fig. 7). The British-born ceramicist Taxile Doat, based in Paris, was also highly influential in popularising East Asian styles; he worked at Sèvres from 1877 to 1905, as well as running his own private workshop, and was known for his inventiveness in developing high-fired glazes for porcelain. Dalton took a particular interest in the work of another French potter, Émile Decoeur (fig. 8). He visited Decoeur's widow in 1954 hoping to purchase his notebooks but, in accordance with Decoeur's will, they had been destroyed after his death.[38] Dalton then set about trying experimentally to replicate his glazes and methods. He had a number of Decoeur pots in his own collection: in 1957, he gave a Decoeur bowl to the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, and expressed the desire to give another example of a different type at a later date.[39]

Dalton's interest in early Chinese wares and glazing techniques was also shared by contemporaries in North America. These included Hugh Robertson of the Chelsea Ceramic Art Works, who discovered a recipe for deep red sang-de-boeuf glaze in 1888, and the educator Charles F. Binns, the first director of the School of Clay-Working and Ceramics at Alfred, New York. Binns, like Dalton, combined his work as a potter with enthusiasm as a teacher, and shared the recipes for his rich monochrome stoneware glazes with his students and in a series of published works. This interest in Chinese glazes was, however, unusual among British potters of the time, who, like Bernard Leach, looked mainly to Japanese models, or to traditional English slipware and lead-glazed ware. Compared to work by his

British contemporaries, Dalton's pottery is notably subtle in decoration, with a consistent focus on the colour and texture effects of minor variations in glazing.

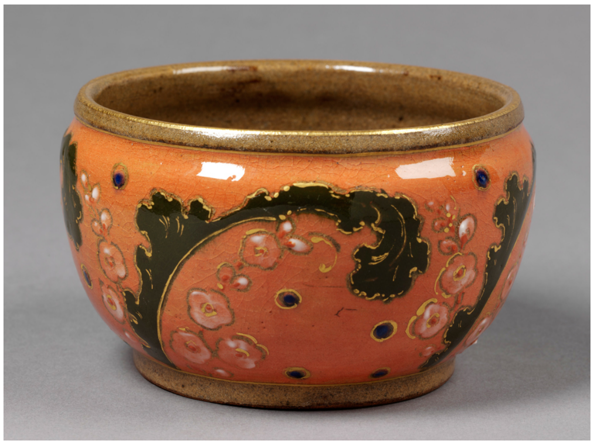


Figure 7 - Bowl, Ernest Chaplet, probably decorated by A. L. and E.-A. Dammouse, about 1885. Museum no. C.308-1983

Critics praised Dalton's work for its qualities of restraint and simplicity, and especially for its glazes. For example, a reviewer attending the South London Group's annual exhibition in 1926 described his stoneware as, 'soberly beautiful'.[40] In 1928, Dalton's work was included in the English section of the International Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art organised by the American Federation of Arts. Reviewing the show, C. Louise Avery noted that the English contributions were, 'simply modelled, subdued in tone, and conservative', but went on to praise Dalton for the, 'great depth and brilliance' of his glazes.[41] One reviewer of a group show of ceramics at Colnaghi in 1932, while singling out Michael Cardew for particular praise, noted of Dalton's pots that 'the quality of their glazes is remarkably high'.[42] A fascinating review of the regular Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society Show in 1935 discussed the continuing relevance of the Society as, 'a complement, or a corrective' rather than, as it had initially been intended, a, 'reaction against the mechanization of life'.[43] To demonstrate the importance of the exhibition, the reviewer picked out a number of works, 'which are not only good in themselves but good in a way which is only possible in handicraft conditions', choosing from the pottery section pieces by Cardew, Leach and Dalton. His being mentioned in this company indicates the high regard in which his work was held at the time.

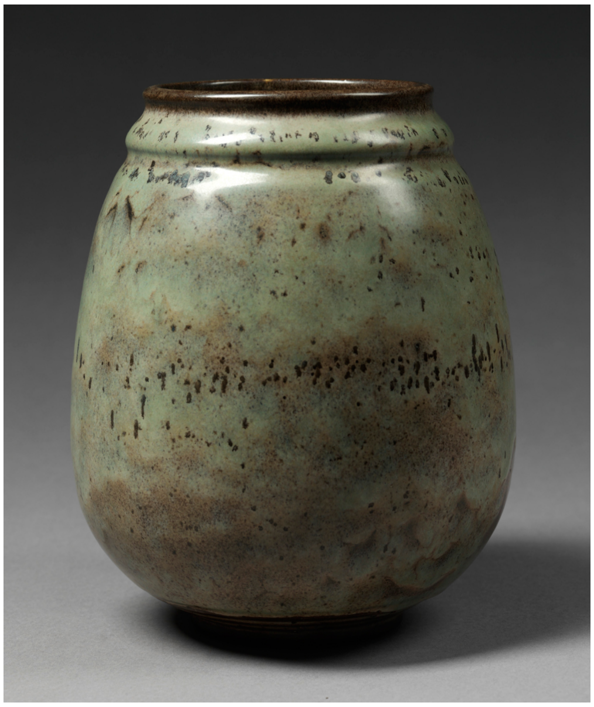


Figure 8 - Vase, Émile Decoeur, 1931.
Museum no. Circ.183-1931

Dalton's work is found in a number of important UK museums and galleries. Naturally, by far the largest collection was built up by the South London Gallery: 36 pieces (now in the care of the Cuming Museum), including figurines and tiles as well as vessels, covering the whole extent of Dalton's working life in Britain.Most other examples of Dalton's ceramics in British public collections date from the 1930s, by which time he was well established in commercial galleries and group exhibitions. Manchester Art Gallery holds the largest collection of his work outside London, with six pots purchased between 1931 and 1937, and a further five 1930s pieces bequeathed to the collection in 1948.[44] Dalton actively encouraged Manchester's curators to consider his work, perhaps hoping for a good representation in his home city – he wrote to the chairman of the gallery committee in 1931 to 'remind' him of the upcoming Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society show at the Royal Academy, offering to meet him there and, 'explain my pottery to you'.[45] The V&A's two Daltons were made in 1933, and acquired by the museum in 1934 as part of a collection formed by the British Institute of Industrial Art, which had clearly continued to encourage Dalton since first showing his work ten years earlier.[46] Gallery Oldham also has a Dalton bowl probably dating from the 1930s, which was given to the Gallery by the Contemporary Art Society (CAS) in 1943. Founded in 1910, the CAS focused on fine art; the fact that Dalton's work was being purchased simultaneously by the BIIA and the CAS indicates the liminal position of studio pottery at the time, as an area of overlap between art and design. The Crafts Study Centre holds a piece exhibited by Dalton in 1934 at the Red Rose Guild's exhibition in Manchester, and given to the Centre in 1977, and Salford Museum & Art Gallery has three pieces dating from 1932 to 1935.

The most important private collector to hold an example of Dalton's work was the Very Reverend Eric Milner-White, then at King's College Cambridge and later Dean of York. A member of the Advisory Council of the V&A, Milner-White built up an extraordinary collection of work by the most influential early studio potters.[47] He purchased a bowl exhibited by Dalton in 1928, later donating it to York Art Gallery.In the late 1950s, two examples of Dalton's work were acquired by Wakefield librarian Bill Ismay.[48] Ismay also gave his collection to York Art Gallery, who therefore have a total of three Dalton pieces.

'Garrow', Dalton's home and studio, was destroyed by bombing in 1941, and he emigrated to the United States, settling in Stamford, Connecticut. He continued to participate in the artistic life of London, exhibiting with the South London Group in the 1950s, and publishing three books on the history and practice of ceramics in 1957, 1960 and 1962. [49] [50] These describe his methods and inspirations, and are aimed primarily at the practical-minded student.

The first book gives a brief history of world ceramics, focusing particularly on China and on the methods and materials used by potters throughout history, and goes on to describe modern workshop equipment and techniques. Dalton explains that, 'the book especially stresses the importance of experiment with glazes, seeking for rare qualities of texture and colour, for only in this way can further advancement be made'.[51] In his second book, Dalton's focus is almost entirely technical, laying out notes on subjects such as the new metal oxides made available by the latest science, how to prepare clay bodies and glazes, and how to pack pottery for dispatch by post. The final book repeats the structure of the first, beginning with an overview of ceramic history, focused this time on medieval and early modern European pottery, and following this with an outline of workshop methods. Taken together, the books underline Dalton's preoccupation with glaze techniques, historic and modern, as well as his commitment to passing on his accumulated knowledge to younger generations.

Examples of Dalton's later work can be seen in museum collections in North America. The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum in New York acquired two pieces in 1957, both bulbous stoneware vessels, one with a brown mottled glaze and the other glazed in brown and grey. There are a further six pieces in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, of which five are porcelain and one stoneware, all with celadon glazes and all of a very small size. Five of these were acquired directly from Dalton between 1952 and 1954, and one was purchased from the New York dealer Warren Cox in 1950. Although Dalton was clearly active in the studio into his 80s, these late works are much less ambitious in terms of scale and surface effects than his earlier pieces.

In 1965, aged 97, Dalton returned to England. He died in the same year, and his pioneering contribution to British studio ceramics and craft education has since been largely forgotten. Looking back now at his work, and particularly at the enduring importance of Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts (now Camberwell College of Arts) as a centre for innovation in studio ceramics, it seems appropriate that his memory should be revived.

Endnotes

1. 1871 census. The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) RG 10/3680/24.
2. 1881 census, TNA: PRO RG 11/3501/54.
3. 1881 census, TNA: PRO RG 11/3510/16.
4. Dolman, Bernard. ed. *Who's Who in Art*. London: The Art Trade Press, Ltd., 1927:59.
5. 1891 census, TNA: PRO RG 12/2820/33.
6. Dalton,W. B. *Just Clay*. Bristol: published by the author, 1962:ix.
7. Macdonald, Stuart. *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*. London: University of London Press, 1970: 294–5.
8. Now the BhauDaji Lad Museum.
9. Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts Joint Advisory Sub-Committee minutes for 3 July 1899, point 2, Camberwell College of Arts Library.
10. From 1904, the job was retitled 'Principal'.
11. For a more detailed discussion of the development of arts provision in Camberwell and other London suburbs see: Crowther, Lily. 'Et in Suburbia Ego: a cultural geography of craft in the London suburbs'. *Journal of Modern Craft* 3/2 (July 2010): 143–160.
12. Scott-Scott, W. Chairman of the Libraries and Museums Committee of Camberwell Vestry. Quoted in 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 7, 1898.
13. The Bishop of Rochester, quoted in 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 7, 1898.
14. Quoted in 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 7, 1898.
15. 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 25, 1911.

16. Advertisement in *The Times*, September 19, 1917.

17. 'Camberwell School of Art'. *The Times*, January 24, 1912.

18. Average earnings in 1902 were just £72 16s per annum. See Lindsay, Craig. '*A Century of labour market change: 1900 to 2000*'. Labour Market Trends 111/3 (March 2003): 141.

19. England and Wales marriage index, April-May-June 1900, vol. 10b: 1337. The marriage was registered in Kendal.

20. 1891 census, TNA: PRO RG 12/3171/21 and RG 12/3033/29.

21. 1881 census, TNA: PRO RG 11/4019/103.

22. Published in summary form as *Life and Labour of the People*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1889. Title of volume 2 reads *Labour and Life of the People; Labour and Life of the People*. London: Williams & Norgate, 1889–1891;Life and Labour of the People in London. London: Macmillan, 1892–1897; *Life and Labour of the People in London*. London: Macmillan,1902–1903.

23. Booth collection, London School of Economics Archives, notebook B375: 9.

24. Dyos, Harold James. *Victorian Suburb: a study of the growth of Camberwell*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1961: 85.

25. 1901 census, TNA: PRO RG 13/501/84.

26. 1911 census, TNA: PRO RG 14/3811/35.

27. Ibid: 188. Both girls went on to study at the Royal College of Art, before both entering the medical profession. See 'Obituaries'. *British Medical Journal* 299 (September 2, 1989): 619.

28. 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 25, 1911.

29. 'The Work of Camberwell School'. *The Times*, January 23, 1913.

30. 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, April 21, 1898.

31. 'South London Art Gallery'. *The Times*, January 27, 1904.

32. *South London Press*. May 19, 1906.

33. *Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society: catalogue of the eighth exhibition*. London: Chiswick Press, 1906.

34. See his typographical studies in Dalton, W. B. *Just Clay*. Bristol: published by the author, 1962.

35. The surrounding countryside has now vanished under a housing development, centred on a cul-de-sac called Garrow.

36. ‘Industrial Art, Forward movement in the Potteries’, *The Times*, January 13,1919; ‘Cheap but Artistic Teapots, Hanley exhibition today’, *The Times*, January 12, 1920.

37. Dalton, W.B. *Just Clay*. Bristol: published by the author, 1962: 76.

38. Letter to the author from Peter Kaellgren, Curator of Decorative Arts, Royal Ontario Museum, January 31 2008. See also Dalton, W. B. Notes from a Potter’s Diary. London: Pitman, 1960: 69–70.

39. Letter from W. B. Dalton to Peter D. Harrison, Royal Ontario Museum, September 12, 1957. Royal Ontario Museum Archives.

40. ‘Art Exhibition, South London artists’. *The Times*, December 23, 1926.

41. Avery, C. Louise. ‘The International Exhibition of Contemporary Ceramic Art’. *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* 23/10 (October 1928): 232–237.

42. ‘Art Exhibition, Pots and portraits’. *The Times*, November 29, 1932.

43. ‘Arts and Crafts, A salutary lesson’. *The Times*, November 5, 1935.

44. For details of all of these objects see: Manchester Art Gallery, ‘Search the Collections’ search results for William Bower Dalton. Accessed 13 August, 2010. <

45. Letter from W. B. Dalton to Mr Sutton, Manchester Art Gallery, 31 October 1931. Manchester Art Gallery archive.

46. For more detail on the relationship between the V&A and the BIIA see: Wilk, Christopher. ‘*Collecting the Twentieth Century’*. A Grand Design: A History of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Accessed 3 January, 2012.

47. For discussion of Milner-White’s remarkable collection see: Riddick, Sarah. *Pioneer Studio Pottery – the Milner-White Collection*. London: Lund Humphries in association with York City Art Gallery, 1990.

48. For an introduction to the Ismay collection see: York Art Gallery. ‘*Potty about pots*’. Accessed 13 August, 2010.

49. Five paintings by Dalton were exhibited in the 27th annual exhibition of the South London Group, at the South London Art Gallery, in 1956.

50. *Craftsmanship in Design and Pottery*. London: Pitman, 1957; *Notes from a Potter’s Diary*. London: Pitman, 1960; *Just Clay*. Bristol: published by the author, 1962.

51. Dalton, W.B. *Craftsmanship in Design and Pottery*. London: Pitman, 1957: ix.

The silent traveller: Chiang Yee in Britain 1933–55

Anna Wu, Assistant Curator, Victoria and Albert Museum

From 23rd April to 9th November 2012, the V&A will present a small selection of original paintings and drawings by Chiang Yee augmented by archival material, relating to his life in Britain, in the T.T. Tsui gallery of Chinese Art. The display will complement the V&A's spring exhibition Britain Design 2012, which showcases the far-reaching influence of Britain and British design around the world. The display is generously supported by the Friends of the V&A.

Introduction

Chinese artist and writer Chiang Yee (1903–1977) came to Britain in 1933, where he lived and worked until 1955. During this time he wrote a successful series of illustrated travelogues using the pen name 'Yaxingzhe' or 'Silent Traveller'.[1] The books describe Chiang Yee's life in London and Oxford during the turbulent years of the Second World War and record his travels to the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, Edinburgh and Dublin.[2] Illustrated throughout, with his own unique ink and watercolour paintings, sketches and poems, they represent a significant artistic, as well as literary project. Notably among the first Chinese writers to write books in English in the first half of the 20th century, Chiang enjoyed a prolific publishing career in Britain, in which he also published two seminal texts on Chinese painting and calligraphy, memoirs of his childhood in China, and several children's books.

In addition to his publications, Chiang engaged in a wide variety of other cultural and educational activities, including lecturing on Chinese art, curating and teaching Chinese language at London's School of Oriental Studies (SOS). As a result he became a widely recognised and consulted authority on Chinese culture in Britain and served as an interpreter of Chinese culture to Western audiences at a time when general and academic interest in China was increasingly keen.

Chiang Yee has received relatively little scholarly attention compared with other influential Chinese figures of the same period, who also acted as cultural intermediaries, such as Lin Yu Tang, Lao She and Fu Lei.[3] However, in recent years renewed interest in Chiang Yee has generated some significant new research on his life and work, in particular by Chinese American scholar Da Zheng, author of a detailed biography of Chiang Yee.[4]

This paper builds on the growing body of research on Chiang Yee, to consider him in a specifically British context; evaluating his life and work in Britain and acknowledging the significant contribution he made to the presentation and understanding of Chinese art and culture in Britain. This paper offers an analysis of Chiang's books on Chinese art, the Silent Traveller books and the various cultural activities he engaged in between 1933 and 1955; looking not only at his personal achievements, but also at the broader implications of his life and activities, as indicators of a wider cultural shift in Britain in terms of attitudes to, and relationships with China, its people and culture, during the first half of the 20th century.

Chiang Yee in China

Chiang was born into a wealthy, middle-class family in the district of Jiujiang in Jiangxi province, south-west China, in 1903.[5] His father was a successful portrait artist and he indulged Chiang's early interest in painting and calligraphy, practices which were to become lifelong pursuits. He enjoyed the privilege of a classical education based on Confucian teachings in early childhood and later studied a broader range of subjects including Maths, Physics and Chemistry, following modernist educational reforms in China in the first decades of the 20th century.[6]

In 1924, Chiang married his first cousin Zeng Yun to whom he had been betrothed since birth. The loveless marriage, though deeply unhappy, nevertheless produced four children. He graduated with a degree in Chemistry from South Eastern University in Nanjing in 1926 and taught for a short period before joining his elder brother in the National Revolutionary Army. He then went on to take up a variety of roles in local government in and around Jiangxi, culminating in the post of local magistrate in his native city of Jiujiang in 1929.[7]

During his short career in local government Chiang cultivated a personal image and lifestyle based on that of a traditional scholar official. Although much of his time was spent attending to government business he also dedicated himself to the scholarly pursuits of painting, poetry and calligraphy. His love and pursuit of scholarly ideals, instilled in him during his early education, endured throughout his life and characterised his subsequent painting and writing career. In a letter to his closest friend Innes Jackson in 1936 he wrote, ‘You know I had a great love in the past literary men’s life of my country. I have read the records of them all. I always wanted and dreamt to be one like that’.[8]

Despite his devotion to these cultured pastimes, Chiang was burdened by the professional challenges he faced in his government work. He resigned from his post as magistrate in 1931, disillusioned by the corruption and nepotism that characterised local politics and government. He was not only disheartened by his career prospects, but also by his marriage and the increasingly unstable political situation in China; fraught by a bloody civil war and the persistent threat of Japanese aggression. All these factors ultimately contributed to his decision to leave China.[9] In 1933 Chiang left his wife and children in the care of his elder brother and sailed from Shanghai to Marseille and then on to London, where despite his poor English, he hoped to forge a new career.

The Chinese diaspora in 20th century Britain

Life in early 20th century China was characterised by chaotic upheaval as the country was torn apart by violent struggles for political power following the end of imperial rule in 1911. In the midst of this turmoil there were calls for social change, which engendered a powerful movement to reinvigorate Chinese culture and establish a modern identity for China. This movement transformed the fields of literature and art as Chinese people searched for new modes of self expression.[10] Following the end of the First World War, in 1918, many Chinese artists and intellectuals attempted to secure opportunities to study in Europe and America.[11] Artists hoped to study Western artistic traditions and appreciate Western art works first hand; others hoped to learn about politics, law, science and literature from a Western perspective and bring new ideas back to China.

When Chiang arrived in Britain in 1933 there was already a small but significant Chinese community in the UK, concentrated in Liverpool and London. It had been established in the late 19th century and the 1931 UK census recorded 1934 Chinese-born residents living in England and Wales.[12] Many were employed as sailors in the British Merchant Navy, whilst others worked in laundries, shops and restaurants. Despite the long-standing presence of Chinese communities in early 20th century Britain, popular perceptions of Chinese people were commonly based on sensationalist stories, put forth in the press and caricatured stereotypes presented in the popular media; the Chinese were variously described as sly, untrustworthy characters who smoked opium. These negative stereotypes were embodied by Sax Rohmer's popular fictional character Dr Fu Manchu and Oscar Asche's Chu Chin Chow.[13]

During the first decades of the 20th century there were very few Chinese scholars and intellectuals in Britain, but throughout the inter-war years their numbers grew, as more people looked outside China for intellectual inspiration as well as political refuge. Most of those who came to study abroad eventually returned to live in China but some, including Chiang Yee stayed to make a life for themselves whether or not they had initially intended to do so. Following his arrival in Britain, Chiang quickly integrated into this small intellectual community. He shared a flat in Hampstead with a Chinese author and playwright Hsiung Shi-I, who made a name for himself in Britain with his 1934 play, *Lady Precious Stream*, an exotic tale of romance and intrigue set in imperial China. It became a West End hit and a staple of amateur dramatic societies throughout the country for many years afterwards.

Hsuing introduced Chiang to many influential contacts in London including not only other Chinese living in Britain and visiting from Europe, but also notable figures in London's art and literary circles.[14]

Although very few Chinese artists came to study at London's art schools (preferring to study in Paris and Berlin), Chiang still received many distinguished artists as guests at his Hampstead home, including Xu Beihong (1895–1953) and Liu Haisu (1896–1994).[15] When Xu visited London Chiang often accompanied him to museums and galleries. He recounts one of these trips in *The Silent Traveller in London*, writing 'I used to accompany Professor Ju Péon [sic], a Chinese artist, while he was copying one of Raphael's Seven Cartoons in the Victoria and Albert Museum'.[16]

Following studies in Europe, both Liu and Xu went on to promote the work of modern Chinese artists in the West, staging exhibitions in Europe and America. In 1935 Chiang worked with Liu to mount *An Exhibition of Modern Chinese Painting* at the New Burlington Galleries. Liu brought works by many of his students and contemporaries in China to display in this exhibition and also invited Chiang to submit some of his own works.[17] The works he submitted were traditionally Chinese in style and subject, executed using Chinese materials and techniques and this was notably one of the few occasions on which Chiang's work was formally displayed alongside that of other Chinese artists.

At this time exhibitions and surveys of Chinese art generally stopped short of the 20th century, giving added significance to the exhibitions of modern Chinese paintings arranged by Xu and Liu. These exhibitions were important not only in identifying continuity in Chinese art and its production in China, but also in demonstrating that China was a modern nation with a thriving modern culture.

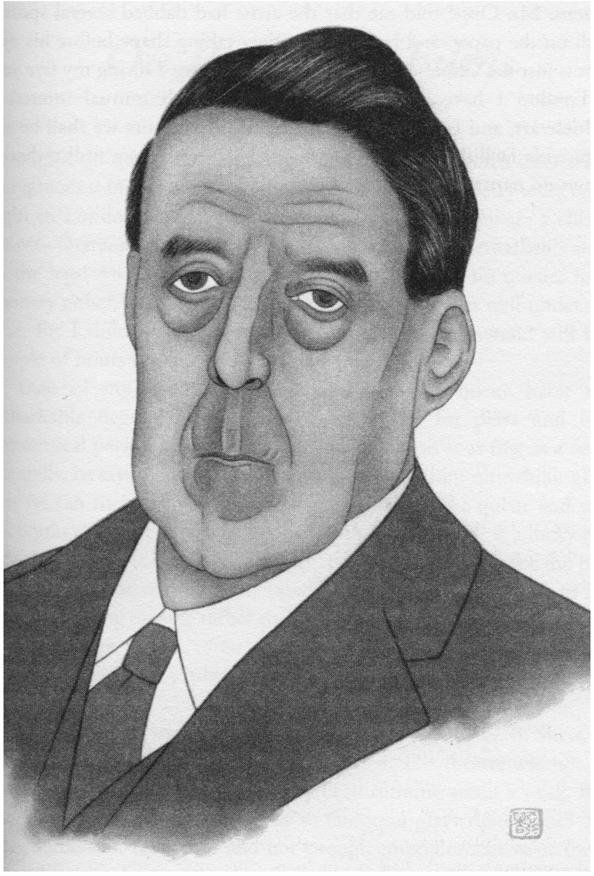


Figure - 1 ‘Mr Laurence Binyon’, Chiang Yee, 1938, ink on paper, reproduced as plate VII in ‘The Silent Traveller in London’ (1938)

Chiang was acutely aware of the value of social and professional connections and he was an enthusiastic networker. After an introduction to Reginald Johnston, then head of the Chinese department at London’s School of Oriental Studies (SOS), Chiang secured a post teaching Chinese language at the University which he held from 1935 to 1938.[18] Throughout the years that he lived in London Chiang made many more influential friends and acquaintances including W. W. Winkworth, Laurence Binyon, Herbert Read, Roger Fry and George Eumorfopoulos. Keen to demonstrate his associations and encounters with London’s intellectual and social elite, Chiang made special mention of many of these relationships in his subsequent travelogues, often accompanied by portrait illustrations.

New directions

Chiang Yee came to Britain with no directly transferable profession and soon turned to painting and illustrating as a means of survival. One of his first commissions, in 1934, was to provide illustrations for Hsiung’s play, *Lady Precious Stream*, when it was published in book form, shortly after its stage success. Later that year Chiang exhibited some of his works in a fundraising exhibition organised by an eccentric society for the protection of trees known as 'Men of the Trees'.[19] Despite the relative obscurity of the exhibition, one of the works he submitted (depicting trees in a Chinese style) was illustrated in the *London Evening Standard*, which quickly brought his work to general public attention.[20] In the years that followed this exhibition, having recognised the timely opportunity to exploit renewed Western fascination with China, Chiang painted prolifically. He initially focused on traditional Chinese subject matter and techniques before slowly broadening his repertoire to include local British subjects. By 1936 he had staged his first solo show entitled, *An Exhibition of Modern Chinese Pictures and Fans by Chiang Yee*, at a commercial gallery in Knightsbridge.[21]

Chiang's paintings, though undeniably valuable, have never been ranked alongside those of the modern masters of Chinese painting such as Liu and Xu. Nevertheless, he did successfully sell a large number of his works through commercial galleries and he relied on the income this generated for his livelihood; though it was a practice which many Chinese artists at the time would have rejected as vulgar. Chiang himself wrote in the introduction to his book *The Chinese Eye*: 'From the very beginning painting has never been a profession: the practisers of it have even been ashamed to sell their works for money'.[22] Despite this scholarly ideal of anticommercialism, in reality many artists openly engaged in the sale of their works.[23]

Chinese art in Britain

Luxury goods from China have been a familiar presence in Britain's material landscape since the 17th century. However, it was not until the late 19th century that intellectual opinion began to consider Chinese objects as art, and for many years they remained confined to displays of ethnographic material in British museums or as part of the elegant furnishings and interior decoration of stately British homes.[24]

During the 19th century and early 20th centuries, serious scholarship on Chinese art began to develop, though the decorative arts, and especially Chinese ceramics, were privileged above all other media.

Although scholarship on China was gaining momentum in academic circles at this time, Chinese art remained unfamiliar and little understood by most people in Britain well into the 20th century. Indeed, the persistent vision of China as a romantic, ancient empire, established in the preceding centuries, lingered on in the collective British consciousness. Throughout the early 20th century it continued to inform general attitudes towards China, and Chinese art, whose alien subjects, forms and materials, though appreciated for their exoticism, were rarely understood in their proper cultural context. By the 20th century these visions had also come to symbolise China's stagnation and well as its continued, 'otherness', especially when compared with industrialised Western nations.[25]

In 1925, *The Burlington Magazine* published a ground breaking monograph on Chinese art, presenting the first academic survey of Chinese art, as it was understood in Britain at the time.[26] The introduction was written by Roger

Fry; in it he describes the challenges that were faced by Western cultures in their attempts to understand and interpret Chinese art and culture. He writes, ‘I believe many people may be acquainted with some aspects of European art who still feel the art of China strange to them. For them to come upon a book like this [the *Burlington* monograph] is to come upon a world to which they have no key.’[27] Fry goes on to argue that the lack of cultural contextual knowledge for understanding Chinese art on the part of most Western audiences is what prevents them from penetrating its deeper meanings and significance.

During the interwar years, British scholarship on Chinese art was progressed significantly by a growing number of scholars actively studying and researching Chinese art.[28] These included both museum professionals and private collectors, such as Sir Percival David, George Eumorfopoulos, Arthur Waley, Laurence Binyon and W. P. Yetts, to name but a few.[29] Between them their expertise ranged from Chinese painting and sculpture to ceramics and decorative arts.

Outside museums and arts societies, formal studies of Chinese art were slow to become established in Britain. Universities prioritised the provision of basic language training for businessmen, missionaries and foreign office officials over cultural studies and it was not until 1930 that the first lectureship in Chinese Art and Archeology was created, at the SOS.[30]

Exhibiting China: The International exhibition of Chinese art, Burlington House, 1935

Public awareness and general interest in Chinese art was heightened considerably by the landmark International Exhibition of Chinese Art, at Burlington House in 1935. The Exhibition was directed by Sir Percival David, in collaboration with the Chinese Nationalist government and an extensive committee of international experts and collectors. It included over 3,000 examples of Chinese painting, sculpture and decorative arts, of which over 800 were loaned by the Chinese government.[31] This collaboration with the Chinese government greatly enriched the academic content of the exhibition and resulted in a more complete survey of Chinese art than any previously seen in Britain. According to David, the exhibition aspired to:

> *… illustrate the culture of the oldest surviving civilisation in the world. The culture itself is so composite, so esoteric and so storied in its long tradition that it is difficult at once to glean from it a simple significance. Yet the significance exists… the scope of the exhibition is wider and more ambitious than any of its brilliant predecessors. An endeavour has been made to bring together as far as possible, the finest and most representative examples of the arts and crafts of China from the dawn of its history to the year 1800.*[32]

Despite the somewhat patronising language used by David in this excerpt, which appears to reinforce Imperialist views of China as an exotic and esoteric ‘other’, the exhibition played a vital role in introducing the British public to a very broad presentation of Chinese art, such as had never been seen before in Europe.[33] Media frenzy ensued during the weeks leading up to the arrival of the British warship sent to collect exhibits from China, and the eventual opening of the show. The exhibition was a resounding success; it was seen by almost half a million people and marked a pivotal turning point in public awareness and appreciation of Chinese art, as well as attitudes to China more generally.

New literature on Chinese art

The interest generated by the 1935 exhibition presented writers and publishers with an excellent opportunity to produce new literature on Chinese art, and numerous books on the subject were published to coincide with the show. Despite the involvement of several Chinese experts on the general organising committee and the significant number of loan objects from China, only one of these new publications was written by a Chinese author; Chiang Yee. Prior to the Burlington exhibition almost all literature on the subject of Chinese art in English had been written by Western authors with few contributions by native Chinese experts. Consequently, London publishers Methuen sought to find a Chinese writer to author a new book on Chinese art, and following a recommendation from Hsiung Shi-I, Chiang was asked to write a book on Chinese painting.[34]

The Chinese Eye: An interpretation of Chinese painting, was Chiang's first book. It is divided in to eight chapters and illustrated with 24 black and white images of masterpieces of Chinese painting. The first chapter provides a succinct historical background within which to contextualise discussions in the succeeding chapters about painting's intimate relationship with both literature and philosophy. The remaining chapters introduce the subjects of Chinese painting and elucidate the importance of inscriptions; and the last chapters describe the traditional materials and tools of the Chinese artist. All of this is achieved in 230 pages in a style that is at once simple and informative. The book fulfilled a vital role in demystifying Chinese art as a practice and a subject for study, which at the time was unknown to most people in the West. It offered readers an introduction to the fundamental principles of Chinese painting and a clearly defined cultural context within which to appreciate it. The book was not intended to be an academic study of Chinese painting, but offered a more accessible approach based on the personal experience and perspective of a practising Chinese artist.[35]

A small volume entitled *Chinese Art* was also published to coincide with the International Exhibition, with a chapter on painting by Laurence Binyon.[36] In it he describes the importance of understanding Chinese views and approaches to Chinese art, and painting in particular:

> *If we are truly to appreciate any work of art it is idle to approach it from the outside, bringing with us all our prejudices and preconceptions. We must try to enter into the mind of the man who made it, discover what his aim was and consider how far he has achieved his aim. In the case of Chinese painting, produced by a race so remote from Europe, while it is easy to enjoy the decorative qualities presented by its surface, we cannot understand it without some knowledge of the Chinese conception of picture making, of the Chinese painter's approach to his subject, and the mental background behind his art.*[37]

This is exactly the viewpoint and important context that *The Chinese Eye* provided; capitalising on the authority and authenticity that Chiang was able to bring to the book as a Chinese artist himself. It was the first major publication on Chinese painting written in English by a Chinese author and marked the beginning of a period in which Chinese intellectuals were, for the first time, able to communicate information and ideas about their culture to Western audiences directly, without mediation by Western writers.[38] The book was met with critical acclaim from the general public as well as the academic community. Art critic Herbert Read wrote of it, '… he has explained the Chinese conception of art so clearly and thus enabled us to appreciate its qualities with a true aesthetic understanding'.[39] Laurence Binyon also reviewed Chiang's book, writing, 'this book tells much in small compass, and to all who take an interest in Chinese painting, and want to know more about its essential qualities, it will be an initiation.'[40] *The Chinese Eye* identified Chiang as a respected authority on Chinese painting and marked the beginning of his prolific publishing career.

Following the success of this publication, Chiang quickly became established on London's art and literary scene as a lecturer and commentator on Chinese art and culture. During the Burlington House exhibition, Chiang gave a series of lectures on the principles and techniques of Chinese painting at SOS, which were well received and even included the renowned collector George Eumorfopoulos among the participants.[41] Throughout the 1930s and 1940s Chiang was regularly invited to contribute to BBC radio programmes, despite initial concerns about his strong accent, to discuss Chinese art, poetry and literature.[42] He was also a regular speaker on the circuit of various London societies and charitable events as well as at literary festivals.[43]

In 1938, Chiang went on to write a complementary volume on Chinese art, this time on Chinese calligraphy. A similarly insightful and accessible introduction to the art and practice of calligraphy in China, *Chinese Calligraphy* was the first single volume in English dedicated to this then little understood subject matter and was significant in bringing this art to the attention of the wider public.[44] The book describes the origins of the Chinese writing system, introduces various styles of calligraphy, and devotes four chapters to expounding practical techniques and the art of composition. The remaining chapters discuss the aesthetic beauty of calligraphy and its relationship to the arts of painting, literature and philosophy. It is illustrated throughout with ideograms and examples of calligraphy, by Chiang and known masters of the tradition. Ultimately the book allowed those without any knowledge of the Chinese language to understand and appreciate the refined beauty of Chinese calligraphy, its relationship to other art forms and its revered status in Chinese culture. It was reprinted in several subsequent editions and met with enthusiasm by reviewers, with comments including '[...] no praise is too high for this book, which is at once instructive and delightful. It is emphatically commended to all lovers of Chinese art.'[45]

The Silent Traveller

Chiang Yee's illustrated travelogues represent his most significant commercial and artistic success. Informative, thought provoking and unusual,they found a wide readership among Anglophone audiences around the world and are still enjoyed by readers today.[46]

The appeal of *The Silent Traveller* books lies not only in their unfamiliar aesthetic beauty, but also in their novel approach to recording Chiang's particular experiences of Britain, 'from the point of view of a homesick Easterner'.[47] They offer a unique perspective on Britain, through the eyes of a Chinese exile at a time when Western literature about China was common, but books about the West by a Chinese author were exceptionally rare. In this way they challenged traditional conventions of travel writing taking Britain as their 'exotic' subject matter. The books provide an intimate exploration of Britain with detailed descriptions of British culture, society and landscape, delivered with poetic prose and perceptive illustrations.

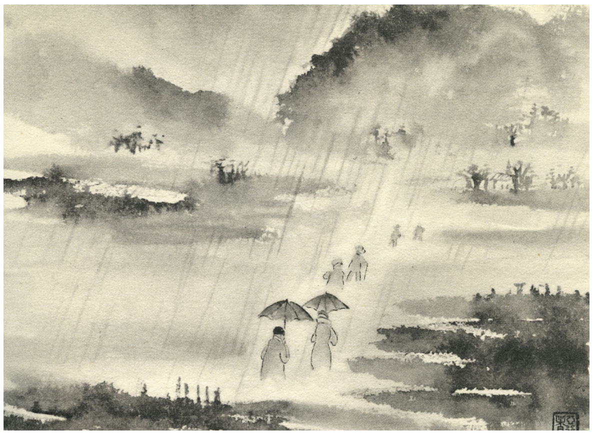


Figure 2 - ‘Going to church in the rain, Wasdale Head’, 1937, ink on paper, reproduced in ‘The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland’ (1937)

A Chinese Artist in Lakeland: The modern expression of national tradition

In 1937 the first of the *Silent Traveller* books was published, under the title, *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. It is a slim volume of just 67 pages divided into five chapters, each dedicated to a different Lake area and describes Chiang’s two week journey through the region, in 1936. Using a combination of detailed, descriptive narrative and 13 monochrome illustrations, he conveys the distinctive character of the landscape and the people in each place he visits. For Chiang, the Lake District held particular appeal as a subject for his first travelogue because of the region’s historical associations with several of Britain’s literary and artistic elite, including

Wordsworth, Constable and Turner. Chiang saw a connection between the activities of these artists and the traditions of China's literati, in terms of their common love of natural beauty and their efforts to capture it, which he felt transcended cultural boundaries. In this book Chiang makes his own contribution to the artistic legacy of the Lake District.[48]

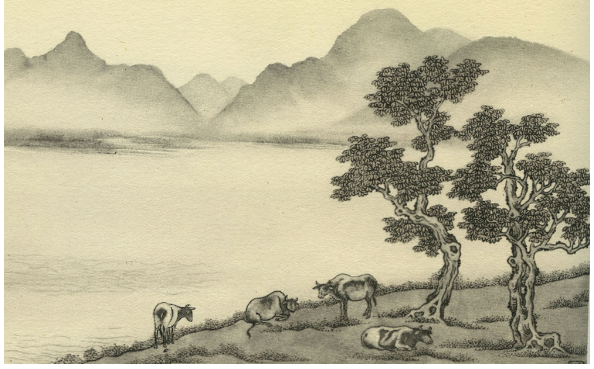


Figure 3 - 'Cows in Derwentwater', 1937, ink on paper, reproduced in 'The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland' (1937)

Chiang's illustrations of Britain were executed using traditional Chinese materials; ink, brushes and absorbent paper, and he applied many of the principles of Chinese painting to them; though he says he did 'not set out to turn the British scene into a Chinese one', rather 'to interpret British scenes with my Chinese brushes, ink and colours, and my native method of painting'.[49]

Recognisably Chinese in style the illustrations succeeded in capturing the particular character and atmosphere of the landscapes in the Lake District, with striking and unusual results. In the preface to *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*, Herbert Read identifies Chiang as, 'a master of the art of landscape painting' and his art work as '... the modern expression of national tradition'.[50]

Although Chiang openly acknowledged the 'different flavour' of his illustrations he did not want them to be appreciated simply on the basis of their 'Chinese' character.[51] Chiang's artistic aims lay in capturing the essence of what he saw, not in identifying his work with the Chinese tradition or otherwise, which he saw as an arbitrary exercise. He writes,

> *...most people nowadays know something about the general appearance and subject matter of Chinese paintings. Unfortunately, they are apt to be biased. If they see a picture with one or two birds, a few trees or rocks piled together, they will certainly say that that is a lovely Chinese painting. But if they see anything like Western buildings or a modern figure there, they will suddenly say "that is not Chinese". In this book I have painted from the surroundings in which I have lived these last few years, and I hope my readers will not be so biased as to say that they do not like the paintings because they are not "Chinese". And I also hope some of my readers are not biased in another way and will not say that they like this painting because it has a Chinese flavour. I should like them to criticise my work without preconceptions.*[52]

Chiang breathed new life into many of Britain's most iconic landscapes and landmarks in a unique style that allowed them to be both instantly recognisable and yet different looking; capturing the essence rather than an exact visual record of the subject. (fig. 4) The ability to capture the atmosphere and spirit of his subjects is arguably indebted to both the use of Chinese media and techniques, and traditional Chinese conventions of painting from memory rather than life; allowing a scene to become imbued with the particular emotional responses of the painter. In the introduction to *The Chinese Eye*, Chiang writes:

> *The painter's aim is to convey an atmosphere, a poetic truth... Whether we paint a small orchid, a young tit or the rugged cliffs of the Yangtze gorges, we must always have some poetic message to convey. If only we can transfer to the mind of the*

> *onlooker this fruit of our dreaming contemplation, we have no care for verisimilitude…'*[53]

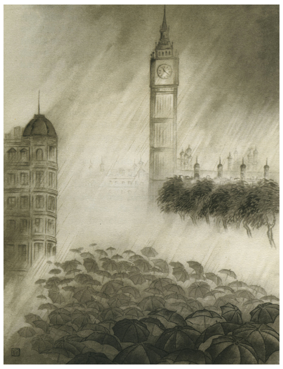


Figure 4 - 'Umbrellas under Big Ben', Chiang Yee, 1938, ink on paper, reproduced as plate V in 'The Silent Traveller in London' (1938)

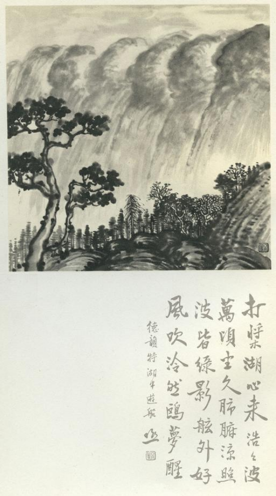

打槳湖心來浩々波
萬頃空久肺腑涼照
波皆綠影艇外好
風吹冷然鷗夢醒
德韻特湖中遊船
啞

Figure 5 - Frontispiece 'Storm on the Screes', Chiang Yee, 1937, ink on paper, reproduced in 'The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland' (1937)

Regardless of Chiang's artistic intentions to create works that transcended cultural definition or categorisation, the 'Chinese flavour' of his works, which are necessarily created by his choice of materials and methods of working, undoubtedly accounted for much of their particular appeal to Western audiences and the subsequent success of his illustrated travelogues.[54]

Poetry and prose

Poetry is central to all the Silent Traveller books. Poems written by Chiang and other poets, in both Chinese and English are scattered throughout the text, and many of the illustrations are accompanied by poems written in elegant Chinese script (with English translations). This combination of visual and literary arts reflects the traditional Chinese practice of inscribing poems on paintings. The prose itself also has clear poetic qualities. Describing the morning of a boat trip in the Lake District Chiang writes:

> *Next I came to the boats' landing stage; looking across to the other side as far as I could see, the mountain ranges stood out clearly against the blue sky and even the beams of sunlight could*

> *be separately counted. The morning smoke was steadily puffing up from the chimney of some house hidden in the mass of trees and only a roof might be hazily discerned through the mist.*[55]

For this quality of the writing Chiang was greatly indebted to his student and friend Innes Jackson, who selflessly reworked and edited the text of this and many of Chiang's other books, including *The Chinese Eye*. The book was beautifully produced with high quality plates and Chiang's name embossed on the spine and front cover in flourishing Chinese characters, adding to the Chinese aesthetic and exotic appeal of the book. It sold out in its first month and was republished in nine subsequent editions.[56]

Other 'Oriental' travellers in London

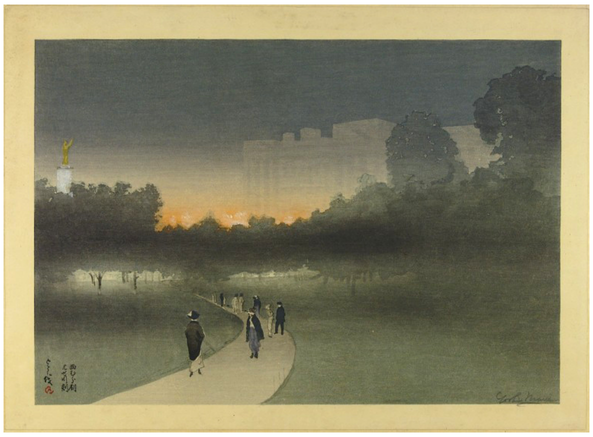


Figure 6 - 'Buckingham Palace, London, seen across the Green Park at dusk', Yoshio Markino, circa 19

Despite the relative rarity of such literary accounts of Britain, Chiang's first travelogue, written in 1937, was not without precedent. At least two other 'Oriental' writers had previously written accounts of their lives in London, with varying degrees of illustration.

In 1907, Japanese author artist Yoshio Markino (1869–1956) illustrated a book called *The Colour of London* with innovative interpretations of London scenes, in a style heavily influenced by traditional Japanese woodblock printing techniques. In 1910 he went on to write and illustrated a travelogue entitled, *A Japanese Artist in London*.

In 1920, a Chinese law student and journalist M. T. Z. Tyau, also wrote an account of his life in Britain in a book called, *London Through Chinese Eyes*, though he did not provide any of the illustrations. It is not clear whether Chiang was influenced by, or even familiar with Markino's work, but he was certainly familiar with Tyau, whose book he quotes several times in *The Silent Traveller in London*. London Through Chinese Eyes clearly provided inspiration, if not a model for Chiang's book, not least in terms of its idiosyncratic structure.[57] However, although the concept of an illustrated travelogue about Britain, by an Asian author seems not to have been a new one, Chiang's certainly became the most popular and successful. This was due to the particularly observant and erudite style of the narrative as well as the unique quality of the illustrations, but also because of increased interest in China at the time of their publication.

The Silent Traveller in London

While the Lakes book took the form a travel journal with a clear chronology and sense of journey, Chiang took a much more idiosyncratic approach to his subject in *The Silent Traveller in London*. It is characterised by themed ruminations on a wide variety of seemingly trivial subjects such as the weather, teatime, children, books and the theatre. The book is divided in to two parts. Part one takes the reader on an alternative tour of London exploring the unique character of the city in each of the four seasons. Part two examines London life and society; describing museums and galleries, parties and people, habits and customs, all in intimate detail with a combination of sharp observation and conversational charm. *The Silent Traveller in London* represents one of Chiang's most intimate portraits of Britain as it was his home for over seven years and the first British city of his acquaintance. The narrative not only provides detailed descriptions of the city, but also describes many of the personal relationships that coloured his life there.

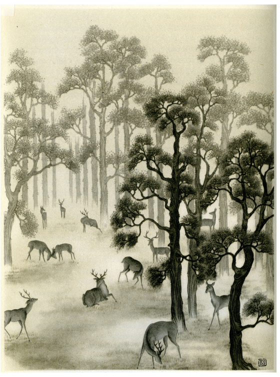


Figure 7 - 'Deer in Richmond Park', Chiang Yee, 1938, ink on paper, reproduced as plate V in 'The Silent Traveller in London' (1938)

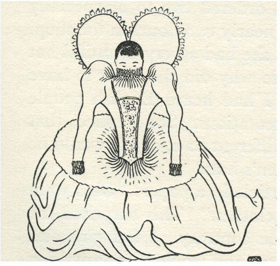
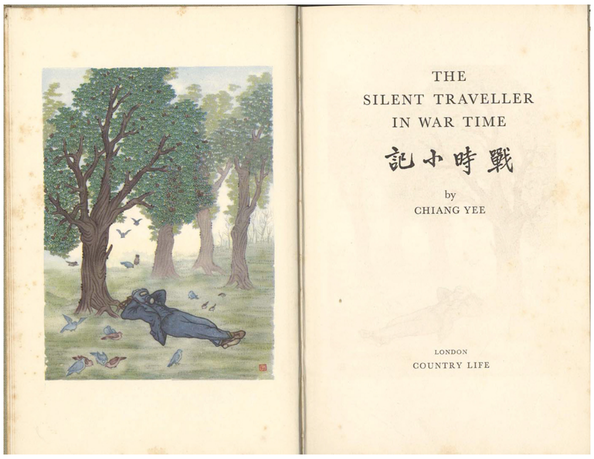


Figure 8 - Sketch, 'The head of the Chinese lady would not even emerge from the Elizabethan skirt', Chiang Yee, 1938, ink and pencil on paper, reproduced in 'The Silent Traveller in London' (1938)

In each of his travelogues Chiang takes obvious pleasure in drawing the reader's attention to the smaller details of life. He writes, 'I am diffident of fixing my eyes on big things, I generally glance down at small ones. There are a great many tiny events which it has given me great joy to look at, to watch and to think about.'[58] Describing the pleasure of London parks he writes, 'I like to wander in London parks when it is windy, because I can see the quivering shapes of the tree-branches and the leaves being blown all in one direction or in confusion, producing a special sound very agreeable to listen to.'[59] Such descriptions exemplify the sense of false naivety that often characterises the narrative of the *Silent Traveller* books, despite their positive attributes. This coupled with his generally flattering portrayal of Britain and his avoidance of more serious issues such as politics and the more unpleasant realities of life in early 20th century Britain lend the books a certain superficiality. However, Chiang does occasionally adopt a more critical tone, even if in a light hearted manner. In his chapter 'On Women', Chiang wryly remarks on the current fashion for wearing historic Chinese garments, among ladies of his acquaintance:

> *I was once struck by a lady who wore an old Chinese robe at a party. She was very proud of her gown… but I am inclined to wonder what English people would think of a small and short Chinese lady wearing an Elizabethan type costume picked up from the drawer of a repertory theatre. I can almost imagine the head of the lady would not even emerge from the huge skirt.'*[60]

The Silent Traveller in War Time



THE
SILENT TRAVELLER
IN WAR TIME
戰時小記
by
CHIANG YEE

LONDON
COUNTRY LIFE

Figure 9 - Frontispiece, Chiang Yee, 1939, ink on paper, reproduced in 'The Silent Traveller in War Time' (1939)

War overshadowed Chiang's life in Britain and had a profound effect on him, not least because of the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937, which wrought terror and violence throughout China, blighting the lives of his family and friends. He recorded the details of his own experiences of life in wartime London in his third *Silent Traveller* book, *The Silent Traveller in War time*, published in 1939.

The book is dedicated to his brother who was killed in the first months of the Sino-Japanese war and is poignantly written in the form of a letter to him. Despite the potentially distressing premise of this book, the narrative is upbeat and Chiang frequently describes scenes of beauty in his wartorn surroundings, such as silent shoals of barrage balloons drifting in the moonlit sky. The illustrations are a combination of paintings in newly colourful and naïve style and atmospheric monochrome ink paintings.

A Means of Escape

The Silent Traveller books offered readers the novelty of an 'Orientalised' view of Britain, coupled with a comforting account of familiar British landscapes, which provided gentle escapism during the dark days of the Second World War and the depression that followed it.

Although the travelogues are ostensibly about Britain, the narratives are interwoven with references to China, and reflections on Chinese cultural history and traditions. Consequently, the reader cannot forget that this view of Britain is that of 'a homesick Easterner'. In this way, the *Silent Traveller* books represented, not only a new perspective on Britain, but also fascinating insights into Chinese life, culture and ways of seeing. In this excerpt from, *The Silent Traveller in London*, Chiang writes about the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival: 'It is supposed to be the birthday of the moon. At this time all the sweet-shops produce a great variety of seasonable cakes, which we call 'Moon-Cake'... We generally have a specially good dinner on all festival days, and this certainly is no exception.'[61]

Although the *Silent Traveller* books present a charming, light-hearted personality intoxicated by his experiences of a new culture and eager to share his own, the narrative is pervaded by a sense of longing for home. It seems clear that as well as serving as an outlet for his creativity and a practical source of income, the *Silent Traveller* books also fulfilled Chiang's own need for escape, from the realities of his difficult personal circumstances. Throughout his life in Britain, Chiang struggled with depression, anxiety, loneliness and the guilt of having abandoned his family, and his writing provided an opportunity to re-connect with the China of his past; untouched by the war by which it was being ravaged at the time he wrote these texts.[62]

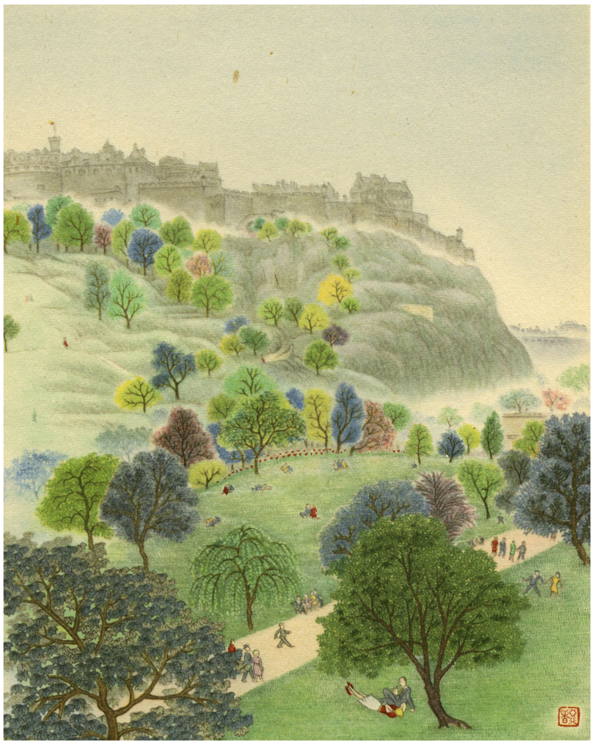


Figure 10 - 'The castle in the summer haze', Chiang Yee, 1948, ink on paper, reproduced in 'The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh' (1948)

Chiang discovered a successful literary formula in the *Silent Traveller* travelogues, and went on to write four more Silent Traveller titles about his travels in Britain, interspersed with other projects in the years leading up to 1954. (fig. 10) They simultaneously offered the appeal of the exotic and an antidote to equivalent Western accounts of China many of which, Chiang lamented, were based on scant evidence and experience of the country. He writes:

> *Many travellers who have gone to China for just a few months come back and write books about it, including everything from literature and philosophy to domestic and social life, and economic conditions. And some having written without having been there at all. I can only admire their temerity and their skill in generalising on great questions. I expect I suffer together with many others in the world, whose characters have been mis-generalised in some way.'*[63]

This feeling of woeful misrepresentation provided the impetus for many of Chiang's subsequent efforts to bring a better understanding of Chinese culture to the British public.

A Nationalistic instinct

Chiang's autobiographical account of his childhood in China offers an intimate insight into Chinese life and culture. *A Chinese Childhood* (1940) details not only a personal history but a way of life that died out when modern social reforms were introduced to China. As such it is a valuable historical record as well as a fascinating account of Chiang's early life. It is illustrated throughout with sketches and drawings, which accompany anecdotes and stories about life in China; from festivals and school life to food, clothes and hairstyles of the time.[64]

Presenting an accurate picture of China and Chinese experiences was central to much of Chiang's work. In 1938, he accepted a short contract at the Wellcome Museum of medical history to work on displays of Chinese medicine, which he did on a part-time basis until 1940. During this time he curated several new displays on East Asian medical practice, and created instructive illustrations to accompany the objects. In his letter of acceptance for the post Chiang wrote:

> *I have been thinking of coming to do something for you as you suggested. I suppose you would like to make a proper show of Chinese exhibits in your museum, as you said yours is the first and best medical museum in the world, so it must be adequately arranged for the world appeal. We Chinese have suffered sometimes from the inadequate and not proper arrangement of our things in some museums in Europe. […] Therefore, this nationalistic instinct has driven me to accept your suggestion and I would like to do my best for you if possible.*[65]

This letter clearly demonstrates Chiang's concern to establish anauthentic representation of Chinese culture; to display Chinese artefacts in a proper context and as they were understood and used in China. In addition to satisfying his ‘nationalistic desire’ to accurately present Chinese culture, the job at the Wellcome Museum also represented much needed additional income for Chiang, especially as his teaching contract at SOS was not renewed after 1938. In 1941 the Wellcome Museum was hit by German bombs and the new displays that Chiang had created were sadly destroyed.[66]

Conclusion

Observant and articulate, Chiang Yee built a career on his knowledge of Chinese art and culture as well as his experiences as a Chinese exile in Britain. His books and lectures on Chinese art and culture gave much needed explanation and context to this then little understood subject, and signalled the beginning of a new era in which Chinese people were, for the first time able to represent their culture directly to Western audiences. The *Silent Traveller* books, with their alternative presentation of Britain, were an innovative attempt to synthesize two very diverse cultures at a time when the Orientalist model, characterised by a fictitious dichotomy between Occident and Orient, persisted as a dominant influence in the collective British consciousness.

The body of work that Chiang produced whilst living in Britain provides further interest when considered in the context of the emergence of the field of Chinese studies and Chinese art in particular; when imperialist frameworks established in the preceding century began, gradually, to be dismantled by more rigorous academic studies and presentations of China and Chinese culture, resulting in a noticeable shift in public attitudes towards China.

Through his activities as an artist, writer and educator Chiang played an active role in establishing a new era of cultural exchange between Britain and China, driven by the desire for improved scholarship and representation of Chinese art and culture as well as new commercial opportunities. Chiang was just one of a group of influential actors who contributed to this growing field of cultural interaction, but one who stands out for his unique approach to both literary and artistic projects.

Endnotes

1. Chiang's pen name 啞行者' Ya Xing Zhe'was inspired by Confucian traditions of scholarly retreat, a practise associated with many of China's best known painters and literati. Chiang elucidates his thoughts on this practise of scholarly retreat in: Chiang Yee. *The Chinese Eye: An Interpretation of Chinese painting*. London: Methuen, 1935: 70–72. In adopting this pen name Chiang clearly identified himself with this tradition, further enhancing the image that he cultivated for himself, as a modern literatus.

2. Chiang Yee recorded his explorative journeys, initially around Britain and latterly in many other parts of the world including America, Australia and Japan writing a total of 12 *Silent Traveller* books during his life.

3. Lin Yutang was one of the most influential Chinese writers and intellectuals in the first half of the 20th century. He moved from China to America in 1936 where he established himself as an eminent writer and essayist on the subject of modern China. His most famous works include *My Country, My People* (1935) and *The Importance of Living* (1937).

4. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010. Further research on Chiang Yee, in English includes: Huang, Suchen S. 'Chiang Yee', in *Asian-American Autobiographers: a bio-bibliographical critical sourcebook*, edited by Guiyou Huang. Greenwood Press, 2001; Janoff, Ronald. *Encountering Chiang Yee: A Western Insider Reading Response to Eastern Outsider Travel Writing* AnnArbor.MI, UMI Dissertation Services, 2002; Tzu-Chiu, Esther. *Literature as Painting: A Study of the Travel Books of Chiang Yee.* Masters Dissertation: University of Northern Colorado, 1976; Chen, Anna. Chinese in Britain. Seriesbroadcast on BBC Radio 4 in April/May, 2007. Chiang Yee is discussed by Diana Yeh (Keele University) in episode 8; Wright, Patrick. *English Takeaway: Reflections on The Anglo-Chinese Encounter*. Series of essays, Broadcast on Radio 3 in 2008. One episode is devoted to a discussion of Chiang and his work.Further sources on Chiang Yee's life include:Chiang, Yee. *Memoirs of a Chinese Childhood*. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1940; Chiang, Yee. *China Revisited*. New York: Norton, 1977.

5. This region has strong associations with many of China's best known artistic and literary figures including Li Bai (701–762) and Su Shi (1037–1101). Throughout his life Chiang felt the strong influence of this legacy and he attempted to model his own image and later career on the lives of China's revered literati. He fondly reminisces about his hometown in many of his *Silent Traveller* books as well as in his memoirs.

6. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 12–15.

7. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 21–22.

8. Correspondence between Innes Jackson and Chiang Yee, quoted in Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 66.

9. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 33–49.

10. Sullivan, Michael. *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996: 36.

11. Ibid: 36 According to Michael Sullivan many Chinese students were sent to

France after World War 1 ended in 1918, on the 'diligent work and frugal study' program, launched by Cai Yuanpei.

12. *British Museum.Chinese Diaspora in Britain.* Accessed January 25, 2012.

13. *Chu Chin Chow* was a popular musical comedy set in the Middle East, combining the two main locations and cultures at the centre of European Orientalist fantasies. The character after whom the show was named was a wealthy Chinese merchant and was one of the key 'Chinaman' caricatures of early 20th century Britain. The musical premiered in 1916 but its popularity saw it return to the London stage in 1940 and it continued to be performed throughout the war years. In *The Silent Traveller in London* Chiang recalls the influence of this musical on his own reception in London: 'Four or five years ago I used to hear them (children) singing a chorus from the play Chu Chin Chow, when I passed them.' In *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938:109.

14. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 51, 57, 60.

15. Liu Haisu was founder of the Shanghai Academy of Art. He was instrumental in introducing Western artistic practices not only into his own work but to that of his students in China; including life drawing and drawing from nature, which for many traditionalists at the time was seen as radical and controversial.

16. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938:151.

17. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 59.

18. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 57.

19. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 53.

20. Ibid.

21. *An Exhibition of Modern Chinese Paintings and Fans by Chiang Yee*. London: Mrs Betty Joel Gallery, 1936.

22. Chiang, Yee. *The Chinese Eye*. London: Methuen, 1935:4.

23. Sullivan, Michael. *Art and Artists of Twentieth-Century China*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1996: 8–9.

24. Clunas, Craig. ‘Oriental Antiquities/Far Eastern Art’. *Postions east asia culture critique* 2.2 (Fall, 1994): 324–326.

25. In the introduction to *The Silent Traveller in London* (1937) Chiang recalls a comment made about him by a London critic which exemplifies this lingering imperialist attitude towards China and Chinese people. He writes, ‘As I am an Oriental (actually one of those strange Chinese people who “belong to an age gone by” as a London critic said of me) [...]’. In *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: ix.

26. Pierson, Stacey. *Collectors, Collections and Museums: the Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560–1960*. Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2007:115.

27. Fry, Roger et al. *Chinese Art: An Introductory Review of Painting, Ceramics, Textiles, Bronzes, Sculpture, Jade,etc.* Burlington Magazine Monographs. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1925:1.

28. Stacey Pierson points out, many collectors and researchers were attracted to Chinese art by the Chinese tradition of art connoisseurship in the early 20th century and a small number were sufficiently proficient in Chinese language to be able to translate original texts on Chinese art and collecting practices. This fostered a more balanced reading of Chinese art compared beyond the more Euro centric surveys to the preceding centuries. S. W. Bushell, Percival David, Arthur Waley and Osvald Siren all translated and published Chinese texts on art and art collecting in English during the early 20th century. See Pierson, Stacey. *Collectors, Collections and Museums: the Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560–1960*. Oxford; New York: Peter Lang, 2007:127.

29. Waley was Assistant Keeper of Oriental Prints and Manuscripts at the British Museum from 1913–1929. He taught himself Chinese and Japanese and later devoted himself entirely to the study of Chinese and Japanese literature producing many translations throughout his life.

30. Bickers, Robert. A. ‘“Coolie Work”: Sir Reginald Johnston at the School of Oriental Studies, 1931–1937’. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Third Series, Vol. 5, No. 3 (November, 1995): 387–9. Former naval medic and scholar of Chinese bronzes and Buddhist art, Walter Percival Yetts was the first to hold the lectureship in Chinese Art and Archeology at SOS.

31. *Catalogue of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art 1935–6*. London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1935.

32. David,Sir Percival. 'The Exhibition Of Chinese Art: A Preliminary Survey'. *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol.1, No.393 (December, 1935): 239. Quoted by Pierson, Stacey. *Collectors, Collections and Museums: the Field of Chinese Ceramics in Britain, 1560–1960*. Oxford and New York: Peter Lang, 2007:154.

33. Stacey Pierson argues that despite the unprecedented collaboration with the Chinese government and the resulting range of objects on display, the exhibition ultimately represented a British interpretation or view of Chinese art. According to Pierson's research, despite requests from the Chinese government that Palace museum staff should select the objects for the exhibition, David insisted that selections should be made by the British executive committee.

34. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 60.

35. Swedish art historian Osvald Sirénalso became another key contributor to the study of Chinese painting, writing in English in the first half of the 20th century. His major works on the subject include; *The Chinese on the Art of Painting: Translations and Comments* (1936), *A History of Later Chinese Painting* (1938) and *Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles* (1956). Although their approaches were different, Sirén's as an academic and Chiang's as an artist, they both attempted to present a Chinese approach and understanding of Chinese painting to Anglophone audiences.

36. Laurence Binyon became Keeper of Oriental prints and drawings at the British museum in 1913.

37. Binyon, Laurence. 'Painting and Calligraphy'. In *Chinese Art*, edited by Leigh Ashton. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, 1935:1.

38. Chiang received significant assistance from Innes Jackson in refining his manuscript, which he acknowledges in the book.

39. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. London: Country Life, 1937: Preface.

40. Binyon, Laurence. 'The Chinese Eye: An Interpretation of Chinese Painting by Chiang Yee: Book Review'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* No. 1 (January, 1937): 165–166.

41. Chiang makes specific mention of Eumorfopolous' attendance at his lectures in *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938:248.

42. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 78–9, 118. Da Zheng notes the doubts expressed by BBC producers about Chiang's accent and also lists the broadcasts Chiang participated in which included: 'Another poet's world' (December 29, 1937). On which he talked about particular qualities of Chinese poetry and recited some works in Chinese (November 1937).'The Northern Program'(11 February, 1938). A discussion of landscape around Lakes with a local farmer.'Chinese Art' on The Home Service BBCWAC (31 March, 1943).

43. Including the *Sunday Times* National Book fair in 1937. He also supported several fundraising events organised by charitable organisations sending aid to China with lectures and painting demonstrations, including the *Artists Aid China Exhibition*, March 31-May 25, 1943 and various charitable events organised by Lady Cripps British United Aid to China fund throughout the late 1930s and 1940s.

44. In the preface to his detailed biography of Chiang Yee Da Zheng notes the enduring relevance of this text which continues to be used as a standard text for college level calligraphy classes in North America see:Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: xx.

45. Li, Ch'i. 'Chinese Calligraphy by Chiang Yee: Book Review'. *The Far Eastern Quarterly* Vol.14, No.4, Special Number on Chinese History and Society (August, 1955): 578–579.

46. London publishers signal books republished *The Silent Traveller in London* in 2001 and The Silent Traveller in Oxford in 2003 as part of their Lost and Found travel series. The Mercat Press in Edinburgh also republished the Silent Traveller in Edinburgh in 2003. Between 2009 and 2010 the Lakes, London, Oxford and Edinburgh books have been translated and published in China for the first time, by the Shanghai People's Press.

47. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. London: Country Life, 1937: 3.

48. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. London: Country Life, 1937: 1–2.

49. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in Edinburgh*. London: Methuen, 1948:2–3.

50. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. London: Country Life, 1937: Preface.

51. *Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: xvi.

52. Ibid: xvi-xvii.

53. Chiang, Yee. *The Chinese Eye: An Interpretation of Chinese Painting*. London: Methuen, 1935:104.

54. E.H. Gombrich cites Chiang's painting 'Cows at Derwent Water', reproduced in *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland* (1937), in his seminal text *Art and Illusion*, to support his thesis that the artist's tendency is to '[...] see what he paints rather than paint what he sees' in accordance with the artist's own specific cultural idiom. For an in depth discussion on representation in art specifically citing Chiang Yee's work see:Gombrich, E.H. 'Part Three: Form and Function'. In *Art And Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation*. London: Phaidon, 1960.

55. *******Chiang, Yee. The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*. London: Country Life, 1937: 32.

56. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East.* New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 74.

57. Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 72. Zheng writes that Markino's book *A Japanese artist in London* (1910) was discussed at a meeting Chiang had with publishers *Country Life* prior to the publication of *The Silent Traveller: A Chinese Artist in Lakeland*, but it is not clear from his discussion whether or not Chiang's book was based on Markino's or not.

58. Chiang, Yee. *The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: x-xi.

59. Chiang, Yee. *The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: 83.

60. Chiang, Yee. *The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: 220.

61. Chiang, Yee. *The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: 38.

62. Chiang relates his grief and anxiety in a letter to Innes Jackson: Letter from Chiang Yee to Innes Jackson, 23 August, 1937 quoted in: Zheng, Da. *Chiang Yee: The Silent Traveller from the East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2010: 77.

63. Chiang, Yee. *The Silent Traveller in London*. London: Country Life, 1938: x.

64. This text continues to be a useful reference for scholars and

researchers today and was recently referenced by Pauline Le Moigne in: ‘La symbolique auspicieuse des chapeaux populaires d’enfants en Chine’. In *Costumes d’enfants :Miroir des grands: Hommage à Krishna Riboud*: Exhibition catalogue, Musée Guimet, Paris, 20 October - 24 January 2011.

65. Letter from the Wellcome collection archives relating to Capt. Johnston-Saint. File WA/HMM/ST/Lat/A41.

66. Letter from Chiang Yee to Capt. Johnston-Saint, dated June 2nd, 1941; The Wellcome collection archives File WA/HMM/ST/Lat/A41.

Room 38A and beyond: post-war British design and the Circulation Department

Joanna Weddell, AHRC CDA Disseminating Design, Centre for Research and Development, University of Brighton and Research Department, the Victoria & Albert Museum

Abstract

Many exhibits in the V&A's forthcoming *British Design 1948–2012* were collected by the Circulation Department; this article draws on a variety of sources to outline the Department's activities from 1947 until closure following government cuts in 1977. Was the country deprived of 'a standard-setting and cost-effective service which continues to fulfil the vision of the original founders of the V&A', as

a petition to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, claimed?[1]

Introduction

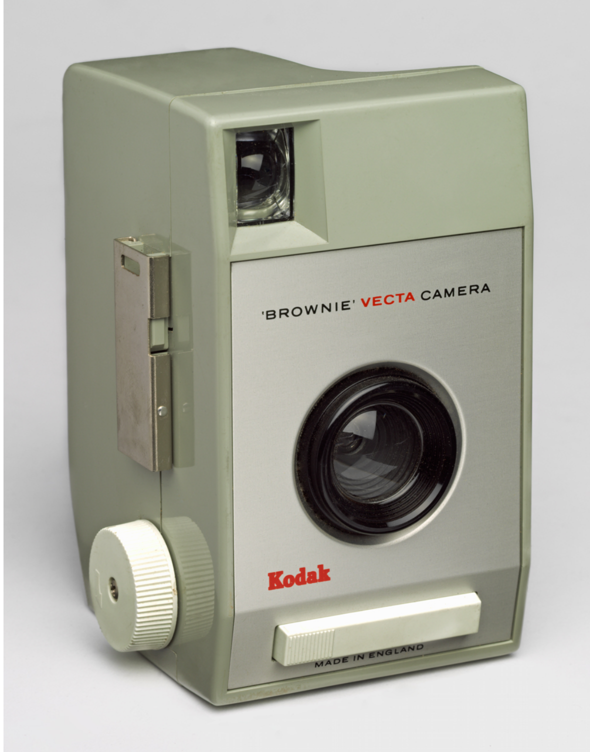


Figure 1 - Brownie Vecta, camera, Kenneth Grange for Kodak, 1964, plastic and nickel. Museum no. CIRC.124-1965

Observant visitors to the V&A exhibition *British Design 1948–2012: Innovation for the Modern Age* will notice that several of the post-war objects of British design bear a museum number with the prefix ‘Circ’ (fig. 1). This prefix is not a reference to some uncertainty about the object’s date (‘circa’) but an abbreviation of a now defunct department of the Museum – the Circulation Department – in-house known simply as ‘Circ’. Circ operated from what is now the temporary exhibition space, beyond Room 38A. The Department was responsible for loan shows that travelled to two categories of venue – to regional museums, art galleries and public libraries, and to art schools and education colleges; thus disseminating art and design across the UK. Today the vehement reaction to Circ’s closure in 1977 is not the only evidence of the Department’s achievements.

The ‘Circ’ objects selected for the forthcoming exhibition can be considered as having a reciprocal relationship with British design, since they travelled so widely across the UK. The ‘Art and Design for All’ dictum celebrated by the recent Bonn Exhibition and the current government agenda on regional engagement show the enduring value of the democratic ethos of the

Department under Keeper Peter Floud CBE (1947–60) and later Hugh Wakefield (1960–76).[2] It is a tribute to the energy of Circ staff and their significance in the history of contemporary collecting by the V&A that 'Circ' objects span such a variety of styles, mediums and functions, from a Lucie Rie bowl to Kenneth Grange's Chefette.[3] The history of the Victoria and Albert Museum has been well researched but a detailed history of the Circulation Department remains to be written and this article builds on new and extensive primary research in the V&A's own archive files at Blythe House.[4] The Department's formal activities were published yearly in booklet and prospectus form and others have interviewed Circulation staff as part of the ongoing V&A Oral History project.[5] This article uses a range of research mediums to outline the post-war ethos of the Circulation Department and the variety of shows travelling to museums. Loans to art schools and colleges and the evolution of this service are discussed in some detail, as is the acquisitions policy. The article closes with reactions to the decision to axe the Department following government cuts in 1977.

Ethos

Until closure in 1977, the Circulation Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum could be considered the oldest such institution for the preparation of travelling exhibitions of museum material in the world, originating as part of the Design Reform initiative centred on the Government Schools of Design at Marlborough House.[6] Following a major re-organisation of the Museum in 1909, each V&A Department transferred part of its collection to Circulation for loan to the regions. By 1950 the Department's own distinct holdings amounted to over 25,000 objects and today the current official total of 'Circ' objects is over 32,000.[7] The Circulation collection did 'not in any way represent a collection of "throw-outs", discarded as being unworthy of exhibition at South Kensington, or even of second-class examples of lesser monetary value', as the Keeper Peter Floud emphasized in 1950.[8] The Circulation collections consisted of a selection of the whole Museum's collections, and included important objects such as a seventeenth-century Thomas Toft plate and Thomas Girtin's 'Warkworth Hermitage'. Circulation staff were more concerned with acquiring contemporary work than the other Departments of the 'parent' museum, aiming to collect the best British and international work in the field of the decorative and graphic arts. As the future Keeper, Hugh Wakefield, noted in 1959, Circ acted, 'as the growth-point of the Museum', ranking 'as the national collections of the present and of the past hundred years'.[9]

This focus on comparatively recent and even contemporary objects gave Circ a distinct identity in relation to the Museum as a whole, close to its original mission, arguably more 'redolent of modernity' and liberal in instinct.[10] Within the Museum, Circ staff were seen as left-wing in sympathy and less scholarly in their approach to objects, perhaps due to the specific demands of travelling shows. Under Floud, however, Circ established a reputation for innovative scholarship in fields then ignored by other departments of the Museum, such as Victorian and Edwardian design.[11] The Oxbridge background of senior Circ staff of the post-war period can be seen as traditionally ‘Establishment’ but this did not prevent them from promoting a number of assistants with art school training.[12] The underlying principle of the Department’s circulating exhibitions was that they should be shown in institutions open to the public without charge. Exhibition design supported this aim through full labels and descriptive notes, often mounted on a lectern, obviating the need to purchase explanatory catalogues. Whilst catalogues were available for a limited number of shows (just six out of sixty-one in 1959, for example) these were modestly priced, and provincial institutions were supported in producing their own catalogues as the Department provided detailed text. Equality of access was further promoted by the charging structure: where a standard transport fee applied irrespective of the borrower’s location in the UK, and through the Department’s willingness to consider loans to a variety of institutions, provided these were secure.[13]

British design and the Circulation Department

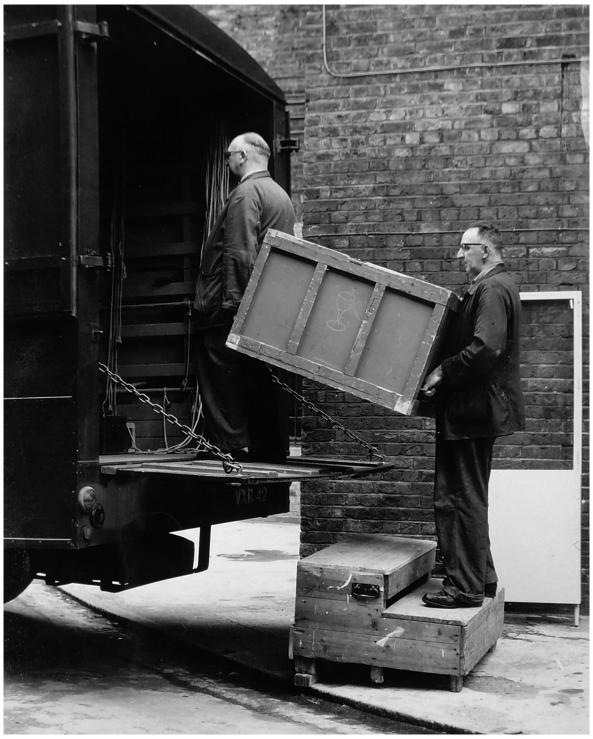


Figure 2 - Circulation Department Packers, V&A Archive MA/15/37. No. V143

The Circulation Department may be seen as having a reciprocal relationship with design in post-war Britain through its shows in museums, galleries and art schools across the UK. The Department's travelling exhibitions were in the 'long tradition of placing, at the disposal of regional museums and galleries, its expertise in every field of activity within the sphere of the fine and decorative arts' (fig. 2).[14]

Regional museums and art galleries

Peter Floud joined the Circulation Department in 1935, leaving in 1939 when the Department closed during the war, and returning as Keeper of Circulation to re-open the Department early in 1947. In Floud's view, 'all museums can be of use to intelligent teachers' and museums are, 'anxious to be of use', echoing Henry Cole's dictum of a 'schoolroom for everyone'.[15] Floud made changes to museum circulation, introducing shorter loans and a range of exhibitions that responded to the very different sizes and needs of the host museums, galleries and other institutions. Travelling exhibitions were 'specially prepared for the typical small general museum which needs non-specialist exhibitions, appealing to a completely uninformed public'. Such exhibitions were 'supplied with much fuller and more didactic labels than would normally accompany a Victoria and Albert exhibition'.[16]

Arguably such explicit aims could be seen as patronising to provincial galleries but, given an understanding of the democratic aims of the department, this approach may be seen as pragmatic in promoting access for all. Starting in 1947, Floud quickly constructed some 15 larger travelling exhibitions that toured in standard travelling showcases and offered provincial galleries a complete survey show, for example on Gothic or Islamic Art. What is notable about these exhibitions is the variety of original material employed to represent the subject in a manner that cut across the Museum's own Departmental division into materials. The Islamic Art show contained glass, ceramics, woodwork, ivory, metalwork, brocades, velvets, miniatures and book-bindings, in a manner we might associate with a more modern approach to 'material culture'.

Survey exhibitions were comprehensive and of high quality, for example the History of Lithography contained 150 prints ranging from Goya to Picasso (fig. 3).[17]

In considering the diverse needs of regional host venues, Floud and his team produced both shows that were limited to two-dimensional material for hanging and those containing only three-dimensional material for galleries with limited wall space. There was a post-war trend for the more important Circulation Department exhibitions to be shown at South Kensington 'before being sent to the provinces'.[18] There was also a deliberate policy to use designers from outside the Museum for a proportion of Circulation Department exhibitions, giving them a distinct identity.[19] Floud stressed the importance of established channels of distribution without which circulating exhibitions would, as he writes with some feeling, 'moulder in the storage vaults of the bureaucratic organisations'.[20]

By the mid 1960s under Keeper Hugh Wakefield, travelling exhibitions for museums and art galleries covered a variety of periods and media, sometimes being formed in co-operation with other museums (for example, European Arms and Armour with loans from the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, and the Tower Armouries), in response to new bequests (for example Chinese Export Porcelain from Basil Ionides) or to appeal to a particular type of museum visitor (for example Animals in Art - with the superbly appropriate order code 'ED1' - to educate children).[21] Travelling exhibitions often amounted to collaborative ventures that utilised the expertise and collection loans of a variety of regional museums and varied from those with popular appeal such as Oriental Puppets to more 'serious' exhibitions with an explicit appeal for knowledgeable collectors like London Porcelain.[22]

Though the Circulation Department had a reputation for maintaining an independent stance within the Museum, it nevertheless did work with colleagues in other departments to produce exhibitions.[24] The Department also produced exhibitions using objects from other V&A departments, for example Peasant Rugs and Wall-hangings with the Textiles Department.[25] Circulation Department exhibitions could contribute to the rise in status of objects regarded elsewhere in the Museum as 'mere ephemera', for example Posters of the Fin-de-Siecle, a Schools Loan in 1964–65.[26]

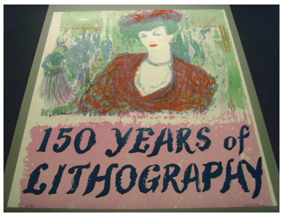


Figure 3 - '150 Years of Lithography', poster, Charles Mozley, England, 1948, auto-lithograph. Museum no. C.17459.C. Photograph by Joanna Weddell

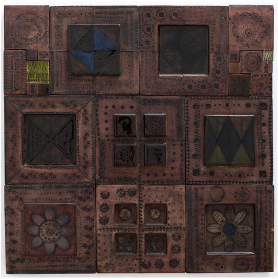


Figure 4 - Tile Panel, Rut Bryk for Arabia factory, Helsinki, Finland, 1960, earthenware. Museum no. CIRC.101-1963

Travelling exhibitions were shown right across the regions, for example in 1964–65 British Studio Pottery travelled to Belfast, Glasgow, Keighley, Kettering and Lancaster. Venues happily accepted a wide variety of exhibitions spanning different periods and media, for example in 1964–65 Belfast Arts Council Gallery hosted exhibitions as diverse as British Studio Pottery; Contemporary Italian Prints; Twentieth-century French Prints; and European Arms and Armour.[27] Loan exhibitions might contain contemporary British work such as Weaving for Walls organised with the Association of Guilds of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, or historic material in thematic displays such as

> The Italian Renaissance. This Italian Renaissance exhibition contained a mouth-watering diversity of objects - Maiolica from Faenza, Deruta and Urbino, Della Robbia ware, Venetian glass, terracottas, bronzes, metalwork, marquetry, gesso-work, leatherwork, textiles, framed original prints, illuminated manuscripts, bookbindings, embroidery, lace, and architectural photographs.

Exhibitions could be designed in a didactic manner to show evolution in design, for example through the 25 chairs dating from the seventeenth century to the mid-sixties displayed in The English Chair.[28] Exhibitions illustrating development could end with especially commissioned works making the Circulation Department's role as arbiters of contemporary design taste explicit, as in Tiles which contained tiles from the Middle East and Europe, from 1200 up to the work of Finnish artist Rut Bryk in 1963.[29] (fig. 4) Post-war the Department used its independent acquisitions funds to encourage particular design approaches by commissioning pieces for the permanent collections.[30]

Circ exhibitions could lead to a revival in a particular industry, as is claimed for the 1955 English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste show held with Manchester's Cotton Board, or for a particular designer, as with the Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts show and William Morris.[31] At South Kensington from the mid-sixties, the Department showed a frequently changing series of small exhibitions, and recent modern acquisitions in the northern and southern halves of the Restaurant Gallery respectively, making these available to 'the considerable public which uses the restaurant'.[32] These shows, geographically close to the

Department's offices 'beyond Room 38A', have received little scholarly attention but students from the Royal College of Art who studied within the South Kensington buildings were influenced by these Circ exhibitions.[33]

Regional art schools

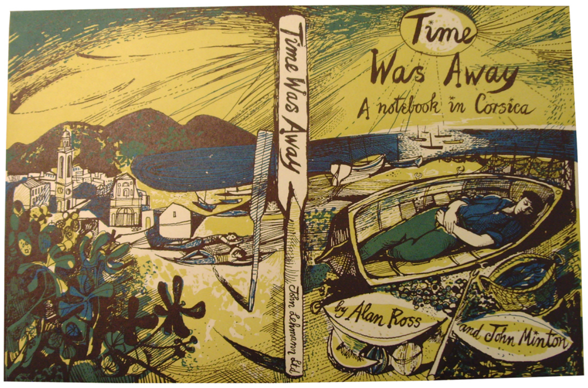


Figure 5 - 'Time Was Away, A notebook in Corsica', Book jacket, John Minton for John Lehmann Ltd, England, 1948. Museum no. C.17925. Photograph by Joanna Weddell

Loans to art schools and teachers' training colleges were re-established after the war, starting in 1948, although as the Museum's own archive is incomplete, the first post-war Circulation prospectus dates from the academic year 1951–52.[34] By this date the Department was circulating collections to some 270 educational institutions around the UK and aimed to provide a service tailored to their specific needs; for example, sending out a questionnaire in 1950.[36] The 1951–52 prospectus made available 125 different categories of 'sets' usually of 18 frames of original material, photographs, facsimile and collotype reproductions. The proposed audience may be seen to relate to the divisions of teaching departments in art schools and also to the departments of the Museum.[37]

The order and division of the categories of schools sets changed over the post-war period but overall the hierarchy continued to emphasise two-dimensional fine art material.[38] Some framed sets had a structured didactic purpose such as

The Decorative Arts in England designed as a series of six running in chronological order from 1675 to 1825 to be shown for a term at a time in sequence, thus educating students over six terms, or two academic years. Sets of facsimile reproductions were of traditional old masters, as for Holbein Drawings; on a theme as for Figure Studies, covering national schools such as Flemish Drawings; or selected to illustrate contrasting styles; like Classical and Romantic.

Art school sets were also created for particular departments to teach technical processes and their historical development, such as The History of Wood-engraving and Wood-Cutting and The Process of Wood-engraving and Wood-cutting, brought up to date by Contemporary Wood-engravings and Wood-cuts. Some sets are of interest today as they were the result of the Department's collaboration with well-known practitioners. John Minton is represented in the Colour Line-Block set of artist-separated line-block illustrations in progressive colour-proofs (fig. 5).[39] Marianne Straub created a didactic set of 'tabby-weaving' with examples by Peter Collingwood added later. The set was commissioned 'to illustrate the variety of textures and effects obtainable in a single simple weave' from 'a leading individual weaver'.[40] In one innovation some loans to art schools could be handled as contemporary textiles were supplied hanging loose.[41]

Art school sets were international in scope, for example, 'Contemporary Illustrated Children's Books included English, French, Swiss, Danish, Polish, Czech, and Russian books. In the immediate post-war period, the Department offered regional art schools unusual and hard to obtain original contemporary material such as foreign posters, ‘rarely seen by the general public’ in Contemporary Posters and ‘export only’ fabrics, ‘not seen on the home market’ in Contemporary Miscellaneous Textiles. There were inherent difficulties in framing certain art objects, so that ceramic tiles are present as originals, whilst sculpture was necessarily photographed. Even at the early date of 1951, commercial design was not neglected, for example ‘Commercial Packaging’ showed a varied selection of mainly foreign contemporary package design.[42]

Development of service to regional art schools

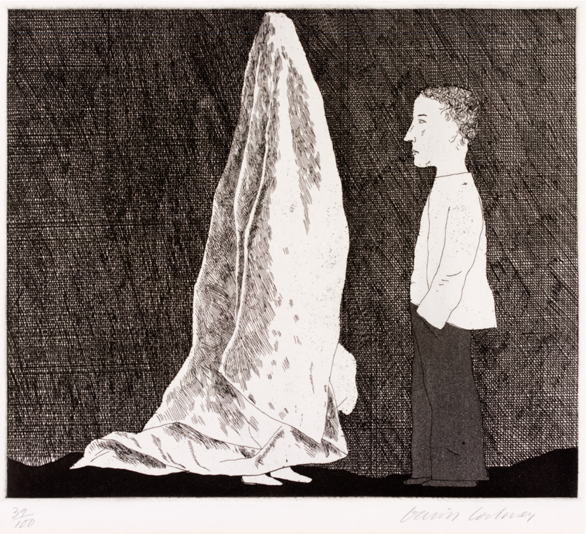


Figure 6 - ‘The Sexton disguised as a Ghost’, Six Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm, David Hockney, England, 1969–70, etching. Museum no. CIRC.152-1971

By the mid-1950s the Department circulated its collections to around 300 schools of art right across the UK with about 170 different subjects covered in 510 framed sets. The pool of framed sets available totalled 11,250 with that of unframed material being 20,000, including the duplicate sets of popular material. A staggering 1,200 framed exhibits were staged with an additional 6,000 showings of unframed mounts in 1955/56. In addition, the Museums section of the Department had shown some 61 different exhibitions to 136 galleries, a total of 300 showings.[43] This prospectus also listed the most popular sets so that schools of art could order strategically and stand a better chance of receiving sets they wanted. The most popular sets were of textiles; Teaching of Embroidery and Wax Resist-Dyed and Printed Cottons. Other sets which also received more than 20 requests included great artists of the western canon like Da Vinci, as well as modern graphic material such as Contemporary Greeting Cards. A similarly varied mix, perhaps surprisingly, received more than 10 requests, for example Raphael and Commercial Packaging.[44] In 1963, moving with the times, the Typography and Printing category offered Contemporary Book-Jackets, Record Sleeves, mainly of foreign origin although some were British.[45]

The variety in media, period and location seen in loans to museums continued in Schools Loans, for example in 1964–65 Posters of the Fin-de-Siecle travelled to Coventry College of Education, Leeds University Department of Fine Art, Leicester College of Art, Newcastle on Tyne College of Art and Industrial Design and Oxford School of Art.[46] In the late 1960s copies and reproductions of works of art were withdrawn from Schools Loan circulation as these were seen as a poor substitute for ‘first-hand contact with original and unique works of art’; perhaps by this date good quality illustrations in books, magazines and slides were more widely available.[47] Art school loans began to be constructed less as ‘illustrated histories’ with technical relevance for a specific craft or medium and rather aimed to be of general interest to art and design students by ‘enlarging their daily horizon’. The display locations of these loans changed and they were shown in central areas rather than in individual studios, with the aim that a fabric might inspire painters and graphic design inspire fashion students, reflecting a more general period trend towards interdisciplinarity.[48]

In 1968 the speed of loan turnover increased with the basic period being three or four weeks to occupy just half an academic term, although art schools could double this to cover a whole term as before. The Drawings category showed traditional and modern art that linked the work of contemporary artists to that of known masters, for example Twentieth-Century British Drawings contained work by Sickert and by Peter Blake. Circ simultaneously toured high quality original fine art etchings by Canaletto, Piranesi and Tiepolo lent by the Trustees of the British Museum with its own recently acquired contemporary material, ensuring the regions enjoyed the latest developments in art.[49] In 1971, for example, Circ acquired David Hockney's etchings Six Fairy Tales from the Brothers Grimm of 1969–70, published in 1971; this material went out on loan in the academic year 1972–73 and visited a variety of locations and venues around the UK, from city museums and libraries to universities and smaller country galleries.[50] (fig. 6) By 1972–73, the service held 180 loan collections which were shown a total of 729 times in art schools and colleges around the UK.[51]

Acquisitions policy

Unlike other Museum departments which had a 'fifty year rule' against purchasing recent objects, Circ continued the founding mission to collect contemporary design as an educational resource for manufacturers, designers and the public. At the start of the post-war period Peter Floud could already write that 'the Circulation Department's contemporary collections are now much more extensive than those of the main Museum'.[52] Peter Floud's first acquisitions for the Department were a selection of French lithographs purchased direct from Paris.[53] Contemporary textiles became a strength of the

Department and early acquisitions were a mixture of gift and purchase sometimes even from the same manufacturer at the same time.[54] This emphasis on two-dimensional material reflects the ease with which such material could be transported to disseminate contemporary international design to a wide audience, largely starved of such stimulus during the war years.[55] Circ was prepared to consider material for exhibition that would have been rejected by other Museum departments, a policy supported by the then Director, Leigh Ashton.[57] The Department's collecting policy was in advance of the market, enabling them to acquire objects at good prices.[58] Collecting the work of living designers was, however, considered problematic at the start of the 1950s; though even this did not prevent the Department from acquiring such material.[59] In addition to concerns about showing preference to particular designers and firms, either causing offence or giving commercial advantage, there was the possibility of arbitrary personal curatorial taste, the ideal being to eliminate anachronisms and build a classic and enduring collection.[60] As other commentators have noted, Circ's acquisitions of modern material were not universally bold in taste.[61]

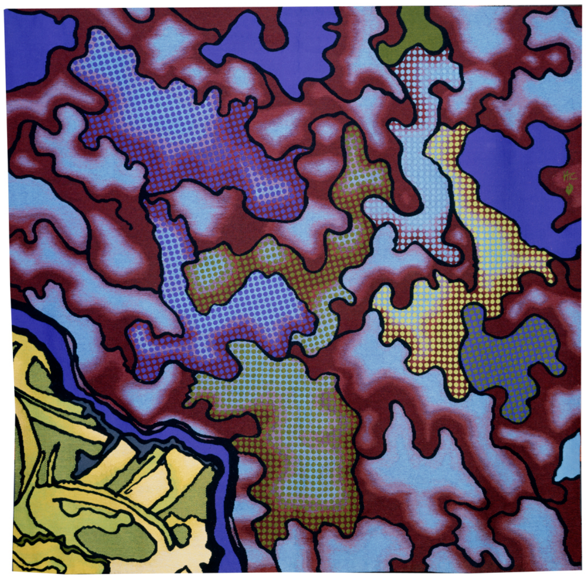
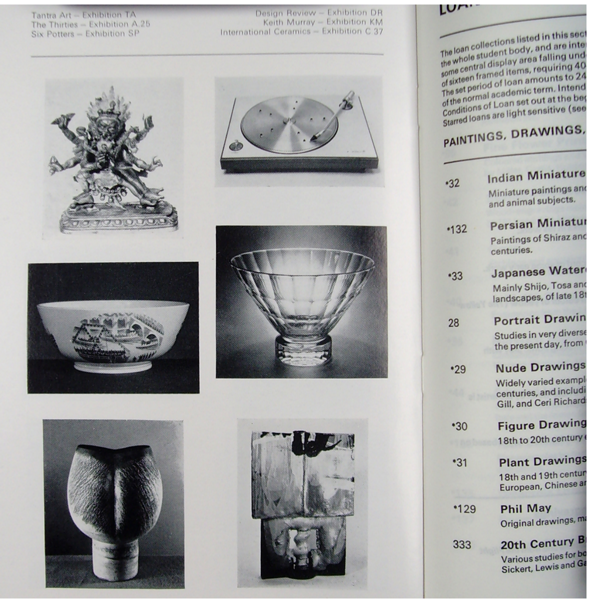


Figure 7 - 'Over All', tapestry, Harold Cohen, Edinburgh Tapestry Co., Edinburgh, Scotland, 1967, tapestry. Museum no. CIRC.536-1967

The Circulation Department's policy to purchase contemporary design responded to, 'an overwhelming bias of demand' for loan exhibitions of modern work from large colleges of art.[62] The principals of art colleges required exhibitions of new and contemporary material to make an impact as works needed an appeal that was, 'strictly of the moment', necessitating a 'ruthless turnover of material'.[63] Contemporary work donated to the Museum by artists was sent straight out in travelling exhibitions to disseminate contemporary design to students and the public. Following Eduardo Paolozzi's 1971 gift of the collages shown at his 1952 lecture to the Independent Group at the ICA, the artist gave an edition of his 'Bunk' prints to the Museum on publication in 1972, forming an exhibition that travelled to public galleries in Dundee, Luton and Wolverhampton in 1973–4.[64] The speed with which such artwork was listed in the prospectus and sent out to art schools is impressive. The Circulation Department was able to purchase contemporary material that would have been controversial in other Departments without going through the full formal procedure for approval, in part due to the low monetary value of such objects which could, therefore, be purchased out of petty cash.[65] Work acquired directly from Circ visits to art schools and at student shows was usually free, gifted by students pleased to be selected for the Museum collection.[66]

Contemporary material could still be problematic, particularly when the Department commissioned artists and makers to produce objects for touring collections. Circulation, like other Museum departments, sought to maintain complete freedom of taste and choice in its acquisitions. Circ rejected any suggestion that it 'should need to refer elsewhere for proper discrimination' in the field of modern design or should compromise, 'taste and direction' when commissioning high quality designs in a contemporary idiom that would appeal to teachers and students (fig. 7).[67] A number of the 'of the moment' exhibitions of contemporary design of a 'more experimental nature' that were originally formed as special exhibitions for the Schools Loan Service (under the direction of Carol Hogben, Deputy Keeper of Circulation) were also shown later at regional museums through the Travelling Exhibitions service, for example Pop Graphics.[68] These transfers to Travelling Exhibitions could include contemporary material whose 'value' was explicitly affirmed by its acquisition by the Circulation Department, displayed together with works still in the collections of art dealers and potentially available to purchase.[69]

Circulation Department exhibitions also promoted emerging British design talent across the UK by exhibiting the work of students from regional centres of excellence, with the open aim of encouraging particular industries.[70]



Tantra Art – Exhibition TA
The Thirties – Exhibition A.25
Six Potters – Exhibition SP

Design Review – Exhibition DR
Keith Murray – Exhibition KM
International Ceramics – Exhibition C 37

The loan collections listed in this sect
the whole student body, and are inte
some central display area falling und
of sixteen framed items, requiring 40
The set period of loan amounts to 24
of the normal academic term. Intend
Conditions of Loan set out at the be
Starred loans are light sensitive (see

PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS,

•32 Indian Miniature
Miniature paintings an
and animal subjects.

•132 Persian Miniatu
Paintings of Shiraz and
centuries.

•33 Japanese Water
Mainly Shijo, Tosa and
landscapes, of late 18

28 Portrait Drawin
Studies in very divers
the present day, from

•29 Nude Drawings
Widely varied exampl
centuries, and includi
Gill, and Ceri Richard

•30 Figure Drawing
18th to 20th century

•31 Plant Drawings
18th and 19th centur
European, Chinese a

•129 Phil May
Original drawings, m

333 20th Century B
Various studies for b
Sickert, Lewis and G

Figure 8 - Art School Loan Collections, 1975–77, showing the wide variety of material available. Photograph by Joanna Weddell

Whilst the Circ emphasis tended to be on two-dimensional or easily transported material, larger industrial designs were accessioned after the decision to accept those objects given Design Centre Awards. Selections of the Design Centre Award objects were circulated as part of the art schools programme, often with design drawings and blueprints so that students could see the process of design undertaken by successful designers such as Kenneth Grange.[71] Following this development, Carol Hogben proposed to circulate examples of industrial design from abroad to provide UK art schools with an international overview of design developments and a balance to British designs. Criticism of this approach, which could be seen as a government-funded department giving commercial advantage to foreign competitors, was countered by touring only those objects which had also won a design award in their own country, for example the Beogram 1202 turntable by Jacob Jensen for Bang &Olufsen which won an award from the Danish Society of Industrial Design in 1969 (fig. 8).[72] By 1971, *The Sunday Telegraph* could write that it was ‘good to know that British, and indeed international, craftsmen and designers now have a pretty generous ‘patron’. For around 1,000 ‘contemporary objects’, anything from an award-winning telephone to a Pop festival poster, are bought and collected by the Circulation Department each year.’[73]

Closure: a standard setting and cost-effective service

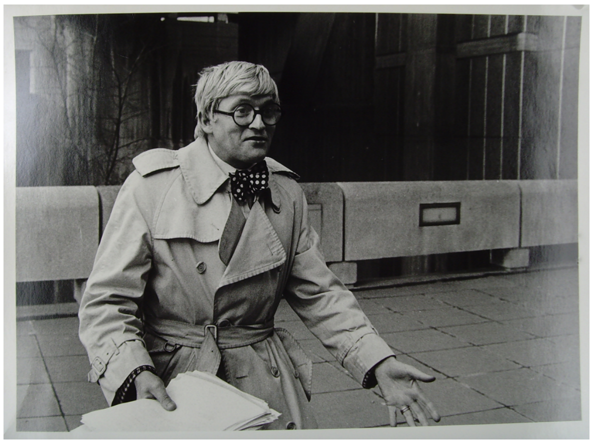


Figure 9 - David Hockney on the South Bank, with a petition against Circ’s closure for Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education and Science, 15/12/1976. Photograph by Andrew Kimm. V&A Archive MA/15/37

In the early 1970s the staff numbered some 38, in two near equal sections, with 70 travelling exhibitions for museums and galleries, and 20 shows and 230 collections for art schools.[74] The Circulation Department was well known for its ability to tour exhibitions of popular contemporary material to a huge range of venues across the country and was viewed as ‘an alternative museum, a museum broken up into small, coherent units, and constantly on the road’ and described as ‘one of the real splendours of the V & A’.[75] The Department’s focus on contemporary acquisitions was seen as showing ‘great imagination and foresight, forming a museum within a museum'.[77] This distinct role was blurred from 1975 when the V&A Director, Sir Roy Strong, allocated special funds for the acquisition of post-1920 objects by other curatorial Departments, marking a change in official attitudes towards the Museum's founding educational mission.

The Department was first amalgamated with the Education Department to become the Department of Regional Services but news of its complete disbandment in late 1976, due to government cuts, was greeted with dismay. In December 1976 following Strong's announcement of Circ's fate, David Hockney presented a petition signed by artists, art critics, college principals and historians to Labour's Shirley Williams, Secretary of State for Education and Science, protesting against the Department's closure (fig. 9). These prominent petitioners pointed out that the closure 'would irretrievably deprive the nation of ready access to a significant part of its art collections' and 'deprive the whole country of a standard-setting and cost-effective service which continues to fulfil the vision of the original founders of the V&A'.[78] The secretary of the Museums Association was quoted saying that, 'the V&A material which is sent out is a highly valuable means of bringing modern design and contemporary craftsmanship to the notice of the public in the provinces'.[79]

Users of the Schools Loans service bemoaned the fact that without the Circulation Department, 'the Victoria and Albert Museum would become just another passive, metropolitan monolith, to be visited by out-of-towners once or twice a year'.[80] Regional venues for travelling exhibitions felt that the closure would 'cut off the provinces from a source of educational and artistic material which we have now come to count on very greatly indeed'.[81] A militant Merseyside County Council was 'prepared to lead a provincial revolt against the London art establishment' by withdrawing co-operation unless the closure was dropped.[82] Some commentators, whilst recognising that underfunding of regional museums had led to a dependence on the V&A travelling exhibitions, were less sympathetic. 'Merseyside may huff and puff about being deprived of their exhibitions from London, but what cultural facilities are they generating through their own resources?'[83] Strong perhaps hoped that Labour's support for the regions would result in the over-ruling of his proposal to impose government cuts solely on Circ and counted on a vociferous backlash from regional voters galvanising MPs around the country but, despite debate in both Houses, the Department was disbanded. Circulation staff either left or were moved to posts elsewhere in the Museum, with the collection being absorbed, very gradually, into other Departments, creating a heavy workload for them. The remaining Keepers then took up the role of 'strengthening the Museum's representation of twentieth-century design' and to emphasise this commitment the Museum created a temporary exhibition, Objects – The V&A Collects 1974–78, the period that spanned the closure of Circ, to give a ‘preview’ of the projected Twentieth Century Gallery.[84]

To the V&A’s credit, current DCMS performance indicators of regional engagement – the terminology may have changed since Henry Cole’s day but the intent remains – show the Museum as considerably in advance of comparable London museums with loans to 254 venues around the UK in 2009–10.[86] Collecting contemporary design has returned to a central position in the Museum’s work, whilst long-term relationships with the regions continue to be developed at Sheffield and Dundee. The Circulation Department and its many activities beyond Room 38A officially ceased in April 1977. The last recorded purchase by the Circulation Department was a Misha Black 1938 wireless design for Ekco for £40 [87] whilst the final accession was a Design Centre Award winner, an automatic helm system for tiller-steered yachts by Derek Fawcett.[88] The very last recipient of a Circulation Department exhibition should have been the Bowes Museum at Barnard Castle which would have returned ‘Minton’ to South Kensington on 12 November 1977, however, due to closure, the Minton show never travelled. A Victorian initiative to drive forward good British design had ended.[89]

Acknowledgements

This research has been undertaken as part of the AHRC funded CDA, ‘Disseminating Design: museums and the circulation of design collections 1945 – present day’, a collaboration between the Research Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Centre for Research and Development, University of Brighton, 2010–15. I am grateful for the support of Professor

Jonathan Woodham, University of Brighton, Professor Christopher Breward, University of Edinburgh, and Ghislaine Wood, Research Department, Victoria and Albert Museum. My thanks go to the V&A Online Journal's reader, to Lily Crowther, Angela McShane, Matthew Partington, Ella Ravilious, Linda Sandino, Eric Turner and Helen Woodfield at South Kensington, the staff of the National Art Library and V&A Archive, particularly James Sutton, the staff of the Library and Design Archive at the University of Brighton, and to Elizabeth Bailey and Catherine Kinley.

Endnotes

Abbreviations: V&A Archive – VAA; National Art Library – NAL.

1. Our Arts Reporter. 'Artists oppose V&A cut'. *The Times*, 16 December, 1976: 8.

2. Von Plessen, Marie-Louise.; Julius Bryant (co-curators). *Art and Design for All*. Kunst-und Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik, Bonn, 2011–2012.

3. Bottle, Lucie Rie, 1959. Museum no. CIRC.126–1959 and Electric food processor. Museum no. CIRC.731-1968 both proposed for Breward, Christopher. *British Design 1948–2012*. Victoria and Albert Museum, 2012.

4. The standard works on the Victoria and Albert Museum are as follows. Burton, Anthony. *Vision and accident: the story of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: 1999. Baker, Malcolm and Brenda Richardson. *A Grand design: the art of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London: 1997. Somers Cocks, Anna. *The Victoria and Albert Museum, the making of the collection*. Leicester: 1980. The Circulation Department is also covered in Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for design: The influence of the Victoria & Albert Museum*.

London: 1986. See also Floud, Peter. *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope*. London: V&A, Curwen Press: post-1949.

5. For example, NAL PP.11.H. CW. The Year's Work 1964–65, 1965–66, 1966–67, 1973–74. As part of the V&A Oral History project Matthew Partington, Linda Sandino and Anthony Burton have interviewed Circulation Department staff (Barkley, Coachworth, Elzea, Hogben, Knowles, Morris, Opie), although some of these have yet to be formally released. The official version of the Circulation Department closure is given in Burton, Anthony, ed. *Review of the Years 1974–78*.London: V&A, 1981.

6. As the V&A Online Journal's Reader rightly points out, the early art schools were circulating contemporary objects from Paris from 1844; see Wainwright, Clive and Charlotte Gere. 'The Making of the South Kensington Museum I: The Government Schools of Design and founding collection 1837–51'. *Journal of the History of Collections* 14:1 (2002). In 1948 Peter Floud dated the start of Circ to 1848 and the Italian purchases of Mr Gruner for the Schools of Design; see MA/15/14, draft radio broadcast on Circ's centenary. See also Floud, Peter. 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum'. *Museum*3.4 (1950): 299 'Museums and circulating exhibitions', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris, UNESCO publication 852. A summary of Design Reform is: *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. Oshinsky, Sara J. 'Design Reform'. Accessed October, 2011. https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dsrf/hd_dsrf.h

7. CIRC prefixed objects totalled 32,493 at 17.8.11: V&A CMS.

8. Floud, Peter. 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum'. *Museum* 3.4 (1950): 299 'Museums and circulating exhibitions', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris, UNESCO publication 852.

9. VAA: MA/15/23. Wakefield, Hugh, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum'. In Hugh Wakefield and Gabriel White. *Handbook for Museum Curators, Part F, Temporary Activities, Section 1, Circulating Exhibitions*. London: The Museums Association, 1959: 7–17. In addition to contemporary material, Circ was also responsible for the acquisition of many of the Museum's Victorian objects through: *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts. Victoria and Albert Museum, 1952*. For example, Catalogue No. 8. 'Loan by Mrs A.M.H. Westland of Decanter, silver mounted glass bottle set with precious stones and antique coins, by

William Burges 1866', now CIRC.857-1956.

10. The Museum has been described as created 'from a pot-pourri of influences redolent of modernity – international exhibitions, the department store, liberal economics, technical design education and utilitarian reform ideology yet it was also informed also by the more traditional curatorial and aesthetic motivations of John Charles Robinson and his successors.' Barringer notes that 'South Kensington was large, impersonal, bureaucratic, systematic and liberal in its economic and political instincts'. See Barringer, Tim. 'Victorian Culture and the Museum: Before and After the White Cube'. *Journal of Victorian Culture* 11.1 (2006):133–145.

11. Linda Sandino's interview with Barbara Morris gives useful context. Sandino, Linda. 'News from the Past: Oral History at the V&A'. *V&A Online Journal* 2 (2009). Accessed December 12, 2010. [https://www.vam.ac.uk/res/cons/research/online/journal/journal-2-index/sandino-oral-history/index.html] On the research undertaken for 'English Chintz' 1960, for example see: Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum.* London, 1986: 116.

12. Peter Floud, Keeper 1947–60, studied at Wadham College, Oxford and the London School of Economics; Hugh Wakefield, Assistant Keeper 1948–1960 and Keeper 1960–75, studied at Trinity College, Cambridge. Elizabeth Aslin studied Fine Art at the Slade, joining Circ in 1947 and rising to Keeper of Bethnal Green 1974–81; Shirley Bury studied Fine Art at Reading University, joining Circ in 1948 and rising to Keeper of Metalwork 1972–85; Barbara Morris studied Fine Art at the Slade, joining the Department in 1947 and rising to Deputy Keeper of Ceramics and Glass in 1976. See: Victoria and Albert Museum, '*Obituary of Peter Floud, CBE*'. Accessed December 12, 2010.; Victoria and Albert Museum, '*Obituary of High Wakefield*'. Accessed March 2, 2011; Aslin, Elizabeth Mary. *Who Was Who*. A&C Black, 1920–2008 and Online Edition, Oxford University Press, December 2007. Accessed February 24, 2012. www.ukwhoswho.com; Hughes, Graham. 'Obituary: Shirley Bury'. *The Independent*, April 4, 1999. Accessed 11.1.12; Victoria and Albert Museum, '*Obituaries of Shirley Bury*'. Accessed December 12, 2010.

13. VAA: MA/15/23. Wakefield, Hugh, 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria and Albert Museum' in *Handbook for Museum Curators, Part F, Temporary Activities, Section 1, Circulating*

Exhibitions, edited by Hugh Wakefield and Gabriel White. London: The Museums Association, 1959: 7–17.

14. VAA: Central Inventory 1977. Loose insert memorandum, 77/896, signed Roy Strong, Director [no date].

15. Victoria and Albert Museum. Frayling, Professor Sir Christopher. *'We Must Have Steam: Get Cole! Henry Cole, the Chamber of Horrors, and the Educational Role of the Museum'.* October 30, 2010. Accessed 12.9.11.

16. Floud, Peter. 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum'. *Museum* 3.4 (1950) 'Museums and circulating exhibitions', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris, UNESCO publication 852: 299.

17. Floud, Peter 'The Circulation Department of the Victoria & Albert Museum'. *Museum* 3.4 (1950) 'Museums and circulating exhibitions', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris, UNESCO publication 852: 299

18. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1965–66*. London, HMSO: 5

19. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1964–65*. London, 1965: 5

20. Floud, Peter. 'Commentary on a Projected International Circulating Exhibition "The Museum, an Educational Centre"'. International Council of Museums, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, WS/101.108, Paris, 30.10.1951.

21. NAL 502.M.0848. Morris, Barbara. I*nspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum. London, 1986:63*. From 1909 "When any major collection was acquired, either by purchase, gift or bequest… a proportion of the pieces were set aside for circulation. This practice continued until the Department was closed by the Government in 1976".

22. VAA: MA/18/3. *English Creamware*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum. The exhibition's 8-page booklet. London, HMSO 10/68. The research acknowledgements for *English Creamware* are to Mr A. R. Mountford, Stoke-on-Trent Museum; Mr William Billington, Wedgewood Museum; Mr D. S. Thornton, Art Librarian, City Art Gallery, Leeds; Mr Christopher Gilbert, Temple Newsam House, Leeds; Mr R. G. Huges, Derby Museum; Mr Alan Smith, Liverpool City Museum. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum,

Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1966–67*. London, 1967: 5/6.

23. *Drawings by G. B. Tiepolo (1696–1770) from the Print Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum. 1970*. Introduction by Graham Reynolds, Keeper, Department of Prints and Drawings, and Paintings. V&A Archive MA/18/3/4.

24. NAL PP.11.H. CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1964–65*. London, 1965: 7/8. List of Travelling Exhibitions.

25. NAL 502.M.0848. Barbara Morris writes on the work of Cheret, Toulouse-Lautrec, Forain, Steinlen, Willette, Grasset, Mucha: "It is a strange irony that these latter posters, now commanding thousands of pounds apiece, were then [1931] regarded as mere ephemera and were not officially registered as museum objects until the 1960s." In Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London, 1986:193. The Department also pioneered the display of photography as fine art, for example: NAL PP.11.H *National Museum Loan Service*, School Loans 1966–68, Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education*. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department, HMSO, Grosvenor Press, 6/66. See page 2 for exhibition *MP Modern Photography* with work by 12 photographers, including Man Ray, Bill Brandt, Ida Kar, Cecil Beaton, Cartier-Bresson.

26. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1964–65*. London, 1965: 8–12. List of Travelling Exhibitions.

27. NAL 77.L. National Museum Loan Service, Circulation Department, Victoria and Albert Museum, Exhibitions 1966–67, Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries. London, HMSO 1965.

28. NAL/77/L. National Museum Loan Service, Circulation Department, Victoria and Albert Museum, Exhibitions 1966–67, *Exhibitions for Loan to Museums, Art Galleries and Libraries*, HMSO 1965. C26 Tiles: 'Middle East and Europe, 1200 to present day; Persian, Turkish, Syrian; Hispano-Moresque, Italian Renaissance, German, Dutch, English. Lustre tile from Rayy, Persia; early 15th century tile from the Green Tomb of Sultan Mehmet I, Bursa; Italian maiolica from Petrucci Palace, Siena and Church of San Francesco, Forli.'

29. Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London, 1986:185. ‘Since the end of the Second World War, largely as a result of the efforts of the Goldsmiths Company, a much more original approach to silver design has emerged, a trend that has been encouraged by the Museum in commissioning pieces from leading silversmiths to add to the permanent collections.’

30. Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London, 1986:116. ‘There is little doubt that the exhibition of *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* in 1952, which was the first post-war exhibition to focus attention on the textiles of William Morris, was responsible for the reprinting of Morris’s designs by Sandersons and other firms’; ‘Two exhibitions of English chintz played a vital part in revitalizing the British textile industry: the first was assembled by the Circulation Department of the Museum at the Cotton Board, Manchester, in 1955, and entitled *English Chintz: Two Centuries of Changing Taste* (later circulated in reduced form)… As an article in *The Ambassador*, the leading British export magazine, stated, the first exhibition traced the development of printed furnishing fabrics over two hundred years and stressed the world influence of British designers; the show was ‘very closely studied by the industry, its designers, students and general public’ and was widely reported throughout the world.’

31. VAA: MA/15/17. Note from Hugh Wakefield, Keeper of Circulation Department to Mr Hodgkinson, for the Director, dated 5 March, 1965.

32. Victoria and Albert Museum. Video clip *‘My V&A: Peter Blake’.* Accessed September 1, 2011. Peter Blake recounts his time studying at the RCA in the V&A from 1953–56: “the cafe was tiny, I can’t remember which room it was in, but all around the walls were the original Beggarstaff Brothers posters, so we’d sit at the table next to the Don Quixote, that wonderful Don Quixote, I mean you could touch it, you could touch the paper, I think that that was only for a couple of years and it was quickly put behind glass” [author transcript].

33. VAA: MA/17/1/1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department, *Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers’ Training Colleges,1951–2*. London, 1951: 2. The Circulation Department Art School Prospectus archive is split across holdings at VAA Blythe House (MA/17/1) and the NAL (Periodicals PP.11.H) with records for 1948–51 and 1952–53 absent from both.

34. VAA: MA/17/1/1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges,1951–2*. London, 1951: 2.

35. VAA: MA/17/1/1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges, 1951–2*. The sections are listed as follows: The Decorative Arts in England; Non-European Decorative Arts; Drawings, watercolours, etc; Engravings, etchings, lithographs, etc; Illuminated Manuscripts; Printing and Typography; Book-production; Book Illustrations; Commercial Printing; Colour Process Sets; Calligraphy; Furniture and Interior Decoration; Textiles; Ceramics; Sculpture; Metalwork; Miscellaneous.

36. VAA: MA/17/1/2. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges, 1953–1954*. The order is as follows: Drawings; Watercolours; Graphic Art; Books, Lettering, Printing; Printing and Typography; Book-Production; Textiles; Sculpture, Ceramics; Decorative Arts etc; Metalwork, Costume and Miscellaneous.

37. VAA: MA/17/1/5. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *School Loans 1959–1960*. London, 1959. By 1959 Set No. 165 also included proofs by Bawden, Ardizzone, and others.

38. VAA: MA/17/1/6.The Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *School Loans 1962–1963*. London, 1962; MA/17/1/2. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges. 1953–1954*; MA/17/1/1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. Material Available for Loan to Art Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges, 1951–2; NAL 77.L. National Museum Loan Service, *School Loans 1966–68*. Loans available to Art Schools and Colleges of Education, Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department. London, HMSO, Grosvenor Press, 6/66. The identity of the weavers is given in the 1966 prospectus as '50 pieces, Marianne Straub, Peter Collingwood'.

39. NAL607.AC.0565. Floud, Peter, Keeper of Circulation. *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope*. London, V&A, post-1949: 4. On photographic insert.

40. VAA: MA/17/1/1. Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *Material Available for Loan to Art*

Schools and Teachers' Training Colleges. 1951–2.

41. VAA: MA/17/1/3. The Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *School Loans, 1956–57*. London, 1956:3.

42. VAA: MA/17/1/3. The Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *School Loans, 1956–57*. London, 1956: 4.

43. VAA: MA/17/1. The Victoria and Albert Museum, Circulation Department. *School Loans 1963–1964*. London, 1963: 8.

44. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1964–65, School Loans*. London, 1965:13–19.

45. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1966–67*. London, 1967: 32–37. Appendix: School Loans Conference held at the V&A 20.6.67, report by Carol Hogben.

46. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1966–67*. London, 1967: 35. Appendix: School Loans Conference Report.

47. VAA: MA/17/7. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department. *Loan Collections 1968–70*. London, 1968. Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions. Examples of the Circulation Department acquisitions are Print, Josef Albers. Museum no. CIRC.100–1968 and Print, Josef Albers. Museum no. CIRC.110-1968.

48. VAA: MA/17/7.Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department. *Loan Collections 1970–72*. London, 1970. National Museum Loan Service, Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions; MA/15/5. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1972–73*. Lists these venues: Basingstoke Willis Museum, Bath Victoria Art Gallery, Belfast Ulster Museum, Bristol City Art Gallery, Norwich University of East Anglia, Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery, Rottingdean Grange, St Helens Central Library, Scunthorpe Borough Museum and Art Gallery.

49. VAA: MA/15/5. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service,*

The Year's Work, 1972–73. London, 1973: 14–18.

50. Floud, Peter, Keeper of Circulation. *V&A Museum Circulation Department, Its History and Scope*. London, V&A, Curwen Press post-1949: 3.

51. VAA: MA/6/15. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Collections, Register of Acquisitions No. 15. CIRC.51.1947 Coloured lithograph, 'Village on a River Bank', Paul Signac, 6,500 francs, £13 10s 10d, purchased by Peter Floud from R. G. Michel, 17 Quai St Michel, Paris. Purchase form dated 23 September 1947, acquisitions entry 3 October 1947. CIRC.51-1947 to CIRC.70-1947.

52. VAA: MA/6/15. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Collections, Register of Acquisitions No. 15. For example, contemporary fabrics presented by Heal's Wholesale & Export Ltd, 196 Tottenham Court Road, London W1, about 1939. Museum no.s CIRC.209 to 214-1947 and Graham Sutherland, 'Sutherland Rose', 1946, purchased for 9s8d from Helios Ltd, Bolton, Lancashire. Museum no. CIRC.71-1947. VAA: MA/6/15. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Collections, Register of Acquisitions No. 15. CIRC.93 to 98-1948 were four purchases and two gifts of designs by Tibor Reich for Tibor Ltd, Clifford Mills, Stratford-on-Avon.

53. Not all CIRC. acquisitions were for travelling, for example CIRC.758-1969 comprised the Strand Palace Hotel Foyer, by Oliver P. Bernard for F. J. Wills, architect, illustrated in *The Burlington Magazine* Vol. 120, No. 902, Special Issue Devoted to The Victoria and Albert Museum (May, 1978): 274 to accompany Strong, Roy. 'The Victoria and Albert Museum – 1978'.The Burlington Magazine Vol. 120, No. 902 (May, 1978) and then proposed for the Twentieth Century Primary Gallery, later featured in *Art Deco*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 2003. Accessed October 20, 2011.

54. VAA: MA/28/85/1 (formerly ME/29/42). Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949–1953, Part 1. Typewritten memorandum: Peter Floud to Director, Leigh Ashton, dated 27 October, 1951, Leigh Ashton's memorandum in response was sent to Woodwork, Metalwork, Ceramics, and Textiles and asked that 'where Departments are offered as gifts or for purchase material produced during the period 1852–1952, which though possibly unsuitable for permanent retention in the Museum collections, should be considered for inclusion in the Exhibition [then titled '100 Years of British Decorative Art: 1852–1952']… inform Mr Floud in all cases'.

55. For example, VAA: AAD MA/28/85/1 (formerly ME/29/42). Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949–1953, Part 1, Typed Minute Sheet from Peter Floud to Director, Leigh Ashton, dated 31 August, 1951, notes 'opportunities may occur for purchase now at nominal prices of material which will probably be able to command quite substantial prices in the next 10–20 years. An example is the purchase… of 2 important Pugin domestic chairs for £2–10 each.'; Floud, Peter, *Victorian & Edwardian Decorative Arts*. Small Picture Book No. 34, October 1952:3/4. Introduction, initials 'P.F.' for Peter Floud, 'After having been out of fashion for the past forty years, [i.e. since 1912] Victorian furniture and furnishings are now receiving the attention of the initiated.'

56. VAA: MA/28/85/1 (formerly ME/29/42). Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts, 1949–1953, Part 1, Typed Minute Sheet from Peter Floud to Director, Leigh Ashton, dated 31 August 1951, 'In dealing with material after 1914 one has to make most invidious distinctions between living designers, craftsmen and firms, and any selection would inevitably cause some ill-feeling.'

57. NAL 77.L V&A catalogues 1955–65. *Catalogue of a Loan Exhibition of English Chintz, English Printed Furnishing Fabrics from their Origins until the Present Day*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, May 18 to July 17, 1960: 1. Introduction by Trenchard Cox, Director, May, 1960. 'A deliberate attempt has also been made towards the ideal, which is less easily attained, of excluding from the selection all traces of present-day tastes and preferences.'

58. Graves, Alun. In *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria & Albert Museum*, edited by Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson. London, 1998: 380. 'Although the Circulation Department acquired contemporary British tableware during the 1950s, what was collected tended to be quite conservative, following types popular in the interwar period. It was not until the mid-1980s that highly styled and thoroughly contemporary 1950s tableware – like Ridgeway's "Homemaker" series – was actively collected by the Museum.' The Department's innovative display methods for 'easily replaceable' contemporary ceramics, on open Perspex shelves, may further explain the focus on 'popular' rather than avant-garde styles; see Wakefield, Hugh. 'Open Display'. *Museums Journal* (January, 1957): 243.

59. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service,*

The Year's Work, 1966–67. London, HMSO, 1967: 32–37. Appendix: School Loans Conference held at the V&A 20.6.67, report by Carol Hogben.

60. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1966–67*. London, HMSO, 1967: 36. Appendix: School Loans Conference held at the V&A 20.6.67, Mr Meredith Hawes, Hon Secretary of the Association of Art Institutions and Principal of Birmingham College of Art.

61. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation, *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1973–74*. London, HMSO: 5. Travelling Exhibitions. See CIRC.713-1971 and CIRC.517 to 561-1972.

62. Rumbelow, Molly. *The Victorian Revival*. RCA MA dissertation 2003:47. Interview with Barbara Morris, February 2003: 'If anything was under £10.00 they could borrow from the petty cash and get the money back without questions being asked'.

63. Richardson, Brenda. In *A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria & Albert Museum*, edited by Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson. London, 1998: 385. Dress fabric, Marc Foster Grant, 1973. Museum no. CIRC.189-1974: 'One day in 1973 there were visitors to Daniel's class. Staff from the V&A's Circulation Department were looking for work suitable for "The Fabric of Pop," a travelling exhibition of Pop imagery in textiles and fashion of the late 1960s and 1970s. In those years, Circulation staff essentially scavenged door to door – often in art schools – to acquire contemporary design works… Grant reports that there was never a question of being paid for these works; the student designers were so excited by the Museum's interest and the prospect of exhibition that they gave to the V&A whatever the curators liked.' [At Brighton Polytechnic School of Art and Design.]

64. VAA: MA/15/17. Typescript note to the Director (probably by Hugh Wakefield) responding to criticism by Mr Wingfield Digby of the Department's commission of a Harold Cohen tapestry from Edinburgh Weavers, no date but after 1967. Harold Cohen's 'Over All' tapestry, 1967, Edinburgh Tapestry Company, CIRC.536-1967, was commissioned by the V&A in 1966. 'I am worried, however, by the suggestion that this Department – whose acquisitions consist almost entirely of examples of modern design and the crafts – should need to refer elsewhere for proper discrimination in these fields. It is surely a very reasonable convention that Departments do not refer directly…

For confirmation of their conclusions in matters such as proposals for acquisition, if only because of the compromise of taste and direction which would result.' Harold Cohen's work continues to be acquired by the Museum, for example Print, Harold Cohen, May 2003. Museum no. E.263-2005; Drawing, Harold Cohen, 1989. Museum no. E.1047-2008; Drawing, Harold Cohen, 1977 and 1982. Museum no. E.327-2009.

65. NAL PP.11.H.CW. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1966–67*. London, 1967:5/6. See also VAA:MA/15/5, Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Circulation. *The National Museum Loan Service, The Year's Work, 1972–73*. London, 1973:5. Travelling Exhibitions. Dom Sylvester: 'of a more experimental nature came from the further education service'.

66. VAA: MA/18/3/6. One such exhibition was: Hogben, Carol (curator). *Dom Sylvester Houedard Visual Poetries a Victoria and Albert Museum Loan Exhibition*. Travelling Exhibition: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1970. It contained 50 works dating from 1963–70, nine of which were the property of the Lisson Gallery.

67. VAA: MA/18/3/2. *Design in Glass, An exhibition of student work from three British art colleges 1969–70*. Showed work by students from Edinburgh College of Art, Stourbridge College of Art, and the Royal College of Art, London. The three colleges were given near equal amounts of exhibition space so celebrating their achievements equally; Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design, The influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum*. London, 1986: 172. 'The Museum has encouraged the development of studio glass in this country by building up an extensive collection of both British and foreign modern studio glass and by arranging a series of shows'.

68. VAA: MA/17/1/7. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department. *Loan Collections 1968–70*. London, 1968: 5. Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions. *PD Product Design*: 'This exhibition consists of approximately forty frames showing the original sketches, notes and working drawings for a number of miscellaneous products, together with photographs etc. of the finished article. Designers represented include Robert Welch, Ronald Carter, Kenneth Grange, Alan Tye and Knud Holscher, whilst the histories recorded include an auditorium chair, a sanitary suite, and a range of stainless steel cutlery.'

69. VAA: MA/17/1/8. Victoria and Albert Museum Circulation Department. *Loan Collections 1970–72*. London, 1970: 4. National Museum Loan Service, Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions. *ID Industrial Design International*: 'Shown in six travelling showcases accompanied by thirty framed photographs etc., this exhibition is devoted to industrially-designed objects of domestic scale and use, which have won the equivalent in their own country of a Design Centre Award within the last couple of years. A special set of eighty colour slides can be used at option, and the exhibition is both delivered, installed, and subsequently removed by the Museum's own staff. (Not available before September 1971.)'MA/17/1/9. National Museum Loan Service, *Loan Collections 1975–77*. Available to Colleges and Schools of Art, Colleges of Education, University Departments, and other Further Education Institutions. London, 1975: 7. *DR Design Review*: 'The objects in this exhibition are all mass-produced consumer items of modest size and, for the most part, domestic use, each one of which has received a major jury-selected award at national level for distinguished design. They range from a desk-top computer to a portable toilet, from stainless steel hollowware to a mountain-rescue collapsible stretcher, from an electronic digital clock to a movie camera. British goods have been specifically excluded, and most of the examples have been directly imported by the Museum for the occasion from seven different countries overseas. The aim has been to provide an opportunity for the student to appraise visual design intentions in a wide variety of product categories…'. Beogram 1202 record player, Jensen for Bang &Olufsen, 1969. Museum no. CIRC.6-1974.

70. Reilly, Victoria. 'V&A tribute to a living artist'. *The Sunday Telegraph*, January 24, 1971.

71. VAA: MA/15/17. Typescript, by Hugh Wakefield, dated August 1971, Memorandum on the possibility of Circulation Department providing a service specifically designed for public libraries [following a DES meeting 14.5.1971, ministerial suggestion to Library Councils].

72. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. Vaizey, Marina, 'National Loan Service'. *Arts Review*. London (29 January, 1972). 'There are three separate David Hockney print exhibitions on tour, and top of the pops at the moment is Hockney's 39 etchings published in 1971 which illustrated Six Fairy Tales from the

Brothers Grimm… In 1964–5, for instance, these consisted of seventy travelling exhibitions and 500 school 'sets'… larger exhibitions (some 90 at this moment) which go to museums and galleries throughout the country, and the other (some 240) which go to 'schools… the Circulation Department itself, which is really in some ways an alternative museum, a museum broken up into small, coherent units, and constantly on the road'. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. Rosenthal, Norman, 'Circulation'. Spectator (12 February, 1977).

73. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. Rosenthal, Norman, 'Circulation'. *Spectator* (12 February, 1977).
74. 'Artists oppose V & A cut' by Our Arts Reporter. *The Times* (16 December, 1976): 8.
75. VVVVAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. Nurse, Keith. V&A economy cuts 'will deprive regions'. *Telegraph* (10 November, 1976).
76. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. No full reference: cutting of letter from Hugh Adams, Department of Modern Arts, Southampton College of Technology, East Park Terrace, Southampton, headed 'The museum as a metro-monolith'.
77. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. No full reference, article headed: 'A Disaster For Doncaster', quoting Mr. John Barwick, Director of Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery.
78. Nieswand, Peter. 'Regions versus V and A'. *The Guardian* (26 November, 1976).
79. VAA: MA/19/13. Press Cuttings 1965–77. Rosenthal, Norman, 'Circulation'. *Spectator* (12 February, 1977).
80. Thornton, Peter, 'Furniture Studies – The National Role'. *The Burlington Magazine* Vol. 120, No. 902, Special Issue Devoted to The Victoria and Albert Museum (May, 1978): 284. 'Fig.19. This chair, made by Rupert Williamson in 1976 and bought by the Department last year as a telling specimen of modern design and craftsmanship, reflects the Museum's continual concern with advanced developments in taste which has recently been re-affirmed by the Director. The strengthening of the Museum's representation of twentieth-century design is now a major pre-occupation for all the Departments, the planned twentieth-century Primary Gallery providing an additional incentive.' W.18:2-1977. *The Burlington Magazine* Vol. 120, No. 902, Special Issue Devoted to The Victoria and Albert Museum (May, 1978): i-lxxxiv.
81. The National Archives. *DCMS Sponsored Museums Performance*

Indicators 2009/10 Accessed September 12, 2011.

82. VAA: MA/6/74. Acquisitions Register. Misha Black, Ekco mains wireless receiver model Ekco UAW78, made by E. K. Cole Ltd, 1938, purchased for £40 from Norman Jackson, 5 Pyrmont Road, Strand-on-the-Green, London W4. Museum no. CIRC.47-1977.

83. VAA: MA/6/74. Acquisitions Register. CIRC.124, A&B-1977, Derek James Fawcett, Nautech Auto-Helm System, 1976, Nautech Ltd, Asser House, Airport Service Road, Portsmouth, Hampshire; for tiller-steered yachts, vane, housing for motor, rod and halyard, DCA 1976. Approved 2 November 1977.

84. 89 VAA: MA/15/7: Transport Schedules. 7 – 12 November 1977, Minton: Barnard Castle to VAM. The travelling version of the V&A Minton exhibition was prepared by Jennifer Opie but not sent out; source, interview, Joanna Weddell with Jennifer Opie, Geoff Opie and David Coachworth, V&A Research Department, 4.7.12.

The Silvern Series: Photographs from the collections of the South Kensington Museum

Zoe Hendon, Head of Museum Collections,
Museum of Domestic Design and Architecture
(MoDA), Middlesex University

Abstract

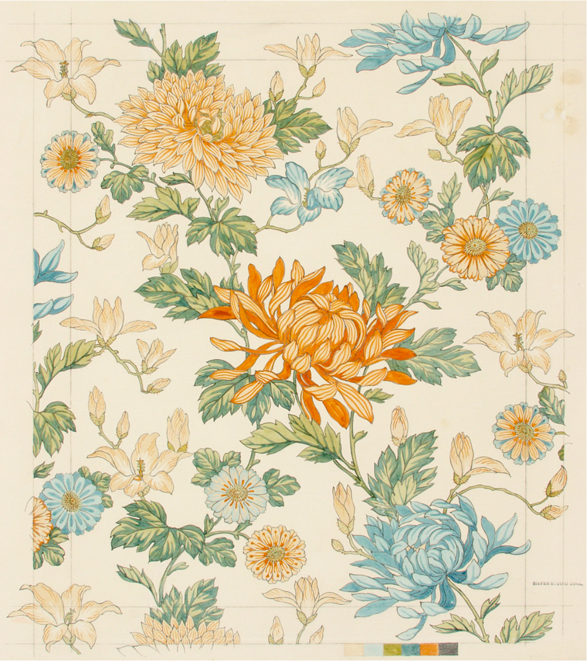


Figure 1 - Design for wallpaper, Silver Studio, 1890 (SD8791A). Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

This article will look at the Silvern Series, a set of photographs of items from the South Kensington Museum's collections. The Series was created and published by Arthur Silver in 1889 and was intended as a source of inspiration for textile manufacturers. Arthur Silver was a commercial pattern designer who founded his own design company (the Silver Studio) in 1880. The Silver Studio was a key producer of designs for wallpapers and textiles for manufacturers and retailers around Britain and abroad, from 1880 until the 1960s.

The production of a set of photographs of items in a museum collection seems like an unlikely enterprise for someone concerned with establishing a role as a professional designer. However, this article argues that Silver's use of the collections was consistent with his understanding of the educational purpose of the South Kensington Museum, and also with his own efforts to produce designs which were both artistically successful and commercially viable. This article draws on evidence from the Silver Studio Collection, now part of the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University.[1]

Relatively little has been written about the late Victorian pattern designer, Arthur Silver.[2] He was a contemporary of William Morris and Christopher Dresser and it is certain that he knew both since he moved in similar circles.[3] He exhibited at

every Arts and Crafts exhibition between 1889 and 1896, and wrote a number of articles about design.[4] However, while Silver was a successful designer of patterns for wallpapers and textiles, it seems he saw himself in entirely different terms to either Morris or Dresser. He was not concerned with the ways in which society might be improved through design, unlike Morris; and while he was similar to Dresser in his acceptance of machine production, he was not interested in formulating 'principles' of design.[5] He was adept at producing designs in the various historicist styles which were popular with the growing market of prosperous middle-class consumers and he appears to have thought of his role, as a designer, to be simply to supply what his customers wanted and to do this to the best of his ability.[6]

This article attempts to locate Arthur Silver within his context as a pattern designer in the last decades of the nineteenth-century, through an exploration of a particular project; his publication in 1889 of a set of photographs of items from the South Kensington Museum, known as the Silvern Series. The publication of this set of photographs was one of the few times in Silver's career when he took the opportunity to record his thoughts on design, rather than simply being a practitioner. Thus the Silvern Series sheds light on both his perception of his own role as a designer, and on the South Kensington Museum itself. Silver's argument for the Silvern Series lay solely in its practical use for manufacturers. It is clear that he saw himself as a practical man rather than a theorist; in his view the only test of a ‘good’ design was whether it satisfied the needs of his customers.

The Silver Studio was a commercial design practice which enjoyed success for a long period, producing more than 20,000 schemes for furnishing fabrics and wallpapers - and to a lesser extent tablecloths, rugs and carpets - between 1880 and 1963. The Studio’s customers were retailers and manufacturers of wallpapers and textiles at all levels of the market, both in Britain and abroad. Surviving records for the 1890s indicate that designs for wallpapers were sold to Essex & Co, Jeffrey & Co, Sanderson and Wylie & Lochhead, amongst others. Clients for printed textile designs included Stead McAlpin and G. P. & J. Baker, as well as Liberty & Co., and designs for woven textiles were sold to a number of companies including the French firms Leborgne and Vanoutryve et Cie.[7]

Arthur Silver was clearly a reasonably successful pattern designer, able to earn a good living for himself and his family, yet he seems to have occupied a slightly marginal role on the edge of late nineteenth-century design circles.[8] This is partly because in one sense he does not leave the historian much to go on, regarding himself first and foremost as a practical designer, rather than a polemicist or self-publicist. He was not an avid writer of letters or diaries, nor was he the sort of person to have been the subject of much comment by other people.[9] And yet, paradoxically, he left a great deal of material: after his death in 1896 the work of the Studio was continued by his eldest son Rex until the early 1960s, and a quirk of history means that the entire contents of the Studio survive, given in their entirety to the Hornsey College of Art.[10] The collection consists of around 40,000 of the Silver Studio's original designs on paper, plus textile and wallpaper samples, books, reference materials, photographs and negatives. The collection also includes sales records and business correspondence detailing the often arduous process of producing designs to satisfy the rigorous requirements of mass manufacture.[11] Thus, Arthur Silver is both undeniably present within the historic record, and yet simultaneously frustratingly absent from it.[12]

Born in 1853, in Reading, Arthur Silver was a product of the 'South Kensington System', having trained at the Reading School of Art between 1870 and 1873. Reading was one of over two hundred provincial Schools of Design that opened in England between 1842 and 1884, and which all followed the same uniform syllabus established by Henry Cole in 1852. Silver received Second Grade certificates for 'vegetable anatomy and physiology', geometry, free-hand drawing, linear perspective and model drawing, all awarded by the 'Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education'.[13] Silver's education places him at the heart of mid-nineteenth century debate on the appropriate education for designers, the relationship of art to industry and the perceived requirement to improve the 'taste' of both the producers and consumers of manufactured goods; as well as the role of museums in achieving this.[14]

Silver chose objects from the South Kensington Museum's collections and published photographic reproductions of them as inspiration for manufacturers. We can read the Silvern Series as Silver's contribution to contemporary debates about standards of design of manufactured objects and the role of museums in influencing this. He intended that manufacturers would either buy a whole set of photographs to use as the basis of future design work, or that they would choose key designs and commission him to develop them into a format ready for the factory. The Silvern Series can be seen as Silver's attempt to mediate the Museum's collections for the benefit of textile and wallpaper manufacturers and their ultimate customers, the buying public.

The role of the Silver Studio

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the industrialisation of the textile industry created more demand for designs, and more demand for people employed as designers. Around five hundred people were employed as designers of printed cottons in Manchester alone by 1841.[15] Similarly, the Glasgow firm of Inglis and Wakefield employed two in-house designers in London, several at their Glasgow factory, and six more 'out-of-house' designers in Glasgow.[16] Thus industrialisation increased the demand for 'art-labor' as more workers required an understanding of the whole process of design, even as they became more specialised in their own distinct trades.[17] The division of labour in the factory system meant, for example, that separate people were required to transpose the design to the appropriate scale; to transfer the pattern to the metal roller; to engrave the roller; and to mix the colours for printing. Manufacturers of wallpapers and textiles frequently bought from freelance designers, or from companies like the Silver Studio, as well as employing people directly. Designs, such as those purchased from the Silver Studio, were just the first stage in this complex chain, representing one small element in the process from drawing board to finished product.[18]

Arthur Silver: professional designer

The majority of designers producing designs for the mass market (both those working for the Silver Studio and elsewhere) were anonymous at the time and have remained unrecognized ever since.[19] In the 1880s and ‘90s a number of wallpaper manufacturers commissioned designs from artists or architects as a way of adding value to their products, mainly at the upper end of the market. For example, Metford Warner of Jeffrey & Co. commissioned designs by such well known names as Walter Crane, E. W. Godwin and Bruce Talbert.[20] However, to employ artists (rather than designers) was a commercial risk for manufacturers, since artists were not always familiar with the demands of commercial production, meaning that costly re-workings of their designs were sometimes necessary. In other words, if it was assumed that machine production had removed the need for skilled artistic labour, it was easy to underestimate the considerable skill (manipulation of scale, proportion, colour, etc.) required in preparing really workable designs for industrial production. Walter Crane was one artist who was particularly reluctant to compromise his artistic will in order to meet the requirements of commissions for Jeffrey & Co., so that he submitted unfinished artwork, or work that was not at all what had been expected. 'Given these difficulties, it was a great advantage to manufacturers aspiring to produce artistically progressive papers to be able to call on the sophisticated professionalism of the Silver Studio …'[21]

For Arthur Silver, the design of wallpapers and textiles was not about personal artistic expression. He was interviewed for an article in *The Studio* magazine, in 1894, in which he argued:

> *whatever his personal taste, a manufacturer cannot afford to go on producing unsaleable goods. The problem we must endeavour to solve, is to supply manufacturers with saleable popular designs that, even in the lowest class, do not offend the canons of artistic propriety, and in some cases are (if I may say so) as good as any effort can make them.*[22]

This meant paying close attention to the requirements of the Studio's immediate customers, the manufacturers, and to their ultimate customers, the furnishing-buying public. Manufacturers wanted designs which would satisfy popular tastes and translate economically to industrial production. Arthur Silver clearly possessed a good understanding of the cost implications of each element of design for various products. For example, when designing silk damasks, he recommended that:

> *The scale of the design must in width be the whole or a divisor of 21 in., 31 ¾ in., or 63 in. Its height is practically immaterial, but it should be kept within reasonable limits. When the height exceeds the width more graceful designs are generally produced, because you avoid "squareness" in your work, yet it must be borne in mind that the more extravagance you permit yourself in the design, the greater the cost of production, therefore if you require a long length for your repeat, you must be assured that the advantage gained is worth the cost.*[23]

This understanding of the relationship between technical and aesthetic considerations when designing for machine production was to be one of the selling points of the Silvern Series.

Although a competent designer himself, Silver did not trade exclusively on his own talents, but rather saw advantages in pooling the skills of several designers.

> *When I found, as every successful designer must needs discover sooner or later, that one pair of hands could not execute the orders which fell to my share, I attempted to bring together a body of men and establish a studio which would be capable of supplying designs for the whole field of fabrics and other materials used in the decoration of the house.*[24]

He recognised that one designer might be skilled in draughtsmanship, while another might excel at colour. Thus their shared talents meant both shared creativity and greater efficiency, since unworkable ideas were more likely to be spotted before being offered to manufacturers:

> *When all designs are criticised and studied by not merely the head of the studio, but others who are technically expert in their various specialities, there is less chance of unpractical details creeping in.*[25]

In the same article, Silver objected to the phrase ‘commercial design’, as he regarded this as meaning drawing to order, purely at the manufacturer’s command. He claimed himself to be more comfortable with the phrase ‘practical design’, because it suggested the development of designs suitable to be translated easily into a range of fabrics for home furnishing. This emphasis on the practical is key to his selection of images for the Silvern Series.

Business records for the Silver Studio between 1880 and 1891 have not survived. However, from the Studio’s daybooks (similar to sales ledgers) for 1891–98, it is possible to see that by 1891 the Studio was selling around three hundred designs per year. It was dealing with over forty customers, ranging from those who bought only a handful of designs per year to those who bought considerably more. Brintons, the carpet company, bought only one design from the Silver Studio in 1891 while Essex & Co and Liberty & Co bought ten designs each.[26]

The South Kensington Museum

Within the context of rapid changes in both the production and the consumption of consumer goods such as wallpapers and textiles the question of how workers should be educated about ‘art’ and ‘taste’ became important sites of negotiation. The country’s requirement for an artistically competent workforce was exactly what had prompted the establishment of the Schools of Design in 1837. This in turn had developed into the South Kensington Museum which opened in 1856. However, whereas the initial impetus for design reform had been the perceived need to improve supply-side (that is, to improve the ability of workers to design better products), the opening of the Museum saw a shift towards an emphasis on demand-side intervention, or the improvement of consumer tastes.[27] This was demonstrated, in the 1850s and 60s, by the Museum's focus on collecting medieval and Renaissance art, which it was hoped would both elevate the spirits and improve the tastes of the visiting public. By the late 1880s, a large number of medieval and Renaissance objects had been acquired through the efforts of the curator J. C. Robinson. The Museum purchased several notable collections, such as the Bandinel, Gherardini, Bernal and Soulages Collections, and an important group of medieval church textiles acquired from Franz Bock in 1864.[28]

The South Kensington Museum was particularly forward-thinking in its approach to photography, and the photography of works of art was seen as one of the important applications of the new process.[29] Henry Cole was an enthusiastic supporter of the medium, and his acquisition of photographic images for the Museum's collections can be divided into four main strands: he insisted on the photographic documentation of the Museum's permanent collections, temporary exhibitions and the Museum building itself; he commissioned and purchased photographs representing the new medium as an art form; he supported dedicated campaigns of photography abroad; and he encouraged the photography of works of art from the Museum's collections for the purpose of study by artists.[30] The creation of photographs was part of a wider 'reproductive continuum', by which the Museum created copies (plaster casts of sculpture, electrotypes, architectural models, watercolour copies of medieval stained glass) as a means of making the collections available to visitors.[31]

By 1878, the South Kensington Museum held a collection of around 50,000 photographs, and was actively displaying and disseminating them via sale, circulation and loan.[32] Within this context, it might be thought that there would have been little need for Silver to undertake the work of publishing photographs of the collections himself, given the Museum's own prodigious output. However, an examination of the lists of photographs published by the Museum by 1889, (the year of the publication of Silver's Silvern Series) reveals that very little attention had been paid to the textile collections by that point. Instead, in line with the Museum's acquisition policy more generally, the focus of the photographic collections seems to have been images of old master paintings and sculpture.[33] The Museum was actively acquiring textiles, but the creation of photographic copies of them for study by students, artists or the general public seems not to have been accorded a high priority.[34] An extensive catalogue published in 1870 contained only a handful of illustrations.[35] Publications such as

Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace by Henry Cole's son, Alan S. Cole, contained relatively few examples (including several from private collections rather than the Museum itself), and by no means showed the extent of the whole collection.[36] Indeed, it appears that textiles did not specifically appear in a 'classified list' of photographs of items from the South Kensington Museum until 1901.[37] In which case, it is perhaps less surprising that a designer working outside of the Museum should have attempted to make visible those parts of the collection which he regarded as most useful to modern manufacture.

However, though the South Kensington Museum may have been slow in bringing the textiles within its collections to a wider public through photographic reproductions, the same seems not to have been the case for other similar institutions. The Dresden Museum of Decorative Arts had opened in 1876 as an institution dedicated to training and further education, with the goal of raising standards in manufactured goods.[38] The Silver Studio Collection includes three catalogues of textiles from the Dresden Museum, the first of which was published in 1889, the same year as the Silvern Series.[39] These volumes feature photographic images of hundreds of textiles from the Dresden collections. Though we cannot be sure that this was a direct influence on Silver, their existence among his reference books means that it is possible that they prompted him to consider producing something similar himself, based on the collections of the South Kensington Museum.

Whether or not Silver borrowed the idea from Dresden, it is clear that he believed that the South Kensington Museum's role was the education of producers of manufactured goods; thereby improving the goods available to the majority of customers.[40] Like Cole and others, Silver believed that manufacturers could benefit from the close study of museum objects, even if only in reproduction. However, his emphasis was on learning from textiles themselves rather than on absorbing the perhaps more elusive attribute of 'taste', which the Museum hoped visitors could acquire through contemplation of medieval and Renaissance art. He understood that for the majority the effort required in working out exactly which of the South Kensington Museum's objects to look at was simply too great. In addition, for those based outside London, the effort of getting to the Museum was an even greater barrier to its use. As he noted:

> *It has oftened (sic) been noticed with regret, that in spite of every effort on the part of the authorities to bring the treasures under their care to the notice of manufacturers; the practical use was restricted by the impossibility of placing the actual material in the hands of those who wished to reproduce it.*[41]

The Silvern Series was his attempt to make the Museum's collections as useful as possible to his customers, who were designers and manufacturers. It is revealing to contrast William Morris's approach to the South Kensington Museum. It is well known for example, that Morris made extensive use of the historic textile collections at South Kensington, and that some of his designs were directly inspired by them.[42] Morris was on the Museum's Purchasing Committee, and made recommendations about the acquisition of a number of important pieces. By the late 1880s, the Museum contained a number of large and impressive tapestries, particularly those recommended by Morris, which were considered to be some of the finest examples in the world. The omission of this kind of material from the Silvern Series is, perhaps, at the heart of the difference between Silver's relationship with the South Kensington Museum and that of other designers of whom Morris is the most obvious example.

Arguably, Silver was not interested in including large scale tapestries in the Silvern Series because he knew they would not translate well to mass production, and would be of little interest to his audience. This was not philistinism, but an interest in sharing the more general educational potential of the Museum with his clients, mainly mass market textile manufacturers. In contrast, Morris admitted that his motivation for contributing to the development of the Museum was largely self-interest. 'They talk of building museums for the public, but the South Kensington Museum was really got together for about six people – I am one, and another is a comrade [Philip Webb] in the room'.[43] Morris found immense personal pleasure and inspiration in the Museum's collections, and undoubtedly learnt much from them that he was able to apply to his own designs. But he was simply less interested in the practical application of this kind of learning to the challenges of mass production, and less concerned with sharing the collections for the wider benefit.

The Silvern Series

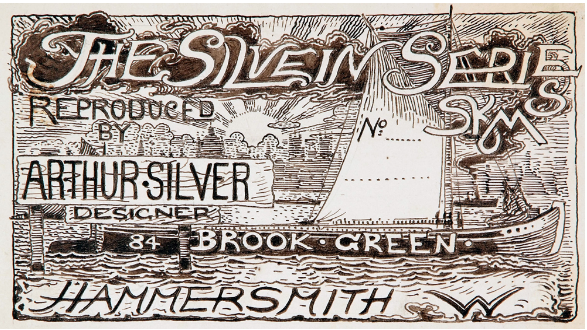


Figure 2 - Design for Silvern Series label, 1889 (SE484). Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

The Silvern Series is a set of over six hundred photographic images of items 'carefully selected' from the South Kensington Museum's collections by Arthur Silver. The intended customers were manufacturers of textiles and wallpapers, mainly those who were already known to the Studio as clients. The Series survives today in two formats: as a leather-bound album and as individual images. The album contains photographs of approximately three and a quarter by four and one eighths of an inch (equivalent to photographic quarter plates). These were pasted into the album by hand, usually twelve per page, and numbered according to the Studio's own system.[44] It seems likely this was the Studio's own reference set, and that the versions intended for customers were the large-format photographs mounted on card, each approximately twenty eight and a half by twenty five inches. A contemporary newspaper observed:

> *By special permission of the ruling powers Mr Silver has selected the most suitable objects for reproduction in modern commerce. From these he has produced, by aid of photography, full-size working designs, made to the exact sizes commercially required by the exigencies of looms, blocks, and other mechanical restrictions. These practical designs are to be sold to manufacturers, who can then reproduce the original work as accurately as if they had the actual samples before them.*[45]

This extract seems to suggest that Silver intended his photographs to be used as direct templates for new products, rather than as inspiration.[46] Silver Studio Daybooks for 1891 show that a whole set of Silvern Series images was purchased by Tomkinson & Adam (carpet manufacturers) for £25, and another two volume set by Templeton (also a carpet manufacturer) for £10. In 1892, two sets were sold to Barbour and Co. and F. Beck & Co. for £25 and £30 respectively.

Alternatively, a customer might choose just one image which they would ask the Studio to develop into a workable design. For example, a company called Walters of Holborn paid three pounds three shillings in June 1891 for a sketch design based on 'SKM image number C190'. Similarly, in October 1891, three of the Studio's regular customers, Simpson &Godlee, Jamieson Darvel and Essex & Co., each bought designs based on South Kensington photographs.

In practice, then, manufacturers did not go for a straight copy of a Museum object, but did indeed request a design ‘based on’ the original. For example, Silvern Series photograph no C241 is of a tile panel, but it was the basis of a design for a textile, clearly re-worked, (Studio No. 1129) sold to Simpson & Godlee in October 1891. Interestingly, there does not seem to have been a price difference for this work compared to the development of a design from scratch; Jamieson Darvel paid the same price (two pounds, ten shillings) for a design for a Madras muslin simply listed in the Daybook as ‘iris’ (in other words, an original Silver Studio design), as for one based on ‘Number 247’ from the Silvern Series.[47]

The Silvern Series and photographic processes

It is worth considering what gave Silver the means of achieving this set of photographic reproductions. One crucial aspect of Arthur Silver’s business was his early adoption of photographic recording techniques. Silver’s business requirement for a cheap and effective way of recording his Studio’s output coincided fortuitously with the invention of the dry plate negative. Until the 1860s, the ‘wet collodion’ process required each photographic plate to be prepared immediately before exposure, thus necessitating the photographer to work within a darkroom tent, and carry other cumbersome paraphernalia. The development of photographic glass plates with an emulsion of dried gelatin was a step forward, since plates could be prepared in advance and used when required. The process of coating with a gelatin emulsion could be achieved more efficiently and cheaply on a large scale than an individual photographer could by hand, and by 1880 the process of preparing plates with a gelatin emulsion was mechanised.[48]

The technical advantages offered by dry plate glass negatives for the Silver Studio were severalfold. Mechanised production meant that glass negatives became much cheaper and the photographic process much easier. Unlike earlier photographic methods (such as wet collodion plates), dry plates could be stored easily and required less exposure to light. They absorbed light quickly enough to mean relatively short exposure times, an advantage when photographing mainly indoors. Short exposure times also made it possible to use a hand-held camera, making the whole process more portable.[49] For these reasons, photography became a viable option for the Silver Studio as a means of recording their own design output, relatively quickly and cheaply, and they employed their own photographer from around the late 1880s.[50]

It is interesting to compare William Morris's use of photography with that of the Silver Studio. Morris seems to have used photography as a tool during the process of design, but to have been less concerned with photography as a means of recording his output. For example, original drawings for Morris's tapestries were enlarged photographically, and used to trace the outlines of the design on to the warp threads.[51] This photography work was carried out by the firm of Walker & Boutall, which had been founded by Morris's friend and associate, Emery Walker, whose studio was conveniently close to Morris's home in Hammersmith. Similarly, when designing for the Kelmscott Press, Walker photographed and enlarged numerous pages from fifteenth-century books to aid Morris in designing his own 'Golden' typeface; the letters were designed on a large scale, re-photographed and reduced to actual size until Morris was happy with their proportions.[52]

For Silver, photography was much more about accurate business records than about design process. All designs produced by the Silver Studio were given a 'Studio Number' and were photographed; small versions of these images were pasted into an album and cross referenced to sales records. It is important to remember that once a design for a wallpaper or textile produced by the Silver Studio was purchased by the customer, the design left the premises. A design generally consisted of a single sheet of paper, with the pattern created in pencil, watercolour or gouache, with indications of both the number of colours required, and how it would work in repeat. Once sold, it would be sent to the factory to be worked into technical drawings for the use of roller engravers or loom setters.[53] Without accurate visual records, it would have been impossible for the Studio to remember which client had seen or bought which designs, and impossible to show a potential client successful designs that had already been sold to someone else. The Studio therefore employed a photographer to record their work, both for their own reference and as a kind of portfolio to show other people.

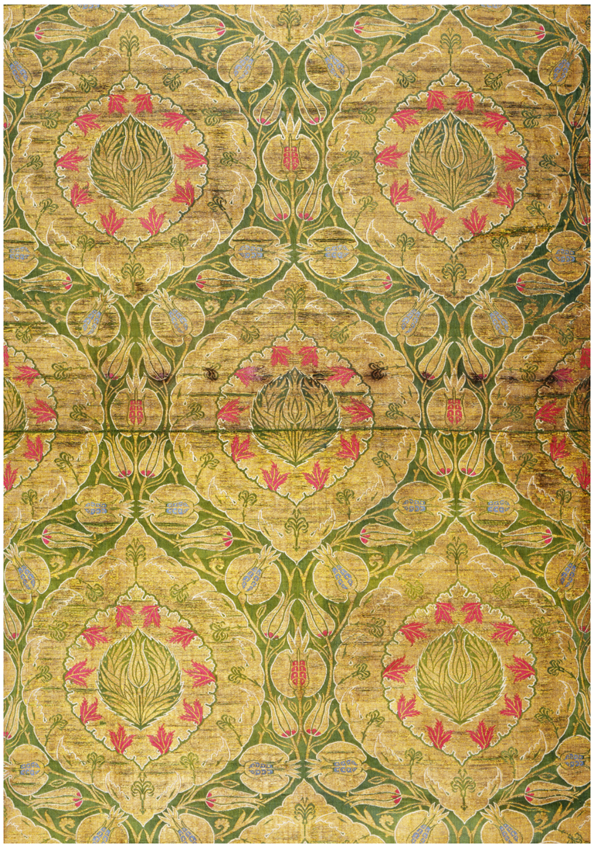


Figure 3 - Woven silk, Turkey, around 1550–1600.Museum no. 1356A-1887. Reproduced by Arthur Silver as part of the Silvern Series, image no. 37

The majority of images in the Silvern Series are examples of flat pattern, mainly textiles, with a few tile panels and embossed leathers. There are only a handful of three dimensional items (such as a tall Persian vase). The Series contains many examples of woven silk brocades and damasks such as 'number 37' (fig. 3), which were mainly French, Italian and Turkish in origin. 'Silvern Series number 38' depicted a Turkish silk brocade based on ogee patterns, and also featuring pomegranate motifs.[54] There are numerous examples of lace panels, embroidered hangings, and Persian tile panels. Silver included a good selection of eighteenth-century French brocades, and a number of Spanish or Dutch embossed leathers (for example, 474-1869). His selection included a number of Italian velvets; not only the magnificent palmate designs used for altar hangings, but the more everyday textiles probably originally intended for garments. These small fragments of Italian velvets feature small sprig motifs, often set within a grid. These are not 'show-stopping' objects, but instead are examples of more 'everyday' designs with a more general application to modern manufactured goods.

At first glance Silver's selection is not dissimilar to the textiles depicted in the Dresden volumes. But whereas the Dresden Museum selection appears to have been a showcase for the best examples then in its collections, Silver seems not to have been interested in some of the most sumptuous examples known to have been held at South Kensington at that point. As has been mentioned, he was not concerned with large-scale items such as tapestries, presumably because he regarded them as unrealistic within the context of commercial reproduction. He also concentrated on items that featured repeating patterns, rather than figurative motifs. He was not attempting a comprehensive catalogue of the collections but instead saw the value of items in visual and technical terms. A fragment of Coptic textile, a small piece of velvet (910-1877) or the cuff of a linen tunic (917-1886) were of equal interest and value for him, because of what he understood as their application to modern manufacture.

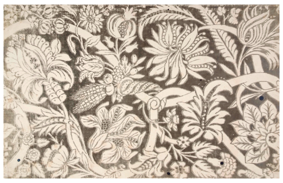


Figure 4 - Silvern Series No. 185, 1889. Museum no. 5662-1859 (SE535). Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture

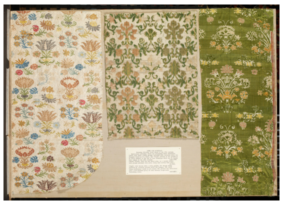


Figure 5 - Brocaded silk, about 1600–1629. Museum no. 1752-1888. Reproduced by Arthur Silver as part of the Silvern Series, image no. 60

Arthur Silver's assertion was that since he himself had a thorough understanding of industrial production techniques, he had been able to make an informed - and therefore more valuable – choice from the Museum's collections. The historical information associated with an object seems to have been less important than his modern-day understanding of its relevance to manufacturers.[55] His own expertise therefore formed an important element of the appeal of the Silvern Series for its potential customers:

> *Those who have experience in designing for the trade, know well how hard it is to obtain an old design adapted to modern use. Either it is unworkable, or the spirit of the whole thing has escaped in the translation.*

> *Mr Silver, an expert in the art of design, has selected the finest examples from South Kensington Museum, with the double purpose of beauty and fitness… The selection having been made by one in touch with the manufacturers of today, and a professional designer who is well aware of the movements in public taste, as well as familiar with the mechanical requirements of the factory, has resulted in a series that would satisfy the most artistic critic and yet be likely to prove commercially profitable.*[56]

Silver's claim to have selected the 'finest examples' may appear a little at odds with the comments above. But it seems he believed he had made the best selection for his purpose, namely, to show a range of repeating patterns, and to advertise his own potential skill in unlocking their potential for modern manufacture.

Furthermore, in making the case for the Silvern Series, Silver placed much emphasis on the fact that these were photographic images, not mere artist's sketches. For him, this was not simply 'visual inspiration' in the sense of getting an idea of shapes or trends. Instead, it was much closer to the idea that examination of the detail of a woven textile, for example, could enable the viewer to develop a better understanding of the methods of its manufacture. As he argued:

> *That these designs convey absolutely the effect of the completed work, and yet show every necessary detail for their reproduction in a way no mere design is able to accomplish. For in ordinary working drawings, the finished effect exists only in*

> *the mind of the artist, who is forced to subordinate the imitation of texture and surface to show clearly the various mechanical steps in the manufacture. In these the unswerving truth of the camera displays not only how such effect is to be obtained, but what it is when completed.*[57]

Silver's assertion of the importance of the detail of the photographic image accords with his insistence that a designer required a good understanding of industrial production methods. For Silver, a successful design was not simply a pleasing surface pattern, but was one which demonstrated a thorough understanding of the techniques of production which would bring it to life. The ability to see the warp and weft of a textile, for example, was important to truly understand it, and without this a designer could not produce a workable – that is, a genuinely profitable – design.

Silver's choices are significant because they demonstrate his commitment to the South Kensington Museum as an educational resource first and foremost. He believed that these objects had something to teach his audience, therefore he included them. He was not constrained by a compulsion to include only the 'best' items, by the sense that he should illustrate 'the canon', or by a connoisseur's understanding of the objects of his choice. The Silvern Series represents an attempt to mediate the South Kensington Museum collections for a particular audience, and at a particular moment in the history of the institution. The interview in *The Studio* magazine saw him grappling with the conundrum of how to improve public taste through designed goods which appealed to a mass market. As he put it, 'One must face the problem boldly, which is to supply saleable designs of artistic merit'.[58] More specifically, the challenge was to produce designs which satisfied consumers while not laying oneself open to the charge that if something sold in large quantities it must by definition be 'bad design'.

The Silvern Series was intended as more than simply a design ‘sourcebook’. We can surmise that Silver hoped the Series might act as a way of ‘franchising’ his expertise, since it represented a distillation of his knowledge of design and production techniques which could be reproduced and sold many times over, at little cost other than the initial outlay. The process of producing designs for wallpapers and textiles was relatively labour intensive, requiring many hours of work for each design, without always the guarantee of a sale. In contrast, the Silvern Series was a means of disseminating Silver’s expertise using a method that was entirely appropriate in an industrial age.

In another sense, the Silvern Series was an important way in which Silver demonstrated his design credibility to clients and potential clients. As has already been noted, by the late nineteenth century, the mass production of textiles and wallpaper was an example of the division of labour par excellence. An incredibly long series of steps existed between the original idea and the finished product. A designer like Silver was only involved at initial stages, and could not control or influence what happened to his designs once they left his premises. Yet the success of his company – in terms of securing repeat business from clients – depended on the success of all of these stages. So it was imperative that Silver could convince clients that he knew his business, and that his designs really would translate well into mass production. By the late 1880s he had established a good reputation as a designer, but his name lacked the cachet that was attached to other more 'artistic' designers or those with better social connections. It is possible to surmise that Silver hoped that an association with the collections of the South Kensington Museum would give him a degree of credibility, authenticity and authority which he found difficult to achieve by other means.

Conclusion

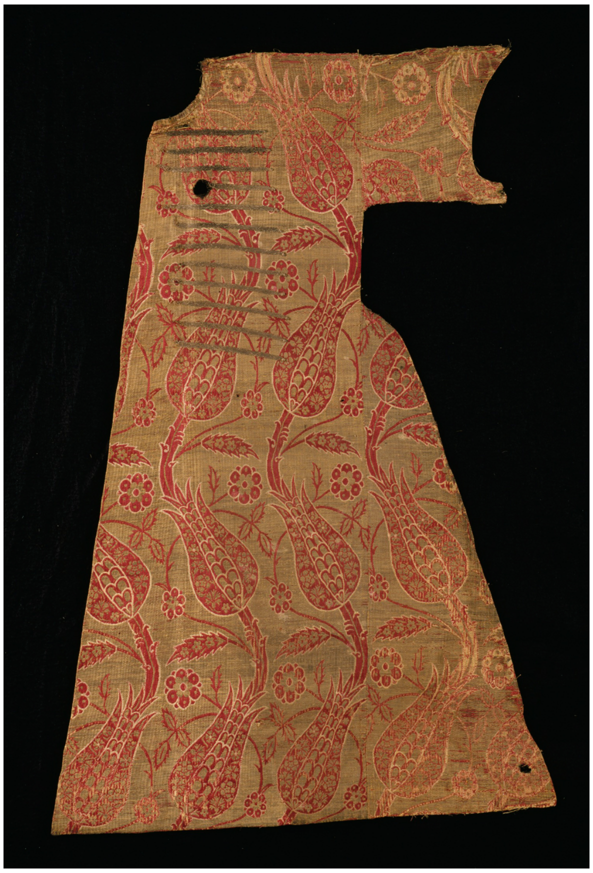


Figure 6 - Silvern Series No. 45. Museum no. 754-1884

The Silvern Series was first launched in 1889, and although Daybook records before 1891 do not survive, we can assume that it had been profitable enough between 1889 and 1891 to be worth continuing. Only a handful of sales are recorded throughout 1891 and 92, and after this the sales seem to decline completely. We must conclude that overall the Series was not a huge commercial success for the Studio. Perhaps manufacturers were not convinced by the usefulness of Silver's selection, or maybe they were becoming less interested in 'historic' styles by that point.

The Silvern Series was a means of promoting Silver's conviction that 'good design' was that which satisfied both manufacturer and consumer. He approached the Museum's collections not from the perspective of an antiquarian, but as a professional working designer. As such, his selection does not provide a straightforward retrospective validation for the inspirational antecedents of later designs. He was not interested in amassing detailed historical information about an object, but instead saw the collections from the perspective of their utility as a visual, educational and ultimately practical resource. The importance of the Silvern Series, then, was as a photographic resource intended for industrial producers; and it now provides us with a unique perspective on the collections of the South Kensington Museum, and a new light on an often overlooked figure in late nineteenth-century pattern design.

Endnotes

1. The Silver Studio Collection is now part of the Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University. Accessed June 16, 2010. www.moda.mdx.ac.uk

2. Arthur Silver 1853–1896. In Turner, Mark. *The Silver Studio Collection*. London: Lund Humphries for Middlesex Polytechnic, 1980: 17–18.

3. Silver lived and worked in Brook Green, Hammersmith, within a mile or so of Morris's Kelmscott House.

4. Arthur Silver contributed three chapters (on the design of printed and woven fabrics, and floorcloths) to *Practical Designing: A Handbook on the Preparation of Working Drawings*, edited by Gleeson White. London: George Bell & Sons, 1893.

5. Parry, Linda. *William Morris*. London: V&A Museum, 1996; MacCarthy, Fiona. *William Morris*. London: Faber & Faber, 1994; Lubbock, Jules. *The Tyranny of Taste*. Yale University Press, 1995; Stuart Durant. *Christopher Dresser*. London:

Academy Editions, 1993; Whiteway, Michael, ed. *Shock of the old: Christopher Dresser's design revolution*. London: V&A/Cooper-Hewitt, Abrams, 2004.

6. Collard, Frances. 'Historical Revivals, Commercial Enterprise and Public Confusion: Negotiating Taste, 1860–1890'. *Journal of Design History* 16.1 (2003): 35–48.

7. Hoskins, Lesley; Zoë Hendon (co-curators). *The Silver Studio: A Designated Collection*. Hendon: Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, Middlesex University, 2008. Accessed June 16, 2012. https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/3103. For a general overview of the Silver Studio's work, see Jackson, Lesley. *Twentieth Century Pattern Design; Textile and Wallpaper Pioneers*. London: Mitchell Beazley, 2002: 16–19.

8. Silver purchased 84 Brook Green Hammersmith in 1884, and by 1893 was able to buy 3 Haarlem Road (in a street directly behind Brook Green) to use as a separate Studio. The purchase had required him to borrow money from his family and from a building society, but nevertheless the creation of a working Studio separate from his own home suggests that the business was thriving. Silver Studio Business Records, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

9. Hornsey College of Art subsequently became part of Middlesex Polytechnic, later Middlesex University. See Hoskins and Hendon. *The Silver Studio: A Designated Collection*. 2008.

10. For an account of the dialogue between the Silver Studio and its customers in the 1930s and 40s, see Protheroe, Keren (curator). *Petal Power: Floral fashion and women designers at the Silver Studio, 1910–1940*. Hendon: Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture: Middlesex University, 2011.

11. Steedman,Carolyn. *Dust*. Manchester University Press, 2001. The simultaneous presence and absence of Arthur Silver is further compounded by the low cultural status of his output, since his customers were primarily those who produced for the mass market. Thus, though wallpapers and textiles based on Silver Studio designs were undoubtedly produced and consumed in great quantities, they are not present in the 'canon' in the way that designs by Morris and Dresser are.

12. SE 490-93, Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

13. Much of this debate was couched in terms of standards of 'design' but was overlaid by assumptions about class. See Rifkin, Adrian. 'Success

Disavowed: the Schools of Design in mid-nineteenth-century Britain'. *Journal of Design History*. 1.2 (1988): 89–102; Schmiechen, James. A. 'Reconsidering the Factory, Art-Labor, and the Schools of Design in Nineteenth-Century Britain'. Design Issues 6.2 (1990): 58–69.

14. Forty, Adrian. *Objects of Desire*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1992: 47.
15. Schmiechen, 'Reconsidering the Factory, Art-Labor, and the Schools of Design in Nineteenth-Century Britain': 63.
16. Ibid: 58–69.
17. Greysmith, David. 'The Impact of Technology of Printed Textiles in the early nineteenth century'. In *Design and Industry*, edited by N. Hamilton. London: Design Council, 1980.
18. The Silver Studio's customers sold the wallpapers and textiles they produced under their own name, crediting neither the Studio nor the name of the original designer. See also note 23, below.
19. Hoskins, Lesley ed. The Papered Wall: the history, patterns and techniques of wallpaper. London: Thames and Hudson, 1994: 160.
20. Ibid: 163.
21. 'A Studio of Design: An Interview with Mr Arthur Silver'. *The Studio* 3 (1894): 117–122.
22. Silver, Arthur. 'The Preparation of Designs for Woven Fabrics'. In *Practical Designing*, edited by Gleeson White. 1897: 61.
23. *The Studio* (1894): 117.
24. Ibid: 118.
25. Silver Studio Daybook, 1891–1898, (Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture). However, a design might also be manufactured by one company on behalf of another; for example, the Silver Studio sold ten designs directly to Liberty & Co in 1891, but also sold fourteen to the printing firm Stead McAlpin. It is possible that several of these were produced by Stead McAlpin for Liberty & Co, thus making the normal conventions of design attribution difficult to apply.
26. Kriegel, Lara. Grand Designs: Labor, Empire and the Museum in Victorian Culture. Duke University Press, 2007; Lubbock, Jules. *The Tyranny of Taste*. Yale University Press, 1995; Rifkin, Adrian. 'Success Disavowed: the Schools of Design in mid-nineteenth-century Britain'. *Journal of Design History* 1.2 (1988): 89–102; Burton, Anthony. *Vision & Accident: the Story of the Victoria & Albert Museum*.

London: V&A Publications, 1999; Robertson, Bruce. ‘The South Kensington Museum in Context: an alternative history’. *Museum and Society* 2.1 (2004): 1–14.

27. Woven textiles, tapestries and embroideries were well represented, though it appears that the collections included few printed textiles until the acquisition of the Forrer collection in 1899. Morris, Barbara. ‘William Morris and the South Kensington Museum’. *Victorian Poetry* 13.3–4 (1975): 167.

28. Hamber, Anthony. ‘Photography in nineteenth century art publications’. In *The Rise of the Image: Essays on the History of the Illustrated Art Book*, edited by R. Palmer and T. Fragenberg, 215–244. Aldershot, 2003; Hamber, Anthony. *A Higher Branch of the Art: photographing the fine arts in England, 1839–1880*. Amsterdam, 1996; Booth, Mark Haworth. *Photography, an Independent Art: photographs from the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1939–1996*. London, 1997.

29. Hamber, Anthony. ‘Building Nineteenth Century Photographic Resources: The South Kensington Museum and William Blackmore’. *Visual Resources* 26.3 (2010): 254–273.

30. Baker, Malcolm. ‘The Reproductive Continuum: plaster casts, paper mosaics and photographs as complementary modes of reproduction in the nineteenth-century museum’. In *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present*, edited by R. Frederiksen and E. Marchand, 485–500. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010.

31. Hamber. ‘Building Nineteenth Century Photographic Resources: The South Kensington Museum and William Blackmore’. 268.

32. In the late 1850s and early 1960s, The Museum actively acquired photographs of works of art, such as a set of images called *The Lords Supper*, in 1868, and a further set of photographs of old master drawings in 1869. Hamber.‘Photography in nineteenth century art publications’.

33. The decorative arts seem to have been relatively poorly represented photographically by the late 1880s. The Arundel Society, which worked with the South Kensington Museum to disseminate images from its collections, published a number of titles in 1867, including ‘precious metals and enamels: carvings in ivory and wood’, ‘works of decorative art in precious metals and enamels’ and ‘works of decorative art in pottery porcelain and glass’.

34. Rock, Daniel. *Textile Fabrics: A descriptive catalogue of the collection*

of church-vestments, dresses, silk-stuffs, needlework and tapestries forming that section of the Museum. London: Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, Chapman and Hall, 1870; see also Hungerford Pollen, Jon. 'Commentary on Textile Fabrics by Rev Daniel Rock'. *The Month* (2 February, 1870: 235).

35. Cole, Alan S. *Ancient Needlepoint and Pillow Lace: with notes on the History of Lacemaking and descriptions of 30 examples*. London: Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, Arundel Society, 1875.

36. *Classified list of photographs of paintings and drawings: published by authority of the Department*. London: South Kensington Museum, 1878; *Classified list of photographs of works of decorative art in the South Kensington Museum, and other collections*. London: South Kensington Museum, 1887; *Classified list of photographs of works of decorative art in the Victoria and Albert Museum : and other collections. Part III, Textile fabrics and lace*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1901.

37. Igor Jenzen, Vom Schenken und Sammeln: 125 Jahre Kunstgewerbemuseum Dresden, Dresden: Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, 2001.

38. Kumsch, Emil. *KöniglichesKunstgewerbe-Museum zu Dresden.Spitzen und Weiss-Stickereien des XVI-XVIII Jahrhunderts*. Dresden, 1889; Kumsch, Emil. *KöniglichesKunstgewerbe-Museum zu Dresden.Leinen-Damastmuster des XVII und XVIII Jahrhunderts*. Dresden, 1891; Kumsch, Emil. *KöniglichesKunstgewerbe-Museum zu Dresden. Stoffmuster des XVI-XVIII Jahrhunderts*. Dresden, 1888–95.

39. For an outline of the tensions between the Museum's initial aim of improving the quality of product design, and that of its emerging tradition of scholarship and connoisseurship see: Barringer, Tim: 'Representing the Imperial Archive: South Kensington and its Museums'. *Journal of Visual Culture* 3.2 (1998): 357–373; Robertson, Bruce. 'The South Kensington Museum in Context: an alternative history", *Museum and Society*, (2, 1, 2004), 1–14 Michael Conforti, "The Idealist Enterprise and the applied arts'. *A Grand Design: a History of the Victoria & Albert Museum*. London: V&A Publications, 1997: 46; Cardoso Denis, Rafael. 'Teaching by Example: Education and the formation of South Kensington's Museums'. *A Grand Design: a history of the Victoria &*

Albert Museum. London: V&A Publications, 1997: 107–116.

40. Arthur Silver, handwritten notes about the Silvern Series. Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, n.d 1889?:1.

41. Morris, Barbara. *Inspiration for Design: The influence of the Victoria & Albert Museum*. London: V&A Publications, 1986: 94–106.

42. *Philip Webb and his Work*. Oxford University Press, 1935: 39–40. Quoted in Morris. 'William Morris and the South Kensington Museum': 159.

43. A handwritten set of instructions to the photographer in Arthur Silver's hand specifies that "Every SKM negative to be inserted in Negative book; the Museum number and negative number to be shown under each print in reference book; and the Museum number to be inserted in small number book immediately after the negatives are made". SBR, G1, box 1, folder 5, n.d., Silver Studio Business Records, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

44. *Berkshire Chronicle*. August 24, 1889. Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

45. For the inevitable role of design 'copying' in the nineteenth century textile industry see Kriegel, Lara. 'Culture and the Copy: Calico, Capitalism and Design Copyright in Early Victorian Britain'. *Journal of British Studies* 2.43 (2004): 233–265.

46. Silver Studio Daybook, 1891–1898. Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

47. Gernsheim, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim. *The history of photography from the camera obscura to the beginning of the modern era*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1969: 322–334; Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1982: 123. The Silver Studio Collection contains several thousand glass negatives relating to both the Silvern Series and the Studio's own design output.

48. Reilly, J.M. and C. McCabe. *Care and identification of nineteenth century photographic prints*. New York: Kodak, 1986; See also: Accessed June 16, 2012. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dry-plate_photography#Popularization

49. Silver Studio Business Records, n.d... SBR, G1, box 1, folder 5, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture.

50. Parry, Linda. *William Morris Textiles*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1983: 104–105.

51. Peterson, William S. *The Kelmscott Press: a history of William Morris's typographical adventure*. University of

California Press, 1991: 82. MacCarthy William Morris. Faber and Faber, 1994: 613.

52. The Silver Studio Daybook only rarely suggests that designs were worked up to technical specifications by Studio. The designs produced were one stage before technical drawings or point papers, once again reinforcing the idea that the production of wallpapers or textiles necessitated many very specialised stages, of which the Studio's was just the first.
53. Brocaded Silk, Turkish, 1550–1625. Museum no. 212-1887. See illustration in *Brief Guide to the Turkish Woven Fabrics*. Victoria and Albert Museum, Department of Textiles. London: HM Stationery Office, 1923.
54. Unlike Alan Cole, Silver did not include captions outlining the technical or historical significance of his examples.
55. Arthur Silver, handwritten notes about the Silvern Series. Silver Studio Collection, Museum of Domestic Design & Architecture, n.d, 1889?:2.
56. Ibid: 3.
57. *The Studio* (1894): 119.
58. IIbid.

Review of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art at the V&A

Raymond Lam, School of Oriental and African Studies (London), Wang Fat Ching She (Hong Kong), Victoria and Albert Museum

Abstract

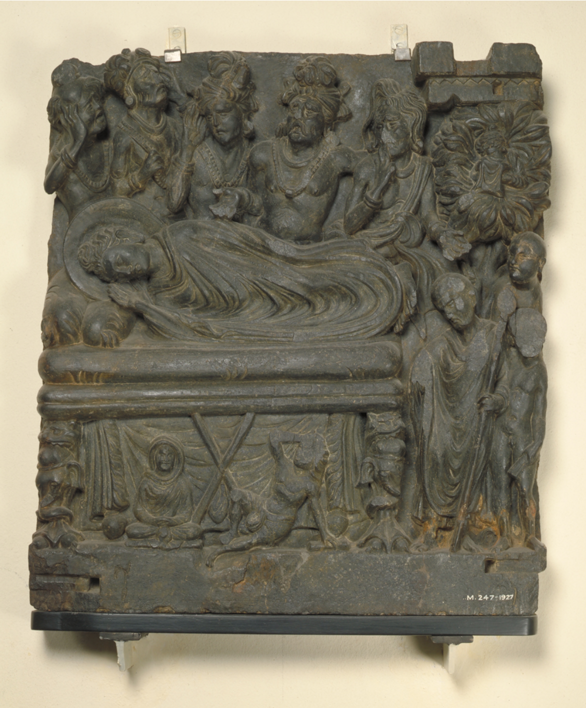


Figure 1 – Mahaparinirvana, sculpture, Pakistan, about 2nd century, carved schist, 53 cm × 48 cm. Museum no. Im.247-1927

Please note: This review was written in relation to the original Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art which closed in November 2013.

This review surveys the spectrum of Buddhist sacred art in The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art. It provides an overview of the Gallery's objectives and display of Buddhist sculpture, and examines each section of the Gallery with reference to pieces that distinguish it as a diverse and instructive repository of spiritual art.

The display under review is kept in The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art, which opened on 29 April 2009. The Gallery is named after the Foundation of Robert Ho Hung Ngai, son of Kuomintang general Ho Shai Lai and grandson of Sir Robert Hotung. It is also the first in the V&A solely devoted to the chronological and geographical development of Buddhist art, and occupies an accessible location next to the Museum's John Madejski Garden. Mr Ho's philanthropic Foundation has been focused on helping people to gain a greater understanding of the Buddhist traditions and encouraging youth to take up the life-changing discipline of meditation. The Foundation also serves as a conduit for the promotion of Chinese arts and culture.[1]

The Gallery's current display was formally called Buddhist Sculpture in Asia and presently houses a total of forty-five items. These forty-five objects are divided into four thematic halls in the Gallery. They are ordered as follows: 'The Indian Subcontinent: the life and teachings of the Buddha'; 'India, Sri Lanka and the Himalayas: Buddhism's Decline in India and Expansion into the Himalayas'; 'South-east Asia: Buddha, Monk and King'; and 'East Asia: Creating Holy Images, Gathering Merit'. The doctrinal trajectory of these divisions is fairly straightforward. The first hall charts the early artistic developments of Indian Buddhism, from the schools of antiquity (Greco-Bactrian Gandhâra and native Indian Mathurâ) to the medieval Pala Empire (AD 750–1174), which set the classical standards for Indian Buddhist aesthetics. The second showcases Vajrayâna (Diamond Vehicle) art in the Himalayas, whilst the third highlights the dominance of Theravâda (Teaching of the Elders) culture in Southeast Asia. The fourth section on East Asia underlines the influence of the Mahâyâna (Great Vehicle) tradition's teachings in China and Japan. The emphasis is mainly on the production of Buddhist art during the Chinese Imperial period, such as the Northern Qi and Yuan Dynasties.

Even a cursory, hurried glance over this quartet of themes should alert the visitor that this Gallery houses an impressive spectrum of sacred art. There are at least one or two pieces of sculpture from every geographic region that Buddhism has diffused into. While this is an important merit in its own right, one of the Gallery's unspoken strengths is its robust emphasis on Indian Buddhist art, which while being familiar to the Buddhist practitioner, scholar or art aficionado, is something otherwise rarely seen in mainstream media. This oversight is of course regrettable, and the Gallery goes some way to correcting this by stressing Buddhism's debt to its land of origin by dedicating an entire hall to it.

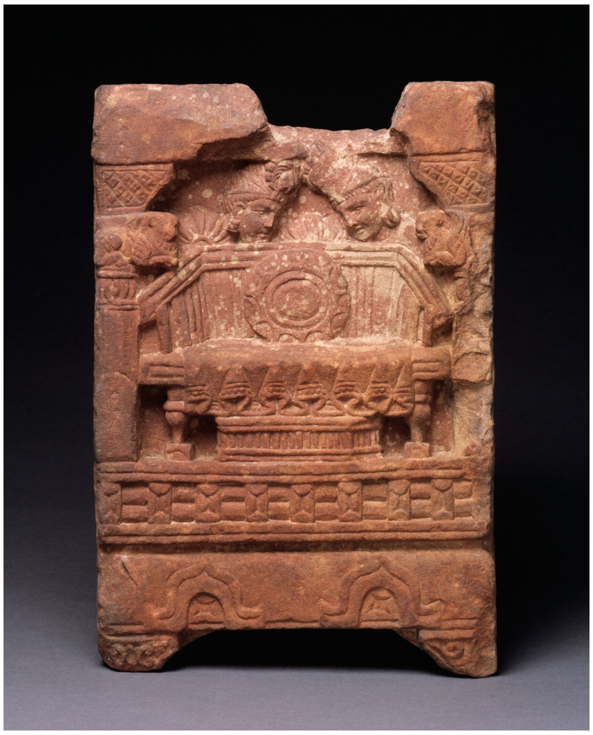


Figure 2 – Monumental stone chair

The art of ancient Gandhâra (in which Buddhist art reaches its apex during the Kuṣâṇa era from BC 30–AD 375) blends Indian narratives of the Buddha's life with Hellenistic techniques of naturalism and facial expression, and this is particularly discernible in the schist frieze of the death of the Buddha, which depicts a host of princes mourning over the Buddha who has passed into Parinirvâṇa (fig. 1).[2] The lamenting figure below the Buddha and beside the meditating Subadha (the last disciple that the Blessed One ordained) is actually the guardian bodhisattva Vajrapâni, who was depicted as the Greek Heracles throughout Gandhâra and is instantly recognisable by the artistic combination of Heracles' fine physique and his use of the Indian two-ended thunderbolt, the vajra.[3] The Gandhâran schist meditating Buddha and reliquary also combine Buddhism's iconography and architecture (the reliquary would have been placed inside a commemorative structure unique to Buddhism called a stûpa) with the techniques of sculptors trained in Greco-Roman skills.[4]

A modest but important piece dating to the period of the Kuṣâṇa Empire is the Empty Throne image, from Mathurâin, modern Uttar Pradesh.[6] This item depicts an unoccupied throne, lovingly attended to by celestial attendants (fig. 2). The empty throne may allude to either the Great Renunciation, the night on which prince Siddhartha fled his palace to eventually become Úâkyamuni Buddha, or might be celebrating the ineffable presence of the Buddha, which is beyond both existence and non-existence. Resting on the throne is a sun, a solar representation of the light of the Buddha's illuminating teachings. The imagery hearkens back to an age when the Buddha was not yet depicted in human form and Buddhist art betrayed apparently 'aniconic' tendencies.[7] This still mysterious epoch spans from the early beginnings of Úâkyamuni's dispensation and ministry to the turn of the Common Era; about four to five centuries.[8]

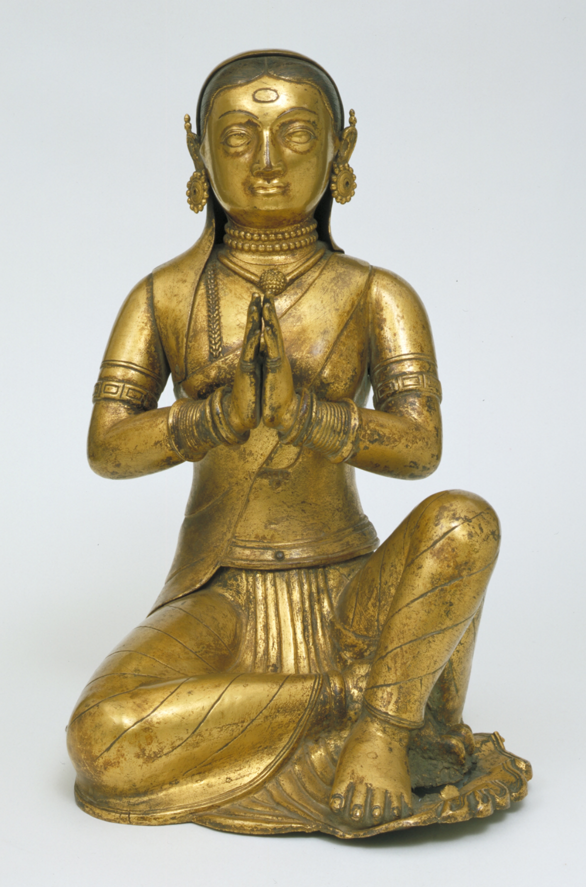


Figure 3 – Golden sculpture of a seated figure praying

Broadly speaking, the Himalayan hall features tantricart from India and the Himalayan region. It mainly covers depictions of Úâkyamuni and the female Buddha Târâ, although other personalities appear, such as a gilded copper with turquoise, coral and lapis lazuli piece of the Buddha Vajradhara; a cast gilded copper with red lacquer image of Amitâyus from China; and a basalt statue of Mahâkâla from Orissa, the fabled Indian tantric heartland.[9] One of the most striking figures here is the sculpture of a nameless female donor, which was produced around AD 1710–1810 during the Shah dynasty (circa AD 1500–2008) in Nepal.[12] Made of gilded copper, the anonymity of the kneeling woman contrasts with her resplendent figure, decked with the robes and jewels of wealth and nobility, possibly even royalty (fig. 3). Overall, the diversity of the Vajrayâna sculptures in this section is impressive and offers an illuminating window into the tantric tradition's Indic funnel through which it diffused into the Himalayan regions, particularly Tibet and Nepal.

Royalty and its relationship to Buddhism form the subject matter of 'South-east Asia: Buddha, Monk and King'. Its centrepiece is a complete Burmese royal shrine from Mandalay, dated to 1800–1900.[13] Yet I find two of the section's most religiously impressive pieces to be the plaster replicas of sculpted murals from Borobudur, Indonesia. These replicas have been titled, The Buddha Competes in an archery contest and Scene from

Gandavyuhasûtra.[14] The former label is actually slightly misleading, as while Mahâyân atheology does envisage the Buddha's pre-enlightened life as destined for Nirvâṇa, it is only after he is enlightened that he can truly be called a Buddha.[16] More accurately, the fresco depicts the prince Siddhartha Gautama competing for and winning the hand of his wife, Princess Yasodharâ, through a shooting contest. Scene from Gandavyuhasûtra depicts the pilgrim Sudhana receiving teachings and blessings from the bodhisattva Samantabhadra.[17] The Gandavyuha sutra was incorporated into the vast Avataṃsaka canon and is famous for its breathtaking, inspired imagery of cosmic interconnectedness.[18] In its narrative, Sudhana goes on a journey to visit a succession of enlightened teachers, from kings and priests to goddesses and people of common professions (fig. 4). The meeting with Samantabhadra represents the climax of the story, and is appropriately depicted in the mural as a joyous, sacred occasion.

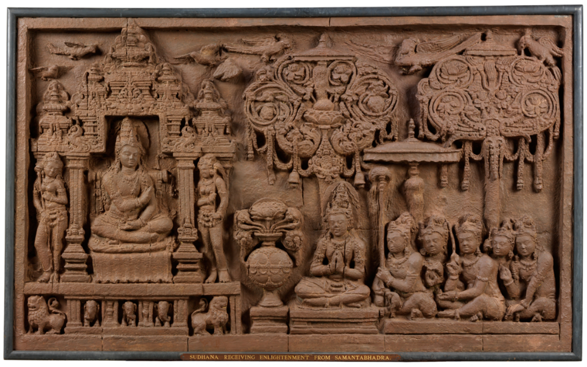

SUDHANA RECEIVING ENLIGHTENMENT FROM SAMANTABHADRA.

Figure 4 - Panel, Java, Indonesia, 8th century, plaster cast, 121.9 x 201.9 cm. Museum no. Im.170-1926

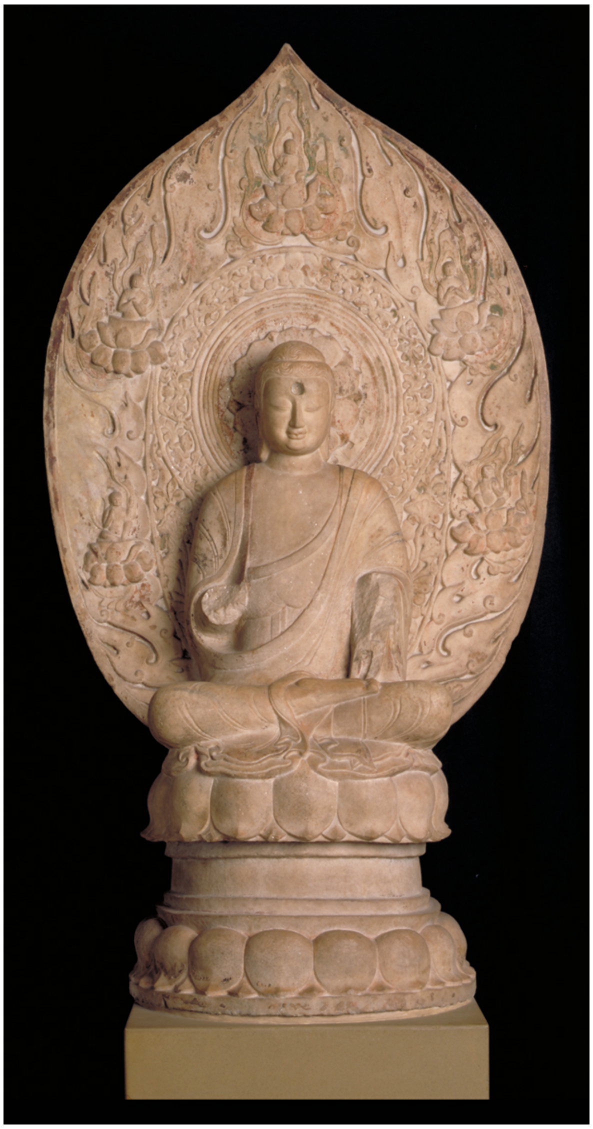


Figure 5 - Seated Buddha, Figure of Buddha, Hebei, China, 550 – 577, marble sculpted, 166.7 × 92 × 40 cm. Museum no. A.36-1950

The East Asian hall comprises slightly fewer items compared to the other sections, although these sculptures compensate with their size. One of the themes they showcase is the aesthetic of Chinese religious art. Of strikingly austere spiritual beauty is the Yuan dynasty-era (AD 1271–1368) arhat figure.[19] Crafted out of wood with traces of paint, the figure’s sitting pose exudes a calm otherworldliness that is qualified by an almost down-to-earth, gruff expression directed to his left. The marble Seated Buddha is an exemplary instance of Chinese Buddhist art during the Northern Qi dynasty (fig. 5), contrasting the Buddha’s serene, reassuring expression with his complex aura and halo of divine flames and emanating enlightened beings.[20] Each sculpture displayed in the Gallery is supplemented by informative text, and the introductions to each hall provide clarification regarding the doctrinal context and social setting of the sculptures. This is of course necessary for visitors who are unfamiliar with Buddhist thought or Buddhist art. The introductions help to ease the Gallery’s guest into the doctrinal, historical and cultural rationale behind signature features of the art, from the sometimes disconcerting range of hand positions (mûdra) to the symbolism of the ornamentation (such as lotuses and swords) on the sculptures. This is a noteworthy accomplishment, given the difficulty associated with writing introductions to world religions and spiritual movements.

The Gallery attempts to host not merely beautiful objects, but the vision behind them. The Buddha’s own vision, when he founded his movement, was a lofty one of liberating all beings from the cycle of suffering known as saṃsâra.[21] This ideal lies behind each of the displayed objects by virtue of their religious heritage. Time and again the Gallery, through its procurement and selection of the present display and informative commentary, amply makes clear the Buddhist relationship between moral purification, ethical discipline and artistic appreciation. As noted in the clerical and monastic regulations preserved in the Mûlasarvâstivâda-Vinaya, the craft and enjoyment of attractive religious art can be a springboard into the patronage of religion.[22] In the context of Buddhist sculpture, the Gallery has brought together a transnational aesthetic that is crisp and compact, yet broad enough to give an idea of Buddhist art’s diversity. It offers an exhibit that will retain a lasting value to discerning visitors and Buddhists for many years to come.

Endnotes

1. The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation. *‘What We Do’*. Accessed January 2, 2012. https://www.rhfamilyfoundation.org/what-we-do

2. The Death of the Buddha, sculpture, Gandhâra, AD 100–300. Museum no. Im.247-1927.

3. Foltz, Richard. *Religions of the Silk Road: Premodern Patterns of Globalization*. 2nd edition. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010: 44. As his name suggests, Vajrapâni is the one with the ‘vajra-in-hand’. Despite being a religion that grew from the œramaṇa intellectual soil, ancient Buddhism owes a significant part of its mythology to even older Vedic theologies of godhood and divinity. We can trace Vajrapâni’s iconography back to the storm god Indra, whose worship as the king of the Vedic gods dates back to at least the first half of the second millennium AD. For a fuller analysis of the word ‘vajra’, which was originally Indra’s weapon and appropriated by Vajrapâni, see: West, Martin Litchfield.

Indo-European Poetry and Myth. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007: 251–2.

4. Buddha seated in meditation, sculpture, Gandhâra, AD 200–400, Museum no. Is.108-2001. Reliquary in the form of astûpa, sculpture, Gandhâra, AD 200–500. Museum no.Is.299-1951.

5. The Adoration of the Empty Throne, sculpture, Mathurâ, AD 100–300. Museum no. Is.1039-1883.

6. For a comprehensive if slightly outdated analysis of aniconic Buddhist art, see: Huntington, Susan L. 'Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism' in *Art Journal* 49, 4 (1990): 401–8.

7. Heller, Amy. *Early Himalayan Art*. Oxford: The Ashmolean, 2007: 13: 'The earliest extant Indian Buddhist art dates from the first centuries AD, with the development of the earliest figural representations in stone of the historic Buddha Śākyamuni (c.563–483 BC).' Subsequent formulations in Buddhist doctrines led to the making and use of images via symbolic representations such as the footprint, tree, or empty throne.

8. Vajradhara, sculpture, Nepal, 1500–1600. Museum no. Im.41-1910. Amitâyus, sculpture, China, 1650–1700. Museum no. M.436-1936. Mahâkâla, sculpture, Orissa, 1100–1200. Museum no. Im.10-1930.

9. Female donor figure, sculpture, Shah dynasty, Nepal, 1100–1200. Museum no. Im.371-1914.

10. Buddhist Shrine and associated objects, shrine, Mandalay, Burma, 1800–1900. Museum no. Is.11:1 to 24, 28 to 31-1969.

11. The Buddha Competes in an archery contest, plaster cast of original relief, Borobudur, 700–800. Museum no. Im.172-1926.Scene from Gandavyuhasûtra, plaster cast of original relief, Borobudur, 700–800. Museum no.Im.170-1926.

12. For a comprehensive study of the concepts, issues, debates and problems in Buddhology, see: Guang Xing. *The Concept of the Buddha: Its evolution from early Buddhism to the trikâya theory*. London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005.

13. Samantabhadra is one of the central bodhisattvas in Mahâyâna Buddhism. He symbolizes the practices of the bodhisattva, the crucial figure and ideal in the Great Vehicle, and his ten vows are detailed in the Gandavyuhasûtra and taken up by Sudhana. See: Cook, Francis. *Hua-yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*. University Park; London: The Pennsylvania State University Press,

1977: 78. Composed most likely in Central Asia, perhaps compiled in the oasis kingdom of Khotan, the Avataṃsakasûtra is no longer extant in its original language (most likely Sanskrit), although it has been preserved in the Chinese canon. The only complete English translation is in Cleary, Thomas. *The Flower Ornament Scripture: A Translation of the Avataṃsaka Sûtra*. Boston and London: Shambhala, 1984–1993.

14. Gyatso, Tenzin (HH The Fourteenth Dalai Lama). *The Universe in a Single Atom: The Convergence of Science and Spirituality*. New York: Morgan Road Books, 2005: 88 – 9.

15. Figure of an arhat, sculpture, Yuan dynasty, 1271–1368. Museum no. A.63-1937.

16. Seated Buddha, sculpture, Northern Qi dynasty, AD 550–77. Museum no. A.36-1950.

17. This central ideal of universal liberation is eloquently narrated in: Gethin, Rupert. *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998: 8: 'So who, and indeed what, was the Lord Buddha? … in brief, the word buddha is not a name but a title; its meaning is 'one who has woken up'. This title is generally applied by the Buddhist tradition to a class of beings who are, from the perspective of ordinary humanity, extremely rare and quite extraordinary… A buddha… awakens to the knowledge of the world as it truly is and in doing so finds release from suffering. Moreover – and this is perhaps the greatest significance of a buddha for the rest of humanity, and indeed for all the beings who make up the universe – a buddha teaches. He teaches out of sympathy and compassion for the suffering of beings, for the benefit and welfare of all beings; he teaches in order to lead others to awaken to the understanding that brings final relief from suffering.'

18. Schopen, Gregory. 'Art, Beauty, and the Business of Running a Buddhist Monastery in Early Northwest India' in *Buddhist Monk and Business Matters: Still More Papers of Monastic Buddhism in India*, edited by Gregory Schopen, 20–1. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004.

Contributors

Donatella Barbieri

- Encounters in the Archive: Reflections on costume

Kirstin Beattie

- A study of a Ming dynasty ceramic pillow

Lily Crowther

- William Bower Dalton: Potter and teacher

Lesley Ellis Miller

- A portrait of the ‘Raphael of silk design’

Stuart Frost

- Another dimension: Integrating music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries

Zoe Hendon

- The Silvern Series: Photographs from the collections of the South Kensington Museum

Raymond Lam

- Review of The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Galleries of Buddhist Art at the V&A

Angela McShane

- Editorial

Giulia Nuti

- Another dimension: Integrating music with the Medieval & Renaissance Galleries

Joanna Weddell

- Room 38A and beyond: post-war British design and the Circulation Department

Anna Wu

- The silent traveller: Chiang Yee in Britain 1933–55