

THE GREEN DINING ROOM

The Experience of an Arts and Crafts Interior

by

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ABSTRACT

Commissioned in 1865 for London's South Kensington Museum (now the V&A), the Green Dining Room was conceived during an exciting period in Victorian Britain, when idealistic artists and architects elevated the status of the decorative arts in fine art circles, promoted the ideal of joy in labour, and sought beauty in the everyday. The Green Dining Room is considered a quintessential example of an early decorative scheme by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., a collective of artists who helped to inspire Britain's Arts and Crafts movement through their products and their principles of art manufacture. It is adjoined by two other refreshment areas: one designed by James Gamble (a salaried employee of the museum) and the other by Edward Poynter (a promising young painter with an affinity for the decorative arts). The three rooms manifest varied, even conflicting, opinions on the cultivation of design. They indicate how different design professionals hoped to see their art progress. However, the rooms were not simply artistic statements. They were also functioning dining areas for the use of guests and employees of the museum. By assessing the aims of the South Kensington administration, the ambitions of the designers who contributed to the museum's fabric, and the impressions of Victorians who witnessed the results, I will illustrate how the Green Dining Room occupies a unique position in the history of nineteenth-century design reform.

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*Unless otherwise stated, interior photographs were taken by the author between 2004 and 2005.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAD	Archive of Art and Design
BL	British Library
BMAG	Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
FM	Fitzwilliam Museum
GRO	Glamorgan Record Office
HFA	Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre
NA	National Archives
NAL	National Art Library
VAA	V&A Archive
WMG	William Morris Gallery

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In 1865, only a few years after it had opened for business, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was commissioned to decorate the westernmost refreshment room of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum, or V&A) in London.¹ The firm, a collective of artists who helped to inspire Britain's Arts and Crafts movement through their products and their principles of manufacture, was represented by William Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, Philip Webb, Charles Faulkner, and Peter Paul Marshall.² The South Kensington Museum, with its mandate to improve British manufactures by educating designers, artisans, and consumers alike, occupied a central position in nineteenth-century design reform. Without a doubt, the commission was an important one, both for the firm (anxious to prove its worth to potential clients) and the museum (anxious to prove its relevance to the workshops of modern industry). Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. designed a striking interior that

¹The South Kensington Museum was renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899. Thus, when referring to nineteenth-century events, I will use the institution's original name. However, when dealing with more recent developments, I will refer to the museum as the V&A.

²Morris became the sole owner of the firm in 1875, which became known as Morris & Co.

showcased the firm's proficiency in a variety of media. Green, the dominant colour, lent the room its name. Today the Green Dining Room is recognized as a quintessential example of an early decorative scheme by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

I believe that a thorough examination of the Green Dining Room's original layout, function, and reception would contribute greatly to the study of the Arts and Crafts movement in Victorian Britain. I also believe that an examination of the Green Dining Room and its relationship to the Arts and Crafts movement must be anchored by a detailed account of the circumstances that gave rise to the commission. Consequently, my second chapter opens with a history of design reform in the nineteenth century; specifically, I review major debates, documented by government reports and contemporary periodicals, that encouraged the establishment of more accessible art collections in order to improve British design. As Louise Purbrick's research demonstrates, the opening of the South Kensington Museum was an important, if indirect, outcome of those debates.³ Advocates of the South Kensington Museum believed that its facilities, open to everyone, could raise the skills of the nation's artisans and refine the palates of its humblest patrons. Impressive displays of decorative wares and other objects of beauty, paired with the latest technical innovations, were thought to attract visitors from all walks of life. Museum administrators, moreover, presented the site's ongoing development as a golden opportunity for craftspeople to observe and learn from their peers as they engaged in the beautification of a noble edifice.

Activities at the South Kensington Museum received considerable attention from

³Purbrick 1994.

the press and, to this day, the institution continues to draw attention. John Physick's book, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The History of Its Building* (1982), is one of the finest publications on the subject. An outstanding work of scholarship, it traces the museum's history in minute detail, from its germination in the Great Exhibition of 1851 through to its late twentieth-century incarnation as a museum devoted to masterpieces of international design.⁴ Physick focusses on the architecture of the various structures that, at one time or another, have contributed to the landscape of the South Kensington estate. He also familiarizes his readers with the diverse individuals who shaped the museum, including its directors (beginning with Henry Cole), an industrious group of Royal Engineers, a dedicated team of decorative artists (assisted by a steady stream of art students), manufacturers of ceramics and other building supplies, and independent artists. His scope is encyclopaedic and, evidently, his research was exhaustive: Physick probed departmental records, contemporary periodicals, and the personal papers of Henry Cole for information on the museum's construction and decoration as well as the governance of its facilities by successive administrations. His book remains the definitive account of the building of the South Kensington Museum.

An equally masterly treatment of the South Kensington Museum's architectural history appeared in the thirty-eighth volume of the *Survey of London* series (*The Museums Area of South Kensington and Westminster*, 1975). This work, like Physick's later publication, grounds descriptions of the Green Dining Room and the museum's

⁴Profits from the Great Exhibition were used to purchase land on which the museum would be built. Organizers also used its profits to acquire objects for a museum of manufactures, an early forerunner of the South Kensington Museum.

many other notable interiors (and exteriors) in a social history of the site. The information is presented chronologically, so the reader can appreciate the leaps and bounds (and lulls) that characterized the museum's development under Cole and his supporters. The museum's makers (its planners and builders) are the dominant figures in this account, as in Physick's work. However, neither study entirely ignores the less authoritative, but by no means less colourful, personalities that populated the museum. Physick, for example, briefly mentions the refreshment contractor Fred Hill and his intent to update the museum restaurant through the introduction of alternate menus.⁵ The *Survey of London* sheds light on working-class visitors and their unique needs (e.g., cheaper forms of transportation and extended hours of admission), but these issues are treated in a cursory fashion.⁶ This is not a criticism of either work because neither intended to be a history of working-class museum audiences. The *Survey of London* recounts the physical transformation of the South Kensington site in astounding detail; Physick documents the development of the museum, as a material structure and a cultural entity, with meticulous care. Both works present a wealth of information on the architectural plans and decorative schemes (realized and unrealized) that shaped the museum's fabric. The multitudes who used the museum as a workplace, an educational centre, or an entertainment venue are integral to both accounts, but they are not foci. Nevertheless, allusions to regular employees and working-class visitors sparked my interest in their interactions with the South Kensington Museum.

⁵Physick 1982, pp. 109-10.

⁶Sheppard 1975, pp. 63, 66. Working-class issues are also touched upon by Physick 1982, p. 35.

A more recent publication devoted to the development of the South Kensington Museum – and its successor, the V&A – delves a little deeper into the treatment of working-class visitors. Anthony Burton's *Vision & Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1999) focusses less on the architectural development of the South Kensington Museum and more on the general history of its administration, its collections, and its public.⁷ Burton discusses biases against the lower classes that hindered their inclusion in museum audiences during the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸ These biases, it is suggested, were discarded by the South Kensington Museum when it encouraged working-class visitors with an unusually sympathetic admission policy (one that offered evening hours and free admission on particular days of the week).⁹ However, I cast doubt on assertions, more often made by nineteenth-century men of privilege, that the South Kensington Museum was a handy resource for London's artisans. I question the feasibility of a trip to South Kensington by low-income artisans, so many of whom resided in the poorer neighbourhoods of the East End, far from the museum's genteel setting in the West End. My doubt is predicated upon an abundance of primary sources, including routine caricatures of commoners as museum outsiders and rather more rare first-hand accounts of craftspeople's impressions of the museum. These documents suggest that the South Kensington Museum was not entirely accessible to the working classes. Such findings should not be altogether surprising for readers familiar with the

⁷*A Grand Design: The Art of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1997), published in conjunction with a travelling exhibition and edited by Malcolm Baker and Brenda Richardson, is a comparable work in this regard.

⁸Burton 1999, p. 12.

⁹Burton 1999, pp. 75-77.

research of Jeffrey Auerbach on the social divisions that persisted at ostensibly universal events. In *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (1999), Auerbach recognizes that the world fair brought the classes together, but distinctions between them remained apparent (or, one could argue, guarded). Affluent residents of the West End protested proposals to mount the exhibition in Hyde Park; they feared and resented the trespass of London's poor.¹⁰ Mingling between the classes was further discouraged by the exhibition's admission policy: admission fees remained prohibitively high during the first weeks of operation and, even after a fee reduction, the priciest sums continued to be charged on Saturdays, the one day that labourers had time to spare.¹¹ In many respects, the Great Exhibition was a democratic affair, but it was not an equalizer of the crowds that congregated in Hyde Park. It was more accessible to some individuals than others, much like the South Kensington Museum that followed it.

My second chapter closes with an introduction to the visual elements of the Green Dining Room. Other writers have described the interior's principal features, but usually in less detail and with fewer illustrations (thorough descriptions appear in Physick's book and the *Survey of London*, for example, while Linda Parry's research expands on both these sources).¹² Before my first physical encounter with the room in 2004, I had only a weak impression of how it would look, even though I had read numerous accounts and seen multiple (albeit uniform) photographs of the room. I believe a detailed account, complemented by an assortment of illustrations, is due. Using nineteenth-century guides

¹⁰Auerbach 1999, pp. 44, 46-47.

¹¹Auerbach 1999, pp. 145, 146. The exhibition was closed on Sundays.

¹²Parry 1996b.

to the museum and departmental reports, among other archival materials, I chart the interior's design and execution. I also attempt to reconstruct the environment in which the restaurant debuted and operated. My aim is to describe the Green Dining Room as it would have appeared to nineteenth-century viewers. Reviews of the refreshment room, excerpted from contemporary periodicals, enrich my account. They reveal that the Green Dining Room was received positively by the press, but not entirely without criticism.

Because the Green Dining Room was part of a larger project to entice visitors to the South Kensington Museum, it cannot be considered in isolation and I devote my third chapter to the two other refreshment rooms, the Centre Refreshment Room and the Grill Room. Once again, Physick's research and the *Survey of London* were crucial sources of information. They delineate each room's course of execution and give special attention to the separate commissions that were involved. I retraced (and occasionally revised) this information using museum records and company files (specifically those of Powell and Sons, an influential manufacturer of stained glass) stored at the V&A Archive in London. The largest interior, the Centre Refreshment Room, was entrusted to Godfrey Sykes, the South Kensington Museum's chief decorative artist and an admiring disciple of Alfred Stevens. Much of Sykes's work, once so prevalent in and around the museum, has been destroyed or concealed by modern improvements (i.e., twentieth-century renovations that aimed to mute Victorian decorations and thereby create neutral backdrops for the museum's prized possessions, its *objets d'art*). Not surprisingly, Sykes's name is unfamiliar now, although Tim Barringer argues it ought to become familiar once more.¹³

¹³Barringer 2005, p. 187.

In *Men at Work: Art and Labour in Victorian Britain* (2005), Barringer devotes one chapter to Sykes, helping readers to better appreciate the important role he played in beautifying the South Kensington Museum and the area that surrounded it. However, I cannot fathom a dramatic resurgence of interest in Sykes any time soon because, in his own day, Sykes's reputation as an artist was minor. As a decorative artist he did not win the high praise that was reserved for fine artists, a more glamorous lot, and the value of his designs was hotly contested in some circles; even Barringer acknowledges this.¹⁴ Moreover, much of his art is bound to the architectural framework of the V&A; little of it is accessible to the art market (where surging sales can make outdated works desirable again). Consequently, there is no commercial incentive to resurrect (or reinvent) the reputation of this Victorian artist, but I digress. Following his death in 1866, Sykes's work was continued by his former assistants, James Gamble and Reuben Townroe, but most of the Centre Refreshment Room's decorations are attributed to Gamble. A most remarkable feature of the room is its ceramic cladding: nearly every surface is encrusted with tiles. Though dazzling in effect, some nineteenth-century critics objected to the ceramic veneer, citing John Ruskin's principle of honest construction: the ornaments obscured the real bones of the space; form competed with function. However, the easy-to-clean tiles had a hygienic purpose and they, along with other elements of the room, strongly reflected Cole's interests. In fact, the Centre Refreshment Room should be regarded as an exuberant portrait of the South Kensington Museum's first director.

It is rather easy to become acquainted with the vibrant historical personage of

¹⁴Barringer 2005, p. 227.

Henry Cole. As a recognizable face of the museum, Cole has been the focus of numerous studies, but one of the earliest and fullest accounts of his life was penned, in part, by Cole himself. *Fifty Years of Public Work* (1884) charts the civil servant's meteoric rise from a modest post at the Public Record Office to the highest echelons of power at South Kensington.¹⁵ A more recent account of Cole's ambitions and accomplishments was written by Anthony Burton and Elizabeth Bonython. *The Great Exhibitor: The Life and Work of Henry Cole* (2003) reinforces Cole's reputation as a tireless administrator who pursued high goals with a steadfast determination. The authors' sketch of Cole is drawn from his personal papers and museum records, most of which are held by the National Art Library and the V&A Archive. I revisited these primary sources, including Cole's letters of correspondence and typed transcripts of his diaries, probing them for signs of his involvement in the decorative schemes of the three refreshment rooms.

My research indicated that Cole kept very busy. He developed a wide variety of interests and he did not hesitate to share his enthusiasms with his peers (or, for that matter, his public). So, for example, when the Society of Arts announced a competition for a tea service in 1845, Cole was inspired to enter new terrain, ceramic manufacture, a branch of modern industry that would remain a constant in his life. Cole's tea service, submitted under the pseudonym of Felix Summerly, was made by the Minton firm. This collaboration helped to cement a personal friendship and professional relationship between Cole and Herbert Minton, the head of the company; Cole's affiliation with the

¹⁵*Fifty Years of Public Work* was unfinished when Cole died in 1882. Two of his children, Henrietta and Alan, completed the work on his behalf; Cole 1884, vol. 1, p. iv.

Minton firm is well documented by such works as *The Dictionary of Minton* (1990), a comprehensive book by Paul Atterbury and Maureen Batkin, and a shorter but equally pertinent article by Ann Eatwell.¹⁶ Convinced of ceramic's ability to withstand environmental abuses and enamoured of its promise to infuse the urban landscape with colour, Cole dressed the South Kensington Museum in a variety of ceramic materials, many of which were manufactured by the Minton firm. Indeed, the Centre Refreshment Room, with its abundance of Minton tiles, reflects Cole's long association with the firm and his commitment to the advancement of modern ceramic manufacture. The Centre Refreshment Room also reflects Cole's admiration for Thomas Love Peacock, the satiric novelist and poet; excerpts from Peacock's written works appear on several of the stained-glass windows, apparent proof of Cole's involvement in the planning of the decorations. Another sign of Cole's involvement can be seen in the enamelled iron ceiling; Cole had a strong practical streak, which attracted him to enamelled iron, a material recognized for its durability. He also seems to have developed an interest in Poynter because the artist became a regular presence at the museum, contributing to multiple decorative schemes. He also received the commission to decorate the Grill Room.

The Grill Room, like the Centre Refreshment Room, is encrusted with ceramic tiles. Designed by Poynter, they were painted by female members of the South Kensington Museum Porcelain Class, an enterprise that deserves more study. In *Potters and Paintresses: Women Designers in the Pottery Industry, 1870-1955* (1990), Cheryl

¹⁶Eatwell 1995.

Buckley discusses an outgrowth of the Porcelain Class, namely the short-lived Art Pottery Studio that stood in Kensington Gore. Her study is illuminating, but more research on the students and instructors of the Porcelain Class is desirable; it would be interesting to know how their lives were impacted by this progressive venture and how they first came into its fold. As for Poynter, he was a fine artist with a special affinity for the decorative arts and work in this other realm supported him during the early years of his career. Although Poynter would become very successful as an easel painter, his art is little appreciated today. His reputation took a nosedive in the early twentieth century, when all things Victorian fell out of favour, and it has not fully recovered. Not surprisingly, then, some of the most complete accounts of his life's work were penned in the nineteenth century; a short essay by James Dafforne (published in the *Art Journal*) and a series of articles by F. Hamilton Jackson (printed in the *Architectural Review*) remain useful references and Poynter's own voice permeates his written works, perhaps the most important being *Ten Lectures on Art* (1879).¹⁷ In the last decade of the twentieth century, there appeared signs of renewed interest in Poynter. An exhibition held in Brighton in 1995, an examination of his work in stained glass, and a dissertation devoted to the artist are among a small number of recent studies that are helping to reintroduce the Victorian classicist to modern audiences.¹⁸ I have used these accounts, supplemented by archival records that document Poynter's activities at South Kensington, to frame my description of the Grill Room.

¹⁷Dafforne 1877 and Jackson 1897.

¹⁸Respectively, J. Freeman 1995, Brooks 1996, and Kear 1999 (diss.).

In my examination of archival records, particularly those pertaining to Henry Cole and his work at the South Kensington Museum, I was struck by the absence of material demonstrating Cole's involvement in the making of the Green Dining Room and so my research led me to question standard accounts of how the commission was awarded to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Scholars generally recognize Cole as the room's commissioner,¹⁹ but his diaries, so illustrative of his likes and dislikes, fail to communicate his impressions of the Green Dining Room, the firm, and its artistic representatives.²⁰ These glaring omissions were entirely unexpected, but they inspired my fourth chapter in which I offer a fresh investigation into the terms of the commission. I first concentrated on the administrative records of the South Kensington Museum, including entry books of tenders and acceptances for works and services in connection with the museum.²¹ These entry books were consulted at the V&A Archive along with another important source, namely an index of the Department of Science and Art's board minutes dating from July 1863 to December 1869.²² Alternate minutes of the Department of Science and Art were consulted at the National Archives.²³ All of these records provide invaluable information concerning the execution of the Green Dining Room,

¹⁹See, for example, Physick 1982, p. 131; Bryant 1986, p. 112, and Parry 1996b, p. 200.

²⁰Spanning sixty years, Cole's diaries are held by the National Art Library in London; typed transcripts are also available for consultation [NAL, 45.C.87 to 45.C.143].

²¹VAA, ED 84/5 and ED 84/6 span the period between December 1865 and February 1869.

²²VAA, ED 84/36. The Department of Science and Art supervised the activities of the South Kensington Museum, hence the relevance of its board minutes.

²³NA, ED 28/21 and ED 28/22 were the most relevant documents, spanning the period between September 1865 and October 1867.

usually from the vantage point of its commissioner, here recognized broadly as the authorities of the South Kensington Museum. It is much more difficult to locate primary materials concerning the execution of the Green Dining Room from the vantage point of its creator, the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Letters received by the museum (or traces of such letters) survive in the aforementioned administrative records of the South Kensington Museum, but little else does. As will be noted in my fourth chapter, there is a dearth of documentation originating from the firm.²⁴ Although the partners kept personal account books (to track their work for the firm), only those of Burne-Jones and Webb survive.²⁵ Of course, written material (e.g., private letters) and visual material (e.g., preparatory sketches) have helped historians to learn more of the firm and its operations, but the loss of documents originating from the firm is lamentable and carries significant implications for the ways in which histories of the firm (and its work at the South Kensington Museum) have been written. I will expand on this issue in Chapter Five when I discuss the efforts of some historians to give more credit for the design of the Green Dining Room to William Morris (rather than Philip Webb), efforts that seem to spring more from Morris's enduring appeal and less from surviving records.

Accounts of the firm's origins and its rise to fame abound, but their quality can vary from the derivative (e.g., poorly-written coffee table books with attractive illustrations aimed at general readers with an interest in the Arts and Crafts movement, William Morris, or both) to the impressive (e.g., groundbreaking studies guided by

²⁴Upon the firm's dissolution in 1940, the V&A took possession of many original designs, but the firm's records perished; Floud 1952, p. 38; B. Morris 1961, p. 6.

²⁵The firm's minute book also survives.

thoughtful questions and informed by careful research). *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (1991), co-authored by Charles Harvey and Jon Press, is an important example of the latter type of publication. As its title suggests, this study focusses on Morris, as many other studies have done and as many more will surely do. Indeed, biography remains a popular vehicle for Morris enthusiasts, who appear to relish tales of his boyhood excursions into Epping Forest with unflagging interest and, it might seem, without much concern for their increasing redundancy. I do not mean to suggest that there is no place for biography in art history. I, for one, am very much interested in the people 'behind' the art: the artists, patrons, spectators, and passers-by whose (individual and collective) experiences have contributed to our appreciation for particular works of art and, in other instances, our lack thereof. However, new biographies of Morris ought to be less susceptible to repetition. Harvey and Press do not entirely escape repetition in their work, but their biography is refreshing because it casts Morris in a new light, that of a businessman, and thereby illuminates an important aspect of his life's work. The success of the firm was integral to the spread of Morris's art and vice versa; by detailing the activities of the firm and Morris's role in them, Harvey and Press succeed in broadening our vision of Morris the artist-poet to include Morris the entrepreneur.

Because secondary sources are more or less united in their portrayal of Cole as the commissioner of the Green Dining Room, I found it necessary to explore multiple scenarios that could have made it possible for Cole to become acquainted with the firm and their wares. When it received the commission to decorate the west refreshment room, the firm was still rather young, having only formed in 1861. Some historians

suggest that the International Exhibition of 1862, at which the firm displayed choice specimens in the Medieval Court, provided the all-important moment of revelation for South Kensington's administrators and London's connoisseurs alike, but I begin my account with an experience that predated the formation of the firm: the painting of the new Debating Hall at the University of Oxford in 1857. This project involved several future members of the firm and attracted the attention of the press; it was an early group effort and Cole may have been aware of it. I go on to consider other important events and affiliations, including the building of Red House (Morris's home in Bexley Heath, Kent), the patronage of architects like George Frederick Bodley, and the firm's positive reception at an exhibition of stained glass held at South Kensington in 1864. These and other experiences provided Cole with ample opportunity to become familiar with the firm, but my research never encouraged the conclusion that he became profoundly interested in it. Indeed, examples of South Kensington administrators approaching individual members of the firm, with the intent of employing them on alternate projects in or around the museum, are exceedingly rare. Thus, the focus of my fourth chapter shifts from *how* Cole became acquainted with the firm to *who* had the means and motivation to push the Green Dining Room commission in the firm's direction. I acknowledge multiple candidates, but I believe Henry Austin Bruce (later Lord Aberdare) is the most likely one. As the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, Bruce was Cole's superior. Had Bruce desired to advance the career of Rossetti, with whom he had direct links, he had the clout to do it.

Bruce's tenure as the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education

was brief, beginning in April 1864 and ending in June 1866 with the defeat of Lord Russell's government. He continued on the political path, serving as the Home Secretary between December 1868 and August 1873, but Bruce remains a minor historical figure and his name is absent from many histories of the South Kensington Museum. However, his name's inclusion in a club handbook – one that listed each and every one of the firm's (future) partners as fellow members – led me to believe that Bruce might be very significant to the history of the Green Dining Room. Was he an admirer of the firm? Did he purchase its wares or patronize its artists? Did he use his station as the Vice-President to secure the services of the firm for the museum? Hoping to find more tangible connections between Bruce and the firm, I explored a number of different avenues. I visited the Glamorgan Record Office in Wales where I examined the archives of the Bruce family estate; these papers confirmed Bruce's identity as a patron of art and, more importantly, an acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The artist was commissioned to paint a triptych for Llandaff Cathedral and Bruce helped to finance the project, which became the focus of an excellent article by Jan Marsh.²⁶ Her research, which owes much to the archives of the Glamorgan Record Office, gives added insight into Bruce's interactions with Rossetti. I also learned more of Bruce's person through his published letters and those of Rossetti.²⁷ The latter indicate that the artist maintained a high opinion of Bruce, if not a constant friendship. More research is needed to illuminate Bruce's patterns of patronage, but I am confident that he played a significant role in the making of

²⁶Marsh 1999b.

²⁷For Bruce's correspondence, see Bruce 1902. For Rossetti's correspondence, see Doughty/Wahl 1965-67 and Troxell 1937, for example.

the Green Dining Room.

In Chapter Five, I examine the Green Dining Room's relationship to nineteenth-century design reform. The chapter opens with a brief introduction to the Arts and Crafts movement, to which the Green Dining Room has strong links. The products of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the personalities associated with them, enjoy immense popularity today (particularly in Britain, which proudly claims two of the movement's 'founding fathers', William Morris and John Ruskin, as its native sons). There is a large demand for studies on the Arts and Crafts, but (again) their quality can vary greatly. Countless publications celebrate the lives of the movement's pioneers, but the overabundance of these celebratory accounts threatens to obscure the diverse identities of the producers, promoters, and patrons of the Arts and Crafts (whilst raising the pedestals of a select few individuals still higher). Excellent correctives to this trend include Anthea Callen's *Women Artists in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870-1914* (1979) and Eileen Boris's *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (1986). They demonstrate that the Arts and Crafts movement was an exciting development, incited as much by social concerns as aesthetic inclinations, that resonated with people of both sexes on both sides of the Atlantic.

In Britain, the movement embraced the ideals of an earlier generation of architects, including A. W. N. Pugin and G. E. Street, who worshipped the Gothic style as the ultimate symbol of English virility. Although the Arts and Crafts movement would welcome other styles into its lexicon, the Gothic style remained a favourite. Like many of their contemporaries, Pugin and Street also took a pluralistic approach to their work.

They encouraged their peers to become better acquainted with the crafts that shaped and coloured buildings; they believed that a deeper familiarity with these time-honoured traditions would lead to worthier architectural designs. Their experiments in different crafts fostered a greater appreciation for the decorative arts as well as the special skills that sustained them. These ideals, along with Ruskin's vision of the liberated craftsman, permeated the Arts and Crafts movement. Indeed, they were very dear to William Morris, but they were not always fulfilled.

Work on the Green Dining Room demonstrated to Morris the difficulty of realizing socialist ideals through art manufactures. Arts and Crafts leaders deplored the separation between design and manufacture made manifest by commercial art production, whereby designers conceived things and labourers made them. They believed this separation diminished the quality of the product and stifled the creative spirit of its maker. However, in practice, the challenge of creating a unified architectural environment without also limiting the personal contributions of the craftspeople engaged in the work flummoxed even the most ardent design reformers, Morris included. When seventy painted panels, designed by the artist Edward Burne-Jones, were added to the dado, Morris strongly disliked their effect. The panels, executed by multiple individuals, were uneven in quality and threatened to disrupt the cohesion of the interior. In Aymer Vallance's well-known account of the incident, Morris responded to the threat by ordering another artist to repaint the panels to his satisfaction.²⁸ Morris hoped to see artisans find joy in their labour, but, as the example of the repainted panels reveals, he

²⁸Vallance 1909, p. 82.

was not wholly able to respect the principles of organic design and liberated craftspeople simultaneously.

The paintings of the Green Dining Room attracted me for yet another reason. They also reveal Burne-Jones's willingness to reuse compositions for alternate projects, a practice that blurred the boundaries between decorative and fine art as well as those between public and private collections. In *Edward Burne-Jones: Victorian Artist-Dreamer* (1998), Stephen Wildman and John Christian noted a strong resemblance between *Sun*, one of the painted panels in the Green Dining Room, and *Day*, a work that once belonged to Frederick Leyland, one of Britain's greatest patrons of art.²⁹ Intrigued by their discovery, I searched for other affinities between the figurative designs of the Green Dining Room and independent works of art by Burne-Jones. Much to my delight, I located several striking examples and they, too, involved works of art formerly owned by Leyland. Moreover, these other works had been used to decorate the dining room of the shipping magnate's opulent residence. It was an exciting revelation because it meant that guests of the Green Dining Room, an intimate space in a public setting, could immerse themselves in an environment that was aesthetically akin to Leyland's dining room, a grand interior in a private dwelling.

In Chapter Five, I also raise the question of who acted as the Green Dining Room's primary designer. Many before me have pointed to Philip Webb and, I believe, deservedly so.³⁰ However, some scholars have pointed to William Morris with

²⁹Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 116.

³⁰See, for example, Sheppard 1975, pp. 111-12 and Physick 1982, p. 132.

remarkable adamance. Barbara Morris, for example, refused to attribute the Green Dining Room's design to Webb, an opinion seemingly based on Morris's renown (rather than physical traces of his superintendence).³¹ In my attempt to settle the matter, I consulted primary documents linked to the firm, most notably the correspondence of its first manager, George Warrington Taylor, and Webb's account book.³² These sources have been analysed previously; for example, basing his judgement on a close reading of the architect's account book, A. C. Sewter named Webb the principal author of the Green Dining Room.³³ Indeed, studied together and in unabridged form, Taylor's letters and Webb's account book indicate – quite convincingly – that Webb led the design and execution of the Green Dining Room as well as the redecoration of the Armoury and Tapestry Room at St. James's Palace, a contemporaneous project of equal import. Nevertheless, scholars with a greater regard for Morris have dismissed, or ignored, this evidence.³⁴ I failed to understand how they could discount such credible sources until I encountered the bias of William Rossetti, Dante's brother and a second-hand observer of the firm. Keen to keep his brother's memory alive, William published several volumes of Dante's personal papers and shared his recollections of the firm and its associates. William wrote very little of Webb, but what he did write was dismissive of the architect's accomplishments.³⁵ Compounded with Webb's distaste for publicity, the door was

³¹B. Morris 1987, p. 15. Others who have attributed the Green Dining Room to Morris include Faulkner 1980, p. 34 and MacCarthy 1994, p. 210.

³²Taylor's letters were consulted at the National Art Library; a copy of Webb's account book was consulted at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery.

³³Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104.

³⁴See, for example, Mitchell 1947, p. 38.

³⁵Rossetti 1906, vol. 1, pp. 215-16, 222.

opened for future historians to negate Webb's authority over ambitious projects for the firm. Stylistic arguments (of questionable merit) have also been used to attribute specific details of the Green Dining Room to Morris, but I hope my chapter will demonstrate stronger (and sounder) arguments for a general attribution to Webb, a most important (if considerably less famous) member of the firm.

Photographs of the Green Dining Room tend to present the interior as an empty shell or a self-contained work of art, thereby allowing modern-day admirers to focus on its permanent features without giving much thought to its former use as a *dining room*, a space where people ate and drank. Indeed, the Green Dining Room was more than an artistic experiment; it was a vital component of a working restaurant. When occupied by Victorian diners, the room would have looked, smelled, and sounded differently from the quiet space it became in the twentieth century, a space lacking its original tables, chairs, and other dining paraphernalia.³⁶ In my sixth chapter, I explore the social fabric of the Green Dining Room: I demonstrate how nineteenth-century visitors and museum staff experienced the museum restaurant. Few scholars have delved into this aspect of the Green Dining Room's history. As noted previously, Physick introduced his readers to several of the main personages connected with the refreshment rooms, including the caterer Fred Hill, but little else has been written. Indeed, relying only on secondary sources, one would struggle to acquire a vivid impression of the Green Dining Room's nineteenth-century atmosphere. Fortunately, the V&A Archive possesses a wealth of documents that illuminate the operations of the former refreshment rooms. These records

³⁶Bryant 1986, p. 113.

include the finer details of the catering contracts, but also shed light on sanitation concerns, security issues, tipping policies, and dress codes.³⁷ This bounty of information, bolstered by the survival of the three refreshment rooms, is exceptional. Although eating houses have performed a necessary service for centuries, they do not make for easy research because so much of their substance is often untraceable. Normally, a restaurant's history is plagued by a lack of documentation and a dearth of physical materials. Restaurants do not simply go out of business; they also tend to disappear. When a restaurant's profits tumble, there is little incentive to keep it open and so the business folds, staff members disperse, the property changes hands, furnishings are carted away, and, with the passing of time, memories of the old restaurant fade. Unless it caught the attention of an architectural journalist or a food critic in its heyday, very few traces of a nineteenth-century restaurant are likely to survive. If they can be found, menus and advertisements might list some or all of the food and beverage options available, perhaps even their prices, but they will not likely indicate how meals were prepared or how the food tasted. Reay Tannahill commented on the difficulty researchers face in writing histories of food (and, I would add, histories of mid-Victorian restaurants):

Cuisines are like art, architecture, sculpture, literature, music and philosophy – aspects of culture. But whereas architecture is still here to be seen, music to be heard, and poetry to be read, the cooking standards of the past have to be judged at second hand through contemporary reports. It is like knowing Shakespeare only through what his reviewers said of him.³⁸

When they fall out of fashion, restaurants (and their foods) cannot be tucked away in

³⁷VAA, ED 84/83, ED 84/194A, ED 84/210, ED 84/211, and ED 84/222-225.

³⁸Tannahill 1989, p. 321.

attics (like unappreciated paintings or outmoded clothes) and await rediscovery by subsequent generations of inquisitive scholars. Former restaurants soon slide into obscurity, so the survival of three nineteenth-century refreshment rooms and a wealth of original documents is truly noteworthy.

The real challenge, however, is to set the museum's refreshment rooms in the context of other mid-Victorian restaurants. The world of food is attracting more and more attention from historians, but the attraction is relatively new and much terrain remains unexplored. Histories of Parisian restaurants and French cuisine dominate the field; histories of London's restaurants and British cuisine are significantly smaller in number and uneven in quality, which makes it difficult to assess how the museum restaurant compared to and competed with other mid-Victorian establishments.³⁹ For example, John Burnett's *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Food in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (first published in 1966) is an excellent introduction to nineteenth-century diets (and the social and economic factors that shaped them), but patterns of eating out are not discussed in great detail. Without a comprehensive study of mid-century (London-based) restaurants to guide my research, I found it necessary to consult a wide range of studies (devoted to the Great Exhibition of 1851, Victorian pubs, department stores, and hotels, for instance) to collect information that would benefit my understanding of dining options in mid-century London. I also gathered information from numerous late-Victorian and Edwardian sources, like Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis's

³⁹According to Alan Warde and Lydia Martens, "there is no satisfactory historical account of the catering industry or restaurants." Warde/Martens 2000, p. 2.

restaurant reviews, which emphasize the multi-sensory pleasures of dining in public restaurants.⁴⁰ I scoured contemporary periodicals for animated descriptions of new restaurants and their culinary offerings. Intent on learning more about the people who dined at South Kensington, I probed a large body of biographical material, including the published memoirs of several museum administrators and the aforementioned diaries of Henry Cole, for example. These sources suggest that the refreshment rooms were frequented by well-heeled patrons, but it is unlikely that low-income individuals ever ventured there, except perhaps to work. Work in the museum restaurant was challenging, but it remained a family affair until Hill's daughter, the indefatigable Annie Cottam, was forced from the business in the early twentieth century.⁴¹ A self-dependent widow, Cottam protested her termination, but to no avail: she was replaced by another caterer with a smaller operating budget. Always keen to lower costs, V&A administrators continued to consider alternate catering arrangements and they eyed catering facilities at other institutions. In doing so, they collected invaluable information on early variants of the museum restaurant, an integral feature of present-day museums.

In my final chapter, I examine the Green Dining Room's recent history, beginning with the interior's symbolic transformation from an elegant room with a practical purpose into a work of art with an uncertain future. In the early twentieth century, under the stewardship of Cecil Smith, the V&A changed dramatically. Keen to neutralize the Victorian decorations in his midst, the new director slowly and methodically set about

⁴⁰Newnham-Davis 1899.

⁴¹VAA, ED 84/222-225; these records chart the development of the museum's refreshment department.

painting them out and boarding them up.⁴² His actions were censured by aging admirers of Cole and his circle, but the modernizing renovations continued. Smith argued that the collections were the real highlights of the museum and, in order to fully appreciate them, their surroundings had to be tamed. Indeed, his memos reveal a strong bias against representational art (especially in the context of a museum setting).⁴³ The Green Dining Room remained relatively unscathed during this period of remodelling, but its fabric was declining. It had accumulated over fifty years of wear and tear when W. R. Lethaby, a Webb enthusiast, began corresponding with museum administrators and pressed them to guard the Green Dining Room against further disrepair. His letters of correspondence, along with other important documents concerning the Green Dining Room's safekeeping, are stored by the V&A Archive in the so-called "Morris Room File."⁴⁴ In Lethaby's eyes, the refreshment room was no ordinary dining room; it was an exemplary work of art and very much worth saving for posterity. He convinced others to see it in the same light and so the interior was carefully renovated. However, with the onset of WWII, the restaurant closed its doors and the Green Dining Room succumbed to a new threat: disuse.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Green Dining Room underwent

⁴²As stated earlier (in reference to my second chapter), both Physick and the *Survey of London* offer detailed histories of the V&A's architectural development; both sources document Smith's renovations.

⁴³VAA, ED 84/68-69.

⁴⁴VAA, MA/2/M. I am not the first (nor likely the last) scholar to examine its contents; Physick also studied this file to write his architectural history of the V&A; see Physick 1982, p. 135, notes 77-83. However, I devote more attention to Lethaby's letters and the implication of his choice of words, which (I will argue) helped to preserve the Green Dining Room, but eroded Webb's position in the history of its making. Moreover, the contents of the Morris Room File have grown since Physick's book appeared in 1982, so now there is more material to consider.

many more changes. It emerged from WWII battered, its stained-glass panels in need of serious repair, but these scars were disguised at the time of its second unveiling to the public, which took place in conjunction with an important exhibition devoted to the decorative arts of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. This groundbreaking exhibition, hosted by the V&A in 1952, encouraged people to see Victorian products with appreciative eyes and it used the Green Dining Room as a spectacular showcase for Morris & Co. wares.⁴⁵ Judging by subsequent descriptions (and photographs) of the interior, the Green Dining Room continued to serve as an elaborate display case for items linked to William Morris and his associates for many years to come. Eventually, however, the room was cleared of these objects and so it truly appeared as a work of art unto itself. Distinguished from the other former refreshment rooms, which (on occasion) were pressed into cafeteria-style service, it was a rarified space and only a privileged few could use it as a dining room (when it was hired for private events), a fact noted by Stephen Klein in his examination of museum restaurants (and their increasing exclusivity).⁴⁶ Compounded with its new designation as the Morris Room, the interior's genesis as a *green dining room* became less apparent (and its connection to Webb became more obscure), but its identity has shifted again. Now all three Victorian interiors are being used as refreshment rooms in the new V&A Café, which opened in 2006. Because the unveiling of the new V&A Café occurred after my last trip to London, I have not seen the rooms in their latest guises, but the internet is an invaluable resource and offers many

⁴⁵Floud 1952, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁶Klein 2002, p. 91.

opportunities to see the rooms through other lenses. For example, Board Minutes posted on the V&A's website shed light on the pace of the refreshment rooms' physical transformation.⁴⁷ Photographs appearing on the website of DHA Designs, the company responsible for the lighting installations, reveal the clean lines and bright spaces of the new café.⁴⁸ Through the visual and written observations included in her blog, the artist Katherine Tyrrell gives some impression of how people are interacting with the transformed environment.⁴⁹

Today the Green Dining Room has a different name, but it has returned to its first purpose: it invites visitors to dine in elegant surroundings. Few may recognize the complex origins of the space, or remember its previous patterns of usage, but the history of the Green Dining Room is undeniably rich and I examine its many facets in this dissertation.

⁴⁷See, for instance, V&A Board Minutes 2004b, 2006b, and 2006c (internet).

⁴⁸See, for example, DHA Designs 2007b and 2007c (internet).

⁴⁹Tyrrell 2006b (internet).

CHAPTER TWO

GOING TO SOUTH KENSINGTON AND SEEING THE GREEN DINING ROOM

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, despite its imperial might, Britain feared the future: it was widely believed that the nation's economy would stagnate if British manufacturers continued to lag behind their more enterprising and artistic French competitors.¹ The government appointed two Select Committees, in 1835 and 1836, to learn how to promote good design and, more broadly, good taste among Britain's artisans.

Each Select Committee had the same mandate, namely:

To inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the ARTS and of the PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN among the People (especially the Manufacturing Population) of the Country; also to inquire into the Constitution, Management and Effects of Institutions connected with the Arts.²

Art connoisseurs and vendors of luxury goods alike attested to the need for public collections of exceptional objects – institutions to inspire manufacturers and elevate their wares by way of example.³ As noted by Michael Conforti, Gustav Waagen (the director of Berlin's celebrated Gemäldegalerie) wielded tremendous influence over the 1835

¹Schmiechen 1988, p. 298.

²*Report 1835*, p. xiv; *Report 1836*, p. ii. See also Purbrick 1994, p. 70; Wainwright/Gere 2002a, p. 3.

³Purbrick 1994, p. 71; Conforti, "The Idealist Enterprise and the Applied Arts," pp. 23-47, in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 26; Wainwright/Gere 2002a, p. 4.

Select Committee. Waagen believed that the best way to spread good taste was to fill museums with great art and to make the museums more accessible to the general public.⁴ Witnesses argued such facilities should offer free admission and extended opening hours in order to entice the labouring classes.⁵ Interestingly, the art envisioned as forming the main attraction at these public centres of learning was more or less limited to the Classical tradition. The Select Committees endorsed collections that focussed on casts of Greek or Roman sculptures, copies after Pompeian designs, and, most important of all, works by the much-admired painter Raphael and other distinguished Renaissance artists.⁶ To ensure the full appreciation of Raphael's genius, it was also suggested that a national collection ought to include works from the era prior to Raphael's age, thus allowing room for comparison between works that promised perfection and those that achieved it.⁷ However, Waagen cautioned against relying solely on the establishment of accessible collections to promote good taste and to improve art manufactures. People had to be taught the ABCs of proper design; aspiring designers had to learn to select, and draw from, the best models.⁸ With the opening of the South Kensington Museum two decades

⁴Waagen in *Report* 1835, p. 11; Conforti in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 26.

⁵Purbrick 1994, p. 72.

⁶*Report* 1836, p. v. Multiple witnesses supported collections that favoured masterpieces of antiquity (originals and copies). See, for example, the testimony of Robert Butt; he superintended the bronze and porcelain department at Messrs. Howell & James in Regent Street. Convinced of the artistic superiority of French manufactures, he believed museums should exhibit "casts from the antique statues, busts, vases, candelabra, gems, coins and so on." Butt in *Report* 1835, p. 46. Henry Sass, a self-described design teacher, likewise recognized the superiority of antique models (in this case, Greek statues); Sass in *Report* 1836, p. 23.

⁷Waagen in *Report* 1835, p. 11

⁸Waagen in *Report* 1835, p. 11.

later, many of the Select Committees' principal recommendations would be implemented. In the interim, however, the Select Committees helped to establish another experiment in design reform, the School of Design.⁹

In June 1837, the Board of Trade opened a School of Design at Somerset House in rooms previously occupied by the Royal Academy.¹⁰ For the benefit of its pupils, a small but impressive group of ornamental objects was assembled; it mainly consisted of modern articles and included all types of media, from ceramics to textiles.¹¹ Provincial Schools of Design soon followed (the first opened in 1838 at Manchester).¹² These schools, like their predecessor, aimed to improve workers' appreciation of aesthetics.¹³ Some manufacturers worried the schools would do more harm than good, either by divulging trade secrets,¹⁴ creating a skilled workforce that felt entitled to higher wages based on their special training,¹⁵ or emboldening employees to abandon their humble trades in favour of more attractive careers in the fine arts.¹⁶ Henry Cole (1808-82), a civil servant and the future director of the South Kensington Museum, argued that the School of Design at Somerset House was not practical enough; the institution had to be reformed if it was to produce true designers and not just fashioners of pretty pictures that never

⁹Barlow/Wilson 2000, p. 157; Wainwright/Gere 2002a, pp. 3, 5.

¹⁰Physick 1982, p. 13; B. Morris 1986, pp. 9-10; Wainwright/Gere 2002a, p. 5.

¹¹Wainwright/Gere 2002a, pp. 6, 22.

¹²B. Morris 1986, p. 11.

¹³Schmiechen 1988, p. 298.

¹⁴Cooper 1992 (diss.), p. 91.

¹⁵Rifkin 1988, p. 95.

¹⁶Rifkin 1988, pp. 96, 97; Burton 2002, p. 86.

amounted to anything.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the Schools of Design would continue to occupy a prominent position in the government's design reform strategy. On the heels of the wildly successful Great Exhibition of 1851, a Department of Practical Art was formed in February 1852 with Henry Cole acting as its General Superintendent.¹⁸ The department, controlled by the Board of Trade, became the Department of Science and Art in 1853 and would later be transferred to the Committee of Council on Education.¹⁹ Cole maintained a high degree of authority during these transitions, securing his place in the new Department of Science and Art as its Secretary with only the Lord President of the Council and the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education as his superiors.²⁰ As for the School of Design, it moved to Marlborough House in 1852, the same year that a Museum of Manufactures opened to the public.²¹ Both the school and the museum were under Cole's stewardship.²² He introduced new specialized classes (e.g., courses in enamelling and porcelain painting) in the hope that the school's

¹⁷Auerbach 1999, p. 21. Cole was commissioned to ascertain the failings of the School of Design and reported his findings to a Select Committee in 1849; Burton 1999, p. 27.

¹⁸Purbrick 1994, p. 77.

¹⁹Purbrick 1994, p. 81.

²⁰Physick 1982, p. 17. The department closed in 1900; Burton 1999, p. 44.

²¹Purbrick 1994, p. 78; Wainwright/Gere 2002b, p. 25. The museum operated for two months before closing again. It opened on a permanent basis in September 1852; Physick 1982, p. 16.

²²The Museum of Manufactures would be renamed the Museum of Ornamental Art. Contemporary products enjoyed pride of place in the beginning, but they were soon outnumbered by historical decorative objects; Burton 1999, p. 36. The School of Design was renamed the Central Training School after moving to Marlborough House. In 1863 it became the National Art Training School, forerunner to the Royal College of Art; Physick 1982, p. 13; B. Morris 1986, pp. 10-11.

graduates would succeed as designers and help British manufacturers to compete with well-designed French products.²³ This approach privileged the role of the designer: it supposed that British design could be reformed, in large part, by focussing on the knowledge and skills of British designers. Improve designers and design improved, or so the theory went.²⁴

However, Cole was increasingly disillusioned with the attention devoted to designers. He began to argue for spreading good taste far and wide. Cole believed the public had to learn to like finer things so that it would create a demand for better manufactures – and until that enlightened public existed, manufacturers and their designers would continue to produce ill-conceived but saleable wares.²⁵ In the words of Cole:

The public, according to its ignorance or wit, indicate their wants, the manufacturer supplies them, and the artizan [*sic*] only does what the manufacturer bids him. The improvement of manufactures is therefore altogether dependent upon the public sense of the necessity of it, and the public ability to judge between what is good and bad in art.²⁶

Others, before Cole, had argued that designers were not solely responsible for the deficiencies of modern manufactures. For example, Charles Harriot Smith, a sculptor of architectural ornament testifying before the Select Committee of 1835, supposed retailers

²³Cole 1857, p. 12; Physick 1982, p. 15; B. Morris 1986, p. 10; Barringer 1996b, p. 29.

²⁴It was a widespread theory, one espoused by the 1835 Select Committee. For example, Butt wholeheartedly believed the establishment of public museums would improve the tastes of artisans – and they, in turn, would improve manufactures; Butt in *Report* 1835, p. 46.

²⁵Cole 1857, p. 13.

²⁶Henry Cole, “On the Facilities Afforded to All Classes of the Community for Obtaining Education in Art,” pp. 3-38, in Cole/Redgrave 1853, p. 12.

and their consumers were also to blame:

Whatever deficiency of taste is displayed in our manufactures, arises not so much from want of taste in artists to design and in our workmen to execute, as it does from want of study and education in the arts among proprietors and conductors of establishments wherein classical design and execution forms an important feature. I am also of [the] opinion, that the public, as a body, are not yet sufficiently educated in the arts to discriminate between pure classical elegance and meretricious finery. I am alluding to the public as a body in this country; and the dealers' study is not so much to improve the taste of the public, as to discover what goods will sell most readily, and produce [for] them the largest profit.²⁷

Hence the importance of a museum of manufactures, where people could see great art in practical form and learn to expect better from contemporary manufacturers.²⁸ The museum was to be the public's instructor.²⁹ Unfortunately, the instructor was about to lose his classroom. Space at Marlborough House had been given to the Department of Science and Art on a temporary basis.³⁰ In due time, the Prince of Wales would inhabit the royal residence, meaning the school and the museum would be forced to move elsewhere.³¹ New quarters were needed for the burgeoning institutions. Prince Albert (1819-61), Cole's valued collaborator, was eyeing land in Brompton for an even grander

²⁷Smith in *Report* 1835, p. 51. Samuel Wiley, a member of Jennings & Botteridge (a Birmingham firm connected to the japanning trade), agreed: "The public taste is bad; I could sell them the worst things, the most unmeaning, in preference to the most splendid designs and the best executions." Wiley in *Report* 1835, p. 58.

²⁸Burton 2002, pp. 81-82.

²⁹Cole in Cole/Redgrave 1853, p. 33. The museum-instructor concept was promoted to the 1835 Select Committee by Charles Toplis, among others. Vice-President of London's Mechanics' Institution and director of the Museum of National Manufactures in Leicester Square, Toplis believed visits to galleries could improve the wider public's taste; Toplis in *Report* 1835, p. 119.

³⁰Purbrick 1994, p. 81.

³¹Sheppard 1975, p. 85.

project: a centre of culture that celebrated advancements in the arts and sciences.³²

With profits from the Great Exhibition, a Surplus Committee set about purchasing properties in Brompton,³³ the future district of South Kensington.³⁴ First the sizeable estate of Gore House, south of Hyde Park, was bought for £60,000.³⁵ Prince Albert commissioned Gottfried Semper (1803-79), an exiled German architect, to design an elegant museum for the Brompton Park Estate nearby, but this scheme never materialized.³⁶ Instead, a humbler iron structure opened there on 20 June 1857 as the South Kensington Museum (fig. 2-1).³⁷ It incorporated the collections amassed at Marlborough House and was enriched by objects purchased at the Great Exhibition.³⁸ The highlight of the new museum was its art objects (Objects of Ornamental Art), but there were eight further departments, including Animal Products, Appliances for Scholastic Education, Architectural Examples, British Pictures, Sculpture and Engravings, Materials for Building and Construction, Models of Patented Inventions,

³²Sheppard 1975, p. 50; Dixon/Muthesius 1978, p. 172; Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 61. Albertopolis, the region that Prince Albert would help to develop between Kensington Gore and Cromwell Road, encompasses the Albert Hall, the Natural History Museum, the Royal College of Music and, of course, the V&A in addition to other educational sites.

³³Physick 1982, p. 19; Purbrick 1994, pp. 76, 77. The Surplus Committee represented the interests of the Royal Commissioners and was led by their president, the Prince Consort; Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 61. The Royal Commissioners were powerful men, most with ties to the Society of Arts or the government; B. Taylor 1999, p. 71.

³⁴In selecting the name 'South Kensington' for the new museum, Cole sought to associate his domain with nearby Kensington, an area more affluent than humble Brompton; Sheppard 1975, p. 59; Cooper 1992 (diss.), p. 130; Burton 1999, p. 41.

³⁵Purbrick 1994, p. 77.

³⁶B. Morris 1986, p. 31; Physick 1994, p. 36.

³⁷The museum's primary goal was to improve manufactures; Cole in *Report* 1860, p. 40.

³⁸Purbrick 1994, p. 81.

Reproductions by means of Photography and Casting, and Substances used for Food.³⁹

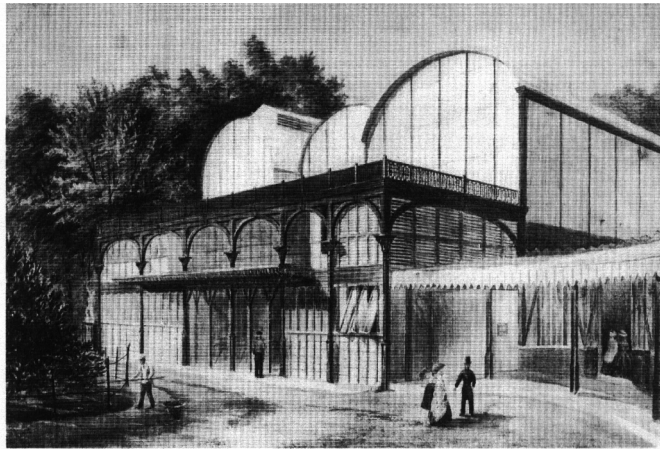


Figure 2-1: The Brompton Boilers: exterior. Watercolour by J. C. Lanchenick, 1863. Reproduced from Physick 1982, p. 25.

The iron building that housed these collections was only temporary.⁴⁰ However, critics were quick to condemn it, even before it reached completion. Writing for the *Art Journal*, one reviewer commented:

We cannot but view it as peculiarly unfortunate that the first structure presented to the public at Kensington, by what may be viewed as the

³⁹Purbrick 1994, p. 69. These categories recall the system of classification adopted by the Royal Commissioners at the Great Exhibition of 1851. For example, its Raw Materials category included the sub-group Substances used as Food (III), the Machinery section incorporated Philosophical Instruments and Miscellaneous Contrivances (X), while the class of Manufactures included both Manufactures in Mineral Substances, used for building or decorations (XXVII) and Manufactures from Animal or Vegetable Substances (XXVIII). The last category of the Great Exhibition, the Fine Arts, was broadly defined as “Fine Arts, Sculpture, Models and the Plastic Arts generally, Mosaics and Enamels, illustrative of the taste and skill displayed in such applications of human industry.” Auerbach 1999, p. 93.

⁴⁰In 1866 elements of the iron structure were removed to the East End, where they formed the Bethnal Green Museum. In 1899 the remainder was demolished; Physick 1982, p. 26.

Government Department of “Taste,” should afford so little evidence of that quality, and that it should not be in advance (to say the best of it) of an average “railway terminus.”⁴¹

Derisively nicknamed the ‘Brompton Boilers’, the maligned monument would be replaced by more permanent structures as funding became available for them. Perhaps surprisingly, the museum’s director, the ubiquitous Henry Cole, chose not to approach a distinguished architectural office for help in erecting these, but instead placed his confidence in the design capabilities of an army man, Captain Francis Fowke (1823-65) of the Royal Engineers.⁴² Cole’s choice, it has been claimed, was based on his prejudice against professional architects and his desire to exercise more control over the museum’s designs.⁴³ The first part of the claim may be unfair to Cole. According to Fiona MacCarthy, Cole’s *Journal of Design and Manufactures* (published between 1849 and 1852) promoted lessons learned from the architect A. W. N. Pugin.⁴⁴ Moreover, Cole worked closely with a number of architects (including Pugin, Owen Jones, and Matthew Digby Wyatt) on a variety of projects, which would suggest he valued their opinions. The latter half of the claim is probably more accurate. With Captain Fowke employed at South Kensington directly, Cole would have found it easier to influence the engineer’s

⁴¹*Art Journal* (1 November 1856), p. 344.

⁴²As a soldier, Fowke was a common sight at South Kensington. A group of Royal Engineers was posted there to serve the Department of Science and Art. The men provided Cole with an efficient workforce, assisting in the construction and maintenance of museum buildings; Somers Cock 1980, p. 7; Cooper 1992 (diss.), p. 80; Denis 1995, p. 12. When the Office of Works took control of the museum’s construction in 1870, the Royal Engineers were released from their duties; Physick 1982, p. 26.

⁴³Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 63.

⁴⁴MacCarthy 1972, p. 15.

output.⁴⁵ Cole hoped that the new museum buildings, devised by Fowke and decorated by students and teachers of the design school, would attract more favourable reviews on account of their artistry, economy of materials and innovative technologies.⁴⁶ The intended masterpiece was the Lecture Theatre building, which now occupies the north wing of the V&A's inner quadrangle (fig. 2-2).⁴⁷



Figure 2-2: The Lecture Theatre building: main facade. Photograph, 1920. Reproduced from Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 57.

Fowke's first plan for the Lecture Theatre dates to 1860, although it was revised considerably before construction began.⁴⁸ The brick facade is divided into three bays. The larger central bay is graced by a pediment commemorating the Great Exhibition of

⁴⁵Indeed, the Department of Science and Art was meant to be its own architect, the designer of its own buildings; "System of Administration in Practice at the Science and Art Department and South Kensington Museum and Affiliated Institutions," July 1869, p. 1 [VAA, ED 84/8].

⁴⁶Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 63; Cooper 1992 (diss.), pp. 126-27.

⁴⁷The Lecture Theatre was intended to be seen from Cromwell Road; Physick 1982, p. 97. However, a subsequent wing built to house the Art Library would obstruct the Lecture Theatre's southern aspect; Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 63; Bryant 1986, p. 112.

⁴⁸Physick 1982, p. 108.

1851.⁴⁹ A balcony, with three arches supported on elaborate terra-cotta columns, stands over a set of bronze doors, the intended main entrance of the South Kensington Museum.⁵⁰ The building is a prime example of the so-called South Kensington style. The style, developed by Fowke with the assistance of Richard Redgrave (1804-88), the Department's art superintendent, and more especially Godfrey Sykes (1824-66), the Department's main decorative artist, reflected their enthusiasm (and Cole's also) for the Italian Renaissance, specifically the fifteenth-century architecture of northern Italy with its warm red brick and polychromatic terra-cotta detailing.⁵¹ As Cole had wished, Fowke's designs garnered praise for the South Kensington Museum. For example, the *Building News*, pleased with the Lecture Theatre's progress, observed:

The materials seem to be calculated, as far as possible, to resist the deteriorating properties of our climate. They are red brick, terra-cotta, and stone, blended in the most charming and harmonious manner. Although the surfaces are everywhere decorated, and even the smallest ornament is a study, yet the *tout ensemble* does not present the slightest appearance of

⁴⁹The pediment's earthenware mosaic, designed by Reuben Townroe after sketches left by Godfrey Sykes, was completed by students; Physick 1982, p. 117.

⁵⁰Physick 1982, pp. 106, 120. It is unclear if the main entrance was ever used as such. Richard Dunn and Anthony Burton described the Lecture Theatre block as the main entrance of the South Kensington Museum, prior to the opening of Aston Webb's addition in 1909; Dunn and Burton, "An Illustrated Chronology," pp. 49-75, in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 57. However, a ground plan (appearing in an early guide to the museum) shows that the principal entrance was located elsewhere, in a temporary building (labelled the 'Entrance Hall'), opposite the Lecture Theatre building. Upon entering, guests were either led to the Food Collections (in the west wing of the quadrangle) or to the South Court and its collections of art; *Guide* 1869a, ground plan inserted between pp. 4-5.

⁵¹B. Morris 1986, p. 35; Barringer 1996b, p. 36; Barnes/Whitehead 1998, pp. 190, 194. When Cole visited Italy in the late 1850s, the combination of brick and terra-cotta mouldings impressed him and, hoping to inject some of the same splendour and pragmatism into South Kensington's emerging architecture, he ordered photographs of local buildings; Physick 1994, p. 36; Burton 1999, p. 87.

crowding or confusion.⁵²

More often than not, however, the South Kensington establishment was roasted by the press. Fowke was considered unfit for his architectural duties.⁵³ Cole and his supporters were criticized for squandering public funds on a museum that ostensibly benefited the whole of London, but remained tucked away in South Kensington.⁵⁴

Despite the appearance of excessive expenditure on the Lecture Theatre building, the pace of its construction was slow. This was due, in part, to piecemeal funding. For some aesthetes, the results were uninspiring. John Charles Robinson (1824-1913) was unimpressed by the staggered development of the site's permanent buildings, which he thought ramshackle at best. Writing in 1897, the former curator described the program of construction at South Kensington as "a penny-wise and pound-foolish system of reluctant dole on the one hand and temporary expedient on the other, destined to perpetuate confusion and to be infinitely costly in its ultimate development."⁵⁵ Nevertheless, museum authorities tried to use the financial situation to their advantage. The Lecture Theatre building was promoted as a three-dimensional study in good taste, or an interactive manual for London's artisans. As the site's development continued, they were expected to improve their own work by observing the techniques employed by the

⁵²*Building News* (14 June 1867), p. 408.

⁵³For instance, the *Art Journal* published harsh reviews that belittled Fowke's architectural accomplishments and described the man as a "quasi-architect" with influential friends; *Art Journal* (1 January 1862), p. 21; *Art Journal* (1 February 1862), p. 46.

⁵⁴Denis 1995, pp. 17-18.

⁵⁵Robinson 1897, p. 955.

museum's decorative artists.⁵⁶ When Gladstone toured the museum in 1871, the Prime Minister's guide was careful to explain that Cole regarded the ongoing decoration as "the School of Application for Art Students."⁵⁷ In theory, then, people only needed to come and see the museum buildings and the collections contained therein in order to learn what constituted good design. At the South Kensington Museum, artisans and consumers were expected to learn by example.

Interestingly, people could rarely explain how museums transformed artisans, but they firmly believed in museums' power to transform. For example, as he sat before the 1835 Select Committee, businessman James Morrison offered a vague description of art exhibitions and their enlightening capabilities. They operate, he said, "directly or indirectly on the public mind, and I have no doubt diffuse benefits through all the different grades of society."⁵⁸ James Nasmyth, a manufacturing engineer from Manchester, envisioned a domino effect, whereby one worker, his ideas improved by a visit to a museum of manufactures, would share his new knowledge with his co-workers, improving their ideas and so the new knowledge would continue to spread.⁵⁹ Cole later argued that museums could teach anyone of any age, whereas actual schools and colleges

⁵⁶B. Morris 1986, p. 34; Barringer 1996a, p. 57; Barringer 1998a, p. 363; Barringer 2000, p. 77.

⁵⁷Letter from Philip Cunliffe Owen to Henry Cole, 31 August 1871 [NAL, 55.BB.15]. P. C. Owen led the tour.

⁵⁸Morrison in *Report* 1835, p. 26.

⁵⁹Nasmyth in *Report* 1836, p. 31. Others were more sceptical of a museum's power to improve the masses. Edward Poynter, co-author of *Classic and Italian Painting* (1880) and the Department of Science and Art's Director of Art, could not imagine an aimless wanderer discovering enlightenment in a museum, unless he had the advantage of prior instruction; Poynter/Head 1880, pp. xxii-xxiii.

catered to the young.⁶⁰ Thus, the notion of self-help was vigorously promoted at South Kensington: “Self-help, self-culture, self-education, are facilitated to the student within its walls.”⁶¹ And although many believed that all museums had the potential to enlighten the common man (lifted by the sheer power of their magnificent displays), many more thought that the South Kensington Museum, with its emphasis on objects crafted by artisans, was more capable of educating the masses. The museum’s educational mission distinguished it from other institutions: “Other museums are archaeological, historic, or scientific in the abstract; but the collections in the concrete brought together at Kensington all tend to the practical and industrial intuition of the people.”⁶² Devoted to archaeological artifacts, the British Museum was considered an elite institution that mystified the working man who, lacking a proper education, could not decipher the significance of its collections. Working-class members of his parish might visit the British Museum occasionally, but Rev. William Rogers (an east London clergyman) doubted they learned as much there as they did at the South Kensington Museum:

I consider that the great difference between the British Museum and the South Kensington Museum is, that an uneducated man derives greater benefit and instruction from the South Kensington Museum than he does from the British Museum. I went only the other day to the British Museum, and I saw people staring about, not appearing to take the interest that they do in the articles exhibited in the South Kensington Museum.⁶³

The British Museum, established in 1753, was perceived as the preserve of classical scholars and art connoisseurs who revelled in the history of past ages and esteemed the

⁶⁰Cole 1874, p. 168.

⁶¹*Art Journal* (1 January 1869), p. 17.

⁶²Atkinson 1862, p. 36.

⁶³Rev. Rogers in *Report* 1860, p. 111.

monuments of ancient civilizations, but cared little for the manufactures of their own day.⁶⁴ As well, the British Museum originally required prospective visitors to apply for tickets and, according to Conforti, guests were not permitted to wander the halls at random, but were marched past the exhibits in haste.⁶⁵ This surely deterred some people from visiting, but illiteracy also acted as a deterrent. Testifying before the 1836 Select Committee, George Rennie (a sculptor) recalled the British Museum's admission policy that required visitors to sign their names in a guest book. Until the practice was abandoned (he believed this happened in 1830), illiterate individuals abstained from visiting. Rennie observed astutely, "a great number of the lower class of people not being able to write their names, they felt a difficulty or delicacy in making such an acknowledgment; they would rather not visit the Museum than pass through such an examination."⁶⁶

The National Gallery was founded in 1824. It, too, was viewed as an elite enclave, beyond the reach of the poorly educated masses:

A man who passes day after day and week after week in hard, continuous, and exhausting labour, cannot be expected, unless he be an exceptional genius, to know much about the Schools of Painting, and all those artistic items of information which a cultivated man of leisure has at his fingers' ends. The result is that if you turn an average working man loose in the National Gallery, he is apt to come away more puzzled than profited.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Taft 1878, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁵Conforti in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 27.

⁶⁶Rennie in *Report* 1836, p. 62.

⁶⁷*Graphic* (6 August 1870), p. 135. Charles Taft concurred, arguing that the workman could not appreciate the paintings as they were meant to be: "It is the artist who derives the greatest advantage from the National Gallery, while the proud laboring [*sic*] citizen contents himself with the patriotic consciousness that such a Gallery exists, and that the nation has such pictures." Taft 1878, pp. 27-28.

The South Kensington Museum and other decorative art museums of the nineteenth century presented a sharp contrast to the marbled halls of the older, more aristocratic institutions that favoured masterpieces of the past. As Anniken Thue explains, “[museums of decorative art] were mainly *contemporary* institutions where the aim was a better future.”⁶⁸ The South Kensington Museum purported to improve the state of modern industry by engaging the interests of artisans – and it attracted artisans to its galleries by exhibiting the fruits of their labour.⁶⁹ By grouping examples of one medium together (stained glass with other stained glass, for instance), the museum authorities hoped artisans and manufacturers (who generally specialized in one area, rather than dabbled in a whole range of media) would find the collections informative.⁷⁰ Descriptive labels also helped to explain the objects on display.⁷¹ In fact, Cole was quite proud of the labelling system adopted at South Kensington, believing it made an ‘open book’ of his museum.⁷² Perhaps without considering illiteracy’s distribution amongst London’s poor, Cole enthused that the destitute required no guide to appreciate the museum’s collections when labels offered information freely.⁷³ However, in labelling its exhibits, the South Kensington Museum adhered to the advice of the Select Committee of 1836, which had

⁶⁸Thue 1998, p. 119.

⁶⁹Artisans may have found the displays at the old Museum of Ornamental Art even more attractive because, in exchange for a small fee, they could handle objects directly. This was not the case at South Kensington; Burton 2002, p. 94, note 7.

⁷⁰Burton 2002, p. 87.

⁷¹Cole 1857, p. 21.

⁷²He wrote, “this Museum will be like a book with its pages always open, and not shut.” Cole 1857, p. 21.

⁷³Cole 1857, p. 22.

recommended the introduction of labels with artists' names and dates.⁷⁴

As the South Kensington Museum sought to educate working-class artisans, it developed an admission policy with their interests in mind.⁷⁵ No admission fee was charged on Monday, Tuesday, or Saturday.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the museum remained open until ten o'clock on Monday and Thursday evenings.⁷⁷ It was widely believed that these measures would help to attract working-class visitors.⁷⁸ As mentioned earlier, the Select Committees of 1835 and 1836 had espoused the evening opening of public collections, so the South Kensington Museum was simply following the advice of a previous generation. This advice hinged upon the notion that labourers, earning their wages during the daytime, would be more willing to visit a museum in the evening, when they were free to

⁷⁴The Select Committee viewed labels, with their brief details, rapidly digested, as important learning instruments for an exhausted workforce: "This ready (though limited) information is important to those whose time is much absorbed by mental or bodily labour." *Report 1836*, p. x.

⁷⁵To appreciate the financial situations of the various classes, I have relied on the scholarship of John Burnett. In a survey of ten million individuals in England and Wales (1867), members of the lower class were identified as earning less than £100 per year; Burnett 1989, p. 108. I have kept this figure in mind, but I also believe that wages varied considerably and many members of the lower class must have survived on (or, suffered from) incomes significantly smaller than £100 per year.

⁷⁶*The Times* (23 June 1857), p. 5; Cunningham 1874, p. 172. The admission policy also addressed the needs of students; they could expect to find a quieter museum on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays when the public had to pay a sixpence entrance fee. Thus, it reflected the wish of the 1835 Select Committee to ensure students found ample opportunity to work in serene environments. For instance, in the interest of scholars, Butt argued for certain restrictions on the general public's access to museums; Butt in *Report 1835*, p. 46.

⁷⁷*The Times* (23 June 1857), p. 5. According to the travel guide, *Handbook to London as It Is*, the South Kensington Museum closed at ten o'clock every Monday, Tuesday, and Saturday; Cunningham 1874, p. 172.

⁷⁸Cole 1857, pp. 23-24; *The Times* (23 June 1857), p. 5; *Art Journal* (1 September 1865), p. 281.

do as they pleased. In 1835, the architectural sculptor Charles Harriott Smith noted that the early closure of public collections precluded the admission of workmen; their only other option, if they wished to see exhibits, was to leave work and lose their pay.⁷⁹ Because its galleries were open later, a labourer did not need to skip a day's work and lose his pay to enjoy the South Kensington Museum.⁸⁰ *The Times* reported this concession to the working class: "The admission of the public to the Museum lighted up in the evening is the first experiment of the kind with a public institution, and it is hoped will be acceptable to those who work in the daytime."⁸¹

The claim, that evening hours enabled the working class to visit the South Kensington Museum, is difficult to prove.⁸² In fact, the testimony of James Crabb made to the Select Committee of 1835 suggests evening hours were not very helpful. He emphasized the need for access to museums before his workday began. He stated, "I can avail myself of no advantage unless it is before breakfast."⁸³ When pressed by his examiner to recognize the benefit offered by the (hypothetical) opening of the British Museum from six to eight o'clock in the evening, Crabb conceded the point, but insisted

⁷⁹Smith in *Report* 1835, p. 51. James Nasmyth, the aforementioned Mancunian engineer, likewise attested to the "heavy price of admission" (i.e., lost wages) imposed on workers by museums that closed at the end of the day; Nasmyth in *Report* 1836, p. 31. See also *Report* 1836, p. x.

⁸⁰"Observations on the Treasury Report," April 1859, p. 135 [NAL, 55.AA.56].

⁸¹*The Times* (17 June 1857), p. 9. The gas lighting, which illuminated the galleries after dark, is still recognized as an important innovation in the museum world; Physick 1982, p. 35.

⁸²The claim is maintained today; for example, see Burton 1999, p. 76.

⁸³Crabb in *Report* 1835, p. 82. A resident of No. 8, Shoe Lane, Fleet Street, Crabb was employed in the 'fancy works' industry (e.g., the decoration of rooms).

morning visits were preferable.⁸⁴ Others believed museums needed to open on Sundays if the wish to attract working-class visitors was sincere.⁸⁵ Perhaps, at this point in the chapter, it would be wise to consider labour conditions in the nineteenth century. The nine-to-five workday may be routine today, but the workday of the nineteenth-century artisan was tediously long, as evidenced by a document penned by none other than Captain Fowke, the architect of the South Kensington Museum. The document outlines the rules of employment applied to artisans and labourers in the building trade. Their only holidays were Christmas, Good Friday, Whit Monday, and the Queen's Birthday. Their workday began at 6:00 a.m. and ended at 5:30 p.m. (with time set aside for breakfast and dinner); on Saturday, labour ceased at 1:00 p.m. (with time for breakfast). However, men were obliged to work longer hours whenever their supervisors deemed it necessary. Moreover, employers were not required to pay overtime until 8:00 p.m.⁸⁶ Conceivably, then, ambitious bosses may have forced men to labour for more than the eleven hours that constituted Fowke's standard workday. In all likelihood, when their shifts finally ended, these artisans and labourers were too exhausted to visit the South Kensington Museum, never mind discern the rules of good taste as they perused its exhibits. Nonetheless, organizers believed that evening hours served the working class well and, in keeping its galleries open after dark, the South Kensington Museum distinguished itself from other nineteenth-century institutions, which normally only

⁸⁴Crabb in *Report* 1835, p. 82.

⁸⁵Waagen in *Report* 1835, p. 12; James Morrison in *Report* 1835, p. 21.

⁸⁶Fowke, "Work," 6 June 1864 [NA, ED 28/18, p. 110].

operated during the day.⁸⁷ For instance, the National Gallery was open to the general public from Monday to Thursday, from ten to five o'clock, but only artists and students were admitted on Fridays and Saturdays.⁸⁸ Considering the long hours they worked, it is unlikely that artisans found time to visit the National Gallery without sacrificing wages.⁸⁹ Rev. Newman Hall, a Blackfriars resident, considered the British Museum "utterly useless" because it closed early.⁹⁰ It also refused entry to children, a policy that likewise deterred working-class families from visiting.⁹¹ In contrast, the South Kensington Museum welcomed children and their guardians. Cole, ever the enthusiast, reported on the museum's success in attracting labouring fathers and their offspring:

In the evening, the working man comes to this Museum from his one or two dimly lighted, cheerless dwelling-rooms, in his fustian jacket, with his shirt collars a little trimmed up, accompanied by his threes, and fours, and fives of little fustian jackets, a wife, in her best bonnet, and a baby, of course, under her shawl. The looks of surprise and pleasure of the whole party when they first observe the brilliant lighting inside the Museum show what a new, acceptable, and wholesome excitement this evening entertainment affords to all of them.⁹²

In theory, then, the admission policy afforded London's labourers ample opportunity to visit the collections. Oscar Wilde, in a lecture delivered in 1882, waxed lyrical on their

⁸⁷*Art Journal* (1 September 1865), p. 281. According to Cole, the National Gallery and the British Museum were more exclusive than most, refusing entry to the public on students' days and other times of the year; Cole 1857, pp. 23-24. The British Museum only introduced evening hours in 1883; Peter Trippi, "Industrial Arts and the Exhibition Ideal," pp. 79-88, in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 84.

⁸⁸*Report 1835*, Appendix No. 2, p. 145.

⁸⁹If their job sites were in close proximity to the gallery, then perhaps workers could use their breaks to slip inside for short visits.

⁹⁰Rev. Hall in *Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 12.

⁹¹*Art Journal* (1 September 1865), p. 281.

⁹²Cole 1857, p. 26; cited by Purbrick 1994, p. 83.

presence at the South Kensington Museum:

There I go every Saturday night, when the museum is open later than usual, to see the handicraftsman, the woodworker, the glass-blower and the worker in metals. And it is here that the man of refinement and culture comes face to face with the workman who ministers to his joy. He comes to know more of the nobility of the workman, and the workman, feeling the appreciation, comes to know more of the nobility of his work.⁹³

However, many Victorians would have disagreed with Wilde's assessment, kind as it is to the spirit of the workman. It was a common complaint that the museum was too far removed from the East End's artisans.⁹⁴ The architect William Burges (1827-81) believed the South Kensington Museum should have been built on a more accessible site:

Had it been placed in a more central situation, say at Charing Cross, it would have had an immense influence in educating the public generally, for people would then run in for half-an-hour when they were passing, as they do at the National Gallery: and it is precisely those half-hours that are the most precious, for people then confine their attention to one or two things and study them well, knowing that they have no time for others; whereas when they go to see the Museum as a sight they try to see as much as possible, and nothing gets properly studied. The consequence is that the Museum at South Kensington does only one-half the good it might do, and is visited principally by students, sight-seers, and the inhabitants of the vicinity, whereas it ought to catch all and every condition of life.⁹⁵

Testifying before a Select Committee in 1860, Rev. Rogers reasoned it was too difficult for members of his district (St. Luke's) to visit the South Kensington Museum when it

⁹³Wilde 1908, p. 165; quoted in B. Morris 1986, p. 83. Wilde expressed this view in his lecture, "The Practical Application of the Principles of the Æsthetic Theory to Exterior and Interior House Decoration, with Observations upon Dress and Personal Ornaments," delivered during his North American tour (11 May 1882).

⁹⁴The Lord President of the Council admitted (indirectly) that the South Kensington Museum served its neighbourhood much better than it did the whole of London; Lord Granville in *Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 4. For other examples, see Taft 1878, p. 25 and Brown 1912, p. 16.

⁹⁵Burges 1865, pp. 5-6; quoted in Burton 1999, p. 47.

was four miles away, a cumbersome distance to travel by foot after a long day of work.⁹⁶ Antonio Panizzi (1797-1879), chief librarian to the British Museum, testifying before the same Select Committee, had quite another impression of the journey to South Kensington from east London: he thought the museum accessible, so long as a working man had a full day to visit it and he travelled by omnibus or steamer.⁹⁷ A writer for *The Times* conceded a trip to South Kensington for the average Londoner was tantamount to a trip out-of-town, but the writer also believed city-dwellers, attracted by the promise of a palatial setting, would flock to South Kensington to see its treasures and “enjoy a little of the country.”⁹⁸

It is difficult to assess how convenient or inconvenient Victorian journeys to South Kensington truly were. It would seem that, with the opening of new roads in time for the Great Exhibition of 1851 (e.g., Exhibition Road,⁹⁹ Cromwell Road, and Prince Albert’s Road) and, in December 1868, a new underground station (the South Kensington station, a three minutes’ walk from the museum),¹⁰⁰ South Kensington gradually became more accessible.¹⁰¹ However, it is unclear if the increased accessibility of the museum translated into more working-class visitors from the outskirts of London. The promise of the General Omnibus Company to call at the museum every thirty minutes delighted

⁹⁶Rev. Rogers in *Report* 1860, pp. 110, 111.

⁹⁷Panizzi in *Report* 1860, p. 96.

⁹⁸*The Times* (7 April 1856), p. 10.

⁹⁹It is worth noting, however, that Exhibition Road was initially considered private; Sheppard 1975, p. 59.

¹⁰⁰The South Kensington station was desired to be “a first-class ornamental passenger station,” not a hub for transporting goods; Sheppard 1975, p. 65.

¹⁰¹*Building News* (8 January 1869), p. 23; Cunningham 1874, p. 172; Bowring 1877b, p. 78.

Cole,¹⁰² but omnibuses catered to the middle classes.¹⁰³ Furthermore, omnibuses could not guarantee speedy transport through the congested streets of London, even though they offered convenient pick-up and drop-off points.¹⁰⁴ Some predicted London's growing network of railways would make travelling to the South Kensington Museum easier for the working classes.¹⁰⁵ London's first underground railway opened in January 1863; initially it only operated between Farringdon Street and Paddington.¹⁰⁶ The underground railway system advanced steadily; by 1870 it extended to Blackfriars and in 1884 developers finished the Inner Circle.¹⁰⁷ Most London underground trains offered third-class fares to passengers and their prices were frequently cheaper than omnibus rates.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, riding an underground train could be as entertaining as it was convenient. Andrew Kurtz, a Liverpool art collector and industrialist on his way to the South Kensington Museum in 1871, thoroughly enjoyed his underground excursion.¹⁰⁹ He wrote in his diary: "The carriages are delightful, clean & comfortable & lighted with gas

¹⁰²Cole, diary, 12 May 1857 [NAL, 45.C.118].

¹⁰³With their standard fare of sixpence and their usual starting time of 8:00 a.m., omnibuses served middle-class patrons well, but not the labouring classes; Barker/Robbins 1975, vol. 1, pp. 31, 35-36, and 167-68; Sheppard 1975, p. 63; Olsen 1976, p. 319.

¹⁰⁴Benjamin Lucraft, a cabinetmaker, complained that the omnibus that brought him from Hoxton to Kensington took an exhausting 1½ hours; Lucraft in *Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰⁵See, for instance, Lord Granville's comments in *Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶Barker/Robbins 1975, vol. 1, p. 99; Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 13.

¹⁰⁷Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 13.

¹⁰⁸Barker/Robbins 1975, vol. 1, pp. 171-72.

¹⁰⁹Dakers 1999, pp. 42-43.

so that in the cheerful light one hardly realizes that one is underground at all.”¹¹⁰

However, Kurtz was a wealthy man, able to choose any mode of transportation he wished, and surely part of the appeal of the underground railway was its novelty. Although third-class ticket-holders are thought to have represented the majority of underground riders in the 1870s,¹¹¹ a depiction of the underground station at King’s Cross suggests the majority of passengers were prosperous (fig. 2-3). The lithograph, dominated by fashionable ladies in voluminous dresses and men in top hats, suggests few of the humbler classes used this amenity.¹¹² Similarly, illustrations of the South Kensington Museum are usually populated by middle-class figures and not the less affluent artisans that it claimed to attract.¹¹³ Richard Dunn and Anthony Burton thought differently and argued that contemporary illustrations support the notion that the South Kensington Museum attracted members of every class.¹¹⁴ However, they illustrated their argument with a two-sided cartoon from *Punch* entitled “The Sunday Question: The Public House; or, The House for the Public?” (fig. 2-4). On the cartoon’s left side, a woman begs her husband to abandon the bar where he is waiting for his next drink. On the right side, their bettered selves admire Palissy ware and other delights at the South

¹¹⁰Diary, Andrew Kurtz Papers, Liverpool Record Office; quoted in Dakers 1999, p. 43.

¹¹¹Barker/Robbins 1975, vol. 1, p. 173.

¹¹²According to Henry Broadhurst (a former stonemason), working men declined to travel by rail in the 1850s and 1860s because it presented an unnecessary expense. He claimed many workers could afford train fares, but regarded this mode of transportation as a luxury and therefore abstained from it – thrift prevailed; Broadhurst, *The Story of His Life from a Stonemason’s Bench to the Treasury Bench, Told by Himself*, 1901; quoted by Burnett 1974, p. 315.

¹¹³Barringer 2000, p. 76.

¹¹⁴Dunn and Burton in Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 57.

Kensington Museum. This image was used by *Punch* in an argument supporting the Sunday opening of national institutions like the South Kensington Museum in order to afford the working classes more opportunities for polite forms of leisure. It was not intended as an accurate representation of the people who visit the South Kensington Museum; rather, it served as a projection of an anticipated audience.¹¹⁵

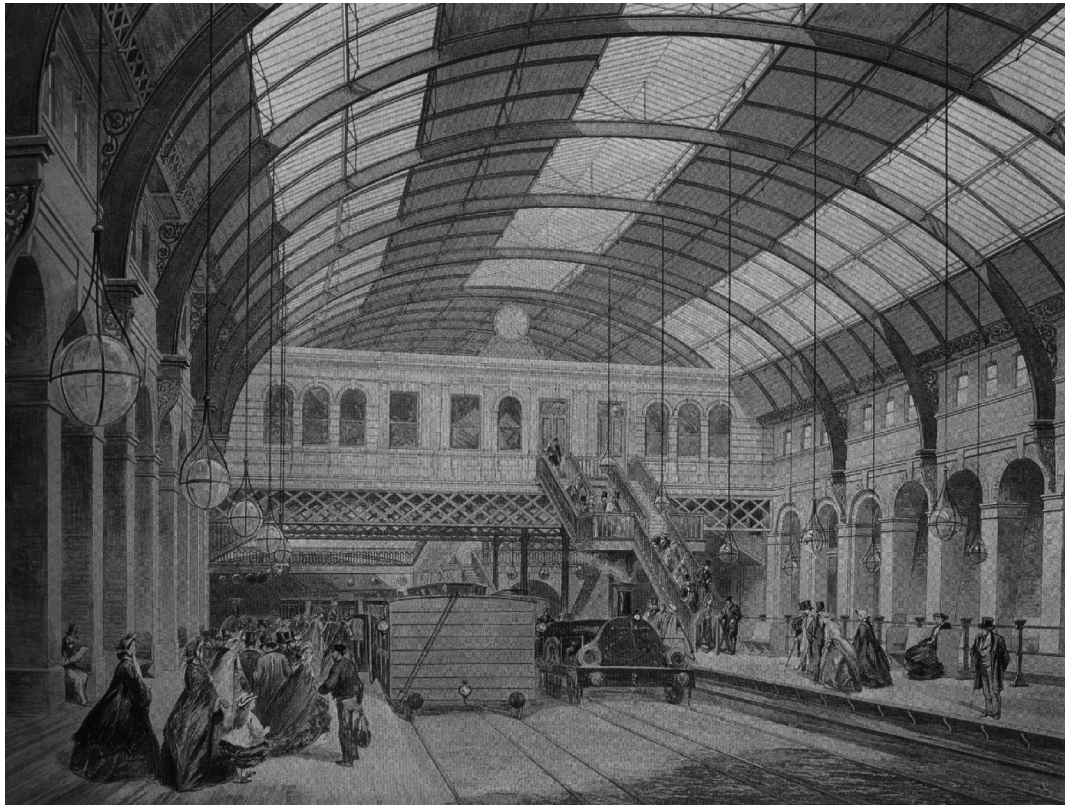


Figure 2-3: *King's Cross, Metropolitan Line*. Lithograph, 1868. Reproduced from Nead 2000, p. 45.

¹¹⁵See *Punch* (17 April 1869), p. 153 for the full text concerning Sunday openings.

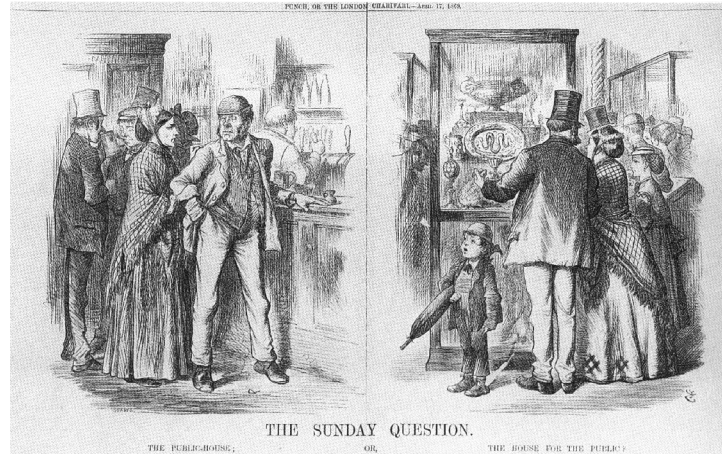


Figure 2-4: “The Sunday Question: The Public House; or, The House for the Public?,” *Punch* (17 April 1869), pp. 158-59. Reproduced from Baker/Richardson 1997, p. 56.

It should also be noted that the sympathetic content of written texts could be subverted by accompanying illustrations. Writers might implore their readers to support causes that improved the lives of the working classes, but very often the pictures used to illustrate their texts portrayed the lower classes as buffoonish, laughable characters who could never fit into the refined environment of a museum. In 1870, for example, *Punch* published an unflattering caricature of a low-class family on an excursion to South Kensington (fig. 2-5). In “Capital Punishment!,” a terra-cotta bust labelled “EXECUTED IN TERRA COTTA” shocks its uneducated audience. A mother exclaims: “Executed in – tut-t-t-t! Lauk a mussy, ‘Liza! What did them foreigners want to ‘ang that poor innocent-lookin’ young creetur’ for!!?”¹¹⁶ Evidently, the poor deserved access to national museums, but the nation could still laugh at the poor. South Kensington, it would seem, was not for everyone.

¹¹⁶See “Punch’s Almanack for 1870,” *Punch* (1870), unnumbered page.



Figure 2-5: “Capital Punishment!,” *Punch* (1870), unnumbered page (“*Punch’s Almanack for 1870*”).

As well as being geographically isolated from working-class populations, South Kensington was socially distanced from the East End.¹¹⁷ The social geography of Victorian London has been carefully interpreted by Deborah Weiner. To summarize her main points, the city was divided between East (a gritty industrial zone where unskilled labour proliferated) and West (a sanitary refuge for the middle and upper classes). This physical separation of the classes was new to the nineteenth century, egged on by the rapid expansion of transportation networks (which allowed the affluent to make their homes away from sources of employment in the congested heart of London).¹¹⁸ The region of South Kensington, in short, was developed for the well-to-do.¹¹⁹ Hence Kurtz’s

¹¹⁷Cole relished Kensington’s genteel ambience, distinguishing the region from the working-class neighbourhoods of Bethnal Green and Islington, for example, in a speech he gave in 1853; Cole, “On Public Taste in Kensington,” 5 April 1853 [NAL, 55.AA.56, p. 14]; cited by Denis 1995, pp. 16-17.

¹¹⁸Weiner 1994, pp. 6-7.

¹¹⁹Dakers 1999, p. 43.

description of its houses as “little Palaces.”¹²⁰ The area, moreover, had an aristocratic history. Nearby Hyde Park had been a royal hunting reserve before evolving into a fashionable strolling ground for London’s elite.¹²¹ The masses marched through Hyde Park in 1851 as they descended upon the Great Exhibition, but memories of the old boundaries lingered. Richard Redgrave recounted the region’s early nineteenth-century exclusivity, when a high wall defended Kensington Gardens against the intrusions of commoners: “The keepers in those days rigorously stopped all fustian jackets, soldiers, or “Belcher-handkerchief’d” people from entering the gardens: it was not a time when much was done for the multitude.”¹²² One might wonder how eager the working classes were to visit a region where, in recent history, they had been unwelcome.

Nor was everyone happy to see museums open their doors to the masses. Many believed that a civic gallery required a dignified atmosphere, and they seriously doubted an influx of working-class visitors would contribute positively to that effect.¹²³ Some worried the lower classes, when invited in large numbers to London’s galleries, would

¹²⁰Diary, Andrew Kurtz Papers, Liverpool Record Office; quoted in Dakers 1999, p. 43.

¹²¹Auerbach 1999, pp. 43-44.

¹²²Redgrave 1891, pp. 2-3.

¹²³Burton rightly observed that many Victorians snubbed the idea of working-class visitors, believing their coarseness would upset the elegant environment of a first-rate museum; Burton 1999, p. 12. However, at least one Victorian was happy to see commoners at a museum, albeit a foreign one. Samuel Woodburn, a witness to the 1836 Select Committee stated, “I very often went to the Louvre, and I was very glad to see soldiers and people with their wooden shoes; I thought it a very fine sight; at least it struck me so.” Samuel Woodburn in *Report* 1836, p. 136. However, he clearly regarded his fellow spectators as colourful spectacles, objects to admire, rather than as equals in the experience of being at the Louvre, admiring its art works together.

abuse the privilege by resorting to vandalism and thievery.¹²⁴ The *Art Journal* recounts an amusing story of the anxiety experienced by the director of the British Museum after it had been decided that the collections would open on a holiday, thus allowing the trespass of the masses; visions of smashed masterpieces besieged the steward, but the day passed without incident.¹²⁵ The abuse of public monuments was considered peculiar to the English labouring classes. One gentleman believed they resorted to this destructive behaviour because they lacked an appreciation for great works of art and architecture, having enjoyed so little exposure to the cream of the crop. Worse still, he thought, there was no easy remedy: “I do think it will take some time to cure this evil in England, for it extends to a great degree. Every nobleman, every gentleman who allow people to walk in their gardens, find that they commit all sorts of indecencies. That is an English practice which is not exercised abroad.”¹²⁶

At the National Gallery, a police officer was stationed at the main entrance to refuse entry to “improper persons.”¹²⁷ Alternately, the *Saturday Review* chastised the South Kensington Museum for attracting the wrong crowd:

It is not content to cultivate science and art for their own sakes; it determines at any cost, whether of good taste or sober reason, to catch the wondering crowd. And its special reward is that in no other Museum in

¹²⁴Burton 1999, p. 12.

¹²⁵*Art Journal* (1 September 1865), p. 281.

¹²⁶Sir John Dean Paul in *Report* 1836, p. 175.

¹²⁷*Report* 1835, Appendix No. 2, p. 145. What constituted an ‘improper’ person was not defined. One might expect intoxicated individuals were turned away. Waagen desired to see unclean persons ousted from the National Gallery, believing their stench contaminated the air and degraded the paintings; see Burton 1999, p. 12 for an excerpt of Waagen’s article, “Thoughts on the New Building to be Erected for the National Gallery of England,” published in the *Art Journal* (1849).

the world is attracted together such an unwashed multitude. Nowhere else can be found so many nursery-maids; here babies in arms are brought before the biggest Michael Angelo in the place to have their cries appeased. Women and children out for holiday flock, and especially in bad weather, to visit the war trophies from Abyssinia, and other objects of equal merit, which, because they can be seen for nothing, have an advantage over the biggest giantess at the Egyptian Hall, or the last murderer at Madame Tussaud's Exhibition.¹²⁸

John Ruskin (1819-1900) warned against using museums to alleviate the hardships of the poor; if palaces of art were to preserve their decorum, the destitute had to seek sanctuary elsewhere.¹²⁹ Others were kinder than Ruskin; they believed that galleries should continue to admit the lower classes, even if they only came to seek warmth or to sight-see. A writer for the *Leisure Hour* hoped that overworked labourers, during a rare moment of leisure, might forget “the hard conditions of their lot” and lose themselves in the joy of seeing beautiful pictures. It did not matter if they could not comprehend what they saw, so long as they enjoyed seeing.¹³⁰ In like manner, a writer for the *Standard* supposed that most people visited museums (at Christmas) to be entertained – and considered this practice acceptable because people left museums with improved taste. So long as the result of visiting was positive, the reason for visiting was unimportant.¹³¹ However, most commentators restricted the ways in which the masses could use world-class museums. If a working-class member of the public wished to transgress the borders of an institution like the South Kensington Museum, it was not good enough for him to

¹²⁸*Saturday Review* (14 August 1869), p. 220.

¹²⁹Ruskin, “A Museum or Picture Gallery: Its Functions and Its Formation,” pp. 247-62, in Cook/Wedderburn 1908, vol. 34, p. 250; cited by B. Taylor 1999, p. 78.

¹³⁰*Leisure Hour* (16 April 1870), p. 248.

¹³¹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 2.

want to spend a rainy day indoors. The working man had to justify his presence with a desire to learn something and improve himself. Presumably this rule did not apply to upper-class visitors who, from time to time, may have treated the galleries of London as casual sites of leisure, as opposed to serious sources of education. Despite the widespread regard for museums as centres of self-education, Robinson believed polite individuals rarely used them as such:

Few care to think of museums as mere shows or places of pleasant recreation; though in truth, ninety-nine out of a hundred use them as such. I wish I could show that our national art-collections were as extensively frequented and as intimately studied by artists as the non-professional world imagines to be the case; but unfortunately, alike amongst architects, painters, and sculptors, the systematic students of our museums and galleries are but few in number: they are, I fear, but rare exceptions to the general rule of almost contemptuous indifference.¹³²

Recreational forays into the hallowed halls of museums were frowned upon, but they were tolerated when their participants were members of the privileged classes.

Since the Victorian era, people have wondered what the lower classes really thought of museums and how they were affected by their interactions with such institutions.¹³³ It has been suggested that evidence of their encounters with the South Kensington Museum is untraceable,¹³⁴ but fictional and factual accounts do exist.¹³⁵ Moreover, they suggest that the working classes recognized the museum's uneasy welcome and their status there as outsiders. "An Easter Monday at Kensington

¹³²Robinson, "On the Art Collections at South Kensington, Considered in Reference to Architecture," *Builder* (6 June 1863), p. 401.

¹³³*Leisure Hour* (16 April 1870), p. 248.

¹³⁴B. Taylor 1999, p. 75.

¹³⁵I am certain that a scholar interested in focussing on this issue could uncover more revealing sources than the few I encountered during my research.

Museum,” an illustration that appeared in the *Leisure Hour* in 1870, shows a working-class family about to enter the South Kensington Museum (fig. 2-6). Dressed in their finest apparel, husband, wife and children are prepared to spend their holiday at the museum.¹³⁶ They should be welcome there, but the viewer senses that they are not. They have not yet passed through the turnstile, which is guarded by a glowering constable.¹³⁷ Although the sign behind this formidable figure announces that admission to the museum is free, it does not appear that the family is free to enter.



Figure 2-6: “An Easter Monday at Kensington Museum,” *Leisure Hour* (16 April 1870), p. 249.

¹³⁶The caption reads: “We want more holidays. It is nothing but work, work, work. Except by the sacrifice of wages, the industrious artisan can get only two or three days of recreation in the year, and these are days of crowding, and discomfort, and weariness.” *Leisure Hour* (16 April 1870), p. 249.

¹³⁷Turnstiles were an early feature of the South Kensington Museum; it used them to track attendance numbers. They are mentioned (in passing) in the *Art Journal* (1 September 1865), p. 281. Custodians might also have used the turnstiles to stall ‘unsavoury’ characters, before turning them away.

The fictional character of Mrs. Brown was a cockney character created by George Rose, who used the pseudonym Arthur Sketchley. She travelled extensively, if one is to judge by the titles devoted to her (for example, *Mrs. Brown at Brighton*, *Mrs. Brown in the Highlands* and *Mrs. Brown at the Paris Exhibition*). On one of her adventures, she visited South Kensington. Her impression of the South Kensington Museum was quite favourable: she thought its organizers deserved praise and although she doubted its galleries would lure loafers from the pubs, she did think respectable working-class families would enjoy seeing all the “lovely things” as much as she did.¹³⁸ Mrs. Brown never identified herself with the humbler classes, but Sketchley’s audience, presumably middle-class readers, understood that Mrs. Brown was a simple woman of no elevated station. Her coarse language and her frumpy appearance provided clear social markers. Although she left South Kensington in a happy mood, believing that she would visit the museum many more times, her subconscious recognized that she had not belonged there. Later that night, Mrs. Brown suffered a horrible dream in which, after being stuffed into one of the museum’s glass cases, she was arrested for stealing a diamond and then received “a crack on the ‘ead as [the police] rolled me down them Maryolicer stairs.”¹³⁹

A factual account was left by the aforementioned cabinetmaker, Benjamin Lucraft, an articulate representative of Hoxton’s working-class residents.¹⁴⁰ As recounted earlier, transport to and from the South Kensington Museum consumed three hours of Lucraft’s day. It was an unfortunate fact and it coloured his impression of the place:

¹³⁸Sketchley [1872], pp. 142-43.

¹³⁹Sketchley [1872], p. 143.

¹⁴⁰See note 104.

On coming down here on a Saturday afternoon, the first thing I do is to sit down, because I am tired, but I never go back with the same pleasure as I came. It suggests itself to my mind that an injustice is done to myself and to my own class, that nothing has been done to bring these means of instruction and self-improvement within a more reasonable distance and more readily accessible; and it seems to me as if I was not wanted here.¹⁴¹

If one individual felt this way, in all likelihood, so did others.

The South Kensington Museum, however, had a novel amenity that promised to refresh weary visitors. From its inception in 1857, the South Kensington Museum had a restaurant. In my sixth chapter, I will address how the restaurant was used and by whom. However, given my previous discussion of wearied working-class visitors, it is worth pointing out that some people believed that everyone had equal access to the museum's amenities. They supposed labourers, exhausted by the long walk to South Kensington, at the end of an even longer workday, could refresh themselves at the museum's restaurant before exploring its galleries, thus nullifying the issue of the museum's remote location:

Does a mechanic find his day occupied? the museum is open three evenings in a week expressly that he may seek innocent recreation and obtain easy instruction . . . Has he grown weary on his way? he can refresh himself with a cup of coffee at the door.¹⁴²

Refreshment rooms had been provided at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and their success encouraged Cole to provide similar amenities at South Kensington.¹⁴³ The museum's refreshment rooms were devised in late 1856. On December 29th, Cole went to Windsor where Prince Albert agreed to the erection of dining facilities.¹⁴⁴ Days later Cole returned

¹⁴¹Lucraft in *Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 25.

¹⁴²Atkinson 1862, p. 33.

¹⁴³Physick 1982, p. 30; B. Morris 1986, p. 31.

¹⁴⁴Cole's diary reads: "To Windsor: Saw the Prince who settled to have refreshment rooms at S. Ken." Cole, diary, 29 December 1856 [NAL,45.C.117].

to Windsor with plans, which met with the Prince's approval.¹⁴⁵ The first of their kind,¹⁴⁶ the refreshment rooms were housed in what John Physick described as a "mock-Tudor" building.¹⁴⁷ Demolished many years ago, the structure cost about £2000 and stood near Cromwell Road.¹⁴⁸ For the small sum of £25,¹⁴⁹ Octavius Hudson painted the interior.¹⁵⁰ An impression of the interior is preserved by a photograph (fig. 2-7), shot around 1858 when the space was being used for an exhibition.¹⁵¹ The building also appears in a watercolour from 1863 (fig. 2-8). In a scathing review entitled "The Piggeries of Kensington Gore," a correspondent for *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* blasted the (unfinished) restaurant:

In addition to the hideous corrugated iron structure already erected, and described by the press as a railway shed, or hospital for decayed railway carriages, another building is being erected close by. This new edifice is to be called a refreshment-room; and, from what we see of it, when finished it will harmonise with its larger neighbour, inasmuch that it will be horribly ugly, and will not, we fear, say much for the art of design as practised at head quarters. It is being constructed of common brick, and,

¹⁴⁵Cole's diary records: "With Fowke by an early train to Windsor. Prince approved of plans of refreshment rooms." Cole, diary, 31 December 1856 [NAL, 45.C.117].

¹⁴⁶Historians generally recognize the South Kensington Museum's original refreshment rooms as the first museum restaurant. For example, see Physick 1982, p. 30; Parry 1996b, p. 198; and Bonython/Burton 2003, p. 175.

¹⁴⁷Physick 1982, pp. 30-31. According to the *Survey of London*, the building's half-timbering derived (loosely) from the secular architecture of Renaissance Germany; Sheppard 1975, p. 100.

¹⁴⁸*Art Journal* (1 May 1857), p. 161; "Statement of the Cost, &c., of the South Kensington Museum, prepared for the use of the Select Committee on the South Kensington Museum," 1860, p. 1 [VAA, ED 84/8]; Pope-Hennessy 1952, p. 15; Sheppard 1975, p. 100.

¹⁴⁹Sheppard 1975, p. 100; Physick 1982, pp. 30-31. Hudson taught at the Central Training School.

¹⁵⁰Aldrich 1990, p. 148.

¹⁵¹Sheppard 1975, pl. 6c.

of course, will form a contrast to the yellow and green striped erection with which it is so immediately associated. Its chimneys are terminated by villanous-looking [*sic*] red clay chimney-pots, as plain as a pike-staff.¹⁵²



Figure 2-7: First refreshment rooms: interior. Photograph, c. 1858. Reproduced from Sheppard 1975, pl. 6c.



Figure 2-8: First refreshment rooms: exterior. Watercolour by Anthony Stannus, 1863. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, A. L. 2814.

¹⁵²*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* (29 March 1857), p. 4; quoted by Physick 1982, p. 30. Physick also reproduces a nineteenth-century cartoon that purportedly represents the South Kensington Museum's original restaurant; Physick 1982, p. 31, fig. 21. If the satirical cartoon is honest in its depiction of the dining experience at South Kensington, it informs us that the original restaurant was hardly comfortable: crowded around small tables, the guests risk losing their articles to the dirty floor below or being doused by drinks overhead.

In the eyes of many, the original restaurant would prove an architectural abomination, but a decade later it was replaced by three grand refreshment rooms. They were conceived by Fowke as early as 1860.¹⁵³ Initial plans situated the rooms on the south front of the Lecture Theatre building (where diners could enjoy views of the garden), but Fowke ultimately moved the refreshment rooms to the rear of the ground floor (i.e., to the building's north side, fig. 2-9).¹⁵⁴ Linda Parry suggested that the restaurant was moved to the back of the building so that the exhibition galleries could look out onto the garden instead.¹⁵⁵ This may be true, but I believe there was a more urgent reason to move the restaurant to the rear of the building: the restaurant required a serviceable kitchen. Waiters needed to communicate with kitchen staff; hot dishes needed to reach diners without cooling; used plates needed to be cleared and washed in a prompt manner. Had the refreshment rooms occupied the south side, the most accessible location for the kitchens would have been in front of the Lecture Theatre building. However, their ordinary appearance would have detracted from the grandeur of the main edifice. It is likely that aesthetic concerns, such as this, led to the erection of the kitchens behind the building. If the refreshment rooms had remained on the south side, restaurant activities (waiters running about, carrying food, and clearing dishes) would have disturbed the exhibition space caught between the kitchens and the refreshment rooms. Victorians deplored seeing or smelling food anywhere outside a dining room, so the restaurant was best located at the rear of the ground floor.

¹⁵³Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 93.

¹⁵⁴Physick 1982, p. 104.

¹⁵⁵Parry 1996b, p. 199.

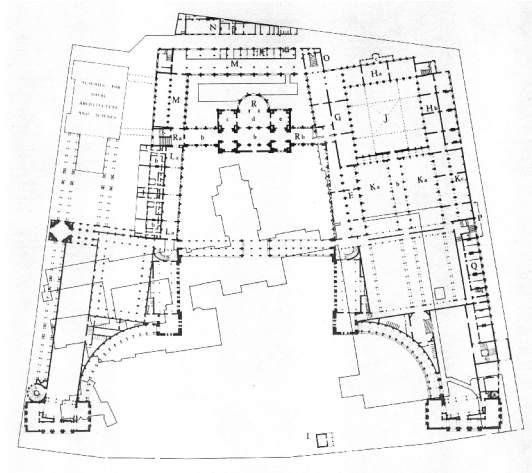


Figure 2-9: Plan of new buildings, South Kensington Museum, November 1865. Reproduced from Shepard 1975, end pocket.

When construction of the Lecture Theatre building reached an advanced stage, the museum authorities discussed the decoration of the refreshment rooms. In the end, three different design teams were selected to decorate the rooms. A young artist of academic training, Edward Poynter, was approached to decorate the easternmost room, the Grill Room. The middle room, known simply as the Centre Refreshment Room, was designed by a group of decorative artists employed at the South Kensington Museum, namely, Godfrey Sykes, James Gamble, and Reuben Townroe. The westernmost room, which became known as the Green Dining Room, was entrusted to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in November 1865.¹⁵⁶

By January 1867, great strides had been made in the construction of the Lecture Theatre building: the ground-floor corridor (just outside the refreshment rooms) was

¹⁵⁶The Firm was requested to supply designs and estimates for the refreshment room; H. A. Bruce, 30 November 1865 [VAA, ED 84/36, pp. 167, 232].

paved with tiles and its walls were plastered, the kitchens were stocked with cooking appliances, and the decorations of the refreshments rooms were under way.¹⁵⁷ Most of the ground floor was finished. The Director of Works, Lieut.-Col. Scott, reported that the walls of the refreshment rooms still required decoration, but the rooms would soon be ready to receive customers.¹⁵⁸ They opened in October 1867 and thereafter attracted the attention of the architectural press.¹⁵⁹ However, work on the new refreshment rooms was incomplete.¹⁶⁰ When the sixteenth *Report of the Science and Art Department* was published in 1869, they were still unfinished and only the Western Dining Room (i.e., the Green Dining Room) was expected to reach completion in the near future.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷Lieut.-Col. Scott (23 January 1867) in the 14th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1867, p. 232.

¹⁵⁸Lieut.-Col. Scott (23 January 1867) in the 14th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1867, p. 232. This information reappeared in the *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (2 September 1867), p. 1061.

¹⁵⁹Henry Cole's "Report of the General Superintendent and Director" (dated 31 March 1868) states: "*The New Refreshment Rooms* and kitchens, the washing rooms with the gallery adjacent on the ground floor, were brought into occupation during the autumn, and are found to be convenient." Cole in the 15th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1868, p. 197. According to E. Robert Festing, the debut of the dining areas was imperfect: "The new refreshment and waiting rooms were opened in October. The former have not yet got into proper working, as the old [refreshment] contractor has given notice to quit, and we have not yet got the new one in." E. Robert Festing in the 15th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1868, p. 204. For early (and repetitious) notices of the refreshment rooms, see *Journal of the Society of Arts* (20 December 1867), p. 88; *Building News* (27 December 1867), p. 910; and *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (28 December 1867), p. 1263.

¹⁶⁰In early 1868, for example, one critic supposed Poynter had not yet begun working on the walls of the Grill Room; *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (25 January 1868), p. 42.

¹⁶¹According to Scott, the only incomplete feature of the Green Dining Room was the dado's series of paintings (they represented the months of the year, the sun and the moon and were designed by Edward Burne-Jones; they will be described in more detail later in this chapter). Lieut.-Col. Scott in the 16th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1869, p. 385.

Many art historians have singled out the Green Dining Room as a quintessential decorative scheme by forerunners of the Arts and Crafts movement, but few have described the interior in much detail. Fortunately, the Green Dining Room survives in a relatively unaltered state. Additionally, the original environment was the focus of several contemporary reviews; they help to illustrate how the room looked from one year to the next.¹⁶² I will chronicle the room's decorations, using nineteenth-century sources as my main points of reference. I hope my description will allow readers to become more intimate with the Green Dining Room's decorative elements – features that scholars routinely 'describe' with a vaguely suggestive photograph, almost always shot from the vantage point of the south entrance (fig. 2-10).¹⁶³



Figure 2-10: Green Dining Room: general view. Commissioned in 1865 for the South Kensington Museum; designed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Reproduced from a postcard (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, G83).

¹⁶²Of the three refreshment rooms, the Green Dining Room received the most favourable attention, although by no means was that favour universal.

¹⁶³This particular photograph has appeared in Parry 1996a, p. 141 and Kirk 2005, p.46, to name a few sources. The implication of using standardized photographs to document a historical environment will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Famished visitors made their way to the so-called Refreshment Room Corridor (it is identified by the letter *b* in fig. 2-11). This area was used to exhibit stained glass (including examples from Paris's Sainte Chapelle) and sculpture from the hands of Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805-67), Edward Hodges Baily (1788-1867) and John Graham Lough (1798-1876), for example, as well as a copy of the Venus de' Medici.¹⁶⁴ The refreshment rooms themselves stood opposite the 'main entrance' of the Lecture Theatre building.

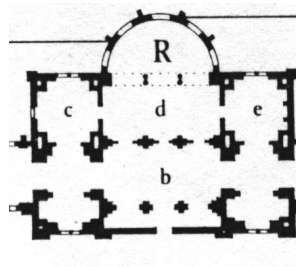


Figure 2-11: Refreshment Rooms Corridor (detail of fig. 2-9).



Figure 2-12: Green Dining Room. Photograph, c. 1902. Reproduced from a poster displayed in the Morris Room, c. 2004.

¹⁶⁴*Guide* 1869a, p. 27.

After considering the lists of tariffs, guests wishing to eat in the Green Dining Room were either escorted into the Centre Refreshment Room and through the doorway that connects the two rooms, or they were whisked through the glazed doors of the Green Dining Room's south entrance (fig. 2-12; the south entrance is visible at the extreme right of the photograph).¹⁶⁵ If diners, seated at their tables set with fresh linens, paused to admire the room's decor, they had much to contemplate. The floors are laid with ceramic tiles in a simple pattern: brick-red octagons with smaller square accents.¹⁶⁶ A dark marble baseboard outlines the room, separating the warm colour of the floor from the cool tones of the walls above.¹⁶⁷ Rich mahogany panelling, "about seven feet in height,"¹⁶⁸ was originally treated with a green stain.¹⁶⁹ A series of paintings, set into the wood panelling (or dado), form a band around the room. Figures representing the signs of the zodiac (or

¹⁶⁵The doorways were rejected as "absolutely contemptible." *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3. The *Standard*'s comprehensive review of the three refreshment rooms was cited by Physick 1982, p. 132.

¹⁶⁶The tiles, costing £45.5.0, were designed and executed by Messrs. Boote of Encaustic Tile Works, Burslem. Messrs. Boote had offered to tile all three rooms (in their tender of 10 December 1866), but when the tiles were ordered (22 December 1866), Messrs. Boote were asked only to execute the floor of the Green Dining Room; VAA, ED 84/6, pp. 6, 10. See also NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷See the tender from George Smith and Co., dated 26 February 1867, for the Purbeck marble plinth and the mahogany wall framing in the west refreshment room, £286 (plinth £36, framing £250); VAA, ED 84/6, p. 24. Smith's estimate, made "in accordance with the Drawings," was approved in early March; NA, ED 28/22, p. 101.

¹⁶⁸*Builders' Weekly Reporter* (25 January 1868), p. 42. The estimate is a little too generous because the painted panels that run along the upper limit of the wood panelling are at eye-level, more or less.

¹⁶⁹The resulting colour was called "Prussian blue" by J. Smith 1887, p. 116. Years earlier it had been described as a "pleasant sage-green colour" by *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (25 January 1868), p. 42. A writer for the *Standard*, however, was baffled by the panelling: the stain achieved the "very peculiar" blueish green (also slighted as "bilious blue-green") at the expense of obscuring the mahogany's costliness; *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

months of the year), the sun and the moon were painted onto fourteen panels. The other fifty-six panels depict fruit and their foliage on gold grounds (figs. 2-13 to 2-15).



Figure 2-13: Green Dining Room: painted wall panels, including *January* (Aquarius).



Figure 2-14: Green Dining Room: painted wall panels, including *June* (Cancer) and *July* (Leo).



Figure 2-15: Green Dining Room: painted wall panels, including *Moon*.

If diners wished to inspect the panels more closely, they may have toured the Green Dining Room in a clockwise fashion, following the ‘chronology’ of the panels representing the twelve months. Just south of the side entrance, diners would have located *January*, or the figure representing Aquarius.¹⁷⁰ She is identified by the statuette of a man pouring a jug (while carrying another on his back). In this scene of winter, the woman stands before a low stone wall; her only company is a bird perched on a leafless

¹⁷⁰*Decorations of the South Kensington Museum, 1862 to 1874* describes the figure panels as beginning with *January*, just left of the door that leads from the ‘Centre Hall’; NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18. I understood this to mean that persons approaching the Green Dining Room from the south entrance (i.e., from the Refreshment Room Corridor) could expect to find the January panel on their immediate left. This is not the case. However, if one enters via the Centre Refreshment Room (and faces westward to the opposite wall), then one finds *January* on his or her left; *December* (identified by the statuette of a goat) is on the right. In this instance, the iconography (in its chronological ordering of the room) appears to privilege the side doorway and one might wonder if it was the principal entrance. However, the larger south entrance is flanked by the panels representing the sun and the moon (these figure panels were composed in a strikingly different fashion, distinguishing them from the others) and consequently the south entrance seems no less special than the side doorway.

shrub. It exemplifies the basic compositional formula used by the other panels: a solitary female, a bird, a statuette (a sign of the zodiac), seasonal vegetation, and, less regularly, an architectural backdrop. Still facing the dado, diners looking further to their right spotted the panel representing Pisces (*February*). Next they saw the figures of the moon and the sun: the first, a clothed figure lifted by a crescent moon and holding a sailboat, is painted on a gold ground, with clouds below and an expanse of stars above. The sun is personified by a nude male who stands on a radiating sphere and holds a grapevine in one hand and a sheaf of wheat in the other. Next followed March, then April, and so on.¹⁷¹

Above the dado, the wall is covered with low-relief plaster blocks. Of a muted green colour, the blocks are patterned with darker green branches (these bear small flowers).¹⁷² Perhaps diners shared the opinion of the *Standard* and appreciated the novelty of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s effort, but not their result: a grid-like

¹⁷¹When the Green Dining Room was critiqued by the *Standard* in late 1868, only one of the dado's painted panels had been installed, but the writer knew that the series would be completed by alternating images of foliage and figures. He knew less about the future treatment of the room's upper expanses; he questioned the limited use of gold (in the painted panels). The writer thought gold was needed on other parts of the wall to keep the viewer's eye moving from one level to the next; *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3. Evidently the frieze of hares and hounds as well as the egg-and-dart cornice, presently picked out in gold, had not yet received their lustrous embellishments.

¹⁷²The *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3 suggested that they were willow branches (bearing pink and purple flowers), but they are more often identified as olive boughs; see *Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74; Lethaby 1925, p. 383; and B. Morris 1986, p. 39, for example. The foliage and the dark fruit are a good match, but I am unaware of olive trees with pink or red flowers. According to *Decorations of the South Kensington Museum, 1862 to 1874*, the plaster blocks, in addition to the frieze with a chase of animals, were designed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., modelled by W. Wright (a former student of one of the many Schools of Art), and executed by George Smith and Co; NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18. However, Rowland Morris is credited with modelling the frieze in Wade 1912, p. 89 (this account was cited by Physick 1982, p. 134, note 72).

vener.¹⁷³ Further up a frieze runs round the room; it carries the motifs of a tree and a hound pursuing a hare (fig. 2-16). The motifs are set into blue panels (or cartouches) and these are framed by alternate bands of colour. In the spaces between the panels, stylized blooms and a golden sunburst appear.¹⁷⁴ An egg-and-dart cornice completes the wall decoration. The gilded egg is cupped by bands of red and green; the gilded dart rests on an off-white ground. Also painted off-white, the coffered ceiling is outlined (at its lowest level) by a thick green fringe (adorned with rigidly symmetrical blue flowers) and a thin red line. Robust swirls of foliage and exuberant rosettes, painted on the ceiling in a golden yellow, add to the profusion of decorative details (fig. 2-17).



Figure 2-16: Green Dining Room: frieze with a chase of animals.

¹⁷³The foliage is arranged in a way that suggests containment. There is no overlapping between the blocks and so, despite the material concealment of the joints (by painted mortar), the individual blocks are readily detected; *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹⁷⁴The blooms were described as “conventional flowers” by the *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3. Parry identified them as crown-imperial lilies and sunflowers; Parry 1996b, p. 202. In the dim light of the Green Dining Room, I thought the ‘sunflowers’ might be better identified as roses (a fitting selection for a national museum, the rose being England’s national flower).



Figure 2-17: Green Dining Room: ceiling.

Finally, there were three stained-glass windows to admire, designed and executed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (figs. 2-18 and 2-19).¹⁷⁵ The *Standard* thought they were the best elements of the Green Dining Room. They obscured the sight of plain outbuildings, but with their thoughtful colour scheme of gentle greens and yellows, they admitted much-needed light.¹⁷⁶ The windows' most pronounced features are the panels of solitary women, the *Garland Weavers*.¹⁷⁷ The women, in long dresses and languorous poses, have been described as flower-gatherers because all but one engage in this occupation – or, at least, they admire the plant life that beautifies their surroundings.¹⁷⁸ For example, in the west-facing window, the woman in the left panel fingers a flowering shrub bearing vivid red blossoms; the female represented on the right holds a posy of

¹⁷⁵NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18.

¹⁷⁶*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹⁷⁷B. Morris 1975, p. 163; Parry 1996b, p. 202.

¹⁷⁸In the second north-facing window (i.e., the window on the right), a woman is depicted playing a stringed instrument in the right panel; Physick 1982, p. 132.

flowers in her left hand and touches a shrub with her right. In both panels, there is a quiet architectural backdrop. Smaller panes of glass, painted in grisaille, appear above and below the figurative panels. The critic writing for the *Standard* was particularly amused by two hares that appear in the grisaille panels. He believed one hare to be “weeping, with . . . *abandon*, the melancholy fate of some dear relative whose final obsequies on some one or other of the neighbouring tables the other is evidently regarding with most unpleasant personal anticipation.”¹⁷⁹ In a room that measures roughly 550 square feet, eyes feasted on plenty.



Figure 2-18: Green Dining Room: stained-glass window, west wall.

¹⁷⁹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.



Figure 2-19: Green Dining Room: stained-glass windows, north wall (detail).
Reproduced from Physick 1982, p. 133.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CENTRE REFRESHMENT ROOM AND THE GRILL ROOM

The Green Dining Room was a feast for the eyes, but the restaurant's other refreshment rooms were equally lavish. They were also distinctly different. With an apse at its north end, the Centre Refreshment Room reflects the shape of the Lecture Theatre located on the floor above (fig. 3-1). The largest of the three dining areas, the space was designed by Captain Fowke and his successor Henry Scott (1822-83), also a Royal Engineer.¹ The decoration of the room, however, was entrusted to Godfrey Sykes (1824-



Figure 3-1: Centre Refreshment Room, looking north. Designed by Godfrey Sykes and James Gamble for the South Kensington Museum; completed in 1878. Reproduced from a postcard (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, G81).

¹NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17.

66).² Sykes was a decorative artist employed by the Department of Science and Art.³ A native of Sheffield, he rose from the rank of student to modelling master in the local School of Design (est. 1843).⁴ He received informal, but profoundly influential, instruction from Alfred Stevens (1817-75) in the early 1850s.⁵ Stevens, whose most recognized work came to be the Wellington Monument in St. Paul's Cathedral, was then employed in Sheffield at Hoole and Company, Green Lane Works as a designer of metal wares.⁶ The multi-faceted designer, previously an instructor in the School of Design at Somerset House (c. 1845-47),⁷ was ridiculed in fine art circles for being an unproven artist: "Rumour says the artist has designed a legion of teapots, an army of knives, forks, spoons, fenders, fire-irons, and the like, for Sheffield manufacturers, and invented much hardware in general."⁸ However, aspiring designers such as Sykes flocked to Stevens, who had studied in Italy and developed a muscular style that relied heavily on Renaissance precedent.⁹ Anxious to better his own design abilities, Sykes worked

²Both Physick and Tim Barringer have argued convincingly for 3 December 1824 as Sykes's date of birth. See Physick 1982, p. 57, note 3; Barringer 2005, p. 355, note 32. Usually Sykes's birth year is given as 1825; for example, see *Art Journal* (1 May 1866), p. 153.

³The Committee of Council on Education described Sykes as a "decorative artist to the museum," a post he held for seven years; *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (15 October 1866), p. 508.

⁴*Art Journal* (1 February 1862), p. 34; *Art Journal* (1 May 1866), p. 153; Barringer 2005, p. 198.

⁵*Architect* (8 May 1875), p. 276.

⁶Barringer 2005, p. 215.

⁷Beattie 1975, p. 7; Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 13; B. Morris 1986, p. 54.

⁸*Athenaeum* (21 January 1865), p. 94. More sympathetic critics believed his perfectionism hindered his artistic output and thereby prevented him from receiving due recognition. See for example, the *Architect* (8 May 1875), p. 276.

⁹Almost a decade was spent in Italy, including one year (1841) studying under the neo-classicist Bertel Thorwaldsen; Beattie 1975, p. 14; Lambourne 1980, p. 74.

alongside Stevens at Green Lane Works for little to no pay.¹⁰ His sacrifice was rewarded: Sykes was invited by Prince Albert to assist Captain Fowke in decorating the Horticultural Gardens, another South Kensington improvement scheme; he arrived in London in October 1859.¹¹ The terra-cotta ornaments he designed for the arcades of the Horticultural Gardens were well received and thereafter terra-cotta was adopted as the material of choice in the buildings of the South Kensington Museum, where Sykes continued to work as the master of a small workshop. Set up in 1858, Cole intended the workshop to provide art students with practical experience and, secondly, to generate respectable designs for the museum's exteriors and interiors at a low price.¹² Cole described the advantages of this form of patronage thus:

It is evident that the progress of a Department of Practical Science and of Applied Art must derive great benefit from the animating impulse which a participation in the planning and execution of buildings, such as those in course of erection at South Kensington, gives to its schools, and the students of the institution have been employed upon these works, wherever possible, as draftsmen, designers, modellers, and artists. At the same time the works, in their turn, have gained advantage, not only from the economy obtained by the employment of the students on their decorative details, but from the friendly criticisms and advice given by their professors and teachers to the officer charged with the execution of the buildings.¹³

The South Kensington system was praised for making more opportunities available to

¹⁰Armstrong 1881, p. 13; W. Ames 1968, p. 129; Gamble 1975, p. 18; Barringer 2005, p. 216.

¹¹*Art Journal* (1 May 1866), p. 153; Pollen 1866, p. 1; Sheppard 1975, p. 89; Barringer 2005, pp. 198, 222.

¹²Barringer 2005, p. 223.

¹³Cole, "Memorandum on the New Buildings of the South Kensington Museum prepared by desire of the Lord President of the Council to be submitted to the First Commissioner of Public Works," 8 March 1870, pp. 1-2 [NAL, 55.AA.61].

design students to expand their practical knowledge of their chosen profession. A rather positive appraisal of its approach – that of putting students to work on real design projects at the museum – was printed in *The Times*:

The courts and corridors of South Kensington are full of work, and much of it very beautiful work, well worth careful inspection, done by the students, either during their course of study or after it, when they have been engaged at good wages to design and model, to paint on porcelain, wood, or other material. With a few exceptions, all the decorative art at South Kensington has been, or is being, done by the students. In the refreshment-rooms, the South Court, and on the staircases, there are pillars, panels, and ceilings which may claim a visitor's attention equally with the contents of the Museum.¹⁴

However, some individuals would have disagreed with the newspaper's estimation of the students' wages as "good." In his autobiography, the artist Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914) described his experience as a South Kensington student in dismal terms. Desperate for money, he and another student accepted stencilling work at South Kensington, which earned them nine pence per hour:

We worked many hours, but produced little. Then they made it "piecework," under which arrangement we produced too much in the time. But I could not stand the slavery of this mean work; it is at the present moment to be seen around the Ceramic Gallery at the South Kensington Museum. My companion thought it best to keep on, but I felt it derogatory to my condition (poor as it was), and struck.¹⁵

The South Kensington system was also censured by design masters who felt encumbered by the responsibility of supervising adolescent students and, if necessary, retouching the works of those students when they failed to meet expectations. Some of Cole's senior

¹⁴*The Times* (4 October 1872), p. 4.

¹⁵Herkomer 1890, p. 33; cited by Frayling 1987, p. 51.

designers wanted no pupils, preferring to focus on their own work instead.¹⁶ The museum may have found it economical to employ students as decorators, but their supervisors lost time and money in the process. In 1879, Frank Moody (1824-86) complained to the Treasury about the burden of working with students. A former assistant to Sykes, Moody had since become one of the museum's principal designers. Several students helped him as he decorated the Ceramic Gallery's ceiling, "the result being," he wrote, "that I had to do most of the work myself and did not make a single farthing."¹⁷

In the early years of the museum, Sykes's artistic contributions could be found throughout the main buildings, in the most prestigious locations, including (but not limited to): the North and South Courts, the Sheepshanks Picture Galleries, the Prince Consort's Gallery and the main facade of the Lecture Theatre building.¹⁸ The Centre Refreshment Room, with its ceramic-encrusted surfaces and stained-glass windows, would share a stylistic affinity with many of the principal areas. However, Sykes would not take credit for its design. He met a premature death on 28 February 1866,¹⁹ leaving his assistants, James Gamble and Reuben Townroe (both 1835-1911), to continue his work.²⁰ Prior to his death, the decision was made to decorate the room with ceramic tiles

¹⁶Cole, diary, 21 July 1868 [NAL, 45.C.129].

¹⁷Letter from Moody to the Treasury, 24 December 1879 [VAA, ED 84/67].

¹⁸NAL, RC.JJ.69, pp. 2, 3, 7, 10, 14 and 15.

¹⁹*Art Journal* (1 May 1866), p. 153.

²⁰Gamble and Townroe also worked as Alfred Stevens's assistants and so Stevens's influence at South Kensington was tangible, though unofficial; Gamble 1975, p. 13 and Sheppard 1975, p. 90. In fact, he seems to have been a regular presence at the museum. According to Richard Lunn, a former member of the museum workshop, Stevens enjoyed visiting Sykes and viewing the workshop's progress. Even following his friend's death, Stevens's visits to the workshop continued; Lunn 1912b, p. 85.

and Sykes produced sketches that formed a general impression of the finished interior.²¹ With four students apiece to assist them,²² Gamble and Townroe ventured on, with Gamble leading the way.²³ Most of the Centre Refreshment Room's decorations have been attributed to him, including the frieze of *amorini*, the columns, mirror-frames, and lunettes (all executed in majolica), the enamelled iron ceiling, and the stained-glass windows.²⁴ Few of these elements were completed when the refreshment room opened to the public and the interior remained in an unfinished state for a long time. Hence its characterization in 1869 as "a dining-room which, year by year, never seems to approach completion."²⁵ Work on its decoration ceased nearly one decade later.

Visitors approaching from the main entrance of the museum were greeted by large glazed doors, through which the dazzling Centre Refreshment Room could be glimpsed.²⁶ Gamble's original sketch for the doors survives (fig. 3-2),²⁷ but the doors themselves do not.²⁸ Inside the room, a profusion of ornamental details compete for attention. Perhaps

²¹Cole (31 March 1866) in the 13th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1866, p. 164. See also Sheppard 1975, p. 111.

²²*Builders' Weekly Reporter* (15 October 1866), p. 508.

²³In 1866 Gamble was appointed Decorative Artist to the museum and earned six guineas per week; H. A. Bruce, 10 March 1866 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 106]. Both he and Townroe worked for many years at the museum. Cole, however, was less enamoured of Townroe's talents, repeatedly reprimanding him for inflating his figures: "He must not exaggerate the proportions as if he knows better than the Creator." Letter from Cole to Col. Scott (stamped 22 December 1870) [NAL, 86.CC.30].

²⁴B. Morris 1986, p. 36. Gamble also took credit for the architectural ornaments made from plaster; NAL, 194.A, p. 1.

²⁵*Standard* (27 March 1869), p. 6.

²⁶Bryant 1986, p. 113; Durbin 1994, p. 9.

²⁷V&A Print Room, no. E.4551-1909; reproduced in Physick 1982, p. 136.

²⁸In the twentieth century, the doors to the Centre Refreshment Room were bricked up (to create more exhibition space in the main corridor). Inside the room, large mirrors were added to the south wall, presumably to offset the loss of natural light;

Victorian eyes first noticed the interior's ceramic veneer. Opposite the south wall, dividing the rectangular portion of the room from the semi-circular bay, stand two pairs of majolica columns (fig. 3-3). Designed by Gamble and executed by Minton, Hollins, and Co., they were installed by 1868,²⁹ making them early components of the interior.³⁰



Figure 3-2: Design for the doors of the Centre Refreshment Room by James Gamble. Pen and watercolour. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E. 4551-1909.

Durbin 1994, p. 9. More recent changes to the layout of the Centre Refreshment Room will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

²⁹NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17; Lieut.-Col. Scott in the 15th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1868, p. 255. On 27 April 1867, Minton, Hollins, and Co. offered to supply the majolica tiles and fix them in place for £257; VAA, ED 84/6, p. 37. According to this record, the columns were ordered on 11 May 1867. The tender had been approved several days earlier; copy of Board Minute, 7 May 1867 [NAL, 86.CC.25, p. 58]; Duke of Marlborough, 7 May 1867 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 233]. See also Physick 1982, pp. 136-37.

³⁰Very little progress had been made in decorating the walls, which were described as being “marked out in white and yellow wash as a suggestion.” *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.



Figure 3-3: Centre Refreshment Room: majolica columns (lower drums).

Each column has an iron core, concealed by colourful majolica tiles.³¹ The white base, decorated with rosettes and other subdued details, is the quietest attribute of an otherwise exuberant architectural feature. Chocolate brown tiles, punctuated by white rosettes and outlined by a mustard yellow, ornament the lower drum. A band of *amorini* appears next: the figures, executed in white against a mustard yellow ground, are engaged in viticultural activities. More than half of the column is decorated by lozenge-shaped tiles. Each tile bears a single white rose on (yet again) a mustard yellow ground. All white ornaments are modelled in relief, creating an uneven surface that invites examination by sight and through touch. Crowning the columns are heavily-gilded Ionic capitals. An exact

³¹The idea of majolica columns has been attributed to Sykes, although Gamble is credited with their design. According to Physick, Sykes intended to create majolica columns for the interior and shared his plan with Cole shortly before he died; Physick 1982, p. 136.

specimen of the columns, the focus of much praise at the Paris Exhibition of 1867,³² was presented to the Imperial Commissioners as an example of what England could accomplish in enamelled terra-cotta.³³ Observers noted the originality of the columns: they had seen others with terra-cotta ornaments, but never had they seen a column wholly encased in majolica.³⁴ Not everyone was convinced of the columns' merits, however. One reviewer questioned their integrity, using Ruskin's principles of honest construction as his guide:

Now we cannot consider that, from the point of view of "the eternal fitness of things" this use of tile work can be looked on as altogether satisfactory. The use of a column is to afford support, and the expression of this purpose should, we submit, be the leading idea, both in its construction and in its ornamentation. But that idea is not by any means conveyed by an elaborate structure of little pieces of thin tile set edgewise one on top of the other.³⁵

Another critic dismissed the ceramic veneer as a "sham art."³⁶

Harsh critics did not deter Cole. The walls of the Centre Refreshment Room, from floor to ceiling, are embellished with glazed tiles.³⁷ The arches of the south wall are

³²Cole (31 March 1868) in the 15th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1868, p. 197.

³³*Art Journal* (1 March 1869), p. 94.

³⁴*Journal of the Society of Arts* (7 February 1868), p. 235. The notice was reprinted in the *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (15 February 1868), p. 76.

³⁵*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3. Despite his reservations, the writer conceded that the style could prove "very effective" when washable surfaces are required.

³⁶*Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55.

³⁷The floor is tiled also: the dominant pattern consists of red octagons offset by smaller black squares. Circumscribing the floor is a gold and black band of fretwork, making this floor more elaborate than the Green Dining Room's. In their tender, dated 12 December 1866, Maw & Co. offered to provide the tiles for £133. The tiles were ordered on 22 December 1866; VAA, ED 84/6, p. 8. See also Physick 1982, p. 139; Bergesen 1989, p. 125.

supported by half-columns (fig. 3-4). The base of each half-column is faced with plain white tiles. Smooth chocolate brown hexagons decorate the lower shaft. Then a band of *amorini* appears, coloured in the same manner as before. White hexagonal tiles (decorated in relief and framed by patterned blue-and-white tiles) cover the upper shaft. A second band of *amorini* and an unfussy gilded capital complete the decoration of the half-column. It may seem like too much ornament for a half-column, but Gamble repeated these elements on every wall, perhaps in an attempt to create cohesion. For instance, the lower band of *amorini* runs around the entire room. With the exception of one sad-looking shrouded woman with a babe in arms, the child-like figures demonstrate the fun of feast and frolic, even the occasional drunken stupor (figs. 3-5 and 3-6). The higher band of *amorini* continues as a frieze around the room and reads: "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labour XYZ."³⁸ The inscription derives from Ecclesiastes 2:24 and incorporates a pictorial alphabet designed by Sykes.³⁹ Modern authors have recognized a self-portrait of Sykes in the letter *I*, although no Victorian source confirms this identification.⁴⁰ However, I do believe that the Centre Refreshment Room represents a

³⁸The frieze was executed by Minton, Hollins, and Co.; NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17. One reviewer had trouble reading the inscription without disturbing other guests, "as the letters double round corners in the most provoking way." *Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55.

³⁹Sykes's alphabet also appeared in the Ceramic Gallery and several museum publications; *South Kensington Museum: Examples* 1881, vol. 1, p. 89. For example, a comprehensive catalogue of ceramics in the South Kensington Museum (Fortnum 1873) used Sykes's designs for its initial letters.

⁴⁰Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 93; Barringer 2005, p. 230. The letter shows a man from behind, working at his easel.

multifaceted portrait of Henry Cole. The interior manifests his ambitions as a design reformer and some of his more personal interests.



Figure 3-4: Centre Refreshment Room: half-columns flanking the main arch.



Figure 3-5: Centre Refreshment Room: band of *amorini* (detail with shrouded woman).



Figure 3-6: Centre Refreshment Room: band of *amorini* (detail with drunken figure).

Sanitation became a major issue in the Victorian period, an era ravaged by devastating cholera outbreaks, and much of majolica's appeal derived from its hygienic nature: easily cleaned with soap and water, tiled walls were better suited to high-traffic areas than porous (and contaminative) plaster walls.⁴¹ In addition, ceramic tiles were thought to resist dampness and fire.⁴² Their sanitary value recommended them for use in hospitals, dairies, kitchens, bathrooms, stairwells, and dining rooms.⁴³ Ceramic tiles were chosen to ornament the walls of the Centre Refreshment Room because the commission specifically called for washable decorations.⁴⁴ Indeed, the South Kensington Museum was keen to prove itself a sanitary monument of modern engineering. However, some scholars have argued that Cole's familiarity with the royal dairy at Frogmore (designed by John Thomas, 1858-61) also prompted the use of ceramic tiles (fig. 3-7).⁴⁵ This argument

⁴¹Blake 1875, p. 74.

⁴²J. Smith 1887, p. 200.

⁴³*Builders' Weekly Reporter* (31 October 1873), p. 1040; Blake 1875, p. 74.

⁴⁴*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3; Herbert/Huggins 1995, p. 64.

⁴⁵See, for example, Sheppard 1975, p. 111; Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 93; Physick 1982, p. 136.

is supported by contemporary reviews. Even before the Centre Refreshment Room opened to the public, when little of its decoration was underway, periodicals were drawing comparisons between the two projects: “The decoration of the new refreshment rooms, in Majolica, [is] a kind of work which has not been attempted in modern times, except in the Queen’s dairy at Frogmore.”⁴⁶ The royal dairy teems with tiles: ceramic pictures with agricultural and seasonal themes enrich its walls, as do medallion portraits of the royal family.⁴⁷ “A perfect gem of taste and art,” the dairy stood as an example of Prince Albert’s aesthetic finesse.⁴⁸ For the man whose firm supplied the tiles, the dairy served as a noble showcase for his wares, imbuing them with an enviable pedigree. This man was none other than Herbert Minton (1793-1858), one of Cole’s closest allies.



Figure 3-7: Royal Dairy at Frogmore, Windsor. Designed by John Thomas, 1858-61. Reproduced from Graves 2002, p. 111.

⁴⁶*Journal of the Society of Arts* (9 March 1866), p. 297. A nearly identical description of the refreshment room’s Frogmore precedent appeared in the *Builders’ Weekly Reporter* (12 March 1866), p. 135.

⁴⁷*Illustrated London News* (27 July 1861), p. 75; W. Ames 1968, p. 110.

⁴⁸*Illustrated London News* (27 July 1861), p. 75.

Cole met Minton in the early 1840s and the pair formed a strong friendship based on a mutual interest in art manufactures.⁴⁹ Although Minton died before any plans for decorating the Centre Refreshment Room were hatched – or, rather, before there were any plans for a new refreshment department – it is unlikely that the Centre Refreshment Room’s ceramic cladding was selected without Minton in mind. Some of Cole’s earliest experiments in design reform involved Minton. For his first art manufacture, a tea service designed under the pseudonym of Felix Summerly and manufactured by Minton, Cole won an award from the Society of Arts.⁵⁰ Encouraged by this success, Cole founded Summerly’s Art Manufactures. With this enterprise, Cole hoped to generate beautiful commercial wares through the sponsorship of diverse artists. Minton supported Cole in this cause and many others: he gave money to help pave the way for the Great Exhibition of 1851 (a project that Cole helped to organize).⁵¹ He also helped to strengthen the South Kensington Museum by dispensing advice on (and providing funds for) potential acquisitions and by donating objects from his own collection.⁵² Minton’s influence was felt in other ways: he funded Schools of Design in the Potteries and he encouraged his employees to make the most of these facilities.⁵³ When Minton died in 1858, his partners – nephews Colin Minton Campbell (1827-85) and Michael Daintry Hollins (1815-98) – assumed control of the business. When their partnership ended in 1868, Campbell

⁴⁹B. Morris 1986, pp. 12, 151; Eatwell 1995, pp. 151, 157.

⁵⁰Cole 1884, vol. 1, pp. 103-04.

⁵¹Minton offered £10,000 to help plan the Great Exhibition. It was a huge sum and demonstrated his devotion to the cause of design reform; Atterbury/Batkin 1990, pp. 78-80.

⁵²Atterbury 1976, p. 305; Eatwell 1995, pp. 162, 163.

⁵³Booth 1990-91, p. 82.

acquired the china works, which produced majolica wall tiles and traded under the name of Minton China Works. Hollins controlled the tile works, which manufactured encaustic tiles (mainly for floors) and traded under the name of Minton, Hollins, and Co.⁵⁴ Not surprisingly, the similarity of the firms' names confused customers. The authorities of the South Kensington Museum received a letter from 'Minton and Co.' asking that all orders concerning majolica wall tiles be directed to them and all orders concerning floor tiles be given to Minton, Hollins and Co.⁵⁵ In spite of this confusion, the Minton firm (and its offshoots) did brisk business in decorating the walls of the Centre Refreshment Room. Perhaps it would be wrong to argue that Cole favoured the use of Minton tiles in the Centre Refreshment Room because the manufacturer had done so much to support Cole's causes and Cole felt an urgent need to repay his debt. However, it is possible to recognize in the Centre Refreshment Room, with its abundance of Minton tiles, an assertion of Minton's importance to Cole as a friend and as a design reformer.

Another prominent feature of the Centre Refreshment Room is the series of stained-glass windows. Five in number, they dominate the north wall of the apse. They were designed by Gamble and manufactured by Powell and Sons.⁵⁶ The first window was

⁵⁴The name Minton, Hollins, and Co. had been used before for Herbert Minton's tile department; hence its appearance in contracts concerning the Centre Refreshment Room prior to the dissolution of the nephews' partnership in 1868. For a more detailed history of Minton's pottery business, and its reorganization by his nephews, see Austwick/Austwick 1980, p. 48; Stuart 1985, pp. 55, 123; Atterbury/Batkin 1990, pp. 17, 223; and Graves 2002, p. 128.

⁵⁵Letter from Minton and Co., 23 April 1869 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 13]. Thus it would seem that Minton China Works also traded under the generic name of Minton and Co.

⁵⁶NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17.

commissioned in 1866,⁵⁷ cost £157.16.3,⁵⁸ and debuted at the Paris Exhibition.⁵⁹ By 1868 it was placed in the Centre Refreshment Room.⁶⁰ The history of the four remaining windows is less clear. The *Athenaeum* mentions three windows in March 1868, but only the middle window is described as “completed in painted glass.” The writer was unimpressed by the Raphael-inspired style and its poor execution: “Not only are the scrolls feeble and commonplace, and their effect in composition weak, but the colouring of the pictures is hard, heavy and crude; and the drawing of the figures in those pictures, as well as in the grisaille, is clumsy, rude and bad.”⁶¹ In May 1868, the *Art Journal* described three windows with figures of saints and two plain side windows.⁶² According to this account, the room had five windows. However, only four windows were noted by the *Standard* in December 1868.⁶³ The Powell archives show that the firm attended to the two side windows by May 1869,⁶⁴ but other records suggest the firm’s tender – to supply glass for no less than four windows – was approved as late as 1870!⁶⁵ This contradicts

⁵⁷Cole, “Store Works,” 2 November 1866 [NAL, 86.CC.30].

⁵⁸AAD, AAD1/54-1977, p. 312. The window’s iron frame cost an additional £34.10.0.

⁵⁹AAD, AAD1/54-1977, p. 312. See also Cole (31 March 1867) in the 14th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1867, p. 185.

⁶⁰*Journal of the Society of Arts* (7 February 1868), p. 235; *Builders’ Weekly Reporter* (15 February 1868), p. 76; Lieut.-Col. Scott in the 15th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1868, p. 255.

⁶¹*Athenaeum* (14 March 1868), pp. 396-97. The review reappeared, more or less verbatim, in the *Builders’ Weekly Reporter* (21 March 1868), p. 136.

⁶²The side windows consisted of ‘ground glass’; *Art Journal* (1 May 1868), p. 99.

⁶³*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

⁶⁴AAD, AAD1/2-1977, p. 520.

⁶⁵James Powell and Sons offered to supply glass for four windows in the Centre Refreshment Room at a cost of sixteen shillings per square foot, plus £34.10.0 for each iron frame; VAA, ED 84/7, p. 18. The tender was approved by the Marquess of Ripon on 17 March 1870 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 354]; copy of Board Minute, 17 March 1870 [NAL,

reviews that described three painted windows in 1868. I can think of only one solution to this conundrum: before the designs were fired by the Powell firm, Gamble may have painted the windows in order to give museum patrons an impression of the intended results. Indeed, Gamble is known to have supplied the Centre Refreshment Room with other temporary decorations. In 1871, the walls remained incomplete and Gamble was ordered to paint one side of the room's decoration – on canvas!⁶⁶

According to the records of the Powell firm, the first of the four remaining windows was ready for installation in late April 1871.⁶⁷ Gamble wrote that it would cost £807.4.9 to complete the three remaining windows (his estimate was accepted in June).⁶⁸ Work had already begun on the first of the three. It was being painted in March.⁶⁹ In 1873, Gamble was still employed on the last two windows.⁷⁰ By 1875 they were installed in the Centre Refreshment Room.⁷¹

86.CC.24, p. 51].

⁶⁶Cole, 'Agenda' to the Works Office, 5 August 1871 [NAL, 86.CC.30].

⁶⁷The glass had been fired and fixed into its iron frame. The firm's fee was £100 (for 125 square feet of glass); AAD, AAD/1/55-1977, p. 287.

⁶⁸Gamble's estimate, dated 5 June 1871, included the cost of payments to Powell and Sons; VAA, ED 84/7, p. 95. Gamble's tender was recommended by the Marquess of Ripon; copy of Board Minute, 23 June 1871 [NAL, 86.CC.24, p. 60]; VAA, ED 84/36, p. 189.

⁶⁹C. R. Dillon, "Memorandum for Mr. Cole," 19 March 1871 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 88]: "The painting on Glass for one window is in hand and the designs for the two remaining windows are in progress."

⁷⁰Cole in the 20th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1873, p. 435. In April, Gamble was working on the fourth window. The fifth window had been involved in an accident and had to be repainted. A delay of three months was anticipated; Scott, "Memorandum: Work upon which Mr. Gamble is engaged," 29 April 1873 [NAL, 86.CC.30].

⁷¹22nd *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1875, p. xiv; Philip Cunliffe Owen in the 22nd *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1875, p. 391.

The windows are decorated in a formulaic manner (fig. 3-8). Solid and solitary figures, vaguely reminiscent of Michelangelo's Sistine sibyls, occupy the upper reaches of the windows. They demonstrate the lingering influence of Sykes and his appreciation for the robustness of the human form in Renaissance works of art.⁷² There are also rotund children, painted in grisaille, and sombre youths, isolated in canopied 'thrones'. Each window displays six smaller scenes, in square and round formats, which relate to lines of prose or scripture painted onto cartouches. The cartouches are arranged into two columns that run down the centre of the window.⁷³ Every window bears the cipher "VA" (the initials of Victoria and Albert), which is surmounted by a crown. The crown itself is surmounted by a crowned lion. Flanking Victoria and Albert's initials are those of the Department of Science and Art (*S* and *A*). Other regal accents include the name 'Victoria' and the monarch's motto 'Dieu et mon droit'. Three of the windows depict saints of national import. St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, can be identified in the first (or westernmost) window by his special attribute, the cross saltire. St. George, mounted on a white steed, appears in the third (or central) window. As he carries a shield emblazoned with a red cross, the patron saint of England attacks the dragon trapped

⁷²Sykes was a devoted admirer of Raphael and Michelangelo, especially the latter: "The massive limbs and extremities of his figures, and his vigorous and large treatment of the objects compressed into his panels show this influence." Pollen 1866, p. 4. See also *Art Journal* (1 May 1866), p. 153 for acknowledgement of Sykes's Renaissance heroes.

⁷³Each column consists of nine cartouches. To follow the narrative, the viewer must first read the uppermost cartouche of the left column. The narrative is continued in the cartouches below. After finishing the left column, the narrative resumes with the right column and ends with the lowest cartouche on the right. To keep my descriptions of the windows as simple as possible, I will refer to each cartouche as a 'line'. For example, the uppermost cartouche of the right column will be referred to as 'line 10', because that cartouche is tenth in the narrative sequence.

between the hooves of his horse. St. Patrick, his garments embellished with golden shamrocks, is represented by the fifth window. The patron saint of Ireland wields his crozier against a serpent. In the two remaining examples (the second and fourth windows), the figure of a saint is replaced by the crest of the Prince of Wales (a crown with three feathers). This is surrounded by the Order of the Garter's motto: "Honi soit qui mal y pense." Such austere reminders of regal authority and nationhood are coupled with touching testimonies to the value of craftspeople and amusing allusions to the pleasures of food.



Figure 3-8: First (or westernmost) window of the Centre Refreshment Room.



Figure 3-9: First window of the Centre Refreshment Room (detail: roundel depicting labour).

The westernmost window celebrates the nobility of labour, different forms of which are depicted in the six small scenes.⁷⁴ The first scene, in the top left corner, represents a learned man. He is seated beside a globe (a lined sphere) and reads from a book in his right hand. Behind him, many more volumes are loaded onto tall bookshelves. In the scene below, two agricultural workers use a rope to guide a bull through a ploughed field. Opposite the agricultural scene, in the tondo at right, appears another image of manual labour (fig. 3-9). Given the size of the image and the height at which it appears, it was difficult to determine the exact occupation in which the two male figures are engaged, but I believe they are meant to be smiths working in a hot forge. Each figure wears a cloth wrapped around his head, presumably to keep sweat from his eyes. The man in the foreground is barebacked, further stressing the discomfort in which he must toil. In the final scene, on the bottom left of the window, two men examine an

⁷⁴In two instances, the upper right and lower right squares, I can only assume that the images represented scenes of labour. They no longer exist and have been replaced with modern glass (non-representational masses of colour).

architectural plan. Behind them stands a stone edifice, rich in carved details, representative of Classical Antiquity. These images are imbued with greater meaning by the inscriptions of the adjoining cartouches. Eighteen lines of text are taken from Ecclesiasticus:

The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure. How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough? He giveth his mind to make furrows and is diligent to give the kine fodder. So every carpenter and workmaster that laboureth night and day, and they that cut and grave seals. The smith also sitting by the anvil and considering the iron work. So doth the potter sitting at his work and turning the wheel about with his feet who is alway carefully set at his work. He fashioneth the clay with his arm, and boweth down his strength before his feet. [All these trust to their] hands and every one is wise in his work. Without these cannot a city be inhabited. They shall not be sought for in the publick counsel nor sit high in the congregation. They shall not sit on the judge's seat nor understand the sentence of judgement and they shall not be found where parables are spoken. But they will maintain the state of the world and all their desire is in the work of their craft.⁷⁵

This is an abridged version of Ecclesiasticus 38:24-34, which, when read in its entirety, reveals physical labour to be much less valuable than spiritual reflection:

The scribe's profession increases wisdom; whoever is free from toil can become wise. How can one become wise who guides the plow, who thrills in wielding the goad like a lance, who guides the ox and urges on the bullock, and whose concern is for cattle? His determination is to plow furrows, and he is careful to fatten the livestock. So with every engraver and designer who, labouring night and day, fashions carved seals, and whose concern is to vary the pattern. His determination is to produce a lifelike impression, and he is careful to finish the work. So with the smith sitting by the anvil, intent on the iron he forges. The flame of the fire sears his flesh, yet he toils away in the furnace heat. The clang of the hammer deafens his ears, his eyes are on the object he is

⁷⁵I respected the original spelling, as it appeared on the glass, as closely as possible. However, it was necessary to add or alter punctuation marks for clarity's sake. Furthermore, a portion of the text was obscured by lead supports, but I have filled in the missing blanks, so to speak (this particular alteration is signalled by square brackets).

shaping. His determination is to finish the work, and he is careful to perfect it in detail.

So with the potter sitting at his work, turning the wheel with his feet. He is always concerned for his products, and turns them out in quantity. With his hands he moulds the clay, and with his feet softens it. His determination is to complete the glazing, and he is careful to fire his kiln. All these are skilled with their hands, each one an expert in his own work; without them no city could be lived in, and wherever they stay, they do not hunger. But they are not sought out for the council of the people, nor are they prominent in the assembly. They do not sit on the judge's bench, nor can they understand law and justice. They cannot expound the instruction of wisdom, nor are they found among rulers. Yet they are expert in the works of this world, and their concern is for the exercise of their skill. How different the person who devotes himself to the fear of God and to the study of the Law of the Most High!⁷⁶

The author of Ecclesiasticus believes scribes (thinkers) to be superior to craftspeople (makers) because scribes have access to powerful people.⁷⁷ They can shape the decisions of rulers and, by extension, the governance of nations. By omitting this declaration of the craftsman's social inferiority, and by adopting a kinder translation of the apocryphal text in the stained glass, a nobler definition of the craftsman emerges – a happy and, in all likelihood, intended outcome, given the South Kensington Museum's efforts to attract artisans and raise public awareness of the need for good design.⁷⁸

The remaining windows draw attention to the many pleasures, and some random pitfalls, of dining. The cartouches of the second window bear phrases excerpted from a

⁷⁶Ecclesiasticus 38: 24-34; pp. 445-46.

⁷⁷Ecclesiasticus 39:4; p. 446.

⁷⁸Another stained-glass window used Ecclesiasticus 38:24-34 in a celebration of manual occupations. It was designed by Reuben Townroe for a competition sponsored by the Department of Science and Art; NAL, RC.JJ.69, pp. 10-11; *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (26 September 1868), p. 461. The department determined the window's location (the museum's North Staircase), its theme (Ecclesiasticus 38:24-34), and its style ('Italian Renaissance'); *Art Journal* (1 October 1864), p. 292.

wide variety of sources. Lines 1 and 2 are taken from *Gryll Grange*, a work by Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866). Translated into English, the passage reads: “Moisten your lungs with wine. The dog-star’s sway / Returns, and all things thirst beneath his ray.”⁷⁹ Peacock was himself quoting from the lyric poet Alcaeus, whose works survive in a fragmented state. Lines 3 and 4 also derive from *Gryll Grange*, only this time Peacock quoted from Petronius, an ancient Roman author.⁸⁰ Lines 8 to 10 originated in François Rabelais’s fabulous tales of giants. Again, however, the quote was relayed by Peacock’s *Gryll Grange*.⁸¹ Obviously, someone keenly interested in Peacock’s work helped to plan the window, but more of that later. The phrases of the remaining cartouches are culled from Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (lines 11 to 12) as well as Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and *Henry IV* (lines 13 to 18).

Harvest scenes appear on the third window: fishermen, farmers, hunters, and winemakers engage in their life-sustaining activities. Familiar sources are revisited in the cartouches below. Lines 2 to 3 are taken from Ecclesiastes 2:24, previously seen in the tiled inscription that runs around the room. Lines 4 to 9 are excerpted from an Ingoldsby legend, “The Lay of St. Cuthbert; or the Devil’s Dinner Party.” The passage promised to make hungry diners waiting on their meals even hungrier:

⁷⁹Only Greek is used in the cartouches. In Peacock’s work, both the Greek text and its English translation are provided; Peacock 1875, vol. 2, p. 296.

⁸⁰The window appears to have suffered damage that could not be repaired: three cartouches (lines 5 to 7) are blank. As a result, the quote – from Petronius by way of Peacock – is cropped. However, enough of the Latin text remains to make a positive attribution. See Peacock 1875, vol. 2, p. 296 for the original Latin quotation and an English translation.

⁸¹Peacock 1875, vol. 2, p. 379.

The Clock strikes One,
And the roast meat's brown, and the boil'd meat's done
And the barbecu'd suckling-pig's crisp'd to a turn,
And the pancakes are fried, and beginning to burn;
The fat stubble-goose Swims in gravy and juice
With the mustard and apple-sauce ready for use;
Fish, flesh, and fowl, and all of the best,
Want nothing but eating – they're all ready drest.⁸²

The remaining lines are drawn from sources as disparate as the *Iliad* and the Koran.



Figure 3-10: Fourth window of the Centre Refreshment Room (detail: portrait of Homer).



Figure 3-11: Raphael, *The Parnassus*, 1509-10 (detail: portrait of Homer). Fresco. Stanza della Segnatura, Palazzi Pontifici, Vatican. Reproduced from www.wga.hu.

⁸²Ingoldsby n.d., p. 356.

The fourth window uses equally diverse sources. They include Homer's *Odyssey* (lines 1 to 3), Dante's *Divine Comedy* (lines 7 to 11), and *The Faerie Queene* by Edmund Spenser (lines 12 to 15 and lines 15 to 18). Presumably the window's six portraits represent the authors of the works cited by the cartouches. The bearded man depicted in the lower right corner is Homer (fig. 3-10). Seated with his eyes closed and wearing a crown of laurel, his identity as a blind poet is unmistakable. In fact, his likeness derives from one of Raphael's frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura, *The Parnassus* (fig. 3-11). In the fresco, Homer is posed in a comparable manner, with his eyes closed, and his blue and green garments are quite similar. Dante is represented in the stained-glass roundel above (fig. 3-12). His distinctive attire can be traced to earlier works of art, including a portrait by Sandro Botticelli (c. 1495, tempera on canvas, private collection).



Figure 3-12: Fourth window of the Centre Refreshment Room (detail: portrait of Dante).

A motley assortment of phrases ornament the fifth window. Ecclesiastes is revisited in lines 5 and 6: “A feast is made for laughter and wine maketh merry”

(Ecclesiastes 10:19). Another Ingoldsby legend is used for the bulk of the cartouches (lines 10 to 17). In this instance, a passage from a story about an ill-fated wedding banquet is used to prime empty stomachs:

There are “lots” of beef, potted and hung,
Prawns, lobsters, cold fowl, and cold ham, and cold tongue,
Hot tea, and hot coffee, hot rolls, and hot toast,
Cold pigeon-pie (rook?), and cold boil’d and cold roast,
Scotch marmalade, jellies, cold creams, colder ices –
Blancmange, which young ladies say, so very nice is, –
Rock-melons in thick, Pines in much thinner slices, –
Char, potted with clarified butter and spices,
Renewing an appetite long past its crisis.⁸³

Reviewing these phrases, one critic concluded they amounted to “one of the oddest assemblages of mottoes drawn apparently at random from the most quaintly incongruous sources we have ever yet had the luck to encounter.”⁸⁴ However, it is unlikely that the selection of phrases was entirely haphazard. It is rather more likely that Cole played a decisive role in choosing them. It is also possible that Gamble, as the windows’ designer, had some input. Nevertheless, the artists employed at South Kensington seem to have worked within tight parameters. Themes for wall treatments and subjects of stained-glass windows were often predetermined by the Department of Science and Art, with Cole exercising considerable control over its decisions. In fact, when Gamble sought outside work, he advertised himself as an artist who had given shape to Cole’s ideas.⁸⁵ Indeed, aspects of Cole’s personality are illustrated by the windows of the Centre Refreshment

⁸³Ingoldsby n.d., p. 424. The story is entitled “The Wedding-Day; or The Buccaneer’s Curse.”

⁸⁴*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

⁸⁵NAL, 194.A, p. 2.

Room. For example, the recurrence of passages excerpted from works by Thomas Love Peacock can be explained by Cole's deep admiration for the man. Cole first became acquainted with Peacock when he and his father took lodgings in Peacock's house in Blackfriars.⁸⁶ The satiric novelist took an interest in the young Cole and a friendship formed.⁸⁷ Years later, Cole edited an anthology of Peacock's works (it was published in three volumes in 1875).⁸⁸ As his avid reader, Cole must have been familiar with Peacock's habit of using other authors' words to introduce his own stories. It would seem that Cole consulted his favourite literature in order to devise themes for the windows. It would also seem that Cole had a soft spot for Ecclesiastes, thus explaining the number of phrases extracted from it (excerpts from Ecclesiastes appear in the tiled inscription around the room and in two of the windows). His favourite motto, "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10), was used to decorate the exterior of his home in Witley.⁸⁹ It also illuminated the title page of his autobiography.⁹⁰ Therefore, in different ways, the stained-glass windows reflect Cole's enthusiasms. Confirming Cole's presence in the room is his coat of arms, situated above the eastern doorway.⁹¹ For these reasons, I believe this public dining room was very personal to Cole.

⁸⁶Van Doren 1911, pp. 147-48; Burton 1999, p. 26.

⁸⁷Cole's devotion to Peacock can be measured by the name he gave to his first child, Downer Peacock Cole (born in 1837).

⁸⁸Kelvin 1987, vol. 2, p. 90, note 1.

⁸⁹Cole's house (The Heights) bore a band of phrases executed in Minton tiles; Bonython 1984, pp. 163-65. His diary records their installation; Cole, diary, 31 March 1862 [NAL,45.C.123].

⁹⁰Cooper 1992 (diss.), p. 292.

⁹¹Physick 1982, p. 137.



Figure 3-13: Centre Refreshment Room: a portion of the enameled iron ceiling.

Although the enameled iron ceiling was not completed until several years after Cole's resignation in May 1873,⁹² its conception is credited to him (fig. 3-13). Cole was inspired by examples of work in this material, first as a spectator at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and later as a modern commuter, when he observed how durable railway signs were and how easily they could be cleaned.⁹³ Wanting to both modernize the plaster ceiling of the Centre Refreshment Room and lessen the threat of fire,⁹⁴ Cole spent £100 on enameled iron experiments.⁹⁵ Gamble then proceeded to prepare designs. Arabesques, accented with the monarch's initials (*VR*), were added to the unadorned

⁹²Norman MacLeod in the 21st *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1874, p. 379.

⁹³*Building News* (2 April 1875), p. 365. See also Sheppard 1975, p. 111; Somers Cock 1980, p. 6; B. Morris 1986, p. 36; Durbin 1994, p. 9.

⁹⁴The authorities at South Kensington believed the material could be used to prevent the spread of fire; Physick 1982, p. 11.

⁹⁵W. E. Forster, 24 March 1870 [VAA, ED 84/36, pp. 116, 389]; copy of Board Minute, 24 March 1870 [NAL, 86.CC.24, p. 52].

plates supplied by the Enamelled Iron Works of Birmingham.⁹⁶ The finished plates were installed by 1875.⁹⁷ Three years later, the decoration of the Centre Refreshment Room was complete.⁹⁸

Assessments of the interior's merits varied greatly. Some visitors enthused over the healthy environment created by the washable surfaces:

Architects, decorators, and all who take an interest in mural art, will scarcely fail to visit the central refreshment-room in the South Kensington Museum. It is, perhaps, now that it is finished, the best example of what such a room ought to be. Lightness, brightness, and cleanliness are all here; yet these qualities are so modified, subdued, and informed with Art, that the general result upon the mind of the visitor is a feeling of absolute pleasure at simply being there. This has always been the effect we have aimed at in our interiors, but never till now has it been so thoroughly and healthily realised.⁹⁹

Others appreciated the consideration shown for good hygiene, but condemned the superabundance of ornament; to their eyes, it was too careful, too studied, too uninspired.¹⁰⁰ The glazed surfaces created an unwelcome glare, a bone of contention that appeared in multiple reviews.¹⁰¹ The *Building News* opined:

Those who would judge of this work of the South Kensington artists at its best should view and examine it by daylight, the sober light of which is

⁹⁶VAA, ED 84/7, pp. 136 and 137; *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (11 June 1875), p. 563.

⁹⁷22nd *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1875, p. xiv; P. C. Owen in the 22nd *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1875, p. 391.

⁹⁸25th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1878, p. 428.

⁹⁹*Art Journal* (1 September 1875), p. 286. Another writer proclaimed: "The whole gives an impression of perfect cleanliness, and every part might be washed down by a fire-engine weekly, if necessary." *Architect* (22 May 1875), p. 311; the article reappeared in the *British Architect* (28 May 1875), p. 301 and in the *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (11 June 1875), p. 563.

¹⁰⁰*Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55; cited by Sheppard 1975, p. 111.

¹⁰¹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

most suitable to it, and the coolness of effect is pleasant in the hot summer daytime, whereas, all its defects, its glitter, and we must say clap-trap, are intensified by the glare of gas-light.¹⁰²

Clearly, the Centre Refreshment Room was not the immediate success Cole must have hoped for.

The third refreshment room was designed by Edward Poynter (1836-1919), a promising artist trained in the academic tradition. Judging by the eminent offices he held during his lifetime, Poynter fulfilled his early promise. After his election to the Royal Academy as an Associate in 1869, Poynter went on to become the Slade Professor of Art (London, 1871), Director of Art and Principal of the National Art Training School at South Kensington (1875), Director of the National Gallery (1894), and President of the Royal Academy (1896).¹⁰³ However, by clinging to the increasingly outmoded genre of history painting, his artistic reputation declined in the twentieth century.¹⁰⁴ Today Poynter is best remembered as an ardent classicist who struggled to imbue his finished works with the same grace and vitality evidenced by his preparatory drawings (beautiful studies of the human form, his favourite subject).¹⁰⁵ His painting style has been described as “sculpturesque.”¹⁰⁶ He worshipped Michelangelo, calling him “the greatest realist the world has ever seen.”¹⁰⁷ Poynter especially admired Michelangelo’s ability to connote

¹⁰²*Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55.

¹⁰³Treble 1978, p. 70; Brooks 1996, p. 27.

¹⁰⁴For a sample mid-twentieth century appraisal of Poynter’s artistic achievements, see Baldwin 1960, p. 164. His oil paintings are denigrated as trite and valueless.

¹⁰⁵Gaunt 1963, p. 16.

¹⁰⁶Monkhouse 1897, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷Poynter 1879, p. 51. Poynter’s devotion to Michelangelo was parodied by his old friend George du Maurier in *Trilby* (1894). Lorrimer, the novel’s sober, Michelangelo-loving character, was based on Poynter; Flanders 2001, pp. 104-05.

motion, singling out the Italian's skill in rendering clothing that moved with every gesture, thus exposing the physicality of the human body.¹⁰⁸ Throughout his career Poynter strove to emulate this trait in his own work.¹⁰⁹

In all likelihood, Poynter's interest in art was piqued at an early age: his father, Ambrose Poynter, was an architect and his uncle, Baron de Triqueti, was a sculptor.¹¹⁰ As a young man Poynter travelled to Italy where he basked in the glories of the Renaissance. In Rome he met another aspiring artist, Frederic Leighton (1830-96), whose monumental paintings would have a lasting influence on him.¹¹¹ In London he received more formal training, first at Leigh's Academy,¹¹² then he studied under the painter William C. T. Dobson (1817-98).¹¹³ Eventually he made his way to the Paris atelier of Marc-Charles-Gabriel Gleyre (1806-74) where he is supposed to have spent three years under the Swiss-

¹⁰⁸Poynter 1879, p. 60.

¹⁰⁹Philip Burne-Jones's portrait of Poynter (1909; London, National Portrait Gallery) reveals the sitter's enduring enthusiasm for Michelangelo. A copy after the Sistine Chapel's *Creation of the Sun and the Moon* dominates the background; Treble 1978, p. 70.

¹¹⁰Ambrose Poynter (1796-1886) had connections to Cole's South Kensington circle. He worked with the Board of Trade and the Council of the School of Design. He also served as the Inspector of the Provincial Schools; Frayling 1987, pp. 21, 24.

¹¹¹Jackson 1897, p. 7; Monkhouse 1897, p. 4. Both Leighton and Poynter went on to become preeminent neoclassicists; J. Freeman 1995, p. 5. However, the value of Victorian art plummeted in the early twentieth century and art critics' regard for nineteenth-century academicians, including Leighton and Poynter, reached an all-time low. Only in the latter half of the twentieth century, when Victorian art began to surge in value, did this trend reverse itself. Indeed, Leighton's reputation has improved markedly (his works command high prices once again), but Poynter remains largely forgotten.

¹¹²Located in Newman Street, this school was founded by James Mathews Leigh.

¹¹³Monkhouse 1897, p. 4. Dobson was elected to the Royal Academy in January 1860 and became a full member in December 1871.

born artist's tutelage.¹¹⁴ A disciple of Ingres (1780-1867), Gleyre instilled in his pupils an appreciation for Classical antiquity and an absolute faith in study from the live (nude) model.¹¹⁵ Poynter did not forget these lessons after he returned to London: most of his paintings celebrate ancient history and he relied heavily on nude studies to complete them.¹¹⁶ Early examples of Poynter's art include *Faithful unto Death* (1865; Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) and *Israel in Egypt* (1867; London, Guildhall Art Gallery), while later paintings include *A Visit to Aesculapius* (1880; London, Tate Britain) and *The Visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon* (1890; Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales).

Poynter was also acquainted with the decorative arts, especially stained glass. His father is thought to have introduced Poynter to the architect William Burges in the early 1850s.¹¹⁷ Burges helped Poynter to gain valuable work experience, providing him with ample opportunities to contribute to public commissions (designing stained glass windows for buildings that Burges renovated) and private enterprises (painting furniture designed by the architect). In 1860, for example, Poynter embarked on a series of

¹¹⁴According to Monkhouse 1897, p. 6, Poynter studied under Gleyre from 1856 to 1859. However, John Gordon-Christian discovered that Monkhouse's chronology conflicts with evidence that Poynter returned to England by 1858 – in that year Poynter designed several windows for the London-based firm of Powells, so Monkhouse's dates should be regarded with suspicion; Gordon-Christian 1968, pp. 38-40. See also Brooks 1996, p. 28. *Moses and the Brazen Serpent*, a window in Tilstock's Christ Church, is Poynter's earliest known work for Powells (February 1858).

¹¹⁵Hauptman 1996, p. 332; C. Harrison 1999, p. 69.

¹¹⁶Kear 1991 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 11; J. Freeman 1995, p. 11.

¹¹⁷Brooks 1996, p. 27. They would later travel together through northern Italy (1856-57); Boucher 1999, p. 24.

important civic projects for Dover's town hall, the Maison Dieu.¹¹⁸ Renovations to the main hall, devised by Ambrose Poynter, had begun several years earlier, but Burges supervised the work.¹¹⁹ Both men helped the young painter to secure two commissions for memorial windows in stained glass.¹²⁰ *The Embarkation of Henry VIII at Dover for the Field of the Cloth of Gold, 1520* (1860) and *The Landing of Charles II at Dover on His Restoration in 1660* (1861) celebrate illustrious events in Dover's history. Vividly coloured and populated by figures in studied poses, the windows received a pictorial treatment.¹²¹ Additional windows were requested and Poynter's work at the Maison Dieu continued, but London was also beginning to reward the artist with public commissions.

It is unclear when Poynter first caught the attention of the South Kensington Museum. In 1861 he exhibited a picture at the Royal Academy for the first time. He collaborated with Burges on several pieces of painted furniture, including a sideboard purchased by the Department of Science and Art from the International Exhibition of 1862.¹²² Displayed for many years at the South Kensington Museum, the sideboard featured an allegorical struggle between wine and beer on its front (Burges designed the cabinet, Poynter painted it). These and other projects heightened Poynter's visibility in London, but it has been suggested, rather cryptically, that Cole's interest in Poynter was triggered by some unnamed cartoons in a relative's possession: "Sir Henry Cole saw a

¹¹⁸The building originally served as the Hospital of St. Mary (founded in 1203); Brooks 1996, p. 28.

¹¹⁹Ambrose's eyesight was failing, so he enlisted Burges to carry out the remaining work; Brooks 1996, p. 29.

¹²⁰Brooks 1996, p. 29.

¹²¹Brooks 1996, p. 32.

¹²²J. Smith 1887, p. 53; Jackson 1897, p. 8; Monkhouse 1899a, p. 243.

couple of cartoons which Sir Edward had drawn for one of his brothers, and was so struck by them that he determined to give an Artist, who appeared so able, an opportunity of showing what he could do on a larger scale.”¹²³

Poynter’s first association with the South Kensington Museum began with an invitation to decorate the South Court. He contributed to a series of artists’ portraits, rendered in mosaic, that graced the court’s upper walls. Work on the ‘Kensington Valhalla’, as the series became known, stretched from 1862 to 1871.¹²⁴ In 1864 Poynter opted to design the figure of Phidias; it cost £95 to complete in English glass.¹²⁵ His figure of Apelles was finished the following year.¹²⁶ Although the mosaics met with mixed reviews in the press,¹²⁷ presumably they met with the approval of the South Kensington authorities for they continued to patronize Poynter and in 1865 he was commissioned to decorate the east refreshment room (fig. 3-14).¹²⁸ Although it is called the Poynter Room today, I will refer to it by its original title as the Grill Room.¹²⁹ The interior took its name from one of its more prominent features: an iron grill designed by Poynter and manufactured by Hart, Son, and Peard.¹³⁰ Ornamented with Tudor roses and

¹²³Jackson 1897, p. 9.

¹²⁴Physick 1982, p. 62.

¹²⁵Physick 1982, p. 64, note 34.

¹²⁶NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 4; Physick 1982, p. 64.

¹²⁷For example, Poynter’s representation of Phidias with bare feet was judged a gross error; *Art Journal* (1 July 1864), p. 282.

¹²⁸VAA, ED 84/36, p. 200.

¹²⁹Its present distinction as the ‘Poynter Room’ is a twentieth-century invention. In Chapter Seven I will discuss the renaming of the three refreshment rooms in more detail.

¹³⁰NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17; *South Kensington Museum: Examples* 1881, vol. 2, p. 73. Joseph Hart and Son submitted the lowest tender (£165) on 27 March 1867; see VAA, ED 84/6, p. 32. This document records that the grill was ordered on 30 March

radiant suns, the grill was applauded as an example of “high art.”¹³¹ In fact, Poynter’s design united form and function so successfully, one critic struggled to accept it as the work of a painter: “We wonder whether Mr. Poynter can lay claim to its design, which seems from the hands of a first-rate Gothic architect rather than those of a painter.”¹³²



Figure 3-14: Grill Room, looking northeast. Commissioned in 1865 for the South Kensington Museum and designed by Edward Poynter. Reproduced from Physick 1982, pl. xxix.

1867, but alternate documents suggest that Henry Scott only recommended the tender’s acceptance in April. See Board Minute, 5 April 1867 [NAL, 86.CC.25, p. 54]; Duke of Marlborough, 5 April 1867 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 232].

¹³¹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹³²*Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74; cited by Sheppard 1975, p. 111.



Figure 3-15: Grill Room: tiled panel, *October*.

The Grill Room has also been called the Dutch Kitchen, a name inspired by the blue and white tiles that ornament its walls. Framed by wood panelling,¹³³ the tiles on the upper walls depict the seasons and months of the year. Visitors entering the Grill Room from the main hall (the former Refreshment Room Corridor) will find *November* on their

¹³³George Smith and Co's tender (6 April 1867), to provide the American walnut framing for £263, was recommended by Scott (15 April) and approved (May 3). See NAL, 86.CC.25, p. 56; VAA, ED 84/6, p. 34; VAA, ED 84/36, p. 232. Preoccupied with designs for the ceiling of the Grill Room (and a painting destined for the Royal Academy), Poynter reassured his patrons that the (as yet unrealized) tiles would fit neatly into the wood panelling, which would go up first. Letter from Poynter, 20 March 1867 [VAA, ED 84/6, opp. p. 29].

left. Moving in a clockwise fashion around the room, *December* is encountered next. The chronology is then interrupted by *Spring*, *Summer*, *Autumn*, and *Winter*. The months resume with *January* (this panel appears in the northwest corner of the room) and ends with *October*, just right (east) of the Grill Room's entrance. The pictures are quite large: *January*, for example, measures 6'2" by 3'7".¹³⁴ Each month is represented by the solitary figure of a woman,¹³⁵ as in the painted panels of the Green Dining Room (designed by Burne-Jones for the dado), but Poynter's compositions are more elaborate. In *October*, a golden-haired woman perches on a rocky shoreline as waves crash behind her (fig. 3-15). The woman's burgundy-coloured cape billows exuberantly, creating a swirl of movement around her upper body.¹³⁶ In the distant background, a building is dwarfed by the stormy sky. The main composition is surrounded by an architectonic frame. Festooned with garlands, the frame is surmounted by a scorpion. A *trompe l'oeil* ribbon graces its base and bears the name of the month, October. Each month is represented by these basic elements: an architectonic frame with the sign of the zodiac above and the name of the month below, a lone female, a suggestive atmosphere, and soft washes of colour.

¹³⁴*South Kensington Museum: Examples* 1881, vol. 1, p. 56.

¹³⁵In *December*, a second individual peers from a doorway in the background and a third person is suggested by the shadow cast on the doorframe in the foreground, but the focus is clearly on the central figure.

¹³⁶Poynter often revisited this motif of swirling fabric in his oeuvre. For example, *Endymion*, a book of poetry by John Keats (London: E. Moxon, Son and Co., 1873), reproduces paintings by Poynter. Plates III and IV depict a young couple and, in each case, the woman is framed by a swirl of fabric. By creating a burst of energy around the figure, the drapery draws the viewer's eye into the picture. Joanna Kear suggested that it was Leighton who taught Poynter to use drapery for dramatic effect; Kear 1991 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 9.

Poynter's portraits of the seasons vary only slightly from this formula (fig. 3-16).¹³⁷ The architectonic frame reappears, but the sign of the zodiac is replaced by a more appropriate motif (for example, the spring season is paired with a life-giving bird's nest). Multiple females, rather than solitary women, partake in pleasant activities together.



Figure 3-16: Grill Room: tiled panel, *Spring*.

On the lower walls, smaller glazed earthenware tiles appear in alternating rows of oblong panels and square panels. Strictly blue and white, their painted images are repeated throughout the room. Each panel is bordered by a chequered pattern of

¹³⁷*Summer* and *Autumn* flank the door that leads to the Centre Refreshment Room.

sunflowers and leaves.¹³⁸ The oblong tiles depict sprays of fruit and flowers.¹³⁹ Roundels in the square tiles are painted with landscapes or solitary women. Heroines from Graeco-Roman mythology and ancient history, the women are Andromeda, Atalanta, Europa, Eurydice (the tile bears the name “Euridice”), Helen, Medea, CEnone, Proserpine, Rhodopis, Sappho, and Venus.¹⁴⁰ Poynter had settled on the general arrangement of these smaller tiles when he submitted his estimate for them in May 1867. Painting eighty-eight roundels would cost the Department £88, or £1 each (replacements for defective tiles would also cost £1 each). The designs for the flower panels (three in total) and the two pattern-work designs (i.e., the chequered frames for the square and oblong panels) would cost £5, so Poynter’s estimate totalled £93. Lastly, he stipulated that he should earn the ‘usual’ three guineas per day for supervising the work.¹⁴¹ Hoping to hear what Cole

¹³⁸The grill is surrounded by blue-and-white tiles. Arranged in a chequered pattern, they are painted with sunflowers and leaves also.

¹³⁹Originally these panels were conceived as bearing potted plants.

¹⁴⁰Andromeda, an Ethiopian princess, was saved by Perseus from a sea-monster. The huntress Atalanta married Hippomenes after he outran her in a race (Atalanta’s suitor was assisted by Aphrodite and three golden apples). Europa was raped by Zeus (who appeared to her in the form of a bull). Killed by a serpent’s bite, Eurydice was very nearly rescued from the underworld by her husband Orpheus. The abduction of Helen ignited the Trojan War. Medea, an ambitious priestess, was niece to Circe (the witch encountered by Odysseus). A mountain nymph, CEnone was Paris’s first wife, before he abandoned her for Helen. Proserpine (or, in Greek mythology, Persephone) had been gathering flowers when she was abducted by Pluto and brought to Hades where she became Queen of the Underworld. Rhodopis, a beautiful Greek slave, married Pharaoh Amasis. Sappho, a lyric poet, lived between 630 BC and 570 BC. Venus was the Roman goddess of love. Most of these panels are signed and dated “18EJP68.”

¹⁴¹Estimate from Poynter, 22 May 1867 [VAA, ED 84/6, p. 41; VAA, ED 84/67]. His estimate was approved on 26 July 1867 and the work ordered on July 30; VAA, ED 84/36, pp. 200, 233; NAL, 86.CC.24, p. 7; and Physick 1982, p. 140.

thought of his progress, Poynter enclosed a rough sketch (fig. 3-17).¹⁴² Cole's impression is not recorded, but several years later the *Building News* would enthuse: "The treatment of the walling is peculiar and original, and promises to be effective."¹⁴³



Figure 3-17: An early conception of the Grill Room's lower walls by Edward Poynter. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E. 5279-1919.

Poynter's designs for the seasons and months were considerably more complicated and, consequently, more expensive. He estimated the design for *March*, with its frame, would cost £25 while he would only charge £20 (each) for the other months. With four figures each, *Autumn* and *Summer* would be the largest panels in the

¹⁴²Poynter also wrote that he had finished "all that I have to do" with regard to the plaster-work and the woodwork. Letter from Poynter, 22 May 1867 [VAA, ED 84/67]. The sketch is no longer stored with the letter; it is kept in the Print Room at the V&A (E.5279-1919).

¹⁴³*Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74. The walls were then incomplete, but some tiles were already inserted into the walnut panelling. According to the author of the review, the ceramic paintings imitated "old china."

room, costing £45 each. The designs for *Spring* and *Winter* were smaller and less elaborate, having only two figures each, and therefore Poynter would charge less for them (£25 each).¹⁴⁴ He expected it would take between six weeks and two months to design and manufacture each tiled panel.¹⁴⁵ As Poynter's estimate clearly indicates, the value of his art was determined by the amount of labour he put into it. This may contradict romantic notions of the 'Creation of Art', but it accords with Poynter's practice as a history painter. Whether it was an easel painting or a tiled panel, Poynter prepared for a figurative work carefully. He made detailed studies, using unclothed and clothed models, to capture every nuance of gesture, every trace of emotion, every flicker of light.¹⁴⁶ And the more figures Poynter planned to include in a final composition, the more life drawings he had to make – this cost him time and money.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, pictures with more figures were pricier. Two pages of preparatory sketches survive for *July* (fig. 3-18) and they illustrate how Poynter worked, beginning with the nude model to establish the posture and then advancing to the clothed model to work out the costume. On one sheet, a nude woman reads from a book carried in her right hand (fig. 3-19). Leaning back, with her legs crossed casually, she looks completely relaxed. Two more studies, of the model's feet and her right hand, appear in the upper left corner of the page. On the second sheet,

¹⁴⁴Ultimately, *Spring* and *Winter* would include a third figure (a small child); *Summer* would bear five figures (four ladies gathered round a female statue).

¹⁴⁵He would also charge £15 for two panels over the grill (these were decorated with peacocks and other fowl). Estimate from Poynter, 27 July 1869 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 29]. His £415 tender (for 18 panels in total) was approved on 6 August 1869; NAL, 86.CC.24, p. 37. See also Physick 1982, p. 140.

¹⁴⁶Gaunt 1963, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷It represented time away from other lucrative projects and, unless every figure was posed identically, presumably the artist had to pay more for his models.

Poynter drew the model in the same pose, but now she is dressed (fig. 3-20). He focussed entirely on her garments – the model’s head is excluded and her right hand is outlined in a cursory fashion. The only solid parts of her body, not already defined by the shape of her apparel, are her left hand and her crossed feet.



Figure 3-18: Grill Room: tiled panel, *July*.



Figure 3-19: Edward Poynter, sketch for *July* (nude model). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E. 5274-1919.



Figure 3-20: Edward Poynter, sketch for *July* (clothed model). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E. 5275-1919.

Grounded in the academic tradition, Poynter's method was time-consuming and labour-intensive.¹⁴⁸ Coupled with the uncertainties of ceramic manufacture (e.g., broken

¹⁴⁸Monkhouse 1899a, p. 237; Kear 1991 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 5.

tiles, spoiled glazes), it made for slow progress in the Grill Room. Its progress was so slow, in fact, the *Building News* speculated that Poynter was neglecting his duties as a decorative artist in order to further his reputation as an easel painter.¹⁴⁹ In September 1867 Minton, Hollins and Co. had offered to supply plain white tiles for £151 and promised to deliver them within five weeks of their order.¹⁵⁰ Three years later, much work remained undone. The panels *August*, *November* and *December* were altogether unfinished, as were *Spring*, *Summer* and *Autumn*. Only four months – *January*, *February*, *March*, and *June* – were complete.¹⁵¹ Poynter was behind in his work: Minton and Co. patiently awaited the receipt of nine designs for the larger compositions.¹⁵² Technical mistakes worsened matters: two panels (with their borders) had been fired, but

¹⁴⁹*Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74.

¹⁵⁰Tender from J. Boulton of Minton, Hollins and Co., 25 September 1867, for wall tiling in East refreshment room [VAA, ED 84/6, p. 54]. The estimate covered the cost of transporting the tiles to the South Kensington Museum and fixing them in the room. The blanks were likely destined for the lower walls since many of the small tiles are signed and dated “18EJP68” whereas larger panels on the upper walls have later dates (*March*, for example, dates to 1869 while *January*, *February* and *December* date to 1870). As for the peacock panels, they probably were not painted before 1870. In late February of that year, an art critic reported seeing students engaged on them; *Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 298.

¹⁵¹Minton and Co. offered to complete twelve centres (for the months of April, May, and July to December, along with the four seasons) for £20 each and six borders (for the months of August, November, and December plus three seasons, namely, spring, summer and autumn) for £10 each, or £300 total. See the tender from Minton and Co., 27 January 1871 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 81]. The tender was accepted in February; letter from the Office of Works to the Secretary of the Science and Art Department, 8 February 1871 [NA, WORK 17/24/1].

¹⁵²Communication from Minton and Co. to the Secretary of the Department of Science and Art, 13 January 1871 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 74]. This document indicates that Poynter was assisted in the supervision of the Grill Room by another artist, Frank Moody (perhaps because Poynter had fallen too far behind). Minton and Co. stated that the unfinished panels were to be “executed to the satisfaction of Mr. Moody.”

were deemed unsatisfactory, “the colours being entirely different from what was contemplated.”¹⁵³ Poynter’s designs again needed to be transferred to blank tiles and the firing process repeated, further delaying the Grill Room’s completion.



Figure 3-21: Grill Room: painted tile, *Sappho*.

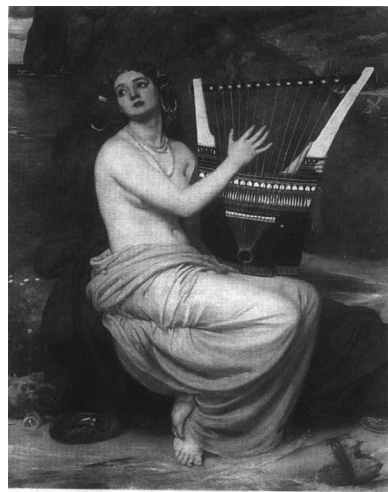


Figure 3-22: Edward Poynter, *The Siren*, 1864. Private collection. Reproduced from A. Smith 1996, p. 107.

¹⁵³C. R. Dillon’s memorandum on porcelain paintings for the Grill Room, 24 January 1871 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 80; VAA, ED 84/67].

Perhaps to lighten his workload, or to quicken the pace of his output, Poynter occasionally recycled his images.¹⁵⁴ *Sappho* (fig. 3-21) is a simplified version of *The Siren*, a painting Poynter completed in 1864 (fig. 3-22).¹⁵⁵ *Proserpine* (fig. 3-23) derives, more or less in its entirety, from an earlier composition also. With a basket tucked in her left arm, the young heroine gathers flowers in pleasant isolation. Her diaphanous garments reveal the outline of her feminine figure. She reaches for a daffodil, unaware of the dark future to which she will be damned. The tile is signed “18EJP68” near the heroine’s foot, which suggests Poynter designed it in 1868. However, the composition was used previously to illustrate *Persephone*, a poem by Jean Ingelow (fig. 3-24).¹⁵⁶



Figure 3-23: Grill Room: painted tile, *Proserpine*.

¹⁵⁴It is also possible Poynter reused pictures because they had delighted him and, relishing his success, he saw no need to invent new compositions for familiar subjects.

¹⁵⁵The painting was displayed at the 1864 Academy; A. Smith 1996, p. viii.

¹⁵⁶Ingelow 1867, pp. 207-212. The image appears on p. 209.



Figure 3-24: Edward Poynter, *Persephone*, from Jean Ingelow's *Poems* (London, 1867), p. 209.

Signed "EJP 1866," Poynter's illustration depicts the moment when Persephone grasps the eye-catching daffodil, the act that precipitated her abduction to the underworld. Its composition is nearly identical to the tile's: the female holds a basket in the nook of her left arm; she reaches for a daffodil with her right hand; the outline of her figure is visible. The settings, however, differ: in the tile, the heroine wanders among rolling hills and gentle trees, whereas the environment represented by the printed illustration is more confined (the ground rises steeply behind her). Nevertheless, the Ingelow design clearly inspired the Grill Room tile. Nor was this his final use of the composition. In 1869 he exhibited a painted *Proserpine* at the Royal Academy. Considered "one of his most beautiful figures,"¹⁵⁷ it also derived from the Ingelow illustration.¹⁵⁸ By recycling his

¹⁵⁷Monkhouse 1897, p. 14.

¹⁵⁸Jackson 1897, p. 11.

images, Poynter risked exposing himself to accusations of incompetence. Indeed, a decade earlier Charles Winston (1814-64), an influential reformer of stained glass, advised Powells against hiring Poynter because both he and Ambrose Poynter worried the young designer “was not sufficiently *matured* as an artist to make designs without . . . repeating himself.”¹⁵⁹ However, *Proserpine* seems not to have been criticised for being derivative (nor, would it seem, was Poynter attacked for being immature and repetitive), either because viewers were blissfully unaware of the painting’s precedents, or because the existence of those precedents did not concern them. The painting sold quickly and Queen Victoria presented a copy to her daughter, Princess Louise, as a wedding gift.¹⁶⁰ It is hard to imagine a better reception for a work of art. Conversely, some criticized the Grill Room tiles for being too pictorial. One journal suggested that they relied too heavily on three-dimensional imagery and too little on flat patterns: “The only adverse criticism . . . is that perspective and distances seem too much indulged in, especially in the more ambitious and larger panels. All such wall decorations, and certainly even more rigidly such as these in monochrome, should be kept as decorative work in one plane.”¹⁶¹ Poynter reused his compositions for different projects in a variety of media, but it seems his audience expected him to recognize distinct rules (appropriate levels of pictorial realism through to abstract ornament) when moving from one medium to the next.

All the tiles in the Grill Room were painted by female students of the South

¹⁵⁹Letter from Charles Winston to Arthur Powell, 13 May 1857; quoted in Gordon-Christian 1968, pp. 45, cat. no. 38i.

¹⁶⁰Jackson 1897, p. 11.

¹⁶¹*Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74.

Kensington Museum Porcelain Class.¹⁶² According to the *Graphic*, the students worked under the direction of an “art-master” in a separate room. Their work was methodical and meticulous:

The tiles on which these decorations are painted are manufactured by Minton and Co., and sent up to London in an unglazed state. They are placed side by side on a board, and an outline of the desired subject is traced upon them. As soon as the first painting is finished, the tiles are sent down to Stoke-upon-Trent to be fired: they are then returned to the artist, who repaints those parts which have not turned out satisfactorily, and then the tiles are burnt again. This process is sometimes repeated four or five times.¹⁶³

Who attended the Porcelain Class, contributing to the decorations of the Grill Room, is uncertain. In the illustration that accompanied the *Graphic*'s review, an unidentified woman can be seen working on Poynter's design for the month of March (fig. 3-25).¹⁶⁴ A man by the name of George Gray had written to the department and offered to give lessons in tile painting; Cole accepted Gray's offer and specifically asked him to lead a class of female students.¹⁶⁵ Perhaps, then, George Gray was the instructor mentioned by the *Graphic*. When she was a student in the Porcelain Class, Amy E. Black transferred the design of *May Day in the Olden Time*, a watercolour by Henry Stacy Marks, to a

¹⁶²*South Kensington Museum: Examples* 1881, vol. 1, p. 56; Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 93. According to Scott, female students also worked on the Centre Refreshment Room's ceramic features: “The painting on pottery for the decoration of the centre room, designed by Mr. Gamble, is also being executed by the female students.” Scott in the 17th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1870, p. 455.

¹⁶³*Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 298. B. Morris 1986, p. 38 (among others) cited this article.

¹⁶⁴The illustration appeared on the preceding page; *Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 297.

¹⁶⁵Board Minute, “South Kensington Museum, Painting Tiles for Poynter's Room,” 25 April 1868 [NA, ED 28/23, p. 94].

ceramic panel; it was used to decorate a buffet commissioned especially for the new refreshment rooms.¹⁶⁶ Black may have worked on the tiles of the Grill Room also.¹⁶⁷ Her name and those of several other women appear on a list of decorative artists employed by the South Kensington Museum. The list was compiled in May 1870, when work on the wall tiles was in full swing. At the time, Black earned 9d per hour (or £1.11.6 per week) while Misses Walker, Judd, Earle, Hall, and Cambridge earned 6d per hour (or a total of £1.1.0 per week).¹⁶⁸ The list does not specify which projects they worked on, but the women are registered as ‘porcelain painters’, so perhaps they assisted Poynter in decorating the Grill Room. At the very least, the list gives an impression of the wages women could receive as painters of pottery.



Figure 3-25: “Tile Painting in the South Kensington Museum,” *Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 297.

¹⁶⁶NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷Black penned the *Practical Guide to Pottery Painting* (London: George Pulman, 1877). I had hoped to consult this publication, mainly to see if she mentioned the Grill Room. Unfortunately, the British Library’s copy was destroyed and no alternate copy has surfaced.

¹⁶⁸H. Scott, “List of Artists employed on Decorative Work, Science and Art Department, South Kensington,” May 1870 [NA, WORK 17/24/1]. See also Physick 1982, p. 140.

The Porcelain Class, which endeavoured to prepare young women for remunerative (and reputable) employment,¹⁶⁹ was praised by the press. The *Graphic* commended South Kensington for “affording a new and most interesting means of occupation for young women.”¹⁷⁰ Indeed, few other employment opportunities allowed respectable women to support themselves without sacrificing their social standing.¹⁷¹ Encouraged by positive feedback, South Kensington officials explored the possibility of founding an Art Pottery Studio, a permanent facility where even more young women could learn a respectable trade and boost their self-sufficiency.¹⁷² Colin Minton Campbell was consulted on the matter and a partnership formed between the ceramic manufacturer and the museum, resulting in the 1871 opening of the Minton Art Pottery Studio in Kensington Gore.¹⁷³ Equipped with its own kilns (to safeguard valuable pieces against damage inflicted by transport to distant potteries),¹⁷⁴ the Art Pottery Studio also aimed to improve the art of ceramics.¹⁷⁵ Its first art director, William Coleman, discouraged his apprentices from applying the rules of easel painting to their blank canvases (unglazed pottery); he instead recommended a decorative style that drew attention to the painted

¹⁶⁹In late February 1870, the class was described as having originated some eighteen months earlier; *Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 298. This would mean the class formed in or around September 1868. However, this estimation contradicts the records of the Science and Art Department, which suggest the class germinated in April 1868. See Board Minute: “South Kensington Museum, Painting Tiles for Poynter’s Room,” 25 April 1868 [NA, ED 28/23, p. 94].

¹⁷⁰*Graphic* (26 February 1870), p. 298.

¹⁷¹Durbin 1994, p. 10.

¹⁷²Middle- and upper-class women were the intended beneficiaries; Rhead/Rhead 1906, p. 351; Buckley 1990, p. 51.

¹⁷³Allwood 1978, p. 42; Callen 1979, p. 57; C. Gere 2000, p. 86.

¹⁷⁴*Art Journal* (1 March 1872), p. 66.

¹⁷⁵Rhead/Rhead 1906, p. 351; Buckley 1990, p. 51.

object's surface.¹⁷⁶ It would seem, then, that the work executed by the women of the Art Pottery Studio drifted from the pictorial art produced by the female students of the Porcelain Class for the Grill Room.



Figure 3-26: A segment of the floor in the Grill Room.

Painted tiles may dominate the Grill Room, but other features still need to be mentioned. The tiled floor was designed and manufactured by W. Whetstone for £35.¹⁷⁷ The pattern that borders the room (fig. 3-26) is more ornate than the tiling employed in the Green Dining Room. The frieze of peacocks and the ornamental panels of the coffered ceiling above were designed by Poynter, modelled by W. Wright, and executed in plaster by George Smith and Co.¹⁷⁸ At least one critic hoped to see the plaster ornaments treated to some colour,¹⁷⁹ but museum officials, keen to detect excessive smoke, decided to paint the ceiling white.¹⁸⁰ The history of the Grill Room's two

¹⁷⁶Buckley 1990, p. 51.

¹⁷⁷NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17; Physick 1982, p. 140.

¹⁷⁸NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17; *South Kensington Museum: Examples* 1882, vol. 2, p. 73; Physick 1982, p. 140.

¹⁷⁹*Building News* (29 July 1870), p. 74.

¹⁸⁰Festing, "Memorandum on the Sun Lights in the Museum," 3 February 1869 [VAA, ED 84/60].

windows is less straightforward. Crace and Sons supposedly manufactured both windows.¹⁸¹ The first window was manufactured sometime around 1873. In *Decorations of the South Kensington Museum, 1862 to 1874*, only one stained-glass window is mentioned. It was designed by Poynter and manufactured by Crace and Sons.¹⁸² Indeed, John G. Crace and Son's tender survives; in late 1872 the firm offered to execute the refreshment room's window.¹⁸³ According to Cole's diary, Poynter inspected a window by Crace at the museum six months later.¹⁸⁴ Cole provided no further details, but one can assume that he was referring to the first stained-glass window (possibly unfinished) and not a second window, given the short period of time between Crace's tender and Poynter's inspection. A few weeks later, on May 22, Cole received Crace at his home and apparently the two men discussed the windows (in the plural) in the Grill Room.¹⁸⁵ On the following day, the Science and Art Department approved Poynter's sketch for the windows (again, in the plural) of the Grill Room.¹⁸⁶ The department also agreed that day to ask the Office of Works to sanction Crace's tender to execute the windows of the Grill

¹⁸¹*South Kensington Museum: Examples 1882*, vol. 2, p. 73. The name of the firm varies from source to source; when dealing with a particular document, I respect its interpretation of the name.

¹⁸²NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 17.

¹⁸³Tender from John G. Crace and Son, 4 December 1872 [VAA, ED 84/7, p. 135]. The tender is inexact: the firm did not name which of the refreshment rooms the window was intended for. However, they were careful to stipulate their fee: they were to be paid at the rate of 18 shillings per square foot. It seems a two-light window was desired, judging by the note C. R. Dillon appended to the file on 9 December 1872. The upper part of the window was to open separately. Dillon expected the window would cost £72; VAA, ED 84/7, p. 135.

¹⁸⁴Cole, diary, 8 May 1873 [NAL, 45.C.134].

¹⁸⁵Cole, diary, 22 May 1873 [NAL, 45.C.134].

¹⁸⁶VAA, ED 84/36, p. 355.

Room (for £48 each).¹⁸⁷ John Physick concluded both stained-glass windows were made by Crace and Sons, perhaps in 1874 when the firm received payment for two windows.¹⁸⁸

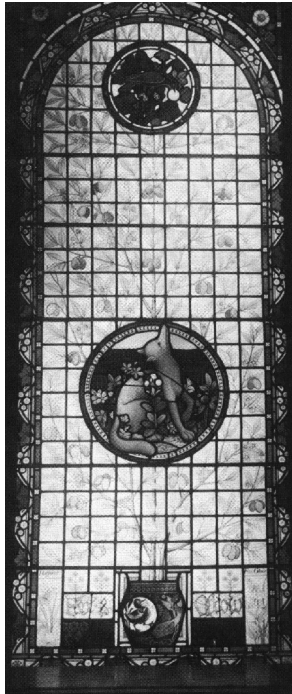


Figure 3-27: Window on the north wall of the Grill Room. Reproduced from Physick 1982, p. 141.

However, I feel the evidence is inconclusive: no record stipulated that the Office of Works had accepted Crace's tender for both windows. In fact, three years after the Office of Works was asked to sanction Crace's tender for two windows, the Grill Room could

¹⁸⁷VAA, ED 84/36, p. 389.

¹⁸⁸Physick 1982, p. 140, note 103. Physick cites the documents ED 84/36, Cole's diary entry for May 23, and WORK17/24/1. I consulted these sources myself, but I found no records supporting the attribution of the second window to Crace – possibly because no such window was ever produced, as my argument for an alternate provenance may prove.

only boast of one. The lack of a second window, above the grill, was regarded as an ugly scar on the interior.¹⁸⁹ Furthermore, because only one stained-glass window existed in 1876, and it did not reside above the grill, it must be understood that the north wall's stained-glass window was installed first. It represents one of Aesop's Fables, "The Fox and the Crow," wherein the fox outwits the crow and wins a morsel of food (fig. 3-27). The window's subsequent history is worth noting: in the 1970s, the Grill Room underwent renovations and, according to the *Survey of London*, this very window was "newly placed" in the wall in 1974.¹⁹⁰ The choice of words ("newly placed") is ambiguous: is the north wall's present window original to the room, or is it a substitute for another window (also by Poynter) that used to occupy the same spot? Unfortunately, no early depictions of the Grill Room illustrate its north wall and no Victorian accounts describe the pictorial details of the windows. Moreover, it appears that the north wall was radically altered in relatively recent years (probably during the course of renovations in the 1970s). The window's wooden framework smacks of modern veneering; it is entirely out of keeping with the rest of the room. I cannot argue that the window is an awkward fit when its framework is the white elephant in the room. However, I do believe the window is original to the room. Physick did not describe it as a modern installation; rather, he did the opposite, specifically illustrating it as an object that Poynter designed for the room.¹⁹¹ It is likely that Poynter's windows were removed from the Grill Room at

¹⁸⁹"South Kensington Museum: Memorandum upon the Decorations to be Completed, 1876," (stamped 18 December 1876) [VAA, ED 84/67].

¹⁹⁰Sheppard 1975, p. 111.

¹⁹¹Physick 1982, p. 141.

the outbreak of WWII, as a precautionary measure, and years passed before they returned to their original positions.¹⁹² Therefore, when the Aesop-inspired window was “newly placed” in the room in 1974, it was a modern reinstatement of a Grill Room original.



Figure 3-28: Window on the east wall of the Grill Room, above the iron grill.

I wish to consider again the Victorian era, when the interior lacked a stained-glass window over the grill. Records held by the Archive of Art and Design prove that Powell and Sons provided the remedy: an order book records their work on the window over the grill. Their estimate for the window was sent to Poynter on 5 February 1878. Three days later Wavell, an employee of Powell and Sons, was at the South Kensington Museum to take measurements. By the end of March, Wavell was busy fitting the stained-glass window into its space above the grill.¹⁹³ In light of this new evidence, it appears that

¹⁹²This happened to the windows of the Green Dining Room; forgotten in their packing-case, years later they were rediscovered in storage. Their modern reinstatement will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

¹⁹³AAD, AAD1/4-1977, p. 344. See AAD, AAD1/57-1977, p. 148 for a duplicate record of Powell and Sons’ manufacture of the stained-glass window over the grill.

Crace and Sons did not manufacture the second stained-glass window, which consists of two parts (fig. 3-28). In the lower section, a man struggles to walk against a bitter wind. His cloak is wrapped tightly around him, to fend off winter's punishing cold. In the upper section, the same man tries to escape the glaring heat of the sun. He lies in the shade of an obliging tree, his hat tossed beside him. The window clearly represents the shifting seasons.

Even before the Grill Room reached completion, it was admired. A writer for the *Standard* considered the Grill Room “the most successful, in point of decoration, of the entire group.”¹⁹⁴ Gladstone, treated to a tour of all three refreshment rooms, seems to have preferred the Grill Room also.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, Poynter's interior was praised by most critics. This may have been a relief to museum authorities; it was a prestigious project and they had risked ridicule by entrusting it to a young and largely unproven artist. Although Poynter had some prior dealings with the South Kensington Museum – the purchase of the sideboard and the commission of the mosaic figures – some may have questioned the confidence Cole placed in Poynter. After all, never before had Poynter tackled anything of this magnitude. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. had more experience in designing interiors, but never before had they contributed to the decorations of the South Kensington Museum. One might wonder, what led the commissioners to entrust the westernmost refreshment room to a young and largely unproven enterprise?

¹⁹⁴*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3. The journal appreciated the interior for its “comfortable, home look.”

¹⁹⁵Letter from P. C. Owen to Henry Cole, 31 August [?] 1871 [NAL, 55.BB.15]. Owen wrote: “I showed him [Gladstone] the Refreshment rooms and he admired the Grill room.”

The matter of the Green Dining Room commission will be considered in my next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE GREEN DINING ROOM COMMISSION

In 1865, on the last day of November, museum authorities agreed to ask Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to provide sketches and financial estimates for the decorations of the westernmost refreshment room.¹ The firm would be paid £100 for their efforts.²

Word of the commission spread quickly:

The Department of Science and Art, desirous of employing the most accomplished decorators to produce examples of their peculiar craft in the now rapidly-advancing central portion of the South Kensington Museum, has invited Messrs. Morris, Marshall, Faulkener [*sic*] & Co., artists' decorators, and Mr. Poynter, to ornament two rooms in the building. . . . By a very sensible agreement, as we believe, the whole work upon each apartment will be committed to the respective decorators, without any interference whatever.³

In the autumn of 1866, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. offered to glaze three windows

¹H. A. Bruce, 30 November 1865 [VAA, ED 84/36, pp. 167, 232].

²Physick 1982, p. 131; Parry 1996b, p. 200.

³*Athenaeum* (17 February 1866), p. 244. Interestingly, the *Athenaeum* supposed the firm would use tiles and stained glass to ornament the room. Did the writer confuse the anticipated appearance of Poynter's room with the firm's, or had Cole hoped to see tiles employed in all three rooms?

for £272.⁴ Their tender was approved in October.⁵ In June 1867 they requested £53.9.0 for work already completed, a further £277.14.0 for work to be done on the ceiling and the dado, and £291.6.0 for the design and execution of the dado's painted panels.⁶ Colonel Henry Scott, who succeeded Captain Fowke as the Director of New Buildings, considered the firm's estimates "fair and reasonable."⁷ Very soon after, they too received official sanction.⁸

Henry Cole is the supposed commissioner of the Green Dining Room. Virtually every account assigns this important role to him,⁹ although minor variations in the story occur from time to time. For example, Charles Harvey and Jon Press identify two individuals as the commissioners of the Green Dining Room: Cole and Fowke.¹⁰ In his authoritative tome on the construction of the museum, John Physick credits a trio with approaching Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in late 1865: Cole, Fowke, and

⁴According to the firm's tender, dated 13 September 1866, Morris would be responsible for discussing the character of the windows with museum authorities; VAA, ED 84/5, p. 101; NA, ED 28/22, p. 45. On 20 September 1886, Scott recommended the firm's tender. See also Sheppard 1975, p. 111.

⁵H. Lowry Corry, 10 October 1866 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 167].

⁶The firm's estimate was written on 3 June 1867; VAA, ED 84/6, p. 40; NA, ED 28/22, p. 229. See also Sheppard 1975, p. 111; Physick 1982, p. 132.

⁷Memo by Henry Scott, 15 October 1867 [NA, ED 28/22, p. 229]. It seems that Scott admired the firm's proposed designs for their practicality; he singled out the dado's painted panels as elements that could be finished gradually. Presumably incremental work allowed museum authorities more time to secure funding for decorative schemes and visitors may have felt more comfortable dining in a room with fewer identifiable gaps in its decorations.

⁸Lord Robert Montagu, 16 October 1867 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 167].

⁹See, for example, Callen 1979, p. 3; Bryant 1986, p. 112.

¹⁰Harvey/Press 1996, pp. 49, 175.

Redgrave.¹¹ Nevertheless, Cole is the key figure in each version. Scholars have applauded Cole for asking the firm to decorate the west dining room, but many have wondered how he selected them for the job.¹² Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was a fledgling company, despite their qualification by the *Athenaeum* as “most accomplished decorators.” Prior to the Green Dining Room commission, most of the firm’s experience was rooted in the ecclesiastical realm (e.g., stained-glass windows for churches) and the domestic sphere (e.g., furnishings for private homes). If Cole was the commissioner, what compelled him to put his faith in these novices?

Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was established in April 1861. Its founding members were William Morris (1834-96), Philip Webb (1831-1915), Ford Madox Brown (1821-93), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98), Peter Paul Marshall (1830-1900), and Charles Faulkner (1833-92). Morris and Webb first met in the Oxford offices of the architect George Edmund Street (1824-81). Webb was Street’s chief clerk when Morris began his short-lived architectural apprenticeship in January 1856.¹³ Brown was the senior artist of the group; Rossetti was a first-generation Pre-Raphaelite. They were close friends and attracted Burne-Jones and Morris into their fold. Marshall, a sanitary engineer and an amateur artist, was an acquaintance of Brown. The

¹¹Physick 1982, p. 131. Physick cites material once held by the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane as his evidence, specifically a Board Minute précis for 30 November 1865 (now VAA, ED 84/36). Parry repeated Physick’s claim (Parry 1996b, p. 200) and provided the same source for her information (Parry 1996b, p. 205, note 8). The trio’s identification as the commissioners of the Green Dining Room recurred in Sheila Kirk’s recent monograph on Philip Webb; see Kirk 2005, p. 305, note 44.

¹²Henderson 1967, p. 82; B. Morris 1986, pp. 38-39; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 56.

¹³Harvey/Press 1991, p. 28.

mathematician Faulkner was a friend of Morris and Burne-Jones since their university days at Oxford and shared their keen interest in art. Known to each other through mutual acquaintances, some of these men collaborated in 1857 on the decorations of the Oxford Union's new Debating Hall. With the support of its architect Benjamin Woodward, Rossetti set about painting the walls with murals. He enlisted the help of his star-struck admirers, Burne-Jones and Morris included.¹⁴ Rossetti's team developed a series of Arthurian subjects, but their work was sporadic and the painting surface was poorly prepared (a fault of inexperience that led to the murals' rapid deterioration in one year).¹⁵ Before the technical flaws of the series became known, however, a review in *The Times* praised the anticipated "masterpiece of art" and mentioned Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones by name.¹⁶ Perhaps this review acquainted Cole with the artists and their efforts in interior decoration.

More future members of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. collaborated on the decorations of Red House, Morris's home in Bexley Heath, Kent (now Bexleyheath, London).¹⁷ The story of its design has been told many times before, but as May Morris suggested, the story deserves to be revisited, "because in it we have a microcosm of all the activities that were to come."¹⁸ An intended artistic haven and domestic utopia, Red House was designed by Webb between 1858 and 1859. Morris and his new wife, Janey

¹⁴Morris's connection to Oxford University, as a BA, had helped Rossetti to secure the commission; Ray Watkinson, "Painting," pp. 90-98 in Parry 1996a, p. 93.

¹⁵Bradley 1978, p. 19; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 31; Kirk 2005, p. 18.

¹⁶*The Times* (6 January 1858), p. 7.

¹⁷Kirk 2005, pp. 20, 296.

¹⁸M. Morris 1936, p. 11.

(née Burden), first resided there in June 1860.¹⁹ The newlyweds enjoyed the company of artistic friends – Burne-Jones and his wife Georgiana (née Macdonald), Rossetti and his wife Lizzie (née Siddal), Faulkner and his sisters (Kate and Lucy), and Brown and his wife Emma (née Hill) – who helped to beautify the home.²⁰ They painted, they played, they stitched, and they created. It was an exciting time and the satisfaction they found in making beautiful furnishings strengthened their resolve to pursue joy in labour and to nurture art.²¹ Ultimately, the positive experience of decorating Red House led to the formation of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.²²

The firm set up shop at 8 Red Lion Square, Bloomsbury. The showroom and offices stood on the first floor; workshops occupied the third storey and spilled into the basement.²³ Keen to attract clients and generate income, the members sent prospectuses to promising contacts. A draft letter to supplement each prospectus, penned by Morris at some point after the International Exhibition of 1862, reveals the firm's aspiration to master every medium relevant to interior design. They promised to provide ecclesiastical and domestic stained glass, table glass, furniture, painted tiles, stamped leather,

¹⁹Watkinson in Parry 1996a, p. 93.

²⁰Kirk 2005, pp. 20-21.

²¹Watkinson 1967, p. 16.

²²Burne-Jones 1904, vol. 1, p. 213. See also Leary 1981, p. 255 and Linda Parry, "Domestic Decoration," pp. 136-47, in Parry 1996a, p. 138. Red House was familiar to artistic circles soon after its completion, but it did not appear in architectural journals until much later; Kirk 2005, pp. 32-33. I found no evidence to suggest that Cole showed interest in Morris's rural retreat (nor did I find proof that he did not).

²³Mackail 1899, p. 148; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 43. In 1865 the firm would move to 26 Queen Square, also in Bloomsbury. The house provided more space than the previous site. A showroom and offices occupied the ground floor, the principal workshop occupied the former ballroom, and additional workshops stood in the courtyard. See Mackail 1899, p. 165; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 54; MacCarthy 1994, pp. 196, 197.

wallpapers (“paper-hangings”), and embroideries.²⁴ They desired commissions for mural paintings and, Morris wrote, “the names of the historical painters given in our prospectus will be sufficient guarantee for our capabilities in this respect.”²⁵ Presumably he was referring to Brown and Rossetti, the leading artists of the firm: Rossetti was an original member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and Brown was an intimate of that circle. They received considerable critical attention in the art periodicals of their day, or so it is reputed.²⁶ Indeed, one could question the real strength of their public reputations. John Ruskin (1819-1900) was a vocal supporter, but his voice could be drowned out by the roars of harsh critics. Brown and Rossetti enjoyed the patronage of a small clientele, but their works rarely reached the Royal Academy, that initiator of brilliant careers and a most important forum for the dissemination of art.²⁷ As a matter of fact, it seems the painter-members of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. were far from famous. George Clausen (1852-1944), a student of the National Art Training School during the late 1860s and early 1870s, claimed that his peers knew little of Rossetti and nothing of Burne-Jones. According to Clausen, Burne-Jones only became famous after the opening of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877.²⁸ Perhaps Clausen was exaggerating, but Burne-Jones’s art was less visible in the years preceding the inception of the Grosvenor Gallery. In 1870, his sensuous *Phyllis and Demophoön* (1870, Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery)

²⁴BL, Add. 45,336, ff. 26v-28; also see Linda Parry in Parry 1996a, p. 56, cat. D.3.

²⁵BL, Add. 45,336, f. 28.

²⁶Harvey/Press 1991, p. 38; Pat Kirkham, “The Firm: Morris & Company,” pp. 32-63, in Waggoner 2003, p. 33.

²⁷Ford 1896, pp. 51, 86, 169.

²⁸Clausen 1912, p. 157.

attracted harsh criticism at an exhibition hosted by the Old Water-Colour Society. A dispute between the artist and the Society ensued; Burne-Jones ultimately resigned from the Society and ceased to exhibit regularly in London. In the interim, he made several appearances at the Dudley Gallery, but he relied more heavily on private sales involving his principal patrons.²⁹ However, with the 1877 opening of the Grosvenor Gallery and the debut of dazzling new works by Burne-Jones, the artist found himself in the spotlight again.³⁰ As for Rossetti, the British public knew little of him until after his death, when vindictory exhibitions were mounted in his honour.³¹ This admission might come as a shock to persons familiar with prolific accounts of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and their heroic siege of the Victorian art world. It is hard to imagine celebrated rebels passing unnoticed by their generation or the next. The firm, however, determined to build a strong reputation in the decorative arts and to this end they adopted business practices that promised to keep operations running smoothly, when members did not indulge in youthful diversions. Each partner kept an account book, making it easier for the firm's members to delegate tasks and debate business matters at their weekly meetings.³² Webb's account book and that of Burne-Jones survive, as does the firm's minute book. These invaluable documents help to shed light on commissions that kept the firm afloat during its early years. However, it is an unfortunate fact that the firm's records are rather

²⁹Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 143.

³⁰Monkhouse 1899a, pp. 136-37; Christian 1975, p. 7.

³¹Laurel Bradley, "The 'Englishness' of Pre-Raphaelite Painting: A Critical Review," pp. 199-208, in Watson 1997, p. 205.

³²Harvey/Press 1991, p. 39.

meagre.³³ When the company dissolved in 1940, many of its designs were transferred to the V&A, but most of its records were destroyed.³⁴

Initially, commissions for ecclesiastical objects (stained-glass windows mainly) helped to sustain the company.³⁵ The architect George Frederick Bodley (1827-1907), a key figure in England's Gothic Revival, was a particularly important patron of the firm during its formative years.³⁶ In 1862 he ordered stained glass for his church in Selsley, Gloucestershire (All Saints), the firm's first commission of the kind.³⁷ Bodley's church in Brighton (St. Michael and All Angels) was also furnished with windows designed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. They include Burne-Jones's beautiful *Flight into Egypt* and Morris's two east windows (*Angel Seated upon the Empty Tomb* and *Three Marys at the Empty Sepulchre*) surmounted by Webb's image of the devoted pelican, feeding her young with her blood (all 1862). Bodley's patronage continued for several more years, but it is unclear how he became acquainted with the company in the first

³³Physick 1982, p. 132.

³⁴Floud 1952, p. 38; B. Morris 1961, p. 6. J. R. Holliday transcribed Webb's account book and bequeathed his copy to the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery in 1927. The original document, however, recently passed from John Brandon-Jones's ownership to another (unnamed) private collection. For more details, see Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 17; Robinson/Wildman 1980, p. 21; and Kirk 2005, p. 294. Burne-Jones's accounts with the firm are held by the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge; Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 17. Sewter noted that extracts from Brown's account book (those pertaining to his designs for stained glass) were published in Ford 1896, but the records of the firm's partners are otherwise incomplete. The firm's minute book spans from 1862 to 1874. A copy of this document can be consulted at the Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre. The original minute book, once in the collection of Sanford and Helen Berger, now belongs to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California.

³⁵Fairclough/Leary 1981, p. 13.

³⁶Henderson 1967, p. 71; Anscombe 1991, p. 27.

³⁷Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 173.

place. A. C. Sewter speculates that Bodley was introduced by a fellow architect, either Burges or Street.³⁸ Harvey and Press point instead to Rossetti, an expert self-promoter and an ex-member of the Hogarth Club.³⁹ An artistic enterprise that came to an abrupt end in December 1861, the Hogarth Club attracted a number of promising artists and architects into its orbit, Bodley and every future member of the firm included.⁴⁰ Rossetti was unafraid of using his contacts to promote the firm and win new commissions for his colleagues, so it is possible that Rossetti lured Bodley to the firm.⁴¹

Rossetti surely played a key role in attracting the patronage of J. P. Seddon (1827-1906) as well. In 1852 Seddon became the diocesan architect for Llandaff, a Welsh district, and he used his position to secure an important commission for Rossetti, the painting of Llandaff Cathedral's altarpiece.⁴² I will return to the altarpiece later, but first I would like to discuss an oak cabinet that Seddon designed in 1861 for his own use.⁴³ The architect commissioned the firm to decorate his cabinet with representations of the fine

³⁸Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 17. Martin Harrison expands on Sewter's supposition, asserting that Bodley met Webb at Street's office and later interacted with the likes of Morris, Rossetti, and Brown at the Medieval Society; Harrison, "Church Decoration and Stained Glass," pp. 106-15 in Parry 1996a, p. 107. The Medieval Society formed in 1857; its existence was brief.

³⁹Harvey/Press 1991, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁰I will describe the Hogarth Club in more detail later in this chapter.

⁴¹One might argue instead that Bodley approached the firm because he admired stained-glass windows by Burne-Jones. Prior to the firm's formation, Burne-Jones had designed several windows for Powell and Sons (e.g., the St. Frideswide window in Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford). Perhaps Bodley was aware of these. Again, however, Rossetti assumes an important role in this hypothesis because he is generally credited with introducing Burne-Jones to Powell and Sons in the first place (although Burges has also been credited with this introduction; Mordaunt Crook 1981, p. 86).

⁴²M. Harrison/Waters 1989, pp. 53-54. In 1852 Seddon went into partnership with another architect, John Prichard; they served the diocese of Llandaff together.

⁴³Seddon 1898, p. 1.

and applied arts.⁴⁴ Brown suggested the theme: King René's honeymoon.⁴⁵ Four main panels on the front of the cabinet show the artist-monarch of Anjou creating and appreciating different art forms: from left to right, the scenes represent architecture (painted by Brown), painting and sculpture (Burne-Jones), and music (Rossetti). Six smaller images celebrate gardening, embroidery, pottery, weaving, metalwork and glass-blowing.⁴⁶ Delighted with the finished article, Seddon displayed the cabinet at the International Exhibition of 1862 where it caught the eye of the South Kensington Museum. It offered to purchase the cabinet, but Seddon preferred to keep his prized possession.⁴⁷ Although museum representatives were impressed by the cabinet, a critic for the *Building News* was not. Its paintings were ridiculed for being more like "the work of an ignorant school-girl, rather than that of an artist."⁴⁸ The firm's debut at the International Exhibition of 1862 was imperfect, but it was an important event nonetheless. It introduced their wares to a huge audience, one much larger than any crowd that could gather in the firm's showroom. More significantly, the International Exhibition was dear to Cole's heart and it took place in the immediate vicinity of the South Kensington Museum.⁴⁹ He had easy access to the exhibits. Consequently, the International Exhibition has been viewed as the venue where Cole developed an interest

⁴⁴Seddon 1898, p. 4; Frances Collard in Parry 1996a, p. 170, cat. J.13.

⁴⁵Seddon 1898, p. 6.

⁴⁶Rossetti painted the gardening panel. Val Prinsep was responsible for the embroidery scene; Seddon 1898, pp. 6, 8, 10, and 12.

⁴⁷Seddon 1898, p. vii.

⁴⁸*Building News* (8 August 1862), p. 99.

⁴⁹The building that housed the International Exhibition of 1862 stood where the Natural History Museum now stands.

in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.⁵⁰

For a fee of £25, the firm rented two stands in the Medieval Court, a prime area of the International Exhibition.⁵¹ They displayed diverse goods, including copper candlesticks, painted tiles, jewellery, and embroideries.⁵² Their painted furniture thrilled some critics and disgusted others. For example, the St. George cabinet (fig. 4-1) and the Backgammon Players cabinet were commended by the *Athenaeum* for their “high-class pictures,” but the same critic rebuked their costliness.⁵³ Fashioned from mahogany, oak, and pine, painted and gilded, and embellished with copper handles, the St. George cabinet was priced at fifty guineas.⁵⁴ A critic for the *Ecclesiologist* was wholly unimpressed, writing:

Some painted and japanned furniture, exhibited by Messrs. Morris, Marshall, and Co., is simply preposterous. We believe that it is meant to be inexpensive; but some of the affixed prices scarcely bear out the assertion. We must totally decline to praise the design or execution of these specimens. . . . Neither in furniture, nor in painted glass, can we tolerate deliberate archaisms and grotesqueness, which are enough to bring the very word “mediaeval” into deserved contempt.⁵⁵

Designed by Webb and painted by Morris, the St. George cabinet is proudly displayed at

⁵⁰See, for example, Henderson 1967, p. 82.

⁵¹Harvey/Press 1991, p. 48. The Medieval Court, roughly 2500 square feet in size, was organised by the Ecclesiological Society (William Burges and another man, Slater, supervised the arrangements). See Pardon 1862, p. 99; *Ecclesiologist* (April 1862), p. 73.

⁵²Harvey/Press 1991, p. 48. The embroideries attracted mixed reviews. One critic praised them for their colour, but dismissed them as coarsely made and overpriced; *Ecclesiologist* (June 1862), p. 171. Another critic reasoned they could provide women with much-needed employment and with beautiful results; *Athenaeum* (27 September 1862), p. 407.

⁵³*Athenaeum* (27 September 1862), p. 407.

⁵⁴Collard in Parry 1996a, p. 172, cat. J.18.

⁵⁵*Ecclesiologist* (June 1862), p. 171; cited by Parry 1983, p. 15.

the V&A as a superb example of the firm's early work. However, at its time of manufacture, critics saw the cabinet as a weak throwback to medieval times. The *Building News* praised its "harmonies in colour," but objected to its naive manufacture (specifically the metal hardware that sliced into the narrative scenes, upsetting the primacy of the painted image). The reviewer concluded: "This studied affectation of truthfulness, in placing ironwork in the midst of a picture, is one of the many sins which have to be purged from Mediaevalists."⁵⁶



Figure 4-1: St. George cabinet, designed by Philip Webb and painted by William Morris, 1861-62. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 341-1906. Reproduced from Parry 1996a, p. 173.

As for the firm's stained glass, the *Ecclesiologist* proclaimed it the worst of the bunch.⁵⁷ Other reviewers were more appreciative; the *Building News* was enthusiastic.⁵⁸

⁵⁶*Building News* (8 August 1862), p. 99; cited by Collard in Parry 1996a, p. 172, cat. J.18.

⁵⁷*Ecclesiologist* (June 1862), p. 173. The critic praised Clayton and Bell as the exhibitor of the best painted glass.

⁵⁸*Building News* (12 September 1862), p. 191.

The *Athenaeum* also responded well, describing the firm's work as "truly excellent both in colour and composition."⁵⁹ The critics could base their judgements on an assortment of glass, including Rossetti's *Parable of the Vineyard* (designed for Bodley's church in Scarborough, St. Martin-on-the-Hill).⁶⁰ Happily for the firm, the judges of the International Exhibition sided with the sunny reviews: they won a medal for their stained-glass windows.⁶¹ Just over thirty medals were awarded in this category (Class XXXIV, Section A: Stained Glass and Glass used for Decoration). The firm also received a medal for their furnishings.⁶² By my estimation, however, over 130 medals were distributed in this area (Class XXX, Section A: Furniture and Upholstery); the abundance of awards seemingly diminishes the intrinsic value of the firm's second medal. Still, Cole may have been impressed by the firm's displays or their medals or both, or perhaps he was intrigued by the testimonials of authoritative admirers that began to surface in respected journals. Street, for example, openly contested the *Ecclesiologist's* unfavourable review of the firm's stained glass. He believed the firm's artists showed real originality and promise.⁶³

Another advocate of the firm was William Burges. Inspired by the firm's wares at the International Exhibition, Burges hoped that more artists would embrace the decorative

⁵⁹*Athenaeum* (16 August 1862), p. 216. In the same article, Burne-Jones also received commendations for his east window of Waltham Abbey. Manufactured by Powells, it was described as "strong, rich, jewel-like and brilliant, excellent in all qualities."

⁶⁰Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 168; Burdick 1997, p. 66.

⁶¹The medal was awarded "for artistic qualities of colour and design." Burne-Jones received a separate medal for his stained-glass windows, "for excellence of artistic design and colour." See *Medals and Honourable Mentions* 1862, p. 363.

⁶²The medal was awarded "for good design and workmanship." *Medals and Honourable Mentions* 1862, p. 326.

⁶³*Ecclesiologist* (August 1862), p. 236.

arts and find new patrons in British homeowners:

It is to be fervently hoped, that our young artists will follow out the path they have begun, and that they will not be ashamed of doing what Giotto and Fra Angelico, among many others, were not ashamed to do. The time is probably not so very far distant, when a nobleman, having built his house, will, as a natural consequence, call in, not his upholsterer but his artist or some such combination of artists, as the present firm of Marshall, Morris, and Co.⁶⁴

As a former member of the Hogarth Club, he knew the founders of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (if not the exact title of the firm). Burges was also linked to the artist-decorators through his previous association with the Medieval Society, which counted Morris and Rossetti among its members.⁶⁵ Burges had attended school with William Rossetti, Gabriel's brother, but they became acquainted later through a mutual friend, George Price Boyce (1826-97).⁶⁶ Boyce, a watercolour painter, lived in rooms above Burges's residence in Buckingham Street and his diaries show Burges socialising with members of the firm.⁶⁷

In the years leading up to the firm's foundation, Burges played an even more important role, that of patron. He showed a real liking for Burne-Jones's work by employing the artist on several different projects, including his Great Bookcase (1859-62), which he displayed at the International Exhibition. Designed by the architect for his personal use, the lavish bookcase is painted with allegories of pagan and Christian art. Rossetti contributed the figure of Beatrice (she appears to Dante, whose figure was

⁶⁴Burges 1862b, p. 338.

⁶⁵Sharp 1994, p. 26; Grieve 1999, p. 19.

⁶⁶Rossetti 1906, vol. 1, p. 155.

⁶⁷Mordaunt Crook 1981, pp. 87, 88.

painted by Poynter).⁶⁸ The three gables at the top of the bookcase depict Art (painted by Burne-Jones) flanked by Religion and Love.⁶⁹ Contemporaneous to the execution of the bookcase was the restoration of Waltham Abbey (fig. 4-2), which Burges directed. At the architect's invitation, Poynter designed decorations for the ceiling.⁷⁰ Burges also commissioned Burne-Jones to design the stained glass. The east window, with its striking three-light *Tree of Jesse*, dates from 1860-61.⁷¹ These two projects, the Great Bookcase and the restoration of Waltham Abbey, are especially interesting because they involved the future designers of the Green Dining Room and the Grill Room. Burne-Jones went on to design the figurative elements of the stained-glass windows in the Green Dining Room as well as the figurative panels of the dado. Poynter designed the whole of the Grill Room. Perhaps Burges influenced the museum's decision to employ these artists as well. As an organizer of the Medieval Court, he had access to Cole's circle. Burges also infiltrated this sphere when he gave a series of lectures to the Society of Arts in early 1864.⁷² At his second lecture, Burges presented stained-glass cartoons by Burne-

⁶⁸Poynter also painted the Muses, the pagan figure of Rhodopis, and ornaments representing the realms of water, air, and land; Mordaunt Crook 1981, p. 321

⁶⁹Burges employed over a dozen artists to decorate his exuberant monument; Mordaunt Crook 1981, p. 321.

⁷⁰Poynter painted the signs of the zodiac, the labours of the months, the four elements and a Janus-like 'Past and Future' on large canvases, which were then affixed to the ceiling above the nave. See Dafforne 1877, p. 18; Monkhouse 1897, p. 8; Mordaunt Crook 1981, p. 184.

⁷¹Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 3. This was the last window that Burne-Jones designed for Powell & Sons, before he devoted his energies to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.; Christian 1975, p. 34.

⁷²Summaries of Burges's Cantor lectures, on the theme of the fine arts applied to industry, appeared in the *Journal of the Society of Arts* from 12 February 1864 through to 25 March 1864.

Jones.⁷³ Cole's diaries do not indicate that he was a member of Burges's audience (despite his deep involvement with the society, especially in the years surrounding the Great Exhibition of 1851).⁷⁴ However, Cole had yet another opportunity to become familiar with the works of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.



Figure 4-2: The nave of Waltham Abbey, c. 1060, with nineteenth-century ceiling decorations by Edward Poynter and stained-glass windows by Edward Burne-Jones. Waltham Abbey, Essex. Reproduced from a postcard (Waltham Abbey, WALT1).

In 1864 Thomas Gambier Parry (1816-88) and Richard Burchett (1815-75) organized an exhibition of stained glass at the South Kensington Museum. It has been described as a little-known event,⁷⁵ but it took place on Cole's turf and merits

⁷³*Journal of the Society of Arts* (19 February 1864), p. 212.

⁷⁴Cole, diary, 1864 [NAL, 45.C.125].

⁷⁵M. Harrison 1973, p. 251.

consideration, even more so because Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. were participants. In one section of the exhibition, viewers could admire ecclesiastical glass by the firm.⁷⁶ In another section, secular subjects dominated the firm's offerings. These included *Tristram Harping to the Shepherds*; a medallion head of Penelope; a depiction of St. Cecilia; *The Prince and the Merchant's Daughter* (from the tale of *Beauty and the Beast*); *Chaucer's Dream*; *The God of Love and Alceste*; and a panel representing Dido and Cleopatra.⁷⁷ As pointed out by Barbara Morris and others, the museum showed real interest in the firm when it purchased some of their stained glass.⁷⁸ It acquired the Chaucer panel, *Dido and Cleopatra*, and *The God of Love and Alceste* for £5.10s each and it paid £3 for the *Penelope*.⁷⁹ The museum bought only seven stained-glass panels in 1864. The other purchases were a *Vision of Beatrice* by Lavers and Barraud (£26.5s), a *Legend of Queen Dagmar* by the same firm (£17.10s), and a reputed fifteenth-century representation of the Virgin seated with Christ, St. John the Baptist, and a female saint (£12).⁸⁰ Over half of the South Kensington Museum's purchases benefited Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (although Lavers and Barraud's profits were larger). Moreover, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s stained glass now attracted glowing reviews. The *Ecclesiologist* enthused over the firm's work, particularly its demonstration of delicate drawing and the thoughtful application of luminous colours and lustrous

⁷⁶*Exhibition of Stained Glass* 1864, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁷*Exhibition of Stained Glass* 1864, p. 6.

⁷⁸B. Morris 1986, p. 39; Parry 1996b, p. 200.

⁷⁹*Inventory* 1868, p. 35. See also H. A. Bruce, 12 July 1864 [VAA ED 84/36, pp. 167, 209].

⁸⁰*Inventory* 1868, pp. 35, 36. The museum acquired other stained-glass panels in 1864, but they were gifts.

whites.⁸¹ The *Athenaeum* described the men as true artists in glass.⁸² The most adulatory review appeared in the *Fine Arts Review Quarterly*. Its author was William Rossetti, Gabriel's sibling. He described Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. as "a firm composed of artists of real capacity," the creators of "some really beautiful works, which we should not hesitate to prefer to any other painted glass of the day that we know, whether native or foreign."⁸³ Cole may have seen the firm's wares, either during the exhibition or soon after their acquisition by the museum, and there were many opportunities for him to read about the firm's triumphs in stained glass.⁸⁴ However, the decoration of the museum's west refreshment room required more than a working knowledge of stained glass and if Cole needed assurance that the firm could create an elegant environment within the museum, perhaps he found it in the architecture of Philip Webb.

Webb was often engaged on separate commissions and his finished works, which included studio-houses for artists and country houses for Britain's elite, may have excited museum officials at South Kensington. One of Webb's earliest clients was William Gillum (1827-1910), a war veteran. Like other patrons of Webb and of the firm more generally, Gillum belonged to the Hogarth Club.⁸⁵ He was also involved in various philanthropic enterprises, including the Industrial Home for Destitute Boys in Euston

⁸¹*Ecclesiologist* (August 1864), p. 191.

⁸²*Athenaeum* (4 June 1864), p. 778.

⁸³Rossetti 1864, p. 54.

⁸⁴More words of praise can be found elsewhere. See, for example, *Building News* (27 May 1864), p. 393.

⁸⁵Gillum was also an amateur artist and took lessons from Brown; perhaps he introduced Gillum to the Hogarth Club. Gillum owned several works by Brown and he seems to have patronized Rossetti as well; Pevsner 1953, p. 78.

Road, a facility that equipped underprivileged boys with employable skills. In another improvement scheme, one that would have appealed to Cole's zeal for reform (had he known of it), Gillum commissioned Webb to build a row of residences, shops, and workshops at 91-101 Worship Street, London.⁸⁶ The new dwellings would replace squalid buildings on the site and thereby provide working-class families with healthier living arrangements.⁸⁷ Erected between 1861 and 1863, they were humble structures. As such, they did not likely inspire Cole's choice. More ambitious were the studio-houses Webb designed for his artistic friends.

In 1860 the painter John Spencer Stanhope (1829-1908) commissioned Webb to design a studio-house in the country.⁸⁸ Webb created Sandroyd, a handsome home in rural Surrey.⁸⁹ Stanhope needed no introduction to Webb as he had close ties to the future founders of the firm: he had worked on the murals of the Debating Hall in Oxford and he was a member of the Hogarth Club. Val Prinsep (1838-1904) had the same connections to Webb and the future partners of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Prinsep had helped to decorate the Debating Hall and he also belonged to the Hogarth Club.⁹⁰ In 1864 he

⁸⁶Kirk 2005, pp. 208-10, 296.

⁸⁷Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 305. The improvements inadvertently displaced some of the poorer families who could not afford the higher rents; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 306. It should also be noted that Webb did other work for Gillum before and after the Worship Street commission. For example, he designed a gardener's cottage for Gillum's property in Tottenham (c. 1860) and in 1868 he designed Gillum's residence, Church Hill House, in Church Barnet (now East Barnet); Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, pp. 201, 260-61.

⁸⁸An asthma sufferer, Stanhope was keen to relocate to an unpolluted setting; Dakers 1999, p. 49.

⁸⁹Kirk 2005, p. 66.

⁹⁰Dakers 1999, p. 46.

leased land near Little Holland House (where his mother Sara thrived as one of London's preeminent hostesses) and he asked Webb to design a studio-house. Built for a little over £2000, the Kensington residence (1 Holland Park Road) evidently pleased Prinsep because he continued to live there, expanding the house as his marital status changed and his wealth grew.⁹¹ The interiors were lavishly decorated, in accordance with the owner's taste, using many of the firm's manufactures.⁹² If Cole knew of either house, Sandroyd or 1 Holland Park Road, it was probably the latter because it was in London and, moreover, in a district that Cole, a longtime resident of Kensington, esteemed. According to Caroline Dakers, its design appeared in contemporary journals (an unusual feat given that Webb shied away from public attention).⁹³ She suggests that Prinsep's studio-house soon became Webb's "show-house," winning the admiration of the cultured individuals who frequented Little Holland House nearby.⁹⁴ However, if 1 Holland Park Road failed to impress Cole, there was yet another opportunity for him to be dazzled. This came in the form of an artist's rural retreat.

Myles Birket Foster (1825-99), a notable watercolourist and book illustrator, employed Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to decorate his home in Witley, Surrey. Built in the early 1860s, the residence was called 'The Hill'.⁹⁵ Morris drew up plans for

⁹¹Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, pp. 199, 239; Kirk 2005, p. 71. The address was changed to 14 Holland Park Road in 1908.

⁹²Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 241; Dakers 1999, p. 50.

⁹³Dakers 1993, pp. 79-80. She does not indicate if these publications appeared before the firm received the commission to decorate the west refreshment room.

⁹⁴Dakers 1993, p. 30.

⁹⁵Foster's twenty-acre property stood between Wormley Hill and the railway station. He would later share some of the land with his friend and fellow artist Edmund Evans. See Cundall 1906, p. 147; Reynolds 1984, p. 89.

the interior, although some came to naught.⁹⁶ The Hill was ornamented with stained-glass windows, paintings by Burne-Jones, and wall tiles. The firm's stained glass could be seen throughout the house. In the library, for example, the theme of King René's honeymoon appeared in the upper windows (c. 1863). Scenes representing painting, architecture, sculpture, and music were derived from Seddon's cabinet.⁹⁷ In a bedroom, seven stained-glass windows were inspired by Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*.⁹⁸ Chaucer's popularity proved itself again in the windows of the entrance hall where guests were greeted by five roundels representing Chaucer, Griselda, Constance, Criseyde, and Dorigen.⁹⁹ These and other panels showed Birket Foster's deep appreciation for the firm's abilities in stained glass.

Birket Foster also saw great promise in Burne-Jones and in 1865 he commissioned a series of paintings for the dining room.¹⁰⁰ The seven canvases depict the legend of St. George. They formed a band around three walls of the dining room (fig. 4-3).¹⁰¹ Three canvases were installed by late 1865, but Burne-Jones fell behind in his work

⁹⁶Huish 1890, p. 24; Reynolds 1984, p. 90; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 55.

⁹⁷Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 207; Reynolds 1984, pp. 90-91; Martin Harrison in Parry 1996a, p. 123, cat. H.17. The panels now belong to the V&A where they are inventoried as nos. Circ.516-1953 to Circ.519-1953.

⁹⁸Burne-Jones's account book indicates that he charged £21 for their design (sometime around January 1864). See FM, B-J A/c, p. 12v; Reynolds 1984, pp. 94, 96; and Martin Harrison in Parry 1996a, p. 129, cat. H.29.

⁹⁹Reynolds 1984, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰Reynolds 1984, p. 97; Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 101.

¹⁰¹Huish 1890, p. 24. Numerous photographs of The Hill were taken in the 1880s (a fortuitous undertaking, especially because the residence was demolished in the early 1950s). In this particular photograph, several canvases can be seen, namely the picture of the princess tied to a tree and the image of the slain dragon; Reynolds 1984, pp. 98, 104. The latter image is now located at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in Sydney.

and the four remaining canvases were completed with the aid of a studio assistant – Burne-Jones’s first – Charles Fairfax Murray.¹⁰² The narrative sequence begins with *The King’s Daughter*, which shows Princess Sabra walking in a garden (1865-66; fig. 4-4).¹⁰³



Figure 4-3: The Hill, Birket Foster’s residence at Witley, Surrey: the dining room (with paintings commissioned from Edward Burne-Jones in 1865). Reproduced from Reynolds 1984, p. 98.



Figure 4-4: Edward Burne-Jones, *The King’s Daughter*, 1865-66. Paris, Musée d’Orsay. Reproduced from Wildman/Stephen 1998, p. 101.

¹⁰²According to Reynolds, the final canvas (depicting the princess’s return) is almost entirely by Fairfax Murray; Reynolds 1984, p. 99. See also Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 101.

¹⁰³J. Gere 1994, p. 86. The painting now belongs to the Musée d’Orsay in Paris.

Its composition resembles certain elements of the Green Dining Room, namely the painted panels that represent the twelve months. Despite occasional traces of human activity (e.g., architectural backdrops), the Green Dining Room figures are quite isolated, some in spaces as confined as Princess Sabra's garden. In *September* (fig. 4-5), for instance, the background looms forward, compressing the space. In *November* (please refer to fig. 5-5), the woman clutches her dress in a contrived manner that parallels Princess Sabra's studied pose. Since the commissions were more or less contemporaneous, it is not very surprising to find similarities between a canvas from Birket Foster's dining room and panels in the Green Dining Room.



Figure 4-5: Green Dining Room: painted wall panel, *September* (Libra).

The Hill's painted tiles illustrate the tales of *Cinderella*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. According to H. M. Cundall, the *Cinderella* panel ornamented the fireplace in a room next to the billiard. The two remaining tiled panels were fixed to

bedroom fireplaces.¹⁰⁴ Burne-Jones designed the tiles, which were painted by Lucy Faulkner using tin-glazed earthenware Dutch blanks.¹⁰⁵ They are quite unlike the painted tiles produced by Minton's and other leading tile manufacturers of the period. Drawn simply and painted with loose washes of colour, they exhibit a rustic charm (fig. 4-6).



Figure 4-6: Detail of *Sleeping Beauty* panel of tiles, designed by Edward Burne-Jones and possibly painted by Lucy Faulkner, c. 1864-65. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Circ. 520-1953. Reproduced from Parry 1996a, p. 189.

Several circumstances induce the question, did The Hill's extensive decorations inspire Cole to employ Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. at the South Kensington Museum? Birket Foster was noted for his hospitality. Numerous friends, many with

¹⁰⁴Cundall 1906, pp. 149-50.

¹⁰⁵Reynolds 1984, p. 96; Jennifer Hawkins Opie in Parry 1996a, pp. 188-89, cat. K.9 and cat. K.10. The *Beauty and the Beast* panel (William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow) and the *Cinderella* panel (Walker Art Gallery, Merseyside) are initialled by Lucy Faulkner, so Hawkins Opie attributed the third panel to her also. Hawkins Opie described all three tiled panels as bedroom ornaments, a variation of the information presented by Cundall; Hawkins Opie in Parry 1996a, p. 189, cat. K.10. *Sleeping Beauty* rests in the V&A.

artistic inclinations, were welcomed into his home on a routine basis.¹⁰⁶ Significantly, Cole was Birket Foster's neighbour,¹⁰⁷ but was he also a friend? Birket Foster evidently knew of Cole, writing on 17 February 1860:

Our cottage will soon be ready for us. Polly and I were down on Wednesday and Thursday. We have J. C. Hook RA for a neighbour and in a little while we shall have Henry Cole, who was the great name of the 1851 Exhibition. He sometimes goes by the name of "Felix Summerley" [*sic*]. Saml. Redgrave brother to the RA is close to us so that we are in an artistic atmosphere.¹⁰⁸

By consulting Cole's diaries, specifically those written in the years preceding the Green Dining Room's public debut, I learned that he knew of Birket Foster. I found one reference to the artist, but it is a lacklustre entry for anyone hoping to prove that Cole adored The Hill. On 24 May 1862, Cole went to Witley, dined at Hook's, and met Birket Foster.¹⁰⁹ Cole's colourless account discourages the conclusion that an artist's private home inspired a room in a public art museum.

There were many opportunities for Cole to acquaint himself with Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Moreover, as the Secretary of the Department of Science and Art (from 1858 until his retirement in 1873) and as the director of the South Kensington Museum, Cole wielded immense power over the development of the South Kensington estate.¹¹⁰ It is only natural to assume that Cole initiated the commission of the Green

¹⁰⁶Huish 1890, p. 16.

¹⁰⁷Cundall 1906, p. 146; Reynolds 1984, p. 89.

¹⁰⁸Letter from Birket Foster to his cousin Robert Spence, 17 February 1860 [Newcastle upon Tyne City Libraries]; quoted in Reynolds 1984, p. 89.

¹⁰⁹The entry reads: "Introduced to my neighbours Mr & Mrs Foster." Cole, diary, 24 May 1862 [NAL, 45.C.123].

¹¹⁰Sheppard 1975, p. 78.

Dining Room. After all, he had few superiors and, during his reign at South Kensington, he pursued many decorative projects that he valued highly and monitored closely:

The architectural offices and studios were visited daily by Mr. Cole. Here, he would discuss and suggest; make rough sketches, and see specimens of materials in use, or proposed for use. When in residence, from 1863 to 1873, his early morning tour of inspection was round the buildings in progress, as well as the carpenters' and smiths' workshops on the premises.¹¹¹

I argued in my previous chapter that Cole's personal interests strongly influenced the fabric of the Centre Refreshment Room. His diaries attest to his involvement; for example, on 30 January 1866 he wrote: "Walked with Scott to see Sykes, rather better & not in pain, was considering a Majolica column for Refreshment room."¹¹² On 6 January 1867 Cole contemplated the refreshment room's inscriptions.¹¹³ Five years later he was relieved to finalize plans for the upper reaches of the room.¹¹⁴ However, and this is quite significant, Cole's diaries fail to mention Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and the Green Dining Room itself during the critical years of its materialization. There is no show of interest in the firm's artists nor their aims. There is no hint of curiosity in the interior's development. For a man who supposedly commissioned the Green Dining Room, these absences in his personal records are quite unexpected. Furthermore, official documents give few assurances of his enthusiasm for the commission. For example, on 16 October

¹¹¹Cole 1884, vol. 1, p. 337.

¹¹²Cole, diary, 30 January 1866 [NAL, 45.C.127].

¹¹³Cole, diary, 6 January 1867 [NAL, 45.C.128].

¹¹⁴He wrote: "Tiles for upper part of Central Refreshment Room at last settled after many experiments. Millais suggested black! Blue & Red & Orange were tried." Cole, diary, 6 August 1872 [NAL, 45.C.133]; cited by Sheppard 1975, pp. 111 and 383, note 189. From 1861 to 1878, J. E. Millais lived very near the museum at 7 Cromwell Place; Sheppard 1975, p. 289.

1867, when Scott recommended the firm's tender for the ceiling and the dado, he noted the practicality of their scheme. However, Cole's only (recorded) words on the topic were "I concur."¹¹⁵ Finally, the document that Physick used to claim that Henry Cole, Francis Fowke, and Richard Redgrave approached the firm, a claim taken up by subsequent authors, simply does not mention any of those men. Nor, for that matter, does it mention the £100 that would be paid to the firm for the preliminary designs, although Physick cites the document as his source for this tidbit as well.¹¹⁶ I believe Physick provided the wrong source for information that he had collected at the Public Record Office (the relevant document is now kept at Kew) and later writers, relying heavily on Physick's meticulous work, have repeated his mistake.¹¹⁷

I do not wish to suggest that Cole was wholly unaware of the firm's artists, but it is not clear that he took much interest in them. From time to time authorities at South Kensington did take note of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, which shared several links with the firm, most notably in the persons of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown. According to the *Survey of London*, Cole yearned to cure the barren appearance of the Exhibition Building of 1862 by adding ceramic mosaic panels to its exterior; large cartoons designed by two Royal Academicians, C. W. Cope and James Clarke Hook,

¹¹⁵NA, ED 28/22, p. 229.

¹¹⁶Physick 1982, p. 131 refers to a source once held by the Public Record Office, but now held by the V&A Archive at Blythe House: a Board Minute précis for 30 November 1865 [VAA, ED 84/36, pp. 167, 232].

¹¹⁷A fuller record of the museum's decision to approach Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. appears in NA, ED 28/21, p. 43. I will discuss the document later in this chapter, but I must acknowledge that the *Survey of London* first brought it to my attention; see Sheppard 1975, p. 383, note 197.

generated some praise, but not enough to save the building from destruction, a remedy that was delivered between 1863 and 1864.¹¹⁸ Had the decorative scheme gone ahead, many other artists were set to participate, including William Holman Hunt, J. E. Millais, and Rossetti.¹¹⁹ On another occasion, at a board meeting in April 1865, South Kensington officials considered inviting Brown to design a lunette for the museum's South Court. The meeting was attended by Henry Cole, Richard Redgrave, Lord Granville, and Henry Austin Bruce.¹²⁰ Brown, however, apparently disliked Cole and it is doubtful that he would have credited Cole with any show of interest in his work. A decade earlier, hard-pressed for patrons with deep pockets, Brown called Cole a "humbug" and a "scoundrel" in his diary entries of 1 January 1855, 13 January 1855, and 18 February 1856.¹²¹

If Cole, Fowke, and Redgrave personally approached Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to decorate the west dining room, we have little evidence to explain why the trio handpicked the firm for the job. Surviving documentation fails to support the conclusion that Cole generated the idea to commission the company. If he had any thoughts on the progress of the Green Dining Room, he did not record them, nor do his diaries reveal any particular interest in the firm itself. Because Cole's personal investment in the Green Dining Room is hidden from history, if we are to maintain the hypothesis that he was the commissioner, we must look for individuals who could have nudged Cole in the firm's

¹¹⁸British History 1975a (internet).

¹¹⁹*Journal of the Society of Arts* (14 March 1862), p. 260; British History 1975a (internet). Holman Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti were slated to portray the subjects of agriculture, navigation, and jewellery (respectively).

¹²⁰Board Minute, 6 April 1865 [NA, ED 28/19, p. 172].

¹²¹Quoted in Surtees 1981, pp. 114, 116, and 164.

direction (we also ought to consider the possibility that Cole was pushed in the firm's direction by someone with more authority). Given their recurrence in accounts of the interior's origins, I would like to begin with Francis Fowke and Richard Redgrave.

Unfortunately, in Fowke's case, the engineer-architect died prematurely. He did not write a memoir to reflect upon his accomplishments at South Kensington, including possibly his role in the patronage of the Morris firm before it became famous. However, had he reached a ripe old age, I doubt that Fowke would have made such a claim. In the spring of 1865, his health declined and he left England. He returned to South Kensington just days before his death in December.¹²² Fowke's extended absence probably precluded him from official discussions that preceded the decision to approach the firm (the decision was made on 30 November 1865).

For most of his career, Richard Redgrave was Cole's right-hand man; he was the Department's Inspector-General of Art from 1857 to 1874.¹²³ He was an active participant in the conception of the South Kensington Museum's buildings.¹²⁴ However, official records do not indicate that he used board meetings or other professional gatherings to actively promote the artists, their firm, and their wares. He did, however, enjoy a link to the firm's social network: William Holman Hunt, a first-generation Pre-Raphaelite and a friend to members of the firm, accepted an invitation from Redgrave in

¹²²Royal Engineers Museum 2006 (internet).

¹²³Sheppard 1975, p. 79.

¹²⁴Anthony Burton, "Richard Redgrave as Art Educator, Museum Official and Design Theorist," pp. 48-70, in Casteras/Parkinson 1988, pp. 59, 60.

December 1863.¹²⁵ Perhaps it was Redgrave who encouraged his colleagues to include Holman Hunt along with Millais and Rossetti in their scheme to beautify the Exhibition Building of 1862 with ceramic mosaics. Additionally, Redgrave was good friends with the painter James Clarke Hook.¹²⁶ Hook's name has appeared before, as a participant in the unrealized project to decorate the Exhibition Building of 1862 and as Birket Foster's neighbour at Witley. With Cole, his friend Hook, and his brother Samuel all spending time in Witley, it is not impossible to imagine Redgrave making occasional trips to the area himself, either for social visits or professional appointments. Perhaps he became interested in the colourful activities that were transforming Birket Foster's residence into an artistic gem. However, with no archival record (at present) to substantiate a direct link between Redgrave and the firm, this trail comes to an abrupt (if indefinite) end.

Could another person have influenced Cole's decision to commission Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.? In my search for individuals with social or professional ties to Cole as well as the firm, I located multiple candidates, some more promising than others. It may not be possible to prove that these individuals persuaded Cole to invest Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. with the responsibility of decorating a refreshment room, but their relations to Cole and to the firm merit examination.

My first contender is Godfrey Sykes, the South Kensington Museum's principal decorative artist. According to Physick, Sykes was esteemed so highly, the Board of

¹²⁵Letter from W. Holman Hunt to Richard Redgrave, 14 December 1863 [NAL, 86.WW.1 (MSL/1979/7461/204)]. I presume the invitation was for dinner.

¹²⁶Treble 1978, p. 71.

Trade agreed to defer to Sykes on matters of decoration.¹²⁷ Sykes, in turn, esteemed the vigour and colour of the Italian Renaissance. His taste visibly affected the fabric of the South Kensington Museum in its early years. Given his artistic preferences, one might assume that Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (with their medieval associations) were unknown to Sykes prior to their South Kensington commission. Alternately, one might assume that Sykes, previously aware of the firm, puzzled over the unproven artists and their promise to reform his profession. However, it is possible that Sykes was on intimate terms with the ambitions of the firm. As an employee of the Department of Science and Art, one of Sykes's duties was the instruction of young talents. His students, aspiring decorative artists, assisted Sykes with different projects around the museum. One such student was the architectural sculptor John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911). In March 1865, Kipling became Burne-Jones's brother-in-law. He is believed to have worked for Sykes between 1860 and 1864.¹²⁸ These dates were supplied by C. J. Erskine in a letter dated 3 December 1864. Erskine, a judge from India, was seeking candidates for teaching positions at the Bombay School of Art and he recommended Kipling. According to Erskine's letter, Kipling modelled many of the museum's terracotta decorations.¹²⁹ An alternate source suggests that the architectural sculptor joined Sykes's team after James Gamble had entered into service (i.e., not before 1863).¹³⁰ This assessment accords with a

¹²⁷Physick 1982, p. 58.

¹²⁸Barringer 2005, p. 272. No official records identify Kipling as an employee of the Department of Science and Art; Craig 1974, p. 7; Barringer 2005, p. 367, note 102.

¹²⁹Craig 1974, p. 5; Ankers 1988, pp. 28-29. No part of the museum has been distinguished as Kipling's work; Sheppard 1975, p. 89, unnumbered note.

¹³⁰According to Richard Lunn, Sykes's assistants (listed in the order of their engagement) were: "Wm. Ellis, John B. Fidler, Reuben Townroe, James Gamble,

letter written by Kipling's future sister-in-law, Agnes Macdonald, in late June 1863.

Kipling was heading to London, "where he is going to live again as he will have permanent employment at the S. Kensington."¹³¹

Although the terms of his employment are sketchy, there can be little doubt that Kipling's services were appreciated because a mosaic panel on the facade of the Lecture Theatre building depicts Kipling in the company of the museum's principal planners, including Cole, Redgrave, and Fowke.¹³² If Kipling spoke favourably of the firm, perhaps his words were valued as much as his person. However, in mid-January 1865, Kipling agreed to join the Bombay School of Art and only weeks after his marriage to Alice Macdonald in March, the couple left Britain.¹³³ Had Kipling recommended the firm to Sykes or other museum officials, the impression of his remarks had to linger for the better part of a year. It is an hypothesis, unproven by extant documentation, but one worth mentioning.¹³⁴

Also worth mentioning is John Hungerford Pollen (1820-1902). Linda Parry identified the artist, an Assistant Keeper of the South Kensington Museum since December 1863, as a potential link between the firm and the commissioners.¹³⁵ In 1850,

Lockwood Kipling, Matthew Eldon, Gilbert R. Redgrave, Francis W. Moody." Lunn 1912b, p. 87. The first record of Gamble's employment is dated 22 December 1863; he was to receive 1s.6d per hour as Sykes's assistant; VAA, ED 84/36, p. 106.

¹³¹Quoted in Baldwin 1960, p. 77.

¹³²Baldwin 1960, p. 111; Ankers 1988, p. 29; Burton 1999, p. 74; Barringer 2005, p. 235.

¹³³Ankers 1988, p. 32; Flanders 2001, p. 99.

¹³⁴It should be noted that Burne-Jones had Edward Poynter for a brother-in-law as well. Poynter married Agnes Macdonald in 1866.

¹³⁵Parry 1996b, p. 200. See also Memo on "Temporary Employment," 1 December 1863 [NA, ED 28/17, p. 109] and Pollen 1912, pp. 296-97.

when he was painting the ceiling of Merton College Chapel in Oxford, Pollen met and befriended J. E. Millais.¹³⁶ Pollen later became acquainted with Rossetti and his circle.¹³⁷ He joined them in their campaign to decorate the Debating Hall (Pollen's mural depicts King Arthur as he seizes Excalibur).¹³⁸ As an employee at South Kensington, Pollen worked in close proximity to Cole. He may have used his position to influence the director's opinion and advance his friends' careers. However, despite his demonstrable interest in interior decoration, no evidence suggests that Pollen shaped the interiors of the South Kensington Museum.¹³⁹ And, as far as Rossetti was concerned, Pollen was not a man of influence.¹⁴⁰

One might also consider William Cowper (1811-88). The First Commissioner of Works from 1860 to 1866, Cowper (later Lord Mount-Temple) employed Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to decorate the Armoury and Tapestry Room at St. James's Palace.¹⁴¹ Sheila Kirk once wrote that the firm received both the St. James's Palace commission and the South Kensington Museum commission through Cowper,¹⁴² but she abandoned this hypothesis before her Webb monograph was published in 2005.¹⁴³ However, the St. James's Palace commission deserves examination because it

¹³⁶Pollen 1912, pp. 268, 269.

¹³⁷Pollen 1912, p. 269.

¹³⁸Holman Hunt 1906, p. 12; Parry 1996b, p. 205, note 5.

¹³⁹Sheppard 1975, p. 89.

¹⁴⁰In a letter to Charles Augustus Howell, Rossetti professed: "At Kensington I only know Burchett the head master and J. H. Pollen, who is I believe the best man they may have but not I fear the most influential." Letter from Rossetti to Howell, 10 April 1865; quoted in Doughty/Wahl 1965, vol. 2, p. 550.

¹⁴¹*Athenaeum* (14 October 1865), pp. 509-10.

¹⁴²Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 402, note 56.

¹⁴³Kirk 2005, p. 46.

demonstrates how Rossetti, as a passionate self-promoter, advanced the firm's reputation. Cowper's second wife, Georgiana (née Tollemache), was an acquaintance of John Ruskin.¹⁴⁴ He introduced the couple to Rossetti, a friendship formed, and Rossetti's firm benefited from it.¹⁴⁵ Rossetti encouraged his new friends to employ Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. on decorative projects, including the couple's home in Curzon Street.¹⁴⁶ Lady Mount-Temple recalled an early occasion when Rossetti dined at their home in a room decorated to their taste. Rossetti looked very uncomfortable and when his hosts asked for his estimation of the room, he advised them to burn everything. Undeterred by Rossetti's impertinence, the couple hired the firm to renovate a staircase (it was decorated with wallpaper and a stained-glass window).¹⁴⁷ Rossetti is also credited with persuading Cowper to employ the firm at St. James's Palace.¹⁴⁸ However, by his wife's account, it was Cowper who did the persuading:

Another thing he did that I recall with pleasure: when some rooms in the old Palace of St. James' had to be done up, instead of putting them into the

¹⁴⁴Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 402, note 56. However, Kirk misidentifies Georgiana as "Alice Tollemache." Kirk apparently confused Georgiana with Cowper's first wife, Harriet Alicia Gurney, whom he married in June 1843. She died several months later. Cowper married Georgiana Tollemache in November 1848.

¹⁴⁵Le Bourgeois 1974, p. 8; Faulkner 1980, p. 33; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 59.

¹⁴⁶On 4 September 1865, Rossetti wrote to Cowper, praising the superior qualities of stained glass by Morris. He acknowledged that other glass could cost less, but it could not match the beauty of Morris's windows. He also commended the talents of Philip Webb: "Any work, large or small, he would do nobly." Letter from Rossetti to William Cowper, 4 September 1865; quoted in Doughty/Wahl 1965, vol. 2, p. 568; also quoted by Le Bourgeois 1974, p. 9.

¹⁴⁷[Cowper-Temple] 1890, p. 65.

¹⁴⁸Harvey/Press 1986, p. 42; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 59. Crace & Co. enjoyed a long history of royal and civic patronage and, having already worked at St. James's Palace, many people may have expected them to work on the Armoury and Tapestry Room.

hands of some fashionable upholsterer, as had been done before, he persuaded that great Reformer in Art, William Morris, to undertake the work. At that time our taste was what would now be considered atrocious, although we were quite satisfied with ourselves.¹⁴⁹

Nevertheless, by confessing that she and her husband were ignorant of good design at the time, Lady Mount-Temple somewhat undermines her own assertion that Cowper had to convince the firm to accept the commission. It seems rather more likely that Cowper was counselled to commission the firm.¹⁵⁰ I do not believe that Cowper had anything to do with the Green Dining Room commission, but his example led me to ask, had another public official felt the influence of Rossetti or some other member of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and did that person have the power to persuade Cole? In the case of Henry Austin Bruce, Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, the answer is a resounding yes.

A Member of Parliament for Merthyr Tydfil, Henry Austin Bruce (1815-95) became Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education in April 1864.¹⁵¹ Bruce was happy with his new position, expressing his pleasure in a letter to his father: "I like the promotion much. The work will be lighter and the pay higher than the Home

¹⁴⁹[Cowper-Temple] 1890, pp. 64-65.

¹⁵⁰Perhaps it may be assumed that the commission to redecorate the Armoury and Tapestry Room was as much Cowper's choice as it was Rossetti's reward. However, as noted by Le Bourgeois 1974, p. 9, Cowper was removed from his office as the First Commissioner of Works upon the defeat of Lord Russell's government in 1866 and, consequently, it is not known if he had intended to employ Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. on additional work at St. James's Palace.

¹⁵¹He occupied the office of Vice-President until June 1866; Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 105.

Office, and I have always taken an interest in the subject of education.”¹⁵² As the Vice-President, he was Cole’s superior. The Science and Art Department, which Cole presided over as the Secretary, was monitored by the Lord President and the Vice-President of the Committee of Council of Education.¹⁵³ Only a small number of people controlled the Department.¹⁵⁴ Influence could spread easily.

It is difficult to gauge how well Cole and Bruce worked together, but official records show no signs of personal conflict between the two men. They are supposed to have made compatible colleagues.¹⁵⁵ In April 1865, Bruce went with Cole to Paris to inspect the city’s educational institutions.¹⁵⁶ Bruce demonstrated a genuine enthusiasm for art, describing how he envied the Louvre’s “magnificent pictures” during a Tuesday visit.¹⁵⁷ The next morning was spent at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, of which he wrote: “It is a fine museum of works of practical industry, arranged historically, and covering seven acres. When shall we have the like?”¹⁵⁸ However, Bruce could not match Cole’s energy and several days later he was grumbling to his wife, “I have been visiting with Cole collections, institutions, libraries without end, and am somewhat weary of

¹⁵²Letter from Bruce to his father, 17 April 1864; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 208.

¹⁵³Argles 1964, p. 19; Bishop 1971, p. 164.

¹⁵⁴Burton 1999, pp. 80-81.

¹⁵⁵Bonython/Burton 2003, p. 222.

¹⁵⁶Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 106.

¹⁵⁷Letter from Bruce to his wife, 13 April 1865; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, pp. 213-14.

¹⁵⁸Letter from Bruce to his wife, 13 April 1865; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 214.

them.”¹⁵⁹ Cole may have thought Bruce grew weary of him also. In 1875, he presented Bruce with some works by Peacock; undoubtedly these were the volumes edited by Cole and published that same year. Accompanying his gift was a note that read: “Any one who can quote from Peacock I regard as Salt of the Earth. Please . . . accept the accompanying volumes of his works as a penitential offering from a sinner who is said to have given you trouble in former years.”¹⁶⁰ Bruce kindly responded, “I accept them . . . as a fine gift, and by no means as a peace-offering, none being necessary between us.”¹⁶¹ If there had been any unpleasantness in the past, Bruce chose to overlook it.

According to the *Report from the Select Committee on the South Kensington Museum*, both the Lord President and the Vice-President regulated the operations of the South Kensington Museum: “Authority for every measure is obtained direct from the Lord President of the Council, or the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education.”¹⁶² However, Ann Cooper has disputed the weight of their influence; she regards the authority of the Lord President and the Vice-President as more symbolic than real. Cooper alleges that Cole drafted many of the board minutes himself, which were then signed by his superiors, thus giving him the leverage he needed to act on his own ideas: “These ‘minutes’ were in practice not a record of what had been decided, but suggestions from Cole as to what should be decided!”¹⁶³ Given Cole’s reputation as a

¹⁵⁹Letter from Bruce to his wife, 16 April 1865; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 216.

¹⁶⁰Letter from Cole to Lord Aberdare, 8 February 1875 [NAL, 55.BB.4 Box 4]. In 1873 Bruce was titled 1st Baron Aberdare.

¹⁶¹Letter from Lord Aberdare to Cole, 11 February 1875 [NAL, 55.BB.4 Box 4].

¹⁶²*Report* 1860, pp. vii-viii; quoted in Purbrick 1994, p. 69.

¹⁶³Cooper 1992 (diss.), p. 101.

dogged administrator, Cooper's analysis may be very close to the truth. Nevertheless, I strongly doubt that Cole personally selected Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. to decorate the west refreshment room. The board minute that initiated the Green Dining Room commission, had it been drafted by Cole, shows that he was unfamiliar with the firm. I shall describe this document in further detail. Housed in the National Archives, the minute pertains to a board meeting that took place on 30 November 1865. In attendance were Bruce, Cole, and Norman MacLeod, the Assistant Secretary. The matter of permanent building decorations was raised and the following instruction was given: "Write to Messrs. Moore, Marshall & Falconer as well as Mr. Poynter and request them to furnish designs and estimates for two of the new refreshment rooms."¹⁶⁴ Cole dated and initialled the document several lines below the main entry, while Bruce added his initials to a margin.¹⁶⁵ The document was penned in ink, evidently by someone without firsthand knowledge of the firm: the names of Morris and Faulkner are misspelled. A second writer attempted to correct the errors of the first: "Moore" and "Falconer" were struck out and "Morris" and "Faulkener" [*sic*] were pencilled in. It is unclear when these revisions were made, nor do we know who made the original mistakes, but I have good reason not to suspect Bruce. He was on friendly terms with diverse artists, whom he loyally patronized. Quite significantly, they included Rossetti and his circle.

In the course of my research, it became obvious that Henry Austin Bruce was a

¹⁶⁴NA, ED 28/21, p. 43.

¹⁶⁵A total of £100 was allotted for sketches. Letters were written on 12 January 1866; NA, ED 28/21, p. 43. Presumably the letters were formal invitations to the firm and Poynter to submit designs and estimates.

devoted patron of art in the nineteenth century, even though he has not been remembered as such. Presumably his collection paled in comparison to those amassed by Frederick Leyland, the Ionides family, or other Victorians of immense wealth, but without a proper inventory of Bruce's collection, one cannot be sure of its size nor its scope. Bruce's ancestral home, Dyffryn estate in Aberdare, was acquired in the eighteenth century, but his family's connection to the property ceased in 1979 when his descendant, Morys Bruce (1919-2005), sold the last piece of land.¹⁶⁶ In 1919, Henry Campbell Bruce (1851-1929) donated multiple canvases by Penry Williams to the National Museum Cardiff.¹⁶⁷ The paintings had belonged to his father, Henry Austin Bruce.¹⁶⁸ More research is needed to determine what other works of art have been dispersed and what other works remain in his family's possession, but documents held by the Glamorgan Record Office indicate that Henry Austin Bruce bequeathed a respectable collection of Victorian art. He patronized Richard Doyle (1824-83) on at least one occasion. After having seen samples of the artist's work, Bruce asked Doyle to create something for him; the result was a drawing of fairies (or, as Doyle termed them, "Wood-Elves").¹⁶⁹ Bruce formed a much stronger relationship with the artist Edward Lear (1812-88), whom he met during an extended trip to Italy (1844-45).¹⁷⁰ Their correspondence is remarkably affable. In an

¹⁶⁶*Times Online* 2005 (internet).

¹⁶⁷National Museum Cardiff 2007 (internet). For a time H. C. Bruce was the President of the National Museum of Wales; *The Times* (21 February 1929), p. 19.

¹⁶⁸BBC News 2006 (internet).

¹⁶⁹Letter from Richard Doyle to Henry Austin Bruce, 3 April [1866] [GRO, DBr 148/2].

¹⁷⁰It is also said that he befriended the sculptor John Gibson (1790-1866) during his Italian sojourn; Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 22.

undated letter, Lear – calling himself “the Landscape-painter, Lithographer, author, & Nonsense composer” – cheerily invites “the beneficial & Bricklike Bruce” and his wife to dine with him.¹⁷¹ In addition to being his friend, Bruce was also Lear’s patron. Lear’s *Kanchenjunga from Darjeeling* was commissioned by Bruce in 1873. After hanging for many years in a Welsh library, the canvas was recently acquired by the National Museum Cardiff for £300,000.¹⁷² The Glamorgan records do not reveal if Bruce owned other works by Lear, but given the friendliness of their correspondence (which endured until Lear’s death), it is extremely doubtful that Bruce limited himself to a single acquisition. Bruce also patronized G. F. Watts (1817-1904), a permanent house-guest of the Prinsep family at Little Holland House where Bruce was a regular visitor.¹⁷³ In an undated letter, Watts informs Bruce that an illness has prevented him from completing some (unnamed) works, even though Bruce had already paid for them.¹⁷⁴ Another letter from Watts, dated 29 July 1863, suggests that Bruce was about to become the proud owner of a picture worth 200 guineas.¹⁷⁵

Bruce also met original members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. At a private dinner in June 1860, Bruce found himself in the company of William Holman Hunt.¹⁷⁶ He continued to socialize with the artist: a note survives, wherein Holman Hunt

¹⁷¹Undated letter from Edward Lear to Bruce [GRO, DBr 153/14].

¹⁷²BBC News 2006 (internet); Art Fund 2007 (internet); National Museum Cardiff 2006 (internet). Henry Campbell Bruce had donated it to the Mountain Ash Urban District Council in 1924; it then hung in a stairwell at Aberdare Library.

¹⁷³Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 114.

¹⁷⁴Letter from “Signor” [Watts] to Bruce, Friday [1863] [GRO, DBr 161/1].

¹⁷⁵Letter from “Signor” [Watts] to Bruce, 29 July 1863 [GRO, DBr 161/2].

¹⁷⁶Letter from Bruce to his wife, 11 June 1860; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 174.

apologizes for being unable to dine with Bruce.¹⁷⁷ Bruce's ownership of pictures by Holman Hunt remains unproven, but he demonstrated an apparent and unfaltering interest in the painter's productions.¹⁷⁸ He was still asking after Holman Hunt's work in the 1890s.¹⁷⁹ Bruce was also acquainted with J. E. Millais. He met the artist ("whom I liked much") in June 1862.¹⁸⁰ However, years before his introduction to Millais, Bruce made the acquaintance of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In the late 1850s, Bruce was helping to raise funds for the restoration of Llandaff Cathedral, a project under the direction of J. P. Seddon and John Prichard.¹⁸¹ The medieval building had fallen into extreme disrepair and, following an abortive attempt to restore the cathedral in the eighteenth century, Dean Bruce Knight (Bruce's uncle) initiated new renovations in the nineteenth century.¹⁸² In early 1856, Seddon asked Rossetti to paint an altarpiece for the cathedral, but funds first had to be raised.¹⁸³ Jan Marsh has written a fine article on the origins of Rossetti's finished work, *The Seed of David* (1858-64), and my knowledge of Bruce's involvement owes much to her research. After it was agreed that Rossetti would develop preliminary

¹⁷⁷Letter from W. Holman Hunt to Bruce, 11 June 1863 [GRO, DBr 150/1].

¹⁷⁸Letter from Bruce to his wife, 28 July 1860; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 175.

¹⁷⁹Letter from W. Holman Hunt to Lord Aberdare, 7 May 1891 [GRO, DBr 150/2]. According to the letter, Bruce had inquired after Holman Hunt's current work at their last meeting. In response, Holman Hunt was now inviting Bruce and his wife to visit him at his studio.

¹⁸⁰Letter from Bruce to his wife, 26 June 1862; quoted in Bruce 1902, vol. 1, pp. 185-86.

¹⁸¹"Deanery, Llandaff, June 29, 1861," p. 2 [GRO, DL/DC B33]; Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 21.

¹⁸²GRO, DL/DC F21; Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 21. Rev. William Bruce Knight died in 1845.

¹⁸³Marsh 1999b, p. 608.

sketches, Bruce (acting as the treasurer of the reredos fund) set out to secure money for the project.¹⁸⁴ The subject was soon settled: Rossetti would create a triptych featuring a scene of the Nativity and, on its wings, two figures of David (shown as a shepherd and as a king).¹⁸⁵ Knowing funds were scarce, Rossetti offered to do the work for £100, but Bruce cordially offered £200 instead.¹⁸⁶ Then Rossetti risked affronting his patrons by demanding £400, but they agreed to the sum on two conditions: they would pay Rossetti so long as there was money to pay him with and he was to complete the central panel first (lest funding should fall through and the cathedral be stuck with one wing of a non-existent triptych).¹⁸⁷ Rossetti risked upsetting his patrons again when he began working on the right wing instead (*David Rex*).¹⁸⁸ Rossetti's progress was protracted, but Bruce duly paid the artist in increments. The triptych was not ready for the cathedral's inauguration in 1861 and the trauma of Lizzie's death in 1862 caused further delay.¹⁸⁹ Only in June 1864 did Rossetti complete the last panel (*David Pastor*), finally allowing parishioners to put the triptych into service.¹⁹⁰

One might suppose that Bruce disliked Rossetti by the end of the affair: Rossetti had quadrupled his fee and purposely disobeyed his patrons' instructions when he began working on a wing (rather than the central panel, as promised); then he failed to meet his deadlines. It was a recipe for disaster, but something rather different materialized instead:

¹⁸⁴Marsh 1999b, p. 608.

¹⁸⁵Marsh 1999b, p. 609.

¹⁸⁶Marsh 1999b, p. 610.

¹⁸⁷Marsh 1999b, p. 610.

¹⁸⁸Marsh 1999b, p. 612.

¹⁸⁹Marsh 1999b, p. 612.

¹⁹⁰Marsh 1999b, p. 612.

a casual friendship. I will not argue that Bruce and Rossetti became close chums because there is no evidence of this. However, in spite of Rossetti's increased fee, his willful disobedience, and his slow progress, Bruce remained attracted to Rossetti and his artistic circle. In early 1859, Henry Austin Bruce became a member of the Hogarth Club, the same organization to which every future partner in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. belonged, the same organization from which so many of the firm's future patrons emerged.¹⁹¹

The first germination of the Hogarth Club occurred in early 1858.¹⁹² The Rossetti brothers, Brown, and Holman Hunt, among others, were keen to form a club where like-minded artists could meet.¹⁹³ The club would serve three purposes, as explained by William Rossetti:

Three principal objects were held in view: (1) the combination of the artists concerned with amateurs and purchasers well affected to their aims in art; (2) the holding from time to time of exhibitions of works by the club members; and (3) the rather important point that these exhibitions, being club affairs and therefore not strictly public, would leave the artists free, if so disposed, to send the same works to the Royal Academy or to other exhibiting institutions which exclude productions previously made public.¹⁹⁴

The last point is noteworthy because some outsiders mistook the club for an anti-RA

¹⁹¹Marsh states that Bruce became a member of the Hogarth Club several weeks after a February meeting with Rossetti; Marsh 1999b, p. 612. However, according to his memoir, his membership commenced in May 1859; Bruce 1902, vol. 1, p. 115.

¹⁹²Letter from William Rossetti to W. B. Scott, 1 March 1858; quoted in Peattie 1990, p. 97.

¹⁹³Dakers 1999, p. 46.

¹⁹⁴Rossetti 1906, vol. 1, p. 224.

organization.¹⁹⁵ The confusion may have stemmed from some very real misgivings about the Royal Academy harboured by the likes of Brown and other club members who experienced few successes there. However, members such as Frederic Leighton were keen to build strong reputations through the Royal Academy and no one wished to exempt fellow members from future successes at the Royal Academy by mounting public exhibitions of their work. Hence the introduction of membership fees and the club's 'private' orientation.

When it first assembled on 10 April 1858, the Hogarth Club was quite small, but it already included Burne-Jones and Morris.¹⁹⁶ When the handbook *Rules of the Hogarth Club* was printed in March 1860, it boasted over six dozen members.¹⁹⁷ As mentioned before, in addition to Henry Austin Bruce, the Club included every future partner in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.¹⁹⁸ Some held executive positions: Brown and Morris were trustees and Rossetti sat on the club's management committee.¹⁹⁹ They evidently considered it an important venture. The Hogarth Club first found a home at 178 Piccadilly, then it moved to 6 Waterloo Place in the summer of 1859.²⁰⁰ The club met every Friday evening and mounted several exhibitions. The first exhibition was launched

¹⁹⁵Frederic G. Stephens, the club's secretary, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* to dispute allegations printed in the *Building News*. Apparently the journal had described the Hogarth Club as anti-RA and suggested its members would refuse to exhibit their work at the next Royal Academy. Stephens dismissed these allegations as absurd; *The Times* (17 November 1858), p. 10.

¹⁹⁶Cherry 1980, p. 238.

¹⁹⁷Hogarth Club 1860, pp. 13-17; Cherry 1980, p. 242.

¹⁹⁸Bruce is listed as a resident (non-artistic) member; Hogarth Club 1860, p. 15.

¹⁹⁹Hogarth Club 1860, p. 18.

²⁰⁰Vallance 1909, p. 26; Cherry 1980, pp. 238, 241.

in January 1859; the last exhibition ran between February and May 1861.²⁰¹ By this time, membership numbers were dwindling and the Hogarth Club closed its doors in December 1861.²⁰² Although it was short-lived, the Hogarth Club played a vital role in building support for the firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Through its exhibitions, Deborah Cherry notes, the firm's artists promoted their decorative wares to potential patrons (the club initially refused to display decorative objects, favouring the fine arts instead, but it relented and some later exhibitions included artistic productions that ranged from painted furnishings to stained-glass cartoons).²⁰³ Perhaps it was at the Hogarth Club that Bruce decided the artists were ready to tackle a large project and, when the opportunity of decorating a refreshment room at the South Kensington Museum became known to him, Bruce recommended the firm to Cole. It is a circumstantial argument, but also a compelling one. In his personal diaries, Cole never expressed any particular interest in the firm, its members, and its work on the Green Dining Room prior to its public debut. He had many opportunities to acquaint himself with the firm's products, but there is no proof that he greatly admired their work. On the other hand, Bruce has a definite history with the artists of the firm. He was so intrigued by their work that he joined their circle as a member of the Hogarth Club. In view of these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that Cole pursued the firm and instigated the Green Dining Room commission. It is even more difficult to believe that Bruce's approval of the Green Dining Room commission amounted to an empty signature.

²⁰¹Cherry 1980, pp. 238, 242.

²⁰²Cherry 1980, p. 242.

²⁰³Cherry 1980, p. 243.

I believe Bruce used his position as Cole's superior to secure the services of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. He enjoyed social connections to the firm's representatives and, as Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education, he could indulge their aspirations. Cole, by comparison, appears to have been indifferent to the firm's creative output – or, if not indifferent, a silent admirer. Despite his great clout at South Kensington, several more factors cast doubt on Cole's role as the commissioner of the Green Dining Room. It is supposed that Cole respected the firm's work and so he handpicked the firm for the job, but if this were true, why did he not employ the firm again? The firm finished the Green Dining Room years before the other refreshment rooms were completed, so Cole could not fault the company for tardiness. The room received praise from the architectural press, so Cole could not feel embarrassed by his choice. Moreover, the firm was willing to do more work at the South Kensington Museum. In April 1868, the firm submitted a tender for a stained-glass window that would have cost £209, but museum officials apparently passed on the offer.²⁰⁴ Coincidentally, by this date, Bruce could no longer influence Cole's decisions. Lord Russell's government fell in June 1866 and Bruce lost his appointment as the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education.²⁰⁵ It seems that the firm also lost their inside man.

My argument would be stronger if I could illustrate other instances of Bruce's

²⁰⁴The firm intended to create a double four-light window for the first-floor corridor above the refreshment rooms; tender from Morris & Co., 27 April 1868 [VAA, ED 84/6, p. 105]; see also Physick 1982, p. 130, note 65.

²⁰⁵His successor was Henry Thomas Lowry-Corry; Bonython/Burton 2003, p. 222.

patronage of the firm, but I am aware of none. Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. contributed stained-glass windows to Llandaff Cathedral between 1866 and 1874,²⁰⁶ but there is no evidence that Bruce was involved. Nevertheless, Rossetti's correspondence in 1869 suggests that Bruce had been an important acquaintance in the past and, as it so happened, Bruce proved himself to be Rossetti's ally in his time of need. Rossetti deeply regretted his decision to commit works of poetry to his wife's grave. He needed permission to exhume the body in order to retrieve his compositions and he hoped to do so without attracting bad publicity or upsetting his family. Not knowing how to proceed, he thought of Bruce and wrote to his friend Charles Augustus Howell, "it has suddenly flashed upon me that I believe a man I know pretty well is now Home Secretary. Is it not Henry A. Bruce?"²⁰⁷ Indeed, he was the Home Secretary and Bruce was soon informed of Rossetti's predicament. He wrote to the artist and assured him that the exhumation would be permitted in all likelihood.²⁰⁸ Howell, acting on Rossetti's behalf, would meet with Bruce, whom Rossetti described as "an old friend."²⁰⁹ After the exhumation took place, Rossetti updated his brother: "An order had first to be obtained from the Home Secretary, who strangely enough is an old and rather intimate acquaintance of my own – H. A.

²⁰⁶The windows were designed by Brown, Morris, and Burne-Jones; Sewter 1975, vol. 2, pp. 120-21.

²⁰⁷Letter from Rossetti to Howell, 3 September 1869; quoted in Doughty/Wahl 1965, vol. 2, p. 735.

²⁰⁸Letter from Bruce to "My dear Rossetti," 13 September 1869; quoted in Troxell 1937, p. 119.

²⁰⁹Letter from Rossetti to Howell, 16 September 1869; quoted in Troxell 1937, p. 120.

Bruce.”²¹⁰ Rossetti’s descriptions give the impression that Bruce was a kindred spirit, not a distant politician. Given these circumstances, I believe Bruce was an important advocate for Rossetti and the firm. I regard him as the man who motivated the museum to employ Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Simply put, I see Bruce as the true commissioner of the Green Dining Room.

²¹⁰Letter from Rossetti to his brother William, 13 October 1869; quoted in Doughty/Wahl 1965, vol. 2, p. 751.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE GREEN DINING ROOM AND DESIGN REFORM
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

May Morris, writing in the second quarter of the twentieth century, questioned if her contemporaries perceived the artistic significance of the Green Dining Room: “I wonder how many visitors who take their meals in the dining-room of the Victoria and Albert Museum to-day realize that they are sitting in a room that marks a period of English art in the Victorian age?”¹ The third quarter of the nineteenth century, the period to which she alludes, gave rise to the Arts and Crafts movement. It was an idealistic development, promoted by individuals who sought to raise the status of the decorative arts in fine art circles, find joy in their labour, and beautify the everyday. Many of these individuals looked to May’s father, William Morris, as an inspirational leader. In fact, both he and John Ruskin are widely regarded as the founding fathers of the Arts and Crafts movement even though their fame as design reformers long preceded the formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, from which the movement took its name. The Society, a splinter group of the Art Workers’ Guild, made its public debut in 1888 when it hosted an exhibition featuring a wide range of materials, in addition to informative

¹M. Morris 1936, p. 56.

lectures and demonstrations, at the groundbreaking New Gallery in Regent Street.²

Although the Arts and Crafts movement took its name from an organization that surfaced in the mid-1880s, many of the ideas that shaped the movement originated earlier, for example, in the works of A. W. N. Pugin (1812-52), the activities of G. E. Street, and the writings of Ruskin, all of which appealed, in different respects, to the sensibilities of the men who formed Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

A convert to Roman Catholicism, Pugin helped to spearhead the Gothic Revival in Britain. From his father, an architectural draughtsman, he inherited a love of Gothic architecture, which he deemed superior to all other styles. His artistic preferences were made abundantly clear by one of his earliest publications, *Contrasts* (1836). In this seminal work, Pugin compared the good and godly Middle Ages with the decadent and decaying industrial age of the nineteenth century.³ He also linked the Classical tradition with paganism and, consequently, he believed it to be wholly unsuited to the fabric of a Christian nation. On the other hand, he viewed the Gothic style as a pure expression of the Christian faith and eminently English. Thus, he advocated its application to modern

²The Art Workers' Guild formed in 1884 and encouraged the unity of the arts, but it shunned publicity and it excluded women. Within a few years of its formation, some Guild members were keen to try another approach: embrace interactions with the public and thereby expose the achievements of modern craftspeople to wider audiences. Hence the establishment of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society under the guidance of W. R. Lethaby, Walter Crane, Lewis Day, Heywood Sumner, William De Morgan, W. A. S. Benson, and T. J. Cobden-Sanderson, the bookbinder credited with coining the term "Arts and Crafts." See Naylor 1971, p. 123; Cumming/Kaplan 1991, pp. 25-26.

³The full title of Pugin's publication conveyed the author's bias for all things Gothic: *Contrasts, or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries and Similar Buildings of the Present Day; Shewing the Present Decay of Taste*. A revised edition appeared in 1841.

buildings.⁴ The Gothic style, with its pointed arches, flying buttresses, and stained-glass windows, was adopted by Pugin as the one true language, the very spirit of English architecture. Indeed, many Arts and Crafts architects would share Pugin's admiration for the medieval age and find inspiration in the history, craftsmanship, and beauty of its monuments. Of more lasting influence, however, was Pugin's plea to construct buildings honestly, without superfluous ornament, and to respect the flavour of a place by incorporating local materials and regional traditions.⁵

The architect Street, Webb's mentor and Morris's one-time employer, shared Pugin's enthusiasm for the Gothic style. He characterized it as vibrant and uplifting, the very antithesis of the Classical tradition, which he viewed as sober and static: "Classic architecture is that of the lintel and impost, involving the idea of rest: Gothic is that of the arch and the flying buttress, involving the idea of life and motion."⁶ Like Pugin before him, Street viewed the Gothic style as native to England and he derided the Classical tradition as an alien import, unworthy of propagation on English soil: "The one style is indigenous, natural, real, and suitable; the other, foreign, contrary in its construction to natural principles, and unsuited in its effects to English habits, and in its design to our English climate."⁷ Like Pugin also, Street did not limit his architectural practice to the design of grand edifices. He immersed himself in the details of his structures and other special commissions, fostering in him a deep appreciation for all the arts connected with

⁴Harvey/Press 1991, p. 16.

⁵Cumming/Kaplan 1991, p. 32.

⁶Street 1874, p. 363.

⁷Street 1853, p. 5.

the construction and ornamentation of entire buildings, inside and out.⁸ Some of Street's most influential articles on the unity of the arts, as well as the architect's responsibilities as a designer, appeared in the *Ecclesiologist*, a journal published by the Ecclesiological Society.⁹ In his essay "On Glass Painting," Street suggested that stained-glass windows ought to receive the attention of architects.¹⁰ His suggestion was propelled by the belief that harmony in the built environment could only be achieved by a careful consideration of the sum of a building's parts. In other words, good architects needed to familiarize themselves with the crafts that gave substance to their structures. Street's example as a multi-talented architect-designer provided a strong dose of inspiration to Webb, Morris, and the leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement.¹¹ However, in his enthusiasm for (and engagement with) the decorative arts, Street was not alone. Other architects were encouraging their peers to embrace various craft forms. William Burges deserves mention as an avid promoter of the architect-designer paradigm. After reviewing the fruit of the 1862 International Exhibition, he expressed hope in the abilities of architects to better the world of design through their own interactions with the decorative arts: "When we see one architect designing stained glass windows, another secular and domestic plate, a third furniture combined with colour, and a fourth sculpture, we feel that this is surely a

⁸As an authority on medieval embroidery, Street was instrumental in the nineteenth-century revival of ecclesiastical embroidery.

⁹The Ecclesiological Society began in 1839 as the Cambridge Camden Society. It was founded by like-minded students of Cambridge University who sought to advance the study of Gothic architecture and ecclesiastical relics; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 16.

¹⁰Street 1852, pp. 238, 241; cited by M. Harrison 1980, p. 28.

¹¹Henderson 1967, p. 36; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 29.

right good beginning and that there is no occasion to despair of the result.”¹²

Ruskin was an even greater influence and attracted many spirited artists into his orbit. He borrowed heavily from Pugin, but, divorced from Pugin’s Catholicism and blessed with an authoritative eloquence, Ruskin’s writings found a larger audience. Ruskin regarded the rapid spread of industry, with its deafening machines and its cheerless monotony, as a scourge on the nation’s landscape. He viewed factory workers as virtual slaves, forced into dismal routines in brutish environments, all for the benefit of meagre wages.¹³ Ruskin grieved especially for their lack of meaningful work: rather than finding satisfaction in the creation of admirable articles, from beginning to end, factory workers were driven to despair by isolated and mindless tasks, fashioning pieces of trivial things to be assembled for unconscientious consumers. Modern labourers, he opined, were reduced to unthinking automatons. In his pivotal publication, *The Stones of Venice*, he argued:

Men were not intended to work with the accuracy of tools, to be precise and perfect in all their actions. If you will have that precision out of them, and make their fingers measure degrees like cog-wheels, and their arms strike curves like compasses, you must unhumanize them. All the energy of their spirits must be given to make cogs and compasses of themselves.¹⁴

In “The Nature of Gothic,” a profoundly influential chapter of *The Stones of Venice*, Ruskin identified a need for responsible consumerism. To improve manufactures and, by extension, the lives of factory workers, consumers had to show more responsibility in

¹²Burges 1862b, p. 336.

¹³Swenarton 1995, p. 207.

¹⁴Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic,” pp. 180-269, in Cook/Wedderburn 1904, vol. 10, p. 192.

their purchases.¹⁵ Ruskin developed three essential rules to guide the selections of concerned shoppers. First, “never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which *Invention* has no share.”¹⁶ Second, “never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end,” and third, “never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving records of great works.”¹⁷ His readers learned to eschew modern contraptions, with immaculate surfaces and ornate details. Such products were tarnished by the knowledge that their mechanical perfection resulted from the absence of the artisan’s touch.¹⁸ Technical wizardry was no substitute for artistic experience.

In “The Nature of Gothic,” Ruskin expounded the theory that art was a reflection of the society, or era, that produced it.¹⁹ Weak ages fostered feeble art whereas noble epochs inspired great art. In the best of times, Ruskin believed, magnificent edifices were erected by individuals seeking higher rewards than fame and fortune; craftspeople expressed themselves in their work, imbuing their creations with warmth and humanity. Like Pugin before him, Ruskin revered Gothic art and medieval society. He envisioned the medieval craftsman, supported by a network of sympathetic patrons, as a person of free will, an independent worker who found joy in designing and making useful objects of beauty. Morris embraced Ruskin’s definition of the medieval craftsman as his own, contrasting the pleasures of Gothic art with the disappointments of modern practises:

¹⁵Boris 1986, p. 5.

¹⁶Ruskin in Cook/Wedderburn 1904, vol. 10, p. 196.

¹⁷Ruskin in Cook/Wedderburn 1904, vol. 10, p. 197.

¹⁸Naylor 1971, p. 27.

¹⁹Boris 1986, p. 4; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 20.

Here then I want you to understand . . . that the Gothic art which we have tried to revive was the work of free craftsmen working for no master or profit-grinder, and capable of expressing their own thoughts by means of their work, which was no mere burden to them but was blended with pleasure; that art or beauty was a necessary incident to all handicraft and was not paid for as a distinct article . . . On the contrary in reviving Gothic art the cultivated men who are striving to bring in a rational and popular style of architecture and decoration are condemned to see their work carried out by workmen who are working for a master who has to grind a profit out of them and so can afford them neither leisure nor thought in their work.²⁰

Ruskin and Morris encouraged a handicraft revival, believing it would bless its adherents with more stimulating work and its public with more beautiful, and meaningful, wares.²¹ For such a revival to be successful, manual labour had to be cast in a positive light, which Ruskin was careful to do. He endorsed handicraft as a worthy endeavour, so long as it did not succumb to a two-tier division of labour (minds versus hands), wherein certain (superior) persons acted as the designers, conceiving ideas, and other (inferior) persons acted as the makers, producing things.²² An object's designer and its maker was, ideally, one person and s/he delighted in both the object's conception and its materialization.²³ Ruskin's characterization of the contented craftsperson informed Morris's own views on decoration. Morris linked beauty in art to joy in labour: "To give people pleasure in the

²⁰Morris, "The Gothic Revival [II]," pp. 74-93, in LeMire 1969, p. 88.

²¹Boris 1986, p. xiv.

²²Ruskin in Cook/Wedderburn 1904, vol. 10, p. 200.

²³Ruskin did not invent this ideal. Earlier commentators had applauded the union of the artist and the workman in one person, although some looked to eras other than the Middle Ages for models of this specimen. For example, when asked how best to apply the arts to manufacture, Dr. Waagen (whom I mentioned in my second chapter) spoke of the multi-talented artisans of the Renaissance: "In former times the artists were more workmen, and the workmen were more artists, as in the time of Raphael, and it is very desirable to restore this happy connexion." Waagen in *Report* 1835, p. 11.

things they must perform *use*, that is one great office of decoration; to give people pleasure in the things they must perform *make*, that is the other use of it.”²⁴ However, as Tanya Harrod duly noted, neither Morris nor the founders of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (many of whom worked as commercial designers) aggrandized handwork as the only acceptable form of art manufacture.²⁵ Nor did Morris contest every machine of modern industry. To the contrary, he believed machines could relieve labourers from the worst forms of toil, if used properly: “No useless work being done and all irksome labour saved as much as possible by machines made our servants instead of our masters, it would follow that whatever other work was done would be accompanied by pleasure in the doing.”²⁶

Ruskin’s image of the liberated artisan inspired many experiments in connection with the Arts and Crafts movement. The movement’s leaders deplored the separation between design and manufacture made manifest by commercial art production, whereby designers conceived things and labourers made them. Such a process, they felt, diminished the quality of the product and stifled the creative spirit of its maker. However, in practice, Arts and Crafts architects struggled to achieve organic design while simultaneously respecting the full contributions of craftspeople. They found it difficult to generate a unified design in an architectural setting without also limiting the interpretative

²⁴W. Morris 1878, p. 5.

²⁵See Harrod, “Paradise Postponed: William Morris in the Twentieth Century,” pp. 5-23, in Harris 1996, p. 8; she repeats this argument in Harrod 1999, p. 17. Only later did practitioners of the Arts and Crafts movement begin to focus on handwork to the exclusion of other modes of production; Bradley 1978, p. 112.

²⁶Morris, “Art and Labour,” pp. 94-118, in LeMire 1969, p. 116.

influence of the craftspeople engaged in the work.²⁷ To achieve the former (good design), the activities of the latter (good craftspeople) had to be harnessed. Webb, for example, acquired a strong reputation for designing all elements of his buildings and sticking to his own ideas, sometimes in spite of his patrons' wishes and sometimes to the ire of his hired help.²⁸ As a former assistant, George Jack (1855-1932), explained:

There was only one thing in which Webb was autocratic, that was in having his own way in carrying out his designs. If clients questioned them, he used persuasion, and if that failed he recommended them to try another architect. He was equally autocratic in this respect in his office work. There were no "ghosts" in his office – every separate detail was designed by himself, even to the smallest moulding – he allowed no one else to interfere in these matters.²⁹

Webb kept few assistants and, by attending to the details of his buildings himself, he afforded little opportunity to accident or to the whim of others.³⁰ Webb's convictions occasionally put him at odds with the tradespeople who gave material form to his designs. In order to realize his vision of Arisaig House, designed in 1863 for Francis Dukinfield Palmer Astley (1825-68) and destined for a Scottish location, Webb pitted himself against

²⁷Cumming/Kaplan 1991, p. 8. Gillian Naylor asserted that, in general, the Arts and Crafts movement's valorization of the designer-maker helped to cultivate an aesthetic of individualism; Naylor 1971, p. 29.

²⁸As Sheila Kirk noted in her dissertation, Webb probably learned his habit of working on all the details from his old mentor, G. E. Street; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, pp. 127-28.

²⁹Jack 1915, p. 5.

³⁰Webb had part-time assistants before he acquired a chief assistant (Bassett) in 1869. George Jack assumed this role in 1884; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 34. Jack, an American by birth, was raised in Glasgow where he trained under the architect Horatio K. Bromhead. He would assume control of Webb's London office following Webb's retirement in 1900; Gere/Whiteway 1993, p. 207.

the local contractors.³¹ Their English was limited and their techniques of construction were lacklustre, or so it was reported, but Webb was unfazed. Determined to see his first country house built to his standards, Webb monitored the project (and the men) closely:

He managed . . . to make them understand one thing – that he meant to have his own way; for he set them to work building experimental slabs of walling, in order to settle the kind of facing the house was to have. This was a difficult task, because the walling stone was exceedingly hard Webb got his way, however, more or less, as he always did, for he was an obstinate man. He taught the masons their business, much to their disgust at the interfering foreigner.³²

Jack's account smacks of prejudice, but it nonetheless speaks to Webb's resolve. He governed his projects unilaterally and his stance likely rankled other persons convinced of the rightness of their own efforts. His individualist approach to architecture also prevented him from accepting every commission that came his way.³³

Although the Green Dining Room predates the formation of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society by two decades, the history of its decoration exemplifies certain contradictions that marked the Arts and Crafts movement, including the elevated importance of the designer's conception above the craftsman's experience. The Green Dining Room was designed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., but the firm used subcontractors, Dunn & Co., to complete the project.³⁴ The figurative panels that Burne-

³¹Astley was a former member of the Hogarth Club; Kirk 2005, p. 104. The house was erected in the vicinity of Arisaig, a village in Inverness-shire, Scotland.

³²Jack 1915, p. 4.

³³Curry/Kirk 1984, p. 2.

³⁴MacCarthy 1994, p. 213; Linda Parry, "Domestic Decoration," pp. 136-47 in Parry 1996a, pp. 139-40. Dunn & Co., with its roster of plumbers, carpenters, and painters, did all kinds of work for the firm between the mid-1860s and the mid-1880s; Harvey/Press 1991, p. 82. Some Dunn & Co. records, held by the William Morris Gallery, document their participation in the decoration of the Green Dining Room; see

Jones designed for the dado also demonstrated the paradox, exemplified by the building of Arisaig House, between the ideal of an individual designer-maker and the reality of a master eye that ruled over subordinate hands. His fourteen representations of the sun, moon, and months of the year were among the final additions to the interior. The compositions, conceived by Burne-Jones and executed by different painters, were uneven in quality and failed to impress Morris. According to his biographer, the panels were “not uniform enough in style to make a consecutive or harmonious scheme of decoration.”³⁵ As a result, Morris had them repainted by Burne-Jones’s assistant, Charles Fairfax Murray.³⁶ Murray’s employment provided him with a decent income and invaluable experience, but perhaps his predecessors (the artisans who painted the figurative panels before him) were stung by Morris’s rejection of their work. Unfortunately, there is little way of knowing how they felt because very few persons, with the exception of the interior’s principal designers, can be positively identified as decorators of the Green Dining Room. For instance, a rare reference to an employee of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. survives among the records of Burne-Jones. In his account book (of which I will write more later), between the dates of 10 October and 14 October 1867, the artist noted a debt of twelve shillings to “Sten” for work done at Kensington, presumably

“Extracts from the Account Book of Selwyn Dunn’s Grandfather, A Decorator and Builder, of Work Done for Morris and Company,” pp. 1, 2 [WMG, file: Morris & Co. (premises and employees)].

³⁵Vallance 1909, p. 82.

³⁶Vallance 1909, p. 82; Henderson 1967, p. 83. Murray became Burne-Jones’s first assistant when he joined his studio in late 1866; Elliott 2000a, pp. 13, 18; Elliott 2000b, p. 19.

in conjunction with the Green Dining Room.³⁷ According to Frances Collard, the firm used a cabinetmaker named Stennett, so perhaps this man helped to panel the lower walls.³⁸ As for the individuals who helped to paint the figurative compositions, their names are missing from extant records and thus, until new evidence surfaces, their identities are lost. However, some impression of their response to technical improvements may be gleaned from Murray's reaction to the censure of his own work. Murray came to know the disappointment of lost art, erased by the brushstrokes of his perfectionist master, Burne-Jones: "An artist like Mr. Jones cannot be satisfied with any work but his own and has always destroyed anything I have done for him however carefully, so that it is no pleasure to do it."³⁹

A number of Burne-Jones's preparatory drawings for the Green Dining Room survive. Studies for the dado's figurative panels, dating to about 1866 or 1867, are held by the V&A (E.2897-1927 to E.2904-1927). Worked in pencil and chalk, they consist of

³⁷FM, B-J A/c, p. 29.

³⁸Frances Collard, "Furniture," pp. 155-63 in Parry 1996a, p. 160. Other persons connected with the decorations of the Green Dining Room are Harry Ellis Wooldridge (1845-1917) – a studio assistant to Burne-Jones, the painting of the moon wall panel has been attributed to him; M. Harrison 1980, p. 54 – and Rowland James Morris (c. 1847-1909) – a ceramic sculptor credited with modelling the frieze with the hound-and-hare motif; Wade 1912, p. 89; Frayling 1987, pp. 62-63. However, as I noted in Chapter Two, the modelling of the plaster-cast wall work and the frieze has elsewhere been attributed to W. Wright; NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 18. Additionally, a report penned by the firm's manager, George Warington Taylor, gives some impression of the distribution of work at South Kensington among the firm's employees, but it offers few other details. So, for example, we learn that the ceiling pattern was completed at a rate of 4½ square feet per day per man, but we do not learn the number of men set to this task nor their names; NAL, 86.SS.57.

³⁹Undated letter from C. F. Murray to [W. S.] Spanton, [Dulwich Picture Gallery]; quoted by Codell in Watson 1997, p. 37.

very loose sketches.⁴⁰ The V&A also possesses a preliminary list, penned by Burne-Jones, which the artist used to plan the layout of the dado. In a formulaic manner, he itemizes the contents of each figurative panel, giving special attention to emblematic birds and plants. So, for example, Burne-Jones proposed pairing a kingfisher with bare boughs and a blanket of snow for the month of January whereas for the warmer month of June he proposed pairing a blackbird with roses and daisies.⁴¹ Although the final compositions often deviated from Burne-Jones's initial selections, his list is significant because it illuminates his intention to create a legible narrative – a progression of the seasons – in the Green Dining Room. Nine drapery studies, for the figures of the stained-glass windows, are held by the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery (1904P25 to 1904P33).⁴² The Fogg Art Museum owns a more finished study (1902.15) and still other preparatory works can be found at Kelmscott Manor.⁴³

In addition to these visual documents of Burne-Jones's work, there is an account book, in two volumes, which the artist kept to track his contributions to the firm. The account book, now in the possession of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, makes repeated references to the South Kensington Museum. The earliest relevant entry reads:

⁴⁰Some bear the handwriting of Murray; Stephen Astley in Parry 1996a, p. 151, cat. I.8.

⁴¹V&A Print Room, PD.52B.

⁴²Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104. As Linda Parry noted, the final compositions vary in some respects from the preliminary drawings; Parry 1996b, p. 205, note 19. Birmingham also possesses a full-length figure study (1927P454) that shows striking similarities to the right-hand figure of the Green Dining Room's west window.

⁴³Christian 1975, p. 68. Eleven of the more finished drawings are kept there.

“To six figures for S. Kensington,” but it was subsequently struck out.⁴⁴ A later entry reads: “To 4 large designs for Kensington,” for which Burne-Jones received £28.⁴⁵ He received another £14 for “2 designs Kens.”⁴⁶ Then, in two separate entries, Burne-Jones noted the receipt of £35 for seven “cartoons.”⁴⁷ A. C. Sewter supposed that one of these final entries was made in error (i.e, one was an unintended duplicate of the other): “There seems to be no reason why the 7 cartoons should have been charged for twice, and this must be a mistake.”⁴⁸ Sewter believed that the final entries referred to Burne-Jones’s designs for the figurative panels of the stained-glass windows. Conversely, he cautiously identified the earlier entries concerning six “designs” as references to the dado’s painted panels.⁴⁹ It is unfortunate that Burne-Jones was not more descriptive when he scribbled notes into his account book; extra details might have made references to specific works of art less obscure. However, I feel there is no reason to disregard one of the final entries as an erroneous duplicate of the other. Neither entry was struck out, which could signify that Burne-Jones wrote them purposely and regarded both as factually correct.

I believe that alternate interpretations of the entries in Burne-Jones’s account book are possible. Museum records show that the Green Dining Room’s stained-glass

⁴⁴The entry was made between 14 August and 1 October 1866; FM, B-J A/c, p. 25v.

⁴⁵The entry was added between 5 December and 17 December 1866; FM, B-J A/c, p. 26v.

⁴⁶This item appears after 1 March 1867; FM, B-J A/c, p. 26v.

⁴⁷The first entry reads, “7 cartoons, S Kensington.” The second entry is quite similar, referring to seven “S. K. cartoons.” Both entries were recorded after 25 February 1868; FM, B-J A/c, p. 30v.

⁴⁸Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104.

⁴⁹Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104.

windows were finished before the dado's painted panels.⁵⁰ Presumably, then, Burne-Jones completed designs for the stained-glass windows before he focussed on the dado. Because Burne-Jones makes reference to six "designs" before he mentions seven "cartoons" and because the Green Dining Room's windows depict six figures (not seven), I believe the earlier ("designs") entries may refer to preliminary studies for the stained-glass windows.⁵¹ Accordingly, the two final ("cartoons") entries may refer to the fourteen figurative panels of the dado: two entries, indicating seven studies apiece, could signify a total of fourteen compositions. Simple arithmetic points to an answer that strays from Sewter's calculations, but my equation is not without its own limitations. Admittedly, the term "cartoon" is more readily associated with the medium of stained glass, which lends weight to Sewter's analysis. If Burne-Jones was employing the term "cartoons" to refer to preliminary sketches for oil paintings, he was using it in an unconventional fashion.

More conventional was Burne-Jones's habit of recycling compositions for new works of art. Like his brother-in-law Edward Poynter and other artists of his time, Burne-Jones was not above reusing tried-and-true compositions for new projects and instances of this practice involve the Green Dining Room. A well-known example is Burne-Jones's adaptation of his stained-glass figures (the *Garland Weavers*) for an incomplete

⁵⁰As I noted in Chapter Two, the painted panels were the only unfinished components of the Green Dining Room in 1869; Lieut.-Col. Scott in the 16th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1869, p. 385.

⁵¹If, however, we accept Sewter's interpretation, whereby the seven cartoons signify preparatory studies for the stained-glass windows, we cannot account for the seventh design, a surplus figure. It is doubtful that Burne-Jones prepared a seventh design for a seventh stained-glass figure that never materialized.

series of paintings known as *The Garland*.⁵² It is widely accepted that the conception of the stained-glass windows preceded the development of the painted series, but the chronology is very tight and Burne-Jones likely worked on both projects simultaneously: the firm's tender to glaze the refreshment room's windows was approved in October 1866, but elements of the painted series are attributed to this period also. In fact, *A Girl Tending Flowers* (fig. 5-1), once intended for *The Garland* and now on permanent display at Leighton House in London, is signed and dated (by the artist) to 1866.⁵³ It depicts a solitary woman as she delicately fingers a cluster of roses, symbols of tamed Nature, clinging obligingly to their stake. The containment of the roses is mirrored by the woman's confinement in the enclosed courtyard. The composition recalls Burne-Jones's design for the right panel of the left window on the north wall, although several details differ. For example, the patterned white dress of the stained-glass figure is solid red in the painting and the woman's hair is no longer beribboned, but partially covered by a scarf. The bright yellow tulips, so prominent in the stained glass, have been replaced by quieter plants and a few architectural elements have been altered or obscured (e.g., the decorative arrangement of the window's paved walkway was omitted in favour of plainer stone slabs). Despite these small variations, however, the similarities between the two compositions are overwhelming: fine art mirrors decorative art. As Stephen Wildman and John Christian have keenly observed, Burne-Jones's pluralistic approach to painting

⁵²Christian 1975, p. 68.

⁵³The painting, executed in gouache, was gifted to the Borough of Fulham (now a part of the larger London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham) through the Cecil French Bequest. See Christian 1975, p. 68; Beyond Burne-Jones 2007 (internet).

had important consequences for his art:

Burne-Jones's readiness to blur the boundaries between easel painting and decorative design naturally had profound repercussions for both, although there was an important difference. Because the designs for applied art nearly always came first, the effect in their case was general; they simply tended to be more pictorial than they would have been if they had not been designed by a painter. On the other hand, the paintings which derive from decorative design bear signs of this in a much more specific sense. Indeed, the connection helps to explain some of the most salient features of Burne-Jones's art.⁵⁴

The authors noted Burne-Jones's preference for shallow compositions, decorative pictures that ascribed to the following formula: "a figure or group of figures in the foreground plane "hanging" on a screen drawn across the middle distance – a curtain, a rose pergola, a piece of architecture or landscape."⁵⁵ This formula was applied to many painted panels in the Green Dining Room.



Figure 5-1: Edward Burne-Jones, *A Girl Tending Flowers*, 1866. London, Leighton House (Cecil French Bequest). Reproduced from *Beyond Burne-Jones* 2007 (internet).

⁵⁴Wildman/Christian 1998, pp. 146-47.

⁵⁵Wildman/Christian 1998, pp. 147-48.



Figure 5-2: Green Dining Room: painted wall panel, *Sun*.



Figure 5-3: Edward Burne-Jones, *Day*, 1870. Cambridge, MA, Fogg Art Museum.
Reproduced from www.artmuseums.harvard.edu.

Another, but lesser known, adaptation of a Green Dining Room composition has been identified by Wildman and Christian. The design of *Sun* (fig. 5-2), one of fourteen painted panels that ornament the dado, was reworked for his representation of *Day* (fig. 5-

3), a painting that once belonged to Frederick R Leyland (1832-92), the extremely wealthy Liverpool shipowner who, it seems, is best remembered for his role as the unwitting patron of Whistler's Peacock Room.⁵⁶ Probing further, I discovered that Burne-Jones reused several other designs for painted panels in the Green Dining Room, namely *January* (fig. 5-4) and *November* (fig. 5-5), for his representations of *Autumn* (fig. 5-6) and *Spring* (fig. 5-7), two pictures that also belonged to Leyland. I believe that Burne-Jones was working on his designs for the dado of the Green Dining Room by (or soon after) late February 1868. It is unclear when he painted his two pictures for Leyland,



Figure 5-4: Green Dining Room: painted wall panel, *January* (Aquarius).

⁵⁶Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 116. Like *Sun*, *Day* is represented as a youthful male nude. The same model may have posed for both pictures; the two faces are remarkably alike. *Day* differs in having an architectural backdrop and the figure has paler skin, a repositioned left foot, a remodelled left arm, and a new attribute (a fiery torch).



Figure 5-5: Green Dining Room: painted wall panel, *November* (Sagittarius).



Figure 5-6: Edward Burne-Jones, *Autumn*, 1868. London, Roy Miles Fine Paintings.
Reproduced from www.artunframed.com.



Figure 5-7: Edward Burne-Jones, *Spring*, 1868. London, Roy Miles Fine Paintings. Reproduced from www.artunframed.com.

but the shipowner received them in the autumn, a fact established by Burne-Jones's correspondence, specifically two letters addressed to Leyland, the relevant sections of which have been published in various sources, including Georgiana Burne-Jones's biography of her husband (1904).⁵⁷ One letter is dated 19 September 1868 and the other, unmarked, is thought to date to 1869. With Burne-Jones's account book, they establish a narrow time-frame for the development of both sets of works. Therefore, although I regard the panels of the Green Dining Room as the earlier compositions, *Spring* and *Autumn* can be viewed as contemporaneous projects.

⁵⁷The two letters are fully cited by Merrill 1998, p. 366, note 32. The original documents belong to the Pennell Whistler Collection of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (PWC 6A).

F. R. Leyland was a successful businessman of humble origins. He first made a name for himself in the firm of John Bibby & Sons, a shipping enterprise based in Liverpool, which he joined in 1844 as an errand boy.⁵⁸ He rose quickly through the ranks and two decades later Leyland was made a partner of the firm. As his power and affluence grew, so did the magnificence of his accommodations. Leyland took possession of Speke Hall, a half-timbered Tudor house near Liverpool, in late 1867.⁵⁹ He also spent considerable time in London and in 1868 he took full possession of 23 Queen's Gate, a stately residence in Kensington.⁶⁰ About this time, the shipping magnate began to collect art more intensively, much to the benefit of Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other modern artists in Britain.⁶¹ According to Georgiana Burne-Jones, her husband was first patronized by Leyland – along with another important benefactor, William Graham – after exhibiting some works at the Old Water Colour Society in the summer of 1865. She writes, “to them for some years went the most important things Edward did, and each of these shrewd business men became his real friend.”⁶² *Spring* and *Autumn*, painted in gouache, were among many works created by Burne-Jones for Leyland. *Spring* is depicted as a modest maiden, dressed in a simple green frock, the fabric of which she fingers clumsily. Her figure is framed by a cloth backdrop, warm gold in colour, over which sprays of apple blossoms protrude. Painted on a cartouche in the lower foreground

⁵⁸Duval 1986, p. 110; Merrill 1998, p. 112.

⁵⁹Leyland only leased the manor house, which was being held in trust for its true owner, Adelaide Watt, a young orphan; Merrill 1998, p. 118.

⁶⁰Duval 1986, p. 110; Merrill 1998, p. 153.

⁶¹Merrill 1998, p. 154.

⁶²Burne-Jones 1904, vol. 1, p. 295.

are some verses by Morris:

Spring am I, too soft of heart
Much to speak ere I depart;
Ask the Summer-tide to prove
The abundance of my love.⁶³

With respect to their figures, Leyland's *Spring* and the Green Dining Room's *November* are nearly identical. *Spring* differs only in the colour of her robe (originally, it was a deep crimson), her bare feet (they were shod in the original), her attribute (the statuette of the centaur is replaced by a sprig of flowers), and her face (it appears that Burne-Jones used a different model for the watercolour). *Autumn* is robed in a rich red and holds an apple in her left hand. Behind her, the mature limbs of apple trees (dense with foliage and laden with ripened fruit) peep over a coral curtain. Paired with her image are four more lines of verse by Morris:

Saddest Autumn here I stand,
Worn of heart, and weak of hand,
Nought but rest seems good to me,
Speak the word that sets me free!⁶⁴

The figure of *Autumn* strongly resembles the figure of *January* painted for the Green Dining Room, but some details have changed (for example, the blue-and-red garments of *January* have become entirely red, the statuette of the water-bearer has been supplanted by an apple, and a new model has lent her likeness to *Autumn*). However, there can be no doubt about the duplication of the figures.

⁶³The verses were printed in the *Athenaeum* (30 September 1882), p. 440. The article (pp. 438-40), a review of Leyland's art collection – presumably penned by F. G. Stephens – was cited by Merrill 1998, p. 366, note 32.

⁶⁴*Athenaeum* (30 September 1882), p. 440.

Both works were completed in 1868, when they were delivered to Leyland with a letter from Burne-Jones explaining his interest in creating a full cycle of the seasons:

I intend doing four more figures to complete the set – a Summer nearly naked, a Winter heavily draped, and a Day and Night – by degrees. Of course I should like them all to go together, but you needn't feel tied by that, for it is not of vast importance, but I think they would make a nice set of decorative pictures for one room.⁶⁵

Leyland agreed to Burne-Jones's proposal and the *Seasons* developed into a bittersweet allegory, described by the *Athenaeum* thus: "As Spring is maidenhood, so Summer is the marriage time, Autumn the wifehood, and Winter the widowhood of the year."⁶⁶ The *Seasons*, along with *Day and Night*, were installed at 23 Queen's Gate where they graced the dining room.⁶⁷ Burne-Jones wrote to Leyland, "I hope you will eat and drink with friends in their company for fifty years to come."⁶⁸ Pleased with his little gems, Leyland lent the pictures to a variety of exhibitions over time.⁶⁹ Displayed in 1869 at the exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, *Spring* and *Autumn* attracted the attention of *The Times*, which described them as "stately full-length decorative figures, . . . contrasted harmonies of cool and warm colouring."⁷⁰ In 1878, all six figures were exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery where they were received more tepidly.⁷¹ The series

⁶⁵Quoted in Burne-Jones 1904, vol. 2, pp. 9-10.

⁶⁶*Athenaeum* (30 September 1882), p. 440.

⁶⁷Both *Summer* and *Winter* are signed and dated 1870; Christian 1975, p. 46.

Maria Zambaco modelled for the head of *Summer*.

⁶⁸Quoted in Burne-Jones 1904, vol. 2, p. 10.

⁶⁹The *Seasons* are modest in size, measuring 122.5 x 45 cm each; Christian 1975, pp. 44, 46. The works are presently owned by Roy Miles Fine Paintings, an art dealership in London. *Day and Night* belong to the Fogg Art Museum (Cambridge, MA).

⁷⁰*The Times* (6 May 1869), p. 6; cited by Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 118, note 40.

⁷¹The pictures could be seen in the venue's East Gallery; Newall 1995, p. 57.

was deemed inferior to newer works by Burne-Jones, but *The Times* still managed to portray the older pictures' merits in polite terms: "The symbolic figures of Day and Night and the Seasons have much grace and beauty, and there is great felicity of invention in their treatment and attributes."⁷²

By 1878 Leyland was living at a new address, 49 Princes Gate.⁷³ At his second residence in London, Leyland sponsored a scheme of decoration, involving multiple architects and artists, that resulted in one of the greatest Aesthetic interiors of the day.⁷⁴ Much of the work was done in consultation with Murray Marks (1840-1918), an art dealer with strong connections to London's most affluent families.⁷⁵ The dining room, transformed by Whistler into the Peacock Room, became the most famous feature of 49 Princes Gate and the *Seasons* were relegated to another area of the house, the magnificent drawing room designed by Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912) in 1879.⁷⁶ The drawing room occupied the first floor (i.e., one storey above ground level) and special screens divided the space into three distinct areas, or salons.⁷⁷ Extending from the intermediate salon, perched above the main portico, was a picture alcove – "a gallery sort of place," Shaw wrote.⁷⁸ The *Seasons* hung in this lush environment, neighbouring rich furnishings

⁷²*The Times* (2 May 1878), p. 7.

⁷³He purchased the home in July 1874, but he seems not to have resided there until 1876. See Duval 1986, p. 112; Merrill 1998, p. 155; British History 2000 (internet).

⁷⁴Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 109.

⁷⁵Merrill 1998, p. 156; Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 112.

⁷⁶Saint 1976, p. 152.

⁷⁷Manufactured by Charles Mellier & Company, the screens were composed of walnut and burnished brass; Merrill 1998, pp. 157, 366, note 47.

⁷⁸Letter from Shaw to his student Arthur Keen, c. 1879; quoted in Saint 1976, p. 188. The intermediate salon was lit from above by a glass roof; Child 1890, p. 84. Theodore Child's article, published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, was cited by

of faintly exotic character and Pre-Raphaelite masterpieces, including Millais's *Eve of Saint Agnes*, Brown's *Burial of Christ*, and Rossetti's *Salutation*.⁷⁹ However, they were uprooted from 49 Princes Gate following Leyland's sudden death in 1892. Christie's hosted the estate sale, which witnessed the dramatic dispersal of Leyland's art collection.⁸⁰ The *Seasons* sold for 1150 guineas as a set while *Day* and *Night* fetched 1350 guineas as a pair.⁸¹

It is exciting to find direct links between the paintings of a dining room in a private dwelling (23 Queen's Gate) and the pictures of a dining room in a public museum. When they founded Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., the firm's partners promised to supply discerning patrons with beautiful products at affordable prices.⁸² Generally, however, the firm's goods were prohibitively expensive: they rarely entered the homes of the masses and frequently converged upon affluent addresses.⁸³ In a similar vein, the Arts and Crafts movement set out to improve the lives of ordinary people, promising to provide them with rewarding work and access to handsome wares. However, such ideals

Saint 1976, p. 423.

⁷⁹Child 1890, p. 84; British History 2000 (internet). It should be noted, however, that the *Seasons* (with *Day* and *Night*) seem to have been situated temporarily at Woolton Hall, an eighteenth-century manor near Liverpool. Leyland acquired the manor after vacating Speke Hall in 1877; Merrill 1998, p. 294. In 1882, an article describing Leyland's impressive art collection at Woolton Hall appeared in the *Athenaeum*. According to its author, the *Seasons* hung with other works by Burne-Jones in the morning room at Woolton Hall, "their permanent home." *Athenaeum* (30 September 1882), p. 439. It is not clear when their relocation to Woolton Hall took place. However, the paintings were installed at 49 Princes Gate by December 1890, when Child identified them as key elements of the grand drawing room's intermediate salon; Child 1890, p. 84.

⁸⁰Duval 1986, p. 115.

⁸¹*The Times* (30 May 1892), p. 7.

⁸²Quoted in Harvey/Press 1991, p. 42.

⁸³Bradley 1978, p. 69.

were seldom realized and contemporaries chastised the movement's practitioners for making expensive products and, in essence, ignoring their own call for an art for all.⁸⁴ Fashionable clients with deep pockets could furnish their homes in the Arts and Crafts style, choosing from a wide range of hand-crafted goods, all made from the finest materials, but the lower classes could not follow their lead.⁸⁵ As Alan Crawford has argued, the Arts and Crafts movement – with its valorisation of creative handwork as the cure for drudgery and its attendant preoccupation with the decorative arts (e.g, stained glass, ceramics, embroidery) rather than the industrialized trades – could not make a dramatic impact on the daily routines of Britain's commoners, so many of whom toiled in industrial settings.⁸⁶ However, here, in the South Kensington Museum, members of the public could dine amidst images that, with minor variations, graced the walls of a connoisseur's dining room. The Green Dining Room presented the public with a rare opportunity to interact with the ornaments of a still-burgeoning Arts and Crafts movement. It is worth noting, however, that the visual qualities of Burne-Jones's figurative designs were not exclusive to the Arts and Crafts movement. In fact, one could associate the figurative elements of the Green Dining Room with Aestheticism. Roughly contemporaneous with the Arts and Crafts movement, Aestheticism was committed to a very different ideal: art for art's sake.⁸⁷ The appeal of a picture's formal elements, not

⁸⁴Callen 1979, p. 7.

⁸⁵Cumming/Kaplan 1991, p. 206. Most of the movement's patrons were members of the *nouveaux riches*, although a smaller number were members of the nobility; Jennifer Harris, "The Economics of Craftwork," pp. 71-79, in Harris 1996, p. 74.

⁸⁶Crawford 1997, pp. 18, 19.

⁸⁷Despite boasting opposite concerns, many of the individuals connected with the Arts and Crafts movement have also appeared in Aesthetic chronicles as promoters and

any underlying moral message, was of primary concern.⁸⁸ In their decorative qualities, the centrality of their female figures, and their atmosphere of repose, the painted panels of the Green Dining Room exhibit a certain affinity with the works of Albert Moore (1841-93), a guiding light of the Aesthetic movement. Indeed, their counterparts, Leyland's *Seasons*, have been described as Aesthetic works of art.⁸⁹ However, having originated in a special commission for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., the imagery of the Green Dining Room retains a tangible connection to the Arts and Crafts movement. The firm did much to inspire the Arts and Crafts movement, through its principles of manufacture and the charm of its wares. Ian Bradley's description of the firm's aims and achievements could also be used to encapsulate the ambitions and accomplishments of Arts and Crafts designers as a whole:

They wanted to revive the medieval ideal of the artist craftsman who designed and executed his own work, with the result that, from original conception to finished product, it never passed out of his hands. In fact, of course, this ideal was not always realized. The firm used outside craftsmen for making furniture and for printing the wallpapers and textiles designed by its members. . . . But the ideal of medieval craftsmanship remained an important guiding principle, particularly for Morris himself, who insisted that he master the techniques of producing a particular art-

practitioners of that movement. Moreover, there were many stylistic semblances between the two movements. So, for instance, a description of a 'typical' Aesthetic interior, fitted out with Morris wallpapers, a blue-green dado, rush-bottom chairs, blue-and-white china, and sprays of peacock feathers (Gere/Whiteway 1993, p. 14), could work equally well as a recipe for a 'representative' Arts and Crafts interior.

⁸⁸Treuhertz 1993, p. 131.

⁸⁹Christian 1975, p. 46. Burne-Jones himself was linked to Aestheticism's central aim, art for art's sake, in a review of the Grosvenor Gallery's offerings in 1878: "Whatever may be the critic's individual opinion of the works of this master, . . . he is bound to admit that in no other is the love of art for art's sake so strong." *The Times* (2 May 1878), p. 7.

form before he started designing for it.⁹⁰

The firm – and their Arts and Crafts successors – sought to unify the arts, beautify the everyday, and brighten the lives of the nation’s public. In a corner of London, in a museum devoted to art manufactures, a small room very nearly succeeded in this endeavour. Lovely stained-glass windows, a richly ornamented ceiling, solid wood panelling, and delicately painted panels contributed to the interior’s elegant fabric, imbuing the space with an air of refinement. Theoretically, any ordinary person could enter the Green Dining Room, order a meal, and feast in the quiet splendour of a Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. showpiece.

Contemporary reviews of the Green Dining Room tended to be favourable, but even the sunniest appraisals could be clouded with disapproving remarks. For example, in its review of the Green Dining Room, the *Building News* commended its tranquil atmosphere and singled out the “exquisite harmony” of the upper walls, with their veneer of moulded plaster panels, as the interior’s finest feature: “This portion of the decorative treatment is, to our minds, simply perfect, and by far the most successful portion of the decorative treatment of this apartment.” However, the critic derided the carved detailing of the dado as “one of the freaks of this firm” and denounced the frieze’s “ungainly and clumsy” hounds and hares.⁹¹ Nevertheless, the writer’s overall impression was a positive one, much to the dismay of one *Building News* reader. A self-professed lover of Classical art, the anonymous correspondent indicated that, after consulting the journal’s positive

⁹⁰Bradley 1978, p. 30. See also Carole Silver, “Setting the Crooked Straight: The Work of William Morris,” pp. 1-17, in Lochnan/Schoenherr/Silver 1993, p. 5.

⁹¹*Building News* (29 July 1870), pp. 73-74.

review, he had expected to view a pleasant dining room at the South Kensington Museum. Instead, he found a melancholic “murky mortuary compound,” a monstrosity painted in a most unflattering shade, “a dirty green, bearing associations of corruption and the charnel house.”⁹² Clearly, the firm did not make fans of everyone.

Scholars regard the Green Dining Room as a quintessential example of an early decorative project by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., but they disagree in their most basic characterizations of the interior. For example, in spite of its location in a government-sponsored public museum, it has been described as a private commission.⁹³ Elsewhere it has been called (more appropriately) a secular work,⁹⁴ a non-ecclesiastical commission,⁹⁵ and an example of “commercial interior decoration.”⁹⁶ Although it enjoys pride of place in a commanding secular building, the Green Dining Room has also been described as both an example of the firm’s “domestic decorative style” and a form of “house-decoration.”⁹⁷ “Domestic” might seem like an awkward descriptor for a public refreshment room, but the interior did bear a certain resemblance to a real London home, 1 Palace Green, completed in 1872.⁹⁸ Designed by Webb for George Howard (the future Earl of Carlisle) and his wife Rosalind, it was decorated by the firm. Its *pièce de résistance* was the dining room and, like the South Kensington interior, it featured an

⁹²*Building News* (5 August 1870), p. 105; cited by Merrill 1998, p. 369, note 151.

⁹³Sparke/Hodges 1986, p. 26.

⁹⁴Stansky 1983, p. 38; B. Morris 1986, p. 40.

⁹⁵Mackail 1899, p. 176; London 1934, p. 15; Faulkner 1980, p. 33.

⁹⁶Parry 1984, p. 153.

⁹⁷See, for instance, M. Morris 1936, p. 56; Physick 1982, p. 132; Bryant 1986, p. 112; and Kirkham in Waggoner 2003, p. 39.

⁹⁸Parry in Parry 1996a, p. 142.

ornate ceiling (its painted details were denser and more florid than in the Green Dining Room, but the coffering was lighter). It also boasted a series of paintings, begun by Burne-Jones and finished by Walter Crane, depicting the legend of Cupid and Psyche; the canvases formed a frieze around the room.⁹⁹ Below the paintings, on peacock-green woodwork, gilded letters spelled out passages from *The Earthly Paradise*.¹⁰⁰ Nearly every surface was painted blue-green, including the windows, the door, and the dado.¹⁰¹ The commonalities – an ornate ceiling, a row of paintings by Burne-Jones, and a dominant palette of blue-greens – are compelling, but 1 Palace Green was neither a humble abode, nor an ordinary slice of domesticity. It was one of the finest residences in Kensington. In my opinion, it is misleading to apply the term “domestic” to the Green Dining Room, despite its similarity to an exceptional dining room in an opulent mansion. The Green Dining Room was a public setting intended for regular use by a number of diners, so practical concerns had to influence its layout. For instance, the most delicate ornamentation was relegated to out-of-reach surfaces like the upper walls, ceiling, and windows, surfaces untouched by the wear and tear that could distress the lower walls. When Gerald Crow visited the Green Dining Room in 1934, he emphasized its purpose as a public refreshment room: “The room triumphantly survives the test of nearly seventy years, though some unprotected paintings are a little dimmed and defaced. Its use,

⁹⁹Burne-Jones based his paintings, which were commissioned separately by Howard, on designs that he had made years earlier. They had been intended for a rich folio version of Morris’s *The Earthly Paradise* (specifically, his poem, “The Story of Cupid and Psyche”), but the project never materialized as such; Parry in Parry 1996a, p. 142; Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 119.

¹⁰⁰Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 122.

¹⁰¹*Studio* 1898, p. 13.

however, precludes the intimate inhabited atmosphere of a private dining-room, softened by textiles and carpets and friendly lighting.”¹⁰² Therefore, I feel descriptions that acknowledge the Green Dining Room’s public grandeur, such as Charlotte Fiell and Peter Fiell’s assessment of the room as being in the firm’s “highly decorated ‘state’ style,”¹⁰³ are more apt than allusions to domesticity.

Scholars also disagree over which member of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. acted as the primary designer of the Green Dining Room. Most believe that the evidence points to Philip Webb as the interior’s true architect.¹⁰⁴ W. R. Lethaby regarded the Green Dining Room as Webb’s work.¹⁰⁵ George Jack, Webb’s former assistant, likewise attributed the interior to his mentor.¹⁰⁶ Other writers, however, have strained to credit William Morris with a sizeable portion of the room’s design, or special status as the project’s supervisor.¹⁰⁷ Peter Floud, for instance, attributed its decorative scheme to Morris.¹⁰⁸ Philip Henderson, alternately, believed that Morris monitored the room’s development in its entirety, although he supposed that Webb was responsible for the general plan.¹⁰⁹

In the spring of 1865, George Warrington Taylor (1835-70) joined the firm as its

¹⁰²Crow 1934, p. 55.

¹⁰³Fiell/Fiell 1999, p. 30.

¹⁰⁴See, for example, Lindsay 1975, p. 145; Sheppard 1975, pp. 111-12; Physick 1982, p. 132; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 39; Parry 1996b, p. 201.

¹⁰⁵Lethaby 1925, p. 383.

¹⁰⁶George Jack, “Approximate List and Dates of Works by Philip Webb, Architect,” 29 March 1910 [NAL, 86.TT.16].

¹⁰⁷See, for example, B. Morris 1975, p. 163; Faulkner 1980, p. 34; Somers Cocks 1980, pp. 7-8; MacCarthy 1994, p. 210; Klein 2002, p. 91.

¹⁰⁸Floud 1952, p. 40.

¹⁰⁹Henderson 1967, p. 82.

general manager.¹¹⁰ Determined to boost profits, Taylor closely monitored the productivity of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. employees.¹¹¹ Unafraid to crack the whip, he ordered the partners to work with greater focus.¹¹² However, weakened by severe illness in his twilight years, Taylor came to rely on Webb to spur the other partners into action.¹¹³ He seems to have regarded the architect as the most mature member of the group and so Taylor corresponded with Webb regularly, imploring him to keep a watchful eye on his colleagues, especially the ever fitful Morris.¹¹⁴ Taylor's letters speak to Webb's professionalism: a trained architect, Webb represented an essential lifeline between the artists of the firm (inspired and inexperienced) and the real world of demanding clients and fixed deadlines. Taylor worried that Webb, who advised the firm on matters of interior decoration, was not paid sufficiently for his work, which did so much to buoy the firm:

In order that I may get a living, that Morris may get extra money it is absolutely necessary to appeal to you from time to time on these matters of business. We could not move another step without your professional assistance & therefore if you will not be paid the firm must come to an end

¹¹⁰Parry 1983, p. 17.

¹¹¹In his handwritten introduction to Taylor's collected papers, Sydney Cockerell asserted that Taylor was instrumental to the firm's early success; NAL, 86.SS.57, p. 5.

¹¹²The circle of artists soon perceived a dragon in their midst: "Within a few weeks of his appointment the rumour spread amongst us that he was keeping the accounts of the firm like a dragon, attending to the orders of customers, and actually getting Morris to work at one thing at a time." Burne-Jones 1904, vol. 1, p. 291.

¹¹³Thus, Webb is also credited with keeping the firm alive during its formative years. See, for example, Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, pp. 38-39; Crawford/Cunningham 1997, p. 41.

¹¹⁴In an undated letter to Rossetti, Taylor complained, "Morris is very nervous about work; and he consequently often suddenly takes men off one job and puts them on to another. There is in this great loss of time." NAL, 86.SS.57.

because sponging upon you is degrading.¹¹⁵

His letters, to Webb and to other members of the firm, also indicate that Webb supervised two of the firm's most important commissions, the decoration of the Green Dining Room and the refurbishment of the Armoury and Tapestry Room at St. James's Palace.

Troubled by few signs of progress in the Green Dining Room, he wrote to Webb: "When do you begin your S. Kens painting because extra painters & Brown are not ornamental at high salaries & doing nothing."¹¹⁶ In another letter, he demanded to know what Burne-Jones would earn for his work in the Green Dining Room: "What is Ned to have apiece for his panel pictures – & what are we to charge, see this properly done, proper estimate sent in. No more muddling, quite enough muck over this job." Taylor's rant continued as he chastised Webb and the other partners. He was dismayed by their premature decision to hire two men for the South Kensington job, months before they could begin working, thus cutting into the firm's profits. By Taylor's account, the firm deliberately ignored his instructions to ask museum officials for a specific start date: "What do they find for Brown to do at the shop now he was to have been at South Kens: only you could not enquire when you were to begin. Nice expense this muddle has entailed upon us."¹¹⁷

More often than not, however, Taylor trusted Webb to guide the firm in the right direction

¹¹⁵Undated letter from Taylor to Webb, [May 1867]; NAL, 86.SS.57.

¹¹⁶Undated letter [from Taylor to Webb]; NAL, 86.SS.57. Quoted, in part, by Parry 1996b, p. 203.

¹¹⁷Undated letter [from Taylor to Webb], [February-March 1867]; NAL, 86.SS.57. It is interesting to find Ford Madox Brown mentioned by Taylor, in two separate letters, in seeming reference to the Green Dining Room. No one has linked him to the decorations of the Green Dining Room, although it appears that Taylor expected Brown to be involved in the commission at some level.

and he voiced his gravest concerns to the architect, believing that Webb would deal with problems satisfactorily. Thus, when Burne-Jones tarried in submitting designs and the firm's chief glass painter (George Campfield) took ill, thereby delaying the execution of the Green Dining Room's stained-glass windows, Taylor trusted Webb to resolve the matter. He also prodded Webb to finish his own designs for the project: "You ought to design the panelling for South Kens at once. It is such nonsense to say they don't want it."¹¹⁸ Later, still vexed by slow progress, Taylor inquired: "Have they begun those South Kens: windows yet[?] You have all the pattern work to do there too. . . . And I do trust you have made some preparations for the wood panelling at the Boilers."¹¹⁹ Taylor's letters betrayed his cross temper, but they also spoke to his respect for Webb and his body of work. In a rare moment of approval, Taylor wrote to Rossetti: "Have you been to see Webb's *chef d'oeuvre*, the decoration of the Palace? It must be very stunning."¹²⁰

According to Taylor's letters, Webb supervised most, if not all, of the work in the Green Dining Room. Moreover, it appears that he designed the wood panelling and "all the pattern work" himself. However, some scholars have elected to disregard Taylor's correspondence as proof of Webb's authority and they continue to presume that Morris directed the South Kensington project along with the redecoration of the interiors at St.

¹¹⁸Letter from Taylor to Webb, Wednesday 10:35 a.m. [November 1866]; NAL, 86.SS.57.

¹¹⁹Letter from Taylor to Webb, Friday; NAL, 86.SS.57.

¹²⁰Undated letter from Taylor to Rossetti, [Autumn 1867]; NAL, 86.SS.57. Quoted in Rossetti 1903, p. 277. When William Rossetti prepared his brother's correspondence for publication, he could not guess the true meaning of Taylor's reference. He wrote, "I am not clear what Mr Taylor refers to as "the decoration of the Palace" by Mr Webb: possibly the decoration of the Refreshment-room etc. in the Victoria and Albert Museum." Rossetti 1903, p. 276.

James's Palace.¹²¹ Nevertheless, the theory that Webb was the Green Dining Room's principal designer is further supported by another contemporary source: his account book. Webb's account book, Sewter noted, is extremely important because it documents the architect's involvement in the decoration of the Green Dining Room and, in the profusion of its details, "it is clear that he had the main responsibility for it, as well as designing the frieze, the wall-pattern in plaster, the panels with boughs, all the details of the wooden panelling, the pattern-work of the flats of the ceiling, and the quarries and borders for the windows."¹²² The pertinent entries date from about July 1866 to November 1867. According to the first relevant entry, the firm owed Webb a little over £22, including £12 for "Kens: Designs Frieze."¹²³ Several other entries document visits that he made to the museum.¹²⁴ Then, in late October, Webb charged £7 for the wall-pattern in plaster.¹²⁵ This was followed by a fee of £1.3 for a museum visit "about modelling animals and

¹²¹For instance, Charles Mitchell opined that Taylor's letters did not disprove Morris's authority over the two projects: "They show that Webb was at this time responsible for general schemes and that the decorations at St. James's, like those of the Dining Room at South Kensington, were to his plan – which does not mean, of course, that Morris did not have a hand in every stage of design and execution." Mitchell 1947, p. 38.

¹²²Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104. Barbara Morris disputed the relevance of Webb's account book by suggesting that the payments he received could have been for "architectural or structural details only." B. Morris 1987, pp. 14-15. Her assessment, however, has little merit because the men responsible for devising the so-called 'structural details' of the building were Fowke and Scott, the museum's main architects. They determined the size and shape of each interior, while the designers of the refreshment rooms focussed on dressing those spaces with remarkable surface ornaments. Webb's account book confirms this: he received no payment for work involving the structural integrity of the Green Dining Room. He did not build the space, but he did beautify it.

¹²³BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. July 1866, p. 37.

¹²⁴BMAG, [Webb A/c], pre-15 September 1866, p. 39 and 16 October 1866, p. 39.

¹²⁵BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 26 October 1866, p. 39; Parry 1996b, p. 202.

bough.”¹²⁶ For another trip to the museum, “about modelling,” Webb charged £1.3.¹²⁷ He designed the quarries of stained glass for a sum of £3.¹²⁸ For an additional £5, Webb oversaw the design of the wood panelling.¹²⁹ Webb also supplied ornamental designs for the stained-glass windows (he devised the borders for a fee of 10 shillings).¹³⁰ Then he returned to South Kensington “to arrange about painting,” charging the firm £1.1 for his efforts.¹³¹ By late November, Webb was occupied with the painted decoration of the ceiling, earning an additional £3.3 for this work.¹³²

In reviewing the contents of Taylor’s letters and Webb’s account book, it is apparent that Webb was integral to the conception of the Green Dining Room, so why is Morris credited with its design? How was Webb’s work eclipsed by Morris’s name? I believe several factors contributed to this misunderstanding (or misrepresentation of events). Firstly, Morris was more famous than Webb and he remains so. This could explain why, within their own circle of friends, the Green Dining Room soon became associated with the name of Morris, not Webb. William Rossetti, for instance, remembered the Green Dining Room as “the Refreshment–room painted by Morris.”¹³³

¹²⁶BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 31 October 1866, p. 41; Parry 1996b, p. 202. Lethaby identified these features of the refreshment room as Webb’s work; Lethaby 1925, p. 383.

¹²⁷BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 15 November 1866, p. 41; Parry 1996b, p. 202.

¹²⁸BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 31 January 1867, p. 41: “S. Ken. Mus. 6 quarries, beasts, etc at 10s.” Cited by Parry 1996b, p. 202.

¹²⁹BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 7 February 1867, p. 43; Parry 1996b, p. 203.

¹³⁰BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 8 February 1867, p. 43; Parry 1996b, p. 202..

¹³¹BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 25 April 1867, p. 45; Parry 1996b, p. 203.

¹³²BMAG, [Webb A/c], c. 20 November 1867, p. 45: “Patterns to flat of ceiling S. K. Mus.”

¹³³Rossetti wrote of the interior, “I think it must be the best piece of room-decoration, or something very like it, of this century, whether in England or elsewhere. It is darker than I like – *i.e.*, the room admits less light: but I fancy this depends upon its

Such characterizations of the Green Dining Room, by persons on intimate terms with members of the firm, compromised Webb's identity as the interior's principal designer. Further hampering subsequent assessments of Webb's work was William Rossetti's paltry estimation of the architect's worth to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. In his reminiscences of the firm, he named Morris as its "leading spirit" and he identified Burne-Jones, Madox Brown, and his brother as its notable artists, but he glossed over Webb's participation with seeming indifference: "Webb was also active; but, being by profession an architect, he did not so regularly contribute designs for the purposes of the firm."¹³⁴ Elsewhere he wrote: "Of the seven members of the Morris firm, Mr. Philip Webb still survives, and he alone. I saw enough of him to admire his talents as an architect and as a designer of animals etc. for stained glass or other decorative work; not much beyond this."¹³⁵ Rossetti used these ungenerous remarks to sum up Webb's merits and they left a poor impression of the man. With the publication of *Das Englische Haus* by Hermann Muthesius in the early twentieth century, Webb's name was struck from the history of the Green Dining Room altogether. Muthesius's description of the interior strengthened Morris's renown, but it robbed Webb of due recognition:

Executed by the firm of Morris, Marshall and Faulkner, it is already historically important as an interesting early example of Morris's art. It shows how extremely independent Morris's thought already was and how far he was from becoming involved – like the architects – in the

position, not decoration." William Rossetti, diary, 19 April 1870; quoted in Rossetti 1903, p. 505 and cited by Faulkner 1980, p. 35.

¹³⁴Rossetti 1906, vol. 1, pp. 215-16.

¹³⁵Rossetti 1906, vol. 1, p. 222.

entanglements of Gothic formalism.¹³⁶

To this day, Morris's celebrity dominates Webb's reputation and accounts of the Green Dining Room, wherein it is distinguished as a William Morris interior, continue to proliferate.¹³⁷

Webb's private nature also affected his popularity: he despised all forms of self-aggrandizement and he resisted opportunities to champion his buildings in public forums.¹³⁸ Thus, the prominence of Morris's lion-like personality in accounts of the firm's early years may be less demonstrative of Webb's minor role and more indicative of the architect's refusal to court publicity. Webb did very little to promote his work beyond an intimate circle of admirers: he was neither an avid speaker, nor was he a prodigious writer, so other individuals were able to speak for him, often leaving impressions that benefited Morris's legacy more than Webb's.¹³⁹ If they can neither visit Webb's buildings nor consult his personal papers, general readers must rely heavily on secondary accounts, including William Rossetti's measly appraisals, before making their own assessments of Webb's value to both the firm and, more broadly, the Arts and Crafts movement. It should be noted, however, that William Rossetti never joined the firm and therefore his dismissal of Webb ought to be taken with a grain of salt. His brother Gabriel, on the other hand, was an original partner and, undoubtedly, a closer observer of

¹³⁶H. Muthesius 1979, p. 158. *Das Englische Haus* was first published in three volumes between 1908 and 1911. I have quoted from the abridged English version.

¹³⁷See, for example, Floud 1952, p. 40; Dixon/Muthesius 1978, p. 172; Barringer 1996b, p. 38; Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 116.

¹³⁸Crawford/Cunningham 1997, p. 40.

¹³⁹Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 1.

Webb's worth. In a letter to an American correspondent, he wrote:

Morris, and Webb the architect, are our most active men of business as regards the actual conduct of the concern: the rest of us chiefly confine ourselves to contributing designs when called for, as of course the plan is to effect something worth doing by co-operation, but without the least interfering with the individual pursuits of those among us who are painters.¹⁴⁰

Here, in contrast to the incidental figure constructed by William Rossetti's snippets,

Webb is portrayed as a chief representative of the firm.¹⁴¹

Stylistic analyses have been used to recognize Morris's hand in the Green Dining Room. For instance, an examination of two extant designs for the decoration of the ceiling led Linda Parry to conclude that Morris and Webb had collaborated on them. In both examples, she attributed the pencil under-drawing to Morris and the finer details to Webb.¹⁴² She referred also to Stephen Astley's description of the two designs, which appears in the exhibition catalogue that she edited, a tribute to the centenary of Morris's

¹⁴⁰D. G. Rossetti to Charles Eliot Norton of Cambridge, Mass., 9 January 1862; quoted in Rossetti 1899, pp. 304-05.

¹⁴¹Other snippets of information have caused me to wonder if Webb's peers perceived his control over the decoration of the Green Dining Room. An announcement in the *Builder* first caught my attention: it informed readers that Poynter was entrusted with the decoration of a refreshment room at the South Kensington Museum and "Messrs. Webb, Morris, & Co." were likewise entrusted with another; *Builder* (19 September 1868), p. 685; this announcement reappeared in the *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (26 September 1868), p. 461. "Messrs. Webb, Morris, & Co." is an unusual variation of the firm's name; the group, it seems, never adopted it and so it is without historical precedent. More common variations omit or misspell the names of Marshall and Faulkner. This particular variation, with Webb's name preceding Morris's, could signify Webb's authority as the firm's resident architect (as perceived by his peers) or simply a greater familiarity with Webb (amongst his peers) due to his association with the building industry.

¹⁴²Parry 1996b, p. 203. Lethaby, however, attributed the cartoons to Webb alone; Lethaby 1925, p. 383.

death.¹⁴³ However, it seems that Astley interpreted the origins of the designs differently, distinguishing one design as Morris's creation and the other as Webb's. Although the designs are catalogued together (I.7) and attributed jointly to both men, Astley's text (the body of the catalogue entry) links one design to Morris (I.7a, or E.1169-1940) and the other to Webb (I.7b, or E.1170-1940):

The looser, more organic, and largely ignored charcoal under-drawing (I.7a) is by Morris. This contrasts with the more carefully drawn and painted arabesques by Webb (I.7b) which are more akin to the decorative styles being executed in the rest of the growing museum. . . . The designs show some difficulties in setting out to full scale, especially Morris's, which has two attempts at diagonals.¹⁴⁴

Unlike Parry, Astley did not suggest that Morris prepared the under-drawing for both designs, but rather he regarded the designs as separate contributions, one by Morris and one by Webb. These stylistic arguments support the notion that Morris was an active participant in the making of the Green Dining Room, but they are inherently flawed because they disagree on the exact nature of his contributions. Nevertheless, some scholars refuse to accept that Webb, and not Morris, supervised the commission. Barbara Morris, for one, could not believe that the famous designer relinquished the project to Webb: "It seems inconceivable that at this stage when Morris was so closely involved with the firm he should have left all the designing of this crucial commission to others."¹⁴⁵ Yet is it inconceivable that Webb, a trained architect, had the ability to execute this special assignment himself? Could the designer of grand estates, erected for

¹⁴³Parry 1996b, p. 205, note 21.

¹⁴⁴Stephen Astley in Parry 1996a, p. 151, cat. I.7.

¹⁴⁵B. Morris 1987, p. 15.

Britain's elite, have found it impossible to design a magnificent interior for a museum restaurant? To my mind, Morris's renown as a master of two-dimensional design is not reason enough to deny (or diminish) Webb's hand in the decorative elements of the Green Dining Room. Webb was an accomplished draughtsman and, from an early date, his professionalism set him apart from other members of the firm. It should not be assumed, because he was an architect and not a pattern-maker *per se*, that Webb had little or no control over the smallest features of the Green Dining Room. Such an argument refutes the full breadth of Victorian architecture, then both a craft and a profession. Its disciples could delve into the intricacies of interior details and the proportions of entire structures with equal concern. Furthermore, Webb's account book reveals that he was intimately involved in the pattern work of St. James's Palace: multiple entries indicate that he worked on the patterns of the ceiling, cornice, doors, and pilasters of the Armoury (and he executed similar work for the Tapestry Room).¹⁴⁶ Moreover, being an important member of the firm, Webb's seniority was recognized by his colleagues when, in May 1867, they elected to pay him a special fee, £80 annually, as the firm's "consulting manager."¹⁴⁷ Parry even supposed that this yearly stipend could have been intended as a reward for Webb's command over the Green Dining Room.¹⁴⁸ Clearly there are many reasons to

¹⁴⁶BMAG, [Webb A/c]: multiple entries between mid-August 1866 and January 1867 record his involvement in the pattern work of the St. James's Palace commission.

¹⁴⁷HFA, DD/235/1, 16 May 1867; cited by Parry in Parry 1996a, p. 55, cat. D.1. It should be noted, however, that Morris received a regular salary (the significant sum of £150 per year) as the firm's business manager; Charles Harvey and Jon Press, "The Businessman," pp. 49-54 in Parry 1996a, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸Parry 1996b, p. 205, note 14. Presumably it also recognized his role in the St. James's Palace commission, a contemporaneous and equally important commission.

look to Webb as the principal designer of the Green Dining Room.

Other stylistic arguments, which favour Morris as the architect of the Green Dining Room, have surfaced nonetheless. In some circles, the general arrangement of the stained-glass windows are attributed to Morris. Both Aymer Vallance and Barbara Morris described the general composition of the windows – namely, a horizontal band of colourful pictorial panels sandwiched between quieter panels of silvery roundels – as a Morris creation.¹⁴⁹ However, their attribution was contradicted by the findings of the foremost expert on Morris stained glass, A. C. Sewter. He linked this type of window to Webb and so have others.¹⁵⁰ Sewter observed that, before he began collaborating with Webb at the firm, Burne-Jones tended to design overtly pictorial stained-glass windows; the artist filled windows with figural representations and gave little thought to their architectural context. His windows combined a profusion of details and gem-like colours, but their rich narratives were difficult for church-goers, seated some distance away, to fully appreciate. To best illustrate his point, Sewter looked to the windows that Burne-Jones designed for Waltham Abbey in the early 1860s. William Burges was renovating the historic church and he entrusted the windows overlooking the altar to Burne-Jones, who was then employed by Powells. The artist created a magnificent three-light *Tree of*

¹⁴⁹Vallance 1909, p. 82; B. Morris 1975, p. 163. Barbara Morris attributed the glass quarries themselves, with their depictions of aquatic and terrestrial species, to Webb; B. Morris 1986, p. 39. May Morris also attributed the individual designs of the glass quarries to Webb: “The delicate window decoration of floweret circles is Webb’s, with Burne-Jones figures half-way up. The whole *coup d’œil* is restrained; quiet green and gold the main effect. I expect it would be considered dowdy and unexciting for a modern restaurant.” M. Morris 1936, p. 57.

¹⁵⁰Physick 1982, p. 133; Alan Crawford, “Burne-Jones as Decorative Artist,” pp. 5-23 in Wildman/Christian 1998, p. 9; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 36.

Jesse and, in the space above, he depicted the *Days of Creation* in a seven-lobed rose (fig. 5-8).¹⁵¹ The dazzling effect of the kaleidoscopic colours and unrestrained details,

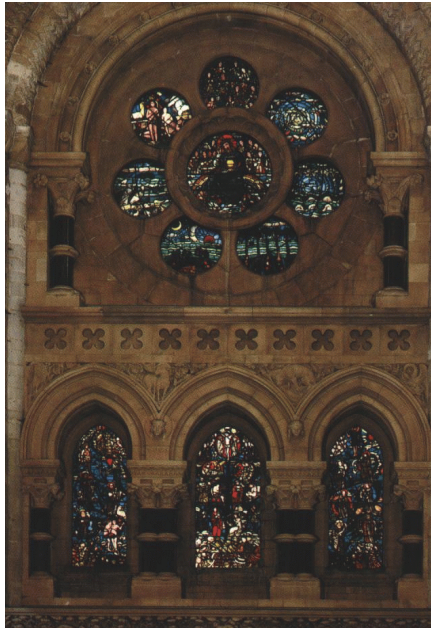


Figure 5-8: Windows of Waltham Abbey (east wall): *Days of Creation* and *Tree of Jesse* designed by Edward Burne-Jones in 1860-61. Waltham Abbey, Essex. Reproduced from a postcard (Waltham Abbey, WALT5).

especially apparent in the three *Tree of Jesse* lancets, is rather unlike the silver serenity of the Green Dining Room's stained-glass panels, which feature large expanses of grisaille and a unifying band of colour. Sewter argued that the quiet restraint of the firm's early windows, as seen in the Green Dining Room, was due to Webb: the architect was responsible for the architectural qualities of the firm's glass and, keen to create unity in the built environment, he imbued Burne-Jones's figural compositions with a clear

¹⁵¹Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 15.

framework and a sense of order.¹⁵² His influence could be seen in the firm's stained glass, begun in 1861, for All Saints Church in Selsley, Gloucestershire (fig. 5-9). The windows, of different shapes and sizes, were linked together by complementary borders and light-admitting quarries of patterned glass above and below a band of colourful panels; the horizontal band of colour traversed the interior, from one window to the next,

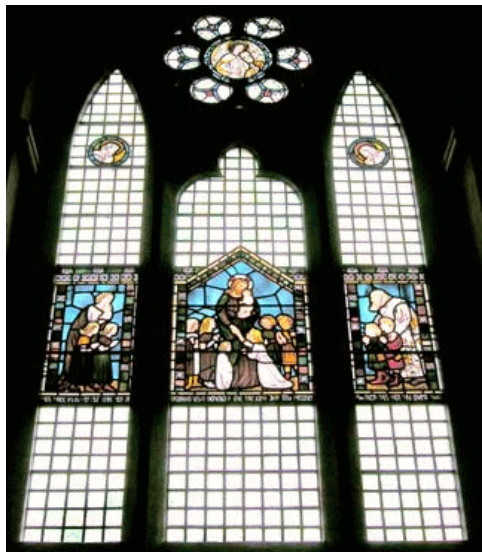


Figure 5-9: Stained-glass depiction of *Christ Blessing the Children*, south aisle of All Saints Church, Selsley; designed by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (with figurative elements by Edward Burne-Jones), 1862. Reproduced from www.bbc.co.uk/gloucestershire/faith.

at a constant height.¹⁵³ This formula, a favourite of Webb's, created cohesion between the stained-glass panels and it flooded the church with much-needed light.¹⁵⁴ However, it disappeared from the firm's repertoire after Webb ceased to assist the firm's glass

¹⁵²Sewter 1974, vol. 1, pp. 15, 23.

¹⁵³Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁵⁴Crawford 1998, p. 852.

department; this transition took place around 1874.¹⁵⁵ Without Webb to temper the richness of Burne-Jones's stained glass, the firm's windows grew increasingly pictorial and the artist's interdependent panels brimmed (again) with colourful mosaics.¹⁵⁶

In noting the abandonment of Webb's formula subsequent to his withdrawal from the stained-glass department, I do not wish to suggest that his designs had proven unpopular. To the contrary, windows bearing his influence, mindful of their architectural framework and truly illuminating in their ready use of clear quarries, were valued by other architects and attracted their patronage to the firm.¹⁵⁷ Indeed, the luminous quality of the Green Dining Room windows garnered high praise. A writer for the *Athenaeum* gushed, "its admirable stained-glass windows . . . are probably the finest specimens of modern Art in their kind."¹⁵⁸ An earlier review, also printed in the *Athenaeum*, addressed common faults of modern glass, with a special emphasis on the obstruction of light caused by too-dense compositions, which made for dark and unwelcoming interiors. As a remedy, the reviewer proposed the use of more grisaille and the Green Dining Room's windows were commended for their application of this technique: "The best tinted modern silvery-hued grisaille known to us is that of Messrs. Morris, Marshall & Co. in the refreshment-room at the South Kensington Museum."¹⁵⁹ The company's talent for grisaille had been noted years earlier, at the 1864 Exhibition of Stained Glass held at

¹⁵⁵Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 25; K. Corey Keeble, "Stained Glass," pp. 113-23 in Lochnan/Schoenherr/Silver 1993, p. 114.

¹⁵⁶Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 32; Kirk 1990 (diss.), vol. 1, p. 36.

¹⁵⁷Crawford/Cunningham 1997, p. 41.

¹⁵⁸*Athenaeum* (12 June 1869), p. 804. This critique was repeated, word for word, in the *Builders' Weekly Reporter* (19 June 1869), p. 293.

¹⁵⁹*Athenaeum* (12 September 1868), p. 344.

South Kensington:

It would seem that the painters . . . use grisaille to such an extent that their windows admit more light than is generally the case with decoration of this kind. The practice is old enough, but the skill of the application is original and peculiar. The grisaille is made to aid the colour of the pictures, as it should do, and is remarkable for the delicate and warm silveriness of its hue, and its pure softness of tone.¹⁶⁰

These same luminous qualities reappeared in the windows of the Green Dining Room, reflecting Webb's aesthetic preferences, but surely also reflecting the needs of the South Kensington Museum. The Green Dining Room was a restaurant interior, where patrons needed to read menus and employees needed to serve meals without bumping into tables, their guests, or each other; ample light was required to illuminate the space. Moreover, considerable sums of money had been spent on the room's appearance and presumably museum administrators hoped that guests would see and appreciate the decorations without too much difficulty. Sewter, however, wondered if the firm's clients ever had much say in the designs of windows that they commissioned:

How important a role was played by the client's own ideas, in suggesting possible subjects and arrangements, in criticizing sketch-designs and proposing changes, remains largely a matter of conjecture. No doubt correspondence frequently passed between the firm and its customers, but no letters of this kind have been published, nor are they available in archives, so far as I know. It is likely that the important decisions were often reached in personal discussion, when the client called at the firm's premises, or a representative of the firm visited the building where the window was to be erected.¹⁶¹

However, documentary evidence suggests that authorities of the South Kensington Museum did make stipulations that directly affected the appearance of windows by

¹⁶⁰*Athenaeum* (4 June 1864), p. 779.

¹⁶¹Sewter 1974, vol. 1, pp. 20-21.

Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. According to a tender for a double four-light window (intended for the corridor above the restaurant), the firm made its design in accordance with the museum's wishes, using "as little coloured glass as possible."¹⁶² The firm's tender, albeit for an alternate and unrealized scheme, demonstrates that museum officials never entirely forfeited their supervision of decorative projects, even those that came to naught, and they preferred light-admitting windows to densely coloured panels.

The Green Dining Room was an immensely important commission for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. because it provided them with an opportunity to promote their wares and their vision, guided by Webb and stamped with the approval of a national museum, to a large public. However, the interior was more than an artistic statement: it was also a functioning refreshment room and its practical dimensions will be discussed in my next chapter.

¹⁶²Tender from Morris & Co., 27 April 1868 [VAA, ED 84/6, p. 105].

CHAPTER SIX

HOW VISITORS AND STAFF MEMBERS USED THE REFRESHMENT ROOMS

Architectural history habitually treats its subjects, entire buildings or single interiors, as finite projects. Narratives celebrate the realization of the architect's vision without relating how time's passage materially alters the 'final' composition:

Most accounts of architectural construction end the moment the building is completed; what happens to it subsequently remains a mystery; whether it fulfils the functions for which it was designed is likewise unknown; in other words, the life of the building, its occupancy and use by successive generations is ignored.¹

I have argued that the Green Dining Room serves as a quintessential example of an early decorative scheme by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. For some modern-day admirers, the interior's importance is defined solely by its artistic elements – for example, the splendour of its stencilled ceiling, the elegance of its stained-glass windows, or the beauty of its painted frieze – but for many Victorians, the Green Dining Room's practical dimension as a *dining room*, a space where people ate, was its most significant feature. Few photographs speak to this aspect of the Green Dining Room's history. Typical illustrations highlight the interior's permanent features, but exclude such essentials as tables and chairs, which guests used to dine in a civilized manner. Such omissions have

¹Walker 1989, p. 184.

helped to redefine the Green Dining Room as a self-contained work of art. Its ultimate significance has been relegated to the visual realm, but this is problematic. After all, a restaurant must do more than make a visual statement and stir things up in the design world. A restaurant exists to feed people, preferably at the proprietor's profit. Therefore a comprehensive account of the Green Dining Room must also consider the interests of diners and caterers alike. As Jeffrey Meikle duly noted, "we tend too quickly to accept the opinions of designers and promoters about the meanings of their creations to the people who use, inhabit, or consume them."² The Green Dining Room's designers (and their patrons) may have regarded their creation as an important visual statement, but the public could have viewed it as a pleasant spot to whittle away the hours of a leisurely afternoon or as a place to earn a modest living. When its doors first opened in the nineteenth century, the Green Dining Room was not an untouchable work of art; it was a vital component of a bustling museum restaurant. Occupied by Victorian diners, the Green Dining Room would have looked, smelled, and sounded differently from the quiet space it became in the twentieth century.³ Although it is impossible to recreate the original atmosphere of the museum's refreshment rooms, I hope to give an adequate impression of the activities that transpired within them.

Guests seeking light refreshments dined in the Centre Refreshment Room (fig. 6-1), which could accommodate over one hundred diners.⁴ Patrons ordered beverages,

²Meikle 1998, p. 194.

³Bryant 1986, p. 113. Its use as a dining room ceased in 1939. In my seventh chapter, I will discuss its closure (and its reincarnations) in greater detail.

⁴An inventory conducted in 1926 revealed the Centre Refreshment Room to be in the possession of 109 cane-seated chairs and 16 chairs of three other varieties. See the

including beer served in tankards designed by Alfred Stevens,⁵ from the bar in the north end of the room.⁶ If guests preferred to rest their feet whilst enjoying their refreshments, they could sit at tables designed by Stevens as well.⁷ Consisting of ornamental iron frames and grey marble tops, the tables proved too small for their intended occupants: four chairs were provided at each table, but foursomes made for tight squeezes.⁸



Figure 6-1: The Centre Refreshment Room in 1925. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, X601H-33904.

“Inventory of Furniture in the Refreshment Department,” 1926 [VAA, ED 84/225].

⁵Beattie 1975, p. 3. According to an early account of the museum’s decorations, the tankard was designed and executed by A. Gibbons; NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 29. Nevertheless, during my visits to London between 2004 and 2006, one such tankard was proudly displayed in the V&A’s Silver Galleries, in a case devoted to ‘Public Plate’, where it was attributed to Stevens.

⁶*Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55.

⁷In the 1970s, two tables were extant; Sheppard 1975, p. 111. However, in the 1980s, Physick reported the survival of just one table; Physick 1982, p. 138.

⁸*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3; Physick 1982, p. 138. Six tables were ordered from Henry E. Hoole and Co. of Green Lane Works, Sheffield and cost 90 shillings each (including their delivery to London); tender from Hoole and Co., 17 March 1868 [VAA, ED 84/6, p. 89].

Visitors dined on more substantial fare in the other refreshment rooms.⁹ The Green Dining Room could accommodate about forty people at a time.¹⁰ It is not easy to obtain a clear picture of the room's arrangement in Victorian times because contemporary accounts tend to ignore the interior's mobile ornaments and, on the rare occasion when they do take stock of the furniture, they tend to describe these pieces in vague terms. The *Standard*, for example, characterized the Green Dining Room's decorations as Elizabethan in effect and its fittings as "furniture of massive oak in the style of the period."¹¹ However, a clearer picture of the Green Dining Room's total environment is revealed by a turn-of-the-century photograph (c. 1902, fig. 2-13). Fresh linens adorn the tables, a coat rack stands near the south entrance, and, just outside the room, a statue graces the main corridor.¹² Through the other doorway, one can peer into the Centre Refreshment Room where tablecloths and an equivalent air of refinement are lacking.

A print by John Watkins (c. 1878; fig. 6-2) offers a vivid impression of the Grill Room soon after its completion. Patrons are shown seated at rectangular tables laid with white linens. Eight Empire-style chairs surround the centre table, but only one person is seated there.¹³ The man standing next to the grill is dressed in the white uniform of a

⁹*Building News* (22 July 1870), p. 55.

¹⁰38 chairs stood in the room in 1926; "Inventory of Furniture in the Refreshment Department," 1926 [VAA, ED 84/225].

¹¹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹²In 1926, there were two brass hat and coat stands in the room; "Inventory of Furniture in the Refreshment Department," 1926 [VAA, ED 84/225].

¹³According to the 1926 inventory, 45 cane-seated chairs and one oak chair occupied the room; "Inventory of Furniture in the Refreshment Department," 1926 [VAA, ED 84/225].

cook and holds a pair of tongs.¹⁴ Another man, in the far right corner, can be identified as a waiter: although he wears a dark jacket, like the male patron seated nearby, a telltale towel is slung over his shoulder. At the table furthest from the viewer are additional diners, one of whom appears to be a woman. Her inclusion is noteworthy because respectable women had only recently begun to dine in the restaurants of London.¹⁵

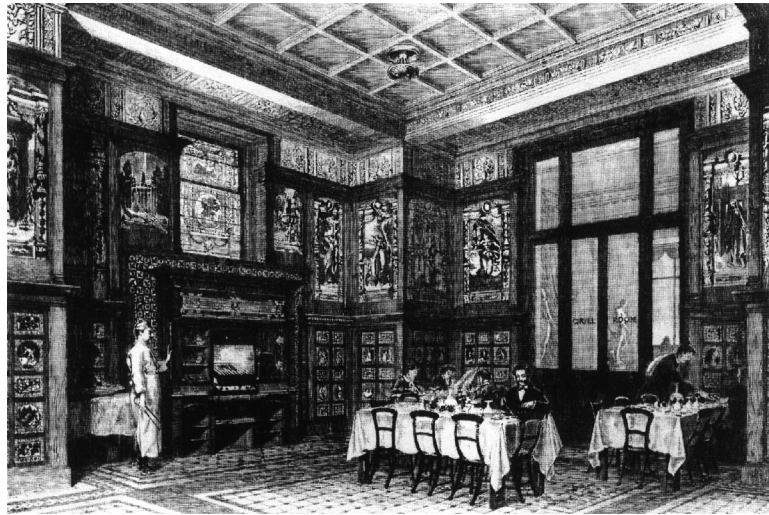


Figure 6-2: John Watkins, *The Grill Room*, from *The South Kensington Museum: Examples of the Works of Art*, vol. 2 (London, 1882), opp. p. 73.

The situation was very different in Paris where French women frequented restaurants.¹⁶ Accompanied by male chaperones, they could dine in mixed company without the fear of censure that British women faced in their homeland. French women were free to patronize restaurants since the late eighteenth century, but this freedom

¹⁴The small table behind him held two butcher's trays, "guiltless of all ornament." One tray carried chops; the other carried steaks; *Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹⁵Edwina Ehrman, "19th Century," pp. 68-83 in Ehrman/Forsyth 1999, pp. 79, 81; Draznin 2001, p. 154.

¹⁶Spang 2000, pp. 199-200.

would remain unknown to British women of the middle- and upper-classes for many more years.¹⁷ In mid-century London (and its environs) men could dine where they pleased, but few options were available to their female counterparts. As one guide to the capital's culinary delights reported:

Since our intercourse with the Continent, some coffee-rooms have been opened where gentlemen may take their wives and daughters; but it has not yet become a recognized custom, although confectioners' shops are resorted to by ladies alone; . . . but to give a private dinner with ladies, it is necessary to go to the "Albion" or "London Taverns," where nothing can exceed the magnificence of the rooms.¹⁸

A smattering of Parisian-style cafés rounded out the options, but nearly thirty years later, few other venues catered to British women. Guidebooks to London still recommended confectioners' shops (pleasant but informal eateries) and a handful of more refined restaurants, Verrey's among them.¹⁹ Women could also dine at restaurants in secluded rooms reserved especially for them,²⁰ or non-residents (on extended visits to the metropolis and in need of overnight accommodations) could consume meals in the privacy of their own hotel rooms.²¹ By and large, however, eating out in Victorian London was a male privilege.²²

¹⁷Tannahill 1989, p. 326.

¹⁸*London at Dinner* 1858, p. 11. See also Spiller 1972, p. 36; Thorne 1980, p. 235; Ehrman in Ehrman/Forsyth 1999, p. 79.

¹⁹Pascoe 1885, p. 51.

²⁰P. Kinchin 1991, p. 31. The novelty of rooms for female diners merited especial attention. In the pages of advertisements that filled *London at Dinner*, St James's Hall Café and Restaurant alerted readers to its department for families and ladies; *London at Dinner* 1858, p. 25 of advertisements.

²¹S. Freeman 1989, p. 271; Mennell 1996, p. 158; Beardsworth/Keil 1997, p. 106.

²²Cathy Ross, "Five Centuries of City Food," pp. 8-11, in Ehrman/Forsyth 1999, p. 9.



Figure 6-3: “Restoration of Crosby Hall, Bishopsgate-Street: Banquet to the Workmen on Tuesday Last,” *Illustrated Times* (28 March 1868), p. 193.

The tide would turn as the world of leisure expanded. The opening of parks, theatres, art galleries, and museums encouraged people to flock to the city in greater numbers; these people needed to find nourishment away from home and entrepreneurs like Frederick Gordon rose to the challenge.²³ In 1868 Gordon invited middle-class men and women to dine at a fifteenth-century palace, Crosby Hall, which he had converted into a restaurant.²⁴ The building’s association with the dark history of Richard III

²³Thorne 1980, p. 236; Alan Crawford, “The Tea Rooms: Art and Domesticity,” pp. 263-89, in Kaplan 1996, p. 266.

²⁴Thorne 1980, p. 239.

fascinated Victorians and added immensely to the pleasure they took in their meals, which were moderate in price.²⁵ The *Illustrated Times* soon took note of the popular venue:

The floors were crowded by a miscellaneous assemblage of men and women, habited in the garb of these days – frock coats, chimneypot hats, chignons, trailing skirts, infinitesimal bonnets – and all bent on sight-seeing and supping. The roofs, windows, balconies, and chimneypieces of the rooms were ancient; the furniture, the dishes, and the guests were modern exceedingly.²⁶

Three different classes of service were provided in three distinct areas of the restaurant. In the old Council Chamber, a Grill Luncheon and Refreshment Bar provided patrons with light refreshments. More solid meals were served in the Great Banqueting Hall, which was furnished with separate tables and chairs (rather than the traditional boxes, or booths, that were found in older eating houses). Guests feasted on the restaurant's finest dishes in the former Throne Room.²⁷ As depicted in the *Illustrated Times* (fig. 6-3), waitresses served the diners.²⁸ Their presence was intended to appeal to female customers, as were the ladies' boudoir and retiring rooms, accommodations that could be difficult to find elsewhere.²⁹ In 1884, for example, the Ladies Lavatory Company opened a comfort station on Oxford Street to help women find relief during their excursions to the city, but many were too embarrassed to use it.³⁰ Discreet lavatories were preferable and the South Kensington Museum provided these for both sexes. The lavatories were

²⁵*Illustrated Times* (28 March 1868), p. 194; [Cunningham] 1874, p. 41.

²⁶*Illustrated Times* (28 March 1868), p. 194.

²⁷*Crosby Hall* [c. 1868], p. 12; Thorne 1980, p. 239.

²⁸*Illustrated Times* (28 March 1868), p. 193.

²⁹*Crosby Hall* [c. 1868], pp. 13, 14; Thorne 1980, p. 239.

³⁰Draznin 2001, p. 155.

housed in separate structures connected by narrow passages to the main building. One rest room stood adjacent to the Green Dining Room, but it was demolished long ago. The other rest room stood next to the Grill Room (fig. 6-4) and it was still accessible in 2005, when I last explored that wing of the museum. Its green and white wall tiles, designed by Gamble and executed by Minton, Hollins, & Co.,³¹ bore four royal motifs: a unicorn, a lion, a crown, and the cipher VA.³²



Figure 6-4: Lavatory near the Grill Room.

In the course of my research, I hoped to identify individuals who dined in the refreshment rooms. This was a difficult task, there being no lists of guests' names, occupations, and dates of attendance (nor did I expect to find any such lists in the museum's archives). However, helpful sources do exist and these come in many different

³¹NAL, RC.JJ.69, p. 19. The lavatories had nearly reached completion in early 1867; Lieut.-Col. Scott (23 January 1867) in the 14th *Report of the Science and Art Department* 1867, p. 232.

³²Physick 1982, p. 108.

forms. There is the memoir of Thomas Armstrong (1832-1911) who in 1881 became the Department of Science and Art's new art director. He and other administrators of the department met in the Green Dining Room regularly. The informal gatherings included Professor Huxley (Dean of the College of Science), General E. R. Festing (Director of the Science Museum), J. H. Pollen (Assistant Keeper of the South Kensington Museum), and J. C. Sparks (the art school's principal).³³ The tradition of friendly meetings, at a table reserved for staff members, continued into the twentieth century. When he headed the Royal College of Art, Will Rothenstein used the Green Dining Room to introduce promising employees to his artistic acquaintances, Max Beerbohm among them.³⁴ In his biography of the Macdonald family, A. W. Baldwin claims that Edward and Georgiana Burne-Jones enjoyed using the Grill Room.³⁵ A letter from William Rossetti indicates that he used the museum's refreshment rooms on at least one occasion: in 1886, after catching a chill in Hunt's studio, Rossetti opted to dine at the South Kensington Museum, "the warmth of which was a great relief."³⁶ Alan Crawford has consulted the personal papers of Victoria Benson, wife of W. A. S. Benson (the distinguished metalworker who co-founded the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society).³⁷ According to Victoria's diaries, her husband occasionally lunched at the South Kensington Museum in the 1890s.³⁸

³³Lamont 1912, p. 54; B. Morris 1986, p. 40.

³⁴Laver 1963, pp. 89, 94.

³⁵Baldwin 1960, p. 153; MacCarthy 1994, p. 212.

³⁶Letter from William Rossetti to Lucy Rossetti, 7 March 1886; quoted in Peattie 1990, pp. 483-84. Entering a museum to seek warmth may have been frowned upon by some (see my second chapter), but evidently members of London's artistic elite used the South Kensington Museum for that exact purpose.

³⁷Crawford 1999, p. 95, note 3.

³⁸Crawford 1999, p. 108.

Henry Cole's diaries also help to identify various patrons of the refreshment rooms. The museum director delighted in the attendance of eminent persons and duly recorded their visits. Some visitors, like Prince Teck (1837-1900), were titled gentlemen of noble birth.³⁹ Others, such as Titus Salt (1803-76), were industrial barons of new wealth.⁴⁰ His diaries also acknowledge the presence of women diners. On 25 May 1869, after a visit to the Ceramic Gallery, "Lady Featherstonhaugh" [*sic*], her sister, and "Lady D Nevill" lunched in one of the refreshment rooms with Cole's wife and daughter, Marian and Henrietta ("Hennie").⁴¹ The widow of Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh (1754-1846), Lady Mary Ann Fetherstonhaugh (née Bullock) was a woman of humble birth: the daughter of the park keeper and poulterer at Uppark, Sir Harry's estate in Sussex, Mary Ann had worked as a dairymaid before she married Sir Harry in 1825.⁴² The sister to whom Cole refers was surely Frances Bullock, an unmarried sibling who also resided at Uppark. The other gentlewoman was Lady Dorothy Nevill (1826-1913), wife of Reginald Nevill and daughter of Horatio Walpole, the 3rd Earl of Orford. An influential society hostess, Lady Nevill was an avid botanist and met regularly with members of the Royal Horticultural Society.⁴³ In her *Reminiscences*, she fondly recalled visiting the South

³⁹A prince without a princely income, he lunched in one of the refreshment rooms in early 1870. See Cole, diary, 15 February 1870 [NAL, 45.C.131].

⁴⁰For a brief account of Salt's visit to the South Kensington Museum, see Cole, diary, 19 January 1869 [NAL, 45.C.130]. The diary entry is ambiguous: Cole mentions a meeting with Salt (to discuss plans for the Saltaire Institute), and then writes: "Lunched in Grill Room." Therefore, it is possible that Cole dined alone.

⁴¹Cole, diary, 25 May 1869 [NAL, 45.C.130].

⁴²Burke 1832, p. 467; Nevill [1906], p. 104; Lummis/Marsh 1990, pp. 128-29.

⁴³*British Biographical Archive* 1999, p. 1823, nos. 143, 144-46. Incidentally, her beloved governess was Elizabeth Redgrave (1806-89), Richard Redgrave's younger sister. Elizabeth remained Dorothy's companion until her marriage to Nevill in 1847;

Kensington Museum on a regular basis:

I knew Mr. (after Sir Henry) Cole . . . very well, and frequently used to go and lunch and dine with him at the South Kensington, . . . He was very proud of the tiled room there, and here it was that these feasts used to be given, Mr. Cole having an idea that its particular style of decoration would be widely adopted, which has not been the case.⁴⁴

It seems that Lady Nevill was quite familiar with the museum and felt at ease in its restaurant.

Queen Victoria also visited the South Kensington Museum in 1869; the monarch toured the kitchens and refreshment rooms, but she did not dine there.⁴⁵ Another royal would: in 1873 Alexandra, the Princess of Wales and Britain's future queen, lunched in the 'Refreshment Room' with Prince John of Glücksburg. Cole hoped news of their lunch would spread,⁴⁶ but the press was discreet. The *Queen*, a popular women's periodical, took note of the royal visit, but omitted the lunch from public record: "On FRIDAY the Princess of Wales, accompanied by Prince John of Glücksburg, and attended by the Hon. Mrs Coke, Miss Knollys, and Mr Holzmann, went to the South Kensington Museum."⁴⁷ Perhaps it was impolite to report on a princess's lunch in a room that could be visited by humbler folk. However, the question remains, how humble could the folk who ate at the South Kensington Museum really be?

Proponents of the museum argued that it could lure the working classes from their

Casteras/Parkinson 1988, pp. 3, 19.

⁴⁴Nevill [1906], p. 255.

⁴⁵Cole, diary, 4 March 1869 [NAL, 45.C.130]. Papers mentioned the monarch's visit only briefly. See, for example, *Illustrated London News* (6 March 1869), p. 227 and *Queen* (13 March 1869), p. 168.

⁴⁶Cole, diary, 17 October 1873 [NAL, 45.C.134].

⁴⁷*Queen* (25 October 1873), p. 324.

favourite pubs and gin shops. Open day and night, the museum was a source of wholesome diversions that, it was supposed, the working classes were eager to embrace. Indeed, middle-class and upper-class professionals widely believed that the lower classes would cease to engage in “vicious pursuits” if more respectable venues (like art museums) became available to them.⁴⁸ Cole viewed all museums as having the potential to pacify an unruly public: “They are temples where all can worship in harmony; they teach good habits of order, and cleanliness, and politeness, and make everyone feel that he has a possession in the commonwealth. Museums are antidotes to brutality and vice.”⁴⁹ Indeed, since the early decades of the nineteenth century, many ascribed to museums the ability to transform slovenly (even treacherous) individuals into upstanding citizens.⁵⁰ It is uncertain how museums were supposed to accomplish this when it was also assumed that the common man was befuddled by London’s best public collections.⁵¹ Perhaps the principal concern was not to entice the masses to museums *per se*, but rather to keep working men out of the public-houses and away from the rabble-rousers. However, if the South Kensington Museum was to compete with pubs for its working-class audience, it would be a hard fight.

As I demonstrated in my second chapter, although organizers believed that the

⁴⁸See the testimony of Samuel Woodburn, a picture dealer, for his thoughts on how the opening of parks, libraries, and galleries could reform the lower classes; *Report* 1836, p. 136. Evidently Woodburn believed the lower classes would resort to criminal activities, or immoral ways, if left to their own devices.

⁴⁹Cole 1874, p. 168.

⁵⁰B. Taylor 1999, p. 66.

⁵¹The Working Men’s Club and Institute Union (No. 150, Strand) sought to address this conundrum by offering guided tours of London’s museums to working men; *Graphic* (6 August 1870), p. 135.

South Kensington Museum's offer of evening admission would attract labourers,⁵² it was difficult for artisans (so many of whom lived on the other side of the city) to reach the West End. Furthermore, the prevalence of public-houses (on the routes that tired workers followed to South Kensington) threatened the museum's intent to sober up the nation.⁵³ Also frustrating the good intentions of the museum's organizers was an old pattern of wage distribution. Customarily workers were obliged to visit pubs in order to obtain their wages, although it was a dead or dying practice in most areas of Britain by the 1880s.⁵⁴ Wages were distributed on Saturdays and, rather predictably, alcohol consumption increased on weekends.⁵⁵ The reminiscences of one Victorian labourer, Charles Shaw, confirm the pitfalls of pay-day Saturday:

The custom was to pay three or four men, with their helpers, in one lump sum, say a five-pound note, and some odd sovereigns. . . . The wages were fastened up . . . until loosened at some public house. Men and women and children had to go there for their wages. The publican took good care to be in no hurry in changing the money given him. Each one – man, woman and child – was expected to have a hot roll and cheese, to be paid for out of the wage to be received, however small the pittance. The roll and cheese were right enough, but the payment was arbitrary and unequal.⁵⁶

Prices at the South Kensington Museum were not arbitrary and unequal. In each

⁵²Cole underscored the (perceived) importance of later admission hours when he wrote: "Perhaps the evening opening of Public Museums may furnish a powerful antidote to the gin palace." Cole 1857, p. 26; cited by Purbrick 1994, p. 83. See also Physick 1982, p. 35; B. Morris 1986, p. 31.

⁵³Both Rev. Newman Hall of Blackfriars (*Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 12) and Benjamin Lucraft of Hoxton (*Local Metropolitan Museums* 1865, p. 24) attested to these detractions.

⁵⁴B. Harrison 1971, p. 339.

⁵⁵S. Freeman 1989, p. 97.

⁵⁶'An Old Potter' [Charles Shaw], *When I was a Child*, 1903; quoted in Burnett 1984, p. 303.

refreshment room, a list of tariffs was displayed conspicuously.⁵⁷ In the late 1860s, as he prepared to assume control of the refreshment department, the caterer Fred Hill proposed to sell the following items in the second-class room: veal cutlets (10d.), stewed kidneys (10d.), poached eggs with spinach (1s.), curried chicken (1s.3d.), and sausages (3d.).⁵⁸ In the first-class room, Hill would offer slightly more expensive dishes: for example, veal cutlets with bacon (1s.3d.), stewed kidneys (1s.3d.), poached eggs with spinach (1s.6d.), curried chicken (1s.9d.), and sausages (1s.).⁵⁹ Each guest of the Green Dining Room, the first-class room, was charged two pence extra for the provision of napkins and finger glasses.⁶⁰ A writer for the *Standard* supposed this additional fee, “and not, as we first imagined, the somewhat depressing colouring of the “green” room itself,” deterred people from eating there.⁶¹ Though he considered the prices “fairly moderate,” he scoffed at the six pence charged for a “small glass of smaller sherry.”⁶² Notably, although the South Kensington Museum sought to lure men from the pub, it was not dry.⁶³ Alcohol (in many varieties) was available for consumption, but Cole claimed the public preferred tea and coffee anyhow. He happily reported, “they have the opportunity of drinking spirits, but

⁵⁷Agreement between the Department of Science and Art and Frederick John Hill, 25 July 1881, p. 7 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁵⁸Frederick Hill, “Tariff of Proposed Charges: Second Class Room,” 26 December 1867 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁵⁹Frederick Hill, “Tariff of Proposed Charges: First Class Room,” 26 December 1867 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁶⁰List of Charges, 8.1.68 (8 January 1868), signed “EB” [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁶¹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

⁶²*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

⁶³The museum’s reputation as the rival to public-houses has given rise to the false impression that alcohol was never served in its refreshment rooms. See, for example, Barringer 1996b, p. 38: “since the museum was the alternative to the gin palace, alcohol was not served.” This is incorrect.

they hardly drink a thimbleful.”⁶⁴

The working-class British artisan figured prominently in the promotional literature of the South Kensington Museum, but could he be spotted eating in one of its refreshment rooms? Mrs. Brown’s fictional reaction to the restaurant may provide a real clue:

There’s heverythink as the ’art can wish for, includin’ a ’ot dinner, as I see a gent a-takin’ in the refreshment department, or you may ’ave a chop or your tea, as is a great conwenience to them as is only up in town for a day or two, and not able to get anythink at their lodgin’s when they goes ’ome at night, and is altogether a reg’lar place for them as wants to enjoy theirselves rational, without a-goin’ to too great espence, tho’ for that matter there’s no goin’ out without a-spendin’ of money.⁶⁵

The South Kensington Museum’s dining facilities may have been convenient to some, like the “gent” whom Mrs. Brown saw or the titled women whom Cole named in his diaries, but perhaps not to the humblest artisan. A meal at the museum could cost a shilling or more: for example, the selection of stewed rabbit, a salad, and a cup of coffee cost one shilling and four pence.⁶⁶ By Captain Fowke’s estimation, the hourly wage of artisans employed in the building industry did not exceed 7½ pence, so the sample meal represented over two hours’ labour for fitters, the best-paid artisans in the trade.⁶⁷ By my calculations, fitters could earn approximately 38 shillings per week, or just under £100 in a year, but a third-class labourer in the building industry might earn as little as 21 shillings per week. Rent had to be paid and if there were other mouths to feed and bodies

⁶⁴*Report* 1860, p. 30; Physick 1982, p. 31.

⁶⁵Sketchley [1872], pp. 142-43.

⁶⁶Frederick Hill, “Tariff of Proposed Charges: Second Class Room,” 26 December 1867 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁶⁷Fitters earned 7½ pence per hour, carpenters 7, ‘leading men labourers’ 5½, first-class labourers 5, second-class labourers 4½, and third-class labourers 4¼; Fowke, “Work,” 6 June 1864 [NA, ED 28/18, p. 110].

to clothe, it seems unlikely that thrifty tradespeople would opt to dine at the South Kensington Museum. The food, quite simply, was not affordable.⁶⁸ Indeed, the elegance of the refreshment rooms was a far cry from the brutal efficiency of the labourer's midday meal, as witnessed at the construction site of the International Exhibition:

The steam hoist ceasing from its labour gives three determined shrieks as a signal to its fellow workmen. . . . From lofty summits, along half formed passages, . . . the great swarm of operatives hurry to their midday meal. At the entrances, eager to supply their wants, are men with soup cans, hot potatoe-tins [*sic*], beer, solid viands, bread and cheese; tea, hot coffee, &c. While these modest perambulating establishments are being speedily surrounded, and their stock exhausted, women and children entering from different doors add to the animation of the scene. They bring their own dinners as well as those of husband, brother, or father, and on some rough bit of planking spread their readily prepared meal. . . . The half hour reaches its termination. The engine screams once more, and as suddenly and rapidly as they discarded their labour, the workmen resume their task, and the ring of the trowel and fall of the hammer resound through the building once more.⁶⁹

Working-class Victorians did not eat at fancy restaurants – they could not – and, in fact, they rarely ate out.⁷⁰ During a visit to the pub, a working man might order small snacks in addition to his pint of beer, but his finances permitted few other indulgences.⁷¹

Because it is unlikely that working-class individuals were regular patrons of the restaurant at South Kensington, it is necessary to debunk a myth that has obscured the true nature of its refreshment rooms. Although the intermingling of classes was permitted in the museum's corridors, Elizabeth Helsinger has argued, it was not tolerated in the restaurant. In her opinion, the refreshment rooms acted as spaces of segregation:

⁶⁸Durbin 1994, p. 9.

⁶⁹*Handy-Book* 1862, p. 9.

⁷⁰Burnett 1989, pp. 128, 168.

⁷¹Burnett 1989, p. 128.

The first, a grill room tiled in cobalt blue and warmed by potbellied stoves, appealed to the more boisterous lower classes. A tearoom, with burnished browns and ornately framed mirrors, was designed with middle-class patrons in mind. The formal dining room's restful green hues and molded-plaster [*sic*] walls were for upper-class patrons.⁷²

The concept of a direct relationship between aesthetic preference and social standing is intriguing, but I believe Helsinger's appraisal of the rooms was based on a misreading of Physick's book, wherein he describes a tender that Fred Hill submitted in December 1867.⁷³ The new caterer proposed to use three classes of tariffs: the first class denoted "prices to be charged in the Room which has yet to be completed" (i.e., the Green Dining Room); second-class fees would be charged in the Grill Room; and a third class of tariffs would be made available in "some place set apart for the Mechanics and all workmen etc. employed at the Museum Buildings and even for the humble working class visitors."⁷⁴ Initially, this information led me to believe that the refreshment rooms were intended to serve different socio-economic classes: upper, middle, and lower. However, in the course of my research, I discovered only negligible differences in prices and menu options. It is doubtful that a ten-pence plate of veal cutlets was significantly more affordable to a penny-pinched artisan than its first-class variation, veal cutlets and bacon for one shilling

⁷²Helsinger 2001 (internet). It must be noted that Helsinger's arguments, first presented at a conference in January 2001 ("Museum Culture" Chicago Weekend), were summarized in an on-line report (penned by a person with the initials "S.A.S."). The block quotation is excerpted from the internet source and not from Helsinger's paper.

⁷³Physick 1982, p. 109.

⁷⁴Letter from Fred Hill to the South Kensington Museum committee, 26 December 1867 [VAA ED 84/222]. In his testimony before the 1860 Select Committee, Cole stated that the caterer sold refreshments according to tariffs "of two kinds," so it appears that the museum offered two classes of refreshments from the beginning. See *Report* 1860, p. 30.

and three pence. Cole's diaries also showed distinguished persons using all three rooms, not just the first-class Green Dining Room. In all likelihood, class-conscious aristocrats and other members of the elite would have avoided certain rooms, if those rooms were intended for the lower classes.⁷⁵ In the end, I perceived two obstacles that would have deterred many working-class individuals from dining at the South Kensington Museum: the food was prohibitively expensive and the West End location was sufficiently remote. Therefore, I believe the choice between a first-class meal and a second-class dinner was limited to relatively affluent individuals, who sometimes preferred a cheaper chop to a costlier filet.

It is difficult to gauge the popularity of the refreshment rooms. Occasionally the restaurant received favourable notice in guidebooks to London.⁷⁶ Some internal records suggest the rooms could be overcrowded,⁷⁷ with an estimated 200 to 225 students and staff members using the restaurant on a regular basis,⁷⁸ but other sources suggest the rooms became unpopular.⁷⁹ Fortunately, on very rare occasions, diners' numbers were monitored. For instance, on Saturday, 9 November 1912, 344 people visited the refreshment rooms: 49 people used the Green Dining Room, 248 guests chose the Centre Refreshment Room (which was then called the "Saloon"), and 47 individuals selected the

⁷⁵Lord Elcho (1818-1914), for instance, lunched with Cole in the Grill Room in late 1870; Cole, diary, 18 November 1870 [NAL, 45.C.131].

⁷⁶See, for example, Pascoe 1885, p. 266.

⁷⁷Letter from William de Wiveleslie Abney to the Treasury's Secretary, 16 January 1903 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁷⁸Copy of a statement sent to the Treasury, 26 January 1903 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁷⁹The prices were deemed too high to attract many students and staff members. See a memorandum from the First Commissioner of Works, undersigned by S. [Schomberg] McDonnell, 20 February 1903 [VAA, ED 84/222].

Grill Room.⁸⁰ These were not huge numbers and, at different points in the day, the Green Dining Room sat empty.

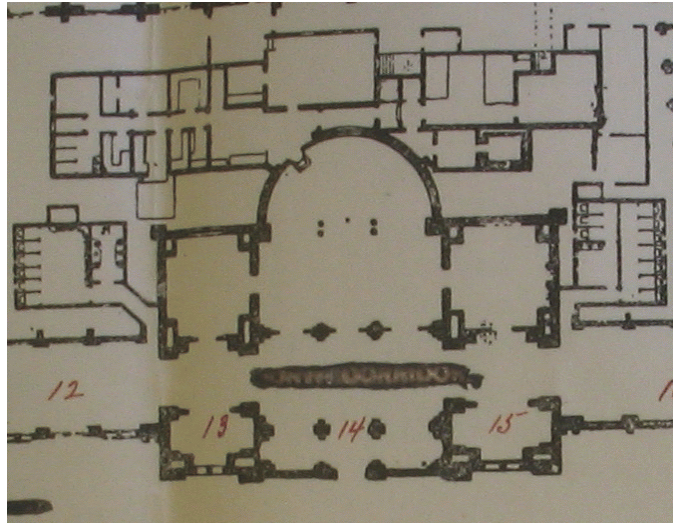


Figure 6-5: Ground plan of the Lecture Theatre building (centre), lavatories (west and east), and kitchens (north). VAA, ED 84/72, AM5069/09.

As for the food, it was prepared in buildings erected in the courtyard north of the refreshment rooms (fig. 6-5). By separating the kitchens from the main building, the threat of fire was reduced and guests were distanced from unpleasant food odours. Indeed, Victorian etiquette dictated the seclusion of the kitchen: dinner guests, at a public restaurant or in a private home, were not supposed to detect odours wafting from the kitchen, nor were they to see or hear the hustle and bustle of servants.⁸¹ Consequently, the kitchen of a grand Victorian home might be far removed from the dining room and other principal areas of the house.⁸² In a large restaurant, greater quantities of food had to

⁸⁰V&A Minute (12/2137), 14 November 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

⁸¹Beeton [1867], p. 19; Panton 1888, p. 13; H. Muthesius 1979, p. 96.

⁸²Annette Carruthers, "The Kitchen," pp. 83-104, in Carruthers 1996, p. 95.

be served in an efficient and decorous manner to guests, so its kitchen needed to be accessible to servers *and* hidden from diners.⁸³ There were different ways to accomplish this; for instance, the kitchen might occupy a separate floor (as at Crosby Hall),⁸⁴ or cooks could work in separate buildings (as at the South Kensington Museum). In the Centre Refreshment Room, below the second stained-glass window, two hatches were used to pass foodstuffs between the kitchens and the dining area (fig. 6-6).⁸⁵ Admittedly, some items were cooked directly within the Grill Room, but perhaps this was tolerated because grill rooms were regarded as more casual environments. When they first appeared in London's grand hotels, late in the nineteenth century, grill rooms were used to serve simpler dishes to guests who wore informal attire.⁸⁶



Figure 6-6: Hatches in the Centre Refreshment Room.

⁸³*British Architect* (24 April 1874), p. 270.

⁸⁴*Crosby Hall* [c. 1868], p. 13.

⁸⁵Durbin 1994, p. 9.

⁸⁶D. Taylor 1977, p. 83; Bowden 1975, p. 31.

The name of the first caterer to the South Kensington Museum, G. Withers, appears in Cole's diary on 22 April 1857.⁸⁷ Evidently it had strained Cole to secure a caterer for the refreshment rooms: "We had some difficulty in finding a respectable pastry cook to take them, there appearing to be a risk about it."⁸⁸ Risk was involved: catering for a museum restaurant was a novel enterprise and, as subsequent proprietors would discover, it proved to be a difficult one. On 26 December 1867, Fred Hill applied for the position of caterer to the South Kensington Museum. As indicated by his letterhead, Hill was already catering to the Oval Kennington and Mitre Tavern (Mitre Court, Fleet Street), the refreshment rooms of the British Museum, and the Surrey Club House.⁸⁹ Hill's qualifications evidently impressed the authorities at South Kensington for he assumed control of the museum's refreshment department in late February.⁹⁰ His sons, Orlando and Thomas, joined in the enterprise,⁹¹ but the business did not pay as well as Hill had hoped and so Hill was granted a significant rent decrease in 1874.⁹² Disappointment struck again in 1880 when his eldest son, Orlando, abandoned the

⁸⁷He wrote: "Saw Mr Withers abt Refreshments." Cole, diary, 22 April 1857 [NAL, 45.C.118]. See also Physick 1982, p. 31.

⁸⁸*Report* 1860, p. 30.

⁸⁹Letter from Fred Hill to the South Kensington Museum committee, 26 December 1867 [VAA ED 84/222]. See also Physick 1982, p. 109.

⁹⁰He wrote: "I have arranged with Mr. Englefield to take possession of the Refreshment department on Wednesday evening the 26th." Letter from Fred Hill to MacLeod, 15 February 1868 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹¹Letter from Fred Hill to P. Owen, 16 May 1881 [VAA, ED 84/222]; letter from Fred Hill to the Secretary of the Science and Art Department, 24 May 1881 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹²Duke of Richmond and Gordon, 30 April 1874 [VAA, ED 84/36, p. 389]. By Hill's own account, his application for a rent decrease was made in 1875; private memo from Fred Hill for Sir Donnelly, stamped on 23 December 1896 [VAA, ED 84/222].

business to search for brighter prospects.⁹³ Then in 1881 Hill's lawyers applied on his behalf for another rent decrease.⁹⁴ They also forwarded his request to set up a buffet near the museum's new entrance.⁹⁵

A Buffet at or near the entrance to the Museum for the supply of light refreshments would be of considerable assistance to Messrs. Hill especially during the winter months, while at all times we hope it would not be other than a convenience to the general public. . . . We may mention that since the removal of the entrance further from the refreshment rooms the business in light-refreshments has considerably diminished.⁹⁶

Hill's request for a rent decrease was approved,⁹⁷ but it seems the buffet never materialized. In 1886 the rent was reduced again,⁹⁸ but the company's prospects did not improve because in 1895 Thomas Hill was forced to quit the business, like his brother before him.⁹⁹ Clearly, catering to the South Kensington Museum was not a lucrative business. In fact, the terms of Hill's contract discouraged excessive profits. He was

⁹³Private memo from Fred Hill for Sir Donnelly, stamped on 23 December 1896 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹⁴Letter from Ward and Letchworth Weld to the Director of the South Kensington Museum, 23 July 1881 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹⁵As I mentioned in my second chapter, at different points in the museum's chronology, the location of its principal entrance is obscure. Apparently turn-of-the-century visitors were confronted by a "very mean entrance" at Cromwell Road; Cook 1897-98, p. 180. Then Aston Webb's addition (begun in 1899) gave a new face to the museum. To this day, his facade provides the main entrance to the museum. However, nineteenth-century visitors could also access the museum via a side entrance from Exhibition Road; [Cunningham] 1874, pp. 172, 173. It is uncertain if Hill intended to position his buffet near an entrance at Cromwell Road or Exhibition Road.

⁹⁶Letter from Ward and Letchworth Weld to the Director of the South Kensington Museum, 23 July 1881 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹⁷Contract between Fred Hill and the Department of Science and Art, 25 July 1881, p. 4 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹⁸Contract between Fred Hill and the Department of Science and Art, 1 July 1886, p. 3 [VAA, ED 84/222].

⁹⁹Private memo from Fred Hill for Sir Donnelly, stamped on 23 December 1896 [VAA, ED 84/222].

obliged to provide decent meals (to staff and students) at prices that only slightly exceeded the cost of ingredients and the labour that went into preparing them.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, as his retirement approached, Fred Hill could boast of staff members who had worked at the museum for over two decades and he expressed concern for their welfare. Before his final contract expired, Hill wanted to ensure that his faithful employees would receive fair warning of their termination, if the museum intended to replace them; he hoped advanced notice would make the transition easier for them.¹⁰¹

The museum's archives shed no light on the identities of Hill's staff members. In fact, few documents allude to the cooks, waiters, and other employees who guaranteed the smooth running of the museum's full-service restaurant. No records reveal the size of Hill's staff, or how staff numbers shifted over the years. Many questions remain unanswered, including how work was divided. Were waiters assigned to particular rooms, or did they circulate between all three? What were their ages? Youth was a valuable commodity, especially at public-houses where patrons preferred to buy their beverages from attractive men and women.¹⁰² However, pretty barmaids were rumoured

¹⁰⁰His agreement stated: "The purpose of this Contract is to supply good refreshments to the Visitors to the said Museum at moderate prices and to students of the Schools and members of the Staff at the lowest possible price that will cover the bare expenses." Contract between Fred Hill and the Department of Science and Art, 1 July 1886, p. 10 [VAA, ED 84/222]. Page 11 of the contract stipulated prices: for example, bread, butter, and cheese sold for one penny each, a cup of coffee or tea cost three pence, and filtered water was free. A student, seeking refreshments between 12 and 2 o'clock, might choose a plate of boiled beef for seven pence and a half-pint of ale for two pence.

¹⁰¹Letter from Frederick Hill & Son to the Secretary of the Board of Education, 5 January 1903 [VAA, ED 84/222].

¹⁰²G. Jones 1992, p. 70.

to have loose morals and they suffered unwanted advances.¹⁰³ Waitresses likely received some of the same ill-treatment, but restaurateurs and tea room managers did not limit themselves to hiring the youngest and prettiest candidates.¹⁰⁴ Normally waiters could expect to receive tips,¹⁰⁵ but the waiters at South Kensington were not allowed to accept any.¹⁰⁶ They seem to have worked long hours, causing at least one observer to worry about their treatment,¹⁰⁷ but long hours may have been the bane of most, if not all, blue-collar employees of the museum. Attendants usually worked from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. during the summer months and, after an hour's rest, they worked again from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.¹⁰⁸

A single image depicts employees of the restaurant: Watkins's illustration of the Grill Room (fig. 6-2). It is an idealized representation (the room appears more spacious than it truly is), but presumably the cook's white uniform is accurate enough. The *Standard* mentioned the cook in its review of the refreshment rooms, describing him in the same lyrical vein used for the architectural details of the interior. Identified as "the white-vested, white-mitred high priest of the culinary temple,"¹⁰⁹ the cook was invested with an exoticism that demonstrates the integral role that 'spectacle' plays in the

¹⁰³Spiller 1972, p. 45. The rumour of the loose barmaid is perpetuated even by modern historians; see Best 1971, p. 101.

¹⁰⁴P. Kinchin 1991, p. 61.

¹⁰⁵For a dinner that cost less than one shilling, a one-penny tip was recommended. Tips larger than six pence (per diner) were discouraged; [Cunningham] 1874, p. 42.

¹⁰⁶*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

¹⁰⁷A twentieth-century witness was shocked to discover that some staff members began working at 7.30 in the morning and continued working until the evening (when the museum closed); letter from Lawrence to Sir Cecil Smith, 10 March 1913 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁰⁸Bonython/Burton 2003, p. 194.

¹⁰⁹*Standard* (26 December 1868), p. 3.

experience of eating out. Did he roast a chop to perfection? Maybe, or maybe not – his culinary skills are not critiqued – but he looked interesting and that mattered a great deal. The appeal of a restaurant meal is influenced by more than the diner’s sense of taste. As Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers have noted, eating out is “a *total* experience” that triggers all five senses.¹¹⁰

In the 1890s Lieut.-Col. Newnham-Davis, a dedicated gourmand, penned some entertaining restaurant reviews for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, which were published collectively in *Dinners and Diners: Where and How to Dine in London* (1899). Written from the vantage point of a patron with deep pockets, the book is a treasure trove of information on turn-of-the-century restaurants in London. Newnham-Davis carefully recounts his dining excursions, detailing the contents and costliness of his meals, the characteristics of his dining companions, and the ambience of his surroundings. Each review emphasizes the power of visual elements to enhance the restaurant experience. A delightful dinner did not limit itself to tickling tastebuds, but also pleased the eye and, as the following examples will demonstrate, restaurant staff often served to please the eye. Greeting guests at the Hotel Cecil’s entrance were three male attendants in “gorgeous uniforms, and with as much gold lace round their caps as a field-marshal wears.”¹¹¹ The spectacle continued inside the hotel’s grand restaurant where Newnham-Davis was entertained by the exotic attire of the curry cook (he was dressed in white samite and

¹¹⁰Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers, “*Vaut ou ne vaut pas le détour: Conviviality, Custom(er)s and Public Places of New Taste since the Late Eighteenth Century,*” pp. 1-15, in Jacobs/Scholliers 2003, p. 6. For further insight into the multi-sensory satisfaction of a restaurant meal, see Finkelstein 1998, p. 202.

¹¹¹Newnham-Davis 1899, p. 60.

wore a turban).¹¹² At the equally impressive Savoy, Turkish coffee was served by a “brightly clothed Asiatic.”¹¹³ Not to be outdone, the Avondale in Piccadilly employed another striking outsider. Approving of the man’s aesthetic contribution to the dining room, Newnham wrote: “A Moorish gentleman, who I expect does nothing more ferocious than make coffee, made a fine splash of colour in his crimson and gold.”¹¹⁴ The staff at other restaurants could be considerably less colourful. The waitresses at St. George’s Café, a casual coffee-house that served vegetarian meals, wore uninspiring black dresses.¹¹⁵ Much more glamorous were the waitresses of the Salon de Luxe (Willow Tea Rooms, Glasgow). They dressed in white and wore pink-beaded chokers, all by the design of the interior’s architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh.¹¹⁶ Uniforms for servers were not universal, but the dining experience could be considerably enriched when staff donned impressive variants. In previous examples, the exotic uniforms of foreign/outsider servants were used to elevate the status of the restaurant, visibly injecting it with imperial power. However, uniforms donned by British/insider servants could also raise the status of the dinner guest. Joanne Finkelstein sees a direct relation between the conduct (and appearance) of waiters in formal restaurants and the pleasure of restaurant food. By acting like domestic servants, the waiters boost the egos of their customers: “They assume the air of liveried family retainers and by their manner they invite the diner to be extravagant in his/her demands, to satisfy any whim or fancy and to order an

¹¹²Newnham-Davis 1899, p. 61.

¹¹³Newnham-Davis 1899, p. 78.

¹¹⁴Newnham-Davis 1899, p. 130.

¹¹⁵Newnham-Davis, p. 92.

¹¹⁶P. Kinchin 1991, p. 110; Crawford in Kaplan 1996, p. 263.

abundance of food and wine as if they were already in one's possession and had simply to be retrieved from the household's private store or cellar."¹¹⁷ Domestic service is less prevalent today, so the association may be less evident to people who enjoy eating out from time to time, but the link may have been obvious to middle-class Victorians (who typically employed domestic servants).

The waiter in Watkins's illustration of the Grill Room wears a dark jacket, but it is unclear whether or not he wears a uniform. His jacket could be an item selected from his personal belongings or an article of clothing assigned to him by his employer. Extant documents make no reference to the provision of uniforms for employees of the restaurant. Hill's contracts only demanded that each employee maintain a presentable appearance: in 1881, for example, Hill was instructed to "pay special attention to the selection and cleanliness of all Servants."¹¹⁸ Similar conditions were written into his 1886 contract: "The Servants are always to be clean and suitably dressed to the approval of the said Department."¹¹⁹ If uniforms were enforced, in all likelihood they were worn grudgingly. Waitresses often had to pay for their uniforms (black dresses, aprons, and white collars) with their own money.¹²⁰ The uniform was both financially and socially degrading: it hurt their already small savings and it marked them as humble workers, distinct from the fashionable ladies of higher classes. In fact, museum officials created a

¹¹⁷Finkelstein 1989, p. 75.

¹¹⁸Contract between Fred Hill and the Department of Science and Art, 25 July 1881, p. 11 [VAA, ED 84/222].

¹¹⁹Contract between Fred Hill and the Department of Science and Art, 1 July 1886, pp. 8-9 [VAA, ED 84/222].

¹²⁰Benson 1996, p. 94.

small controversy when they forced museum attendants to wear uniforms so that the public could identify them more easily. Word of the new policy was circulating by July 1906, when an employee began to voice his objections. C. J. Goddard, who had worked at the museum for forty-two years, was “most deeply grieved and humiliated” by the prospect of a working-man’s uniform.¹²¹ More feathers were ruffled, but a compromise was made in 1909: to appease the ‘senior’ attendants on his staff, Cecil Smith excused current employees aged sixty (and over) from wearing the uniform, which became mandatory for everyone else.¹²²

When Hill retired in 1903, his daughter Annie Page Cottam was recommended to take his place, “she having acted as Manageress for some time past.”¹²³ Because she did sign on as the new caterer, in April 1904, it is unlikely that the staff changed radically.¹²⁴ Already familiar with the capabilities of her father’s former employees (who, in turn,

¹²¹Letter from C. J. Goddard to Mr. Skinner, 18 July 1906 [VAA, ED 84/211]. Goddard also objected to his classification as an “Attendant” because he did not perform the “ordinary duties” of an attendant; he did clerical work (accounts and statistics). In his correspondence with another official, Goddard expressed his intense dislike for the proposed uniform, describing it as a “most undeserved indignity.” Letter from C. J. Goddard to J. Bailey, 18 July 1906 [VAA ED 84/211].

¹²²Cecil Smith, Board Minute (AM3332), 8 July 1909 [VAA, ED 84/211]. Cecil Smith was the V&A’s director from 1909 to 1924.

¹²³Letter from Sir John Bromley to the Treasury’s Secretary, 12 December 1903 [VAA, ED 84/222].

¹²⁴Contract between the Board of Education and Annie Page Cottam, 12 April 1904 [VAA, ED 84/223]. According to a later report, Cottam succeeded her father in 1903; “Report of the Committee appointed to consider the arrangements to be made for refreshments at the Victoria and Albert Museum,” 20 March 1913, p. 1 [VAA, ED 84/223]. However, given that Sir Bromley had only recommended her for the job in mid-December 1903, the 1904 contract is surely more accurate. Perhaps Cottam had assumed her father’s duties, in an informal arrangement, before the museum decided what it wanted to do with the refreshment department.

were already familiar with the routines of the museum restaurant), Cottam probably wanted to keep as many employees as she could afford. As it turned out, Cottam's experience was not unlike her father's: her work as the sole purveyor of refreshments was very challenging. Ailing visitor numbers and low prices kept her annual profits below £100.¹²⁵ People were also beginning to perceive a decline in the quality of the food.¹²⁶ One individual, an instructor at the Royal College of Art, worried that people would spend less time in the museum, learning from its magnificent collections, if the restaurant did not improve:

Remembering from my own student days, the great good I got from wandering round the museum after meal times and coming across all sorts of unexpected things of fine quality . . . I think it is worth considering whether a really good refreshment department is not an important factor in the usefulness of a museum. In days thirty years ago our refreshment rooms were noted for their excellence and I am convinced many people came for a pleasant meal, and used the museum collection much more in consequence.¹²⁷

Perhaps it is not surprising that the V&A, eager to improve its refreshment rooms, kept an eye on dining facilities at other museums: in 1912 the V&A's deputy director, Paul Oppé (1878-1957), conducted a refreshment room survey. The information he collected is extremely interesting because it sheds light on the emergence of the museum restaurant, an essential feature of modern museum buildings that is rarely discussed in museum histories. There were public refreshment rooms at the British Museum, the Tate Gallery,

¹²⁵Minute Paper, 9 May 1905 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹²⁶See, for example, "Report of the Committee appointed to consider the arrangements to be made for refreshments at the Victoria and Albert Museum," 20 March 1913, pp. 2-3 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹²⁷Letter from Frank Short to Sir Cecil Smith, 29 November 1914 [VAA, ED 84/224].

and the Natural History Museum, but they were not licensed to sell alcohol. The contractors paid no rent, nor did they pay for gas (at the British Museum and the Natural History Museum) or coal (at the Tate Gallery). Food for the British Museum and the Natural History Museum was first cooked offsite and then reheated on the premises. Notably, it was Annie Cottam, working from the kitchens of the Victoria & Albert Museum, who catered to the Natural History Museum.¹²⁸

At the Tate Gallery, refreshments were provided for students and the general public by a female contractor, who profited very little from the business. Upon her death, she was replaced by Mrs. Farrell, the gallery's "capable housekeeper."¹²⁹ Earning 18 shillings per week for her catering duties, she cooked hot meals onsite and served them in a tiny refreshment room.¹³⁰ Business was brisk in the summer, but weak in the winter. The arrangements were far from glamorous, the food was less than exquisite, but the enterprise served its purpose: "It is not what I call attractive, but it is efficient in the sort of way the usual middle class English public likes to be fed."¹³¹

When Oppé conducted his survey, the Holborn Restaurant was catering to the British Museum.¹³² "A very unambitious affair,"¹³³ the refreshment room was an architectural afterthought:

¹²⁸Oppé, Minute Paper (12/2137M), 5 November 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹²⁹Letter from Charles Aitken (of the Tate Gallery) to Oppé, October 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³⁰Oppé, Minute Paper (12/2137M), 5 November 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³¹Letter from Aitken to Oppé, October 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³²Oppé, Minute Paper (12/2137), 5 November 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³³Letter from A. R. Dryhurst (of the British Museum) to Oppé, 24 October 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

To find a place for the Room was not easy, & it had to be jammed in with the Egyptian Gallery & the Reading Room. In the early days when the Museum was designed, the Architect did not imagine it would be the thronged microcosm of today, & never thought of providing a Refreshment Room, or, for that matter, administrative offices.¹³⁴

The first caterer to the British Museum, R. H. Muffit, had supplied “light refreshments of every kind, and only of the best quality, . . . at a moderate cost.”¹³⁵ Under the management of the Holborn Restaurant, the refreshment room offered a small selection of modestly priced items, including cuts of meat sent from the kitchens of the restaurant and reheated in a gas oven at the museum. Readers made the most use of the refreshment room, which filled to capacity at tea time (although A. R. Dryhurst, Oppé’s contact at the British Museum, conceded he knew little more of the room, having rarely used it himself).¹³⁶ However, a menu from the British Museum provided Oppé with extra information. Patrons could dine on such things as Balvais cream soup (6d.), fish cake and Indian sauce (6d.), filet mignon with fried potatoes (10d.), sausages and mashed potatoes (8d.), or tomato salad (4d.).¹³⁷ Reduced prices were not offered to students nor to museum staff,¹³⁸ but the freedom to charge full prices to every customer did not bless the caterer with significant profits (Dryhurst doubted that the Holborn profited much from its work at the museum).¹³⁹

Returning now to the subject of the V&A, the museum housed priceless treasures

¹³⁴Letter from Dryhurst to Oppé, 24 October 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³⁵*The Times* (26 December 1865), p. 5.

¹³⁶Letter from Dryhurst to Oppé, 24 October 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³⁷Menu for the British Museum’s refreshment room, c. 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³⁸Oppé, Minute Paper (12/2137), 5 November 1912 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹³⁹Undated letter from Dryhurst to Oppé [VAA, ED 84/223].

and it was keen to guard them. The police were a regular presence at the museum in its early years, hired to keep a watchful eye on the collections and suspicious characters. In 1869, one superintendent, three sergeants, and forty constables patrolled the museum's corridors.¹⁴⁰ Cottam also had to worry about thefts in her department: cutlery disappeared occasionally, but beer vanished "with a regularity almost monotonous."¹⁴¹ She struck back, smearing the beer taps with an unpalatable mix of mustard and cayenne pepper. The attraction of free beer thus dissolved, the culprits resorted to pilfering condiments! While Cottam accepted the inevitability of certain losses, museum officials pondered the identities of the kitchen thieves; they preferred to suspect the early morning workmen rather than the night patrols.¹⁴² Other records reveal a strong tendency to mistrust the kitchen staff. For example, when museum officials contemplated the services of a large catering firm, a red flag was raised – namely, the concern that "we should be introducing within the precincts of this Museum an organisation with a staff over which we could have practically no control. The waiters, cooks, etc., would be constantly changing, and both through them and through their relations with [the] outside there would be some danger to the Museum."¹⁴³ Another sceptic wondered: "What control have we over Mrs. Cottam's staff – do we even know their routines?"¹⁴⁴ Knowledge of their routines may

¹⁴⁰Letter from Acton S. Ayrton (of the Treasury) to the VP of the Council on Education, 13 February 1869 [VAA, ED 84/194C]. Their numbers do not necessarily represent the number of policemen on patrol each day, but these men had worked for the museum in the year leading up to Ayrton's letter.

¹⁴¹V&A Minute Paper (491M), 25 January 1912 [VAA, ED 84/194A].

¹⁴²V&A Minute Paper (491M), 25 January 1912 [VAA, ED 84/194A].

¹⁴³Oppé, V&A Minute Paper (12/2137M), 16 October 1912, p. 4 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁴⁴V&A Minute Paper (12/2137M), p. 4 [VAA, ED 84/223].

have been patchy, but the routes used by kitchen staff to get to and from work were well-known. The catering staff reached the kitchens via an underground passage, one which authorities fretted over because it provided easy access to the museum. As indicated by the lower ground floor plan, the workers approached the passage from the north (no. 35, fig. 6-7). The underground passage remained open throughout the day and a would-be thief, once inside the kitchen precinct, could strike the museum in several places: for example, a door that led from the kitchens to the North Corridor, or another that led to the Circulation department (nos. 11 and 14 on the ground floor plan, fig. 6-8).¹⁴⁵

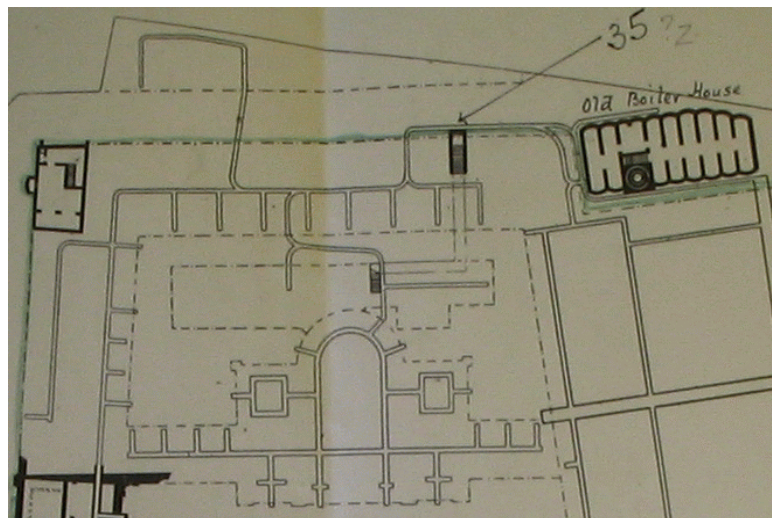


Figure 6-7: Lower ground floor plan of the South Kensington Museum, showing the subway used by staff members to access the kitchens. VAA, ED 84/72, AM5069/09.

¹⁴⁵V&A Minute Paper (11/3012M), 7 June 1911 [VAA, ED 84/194A].

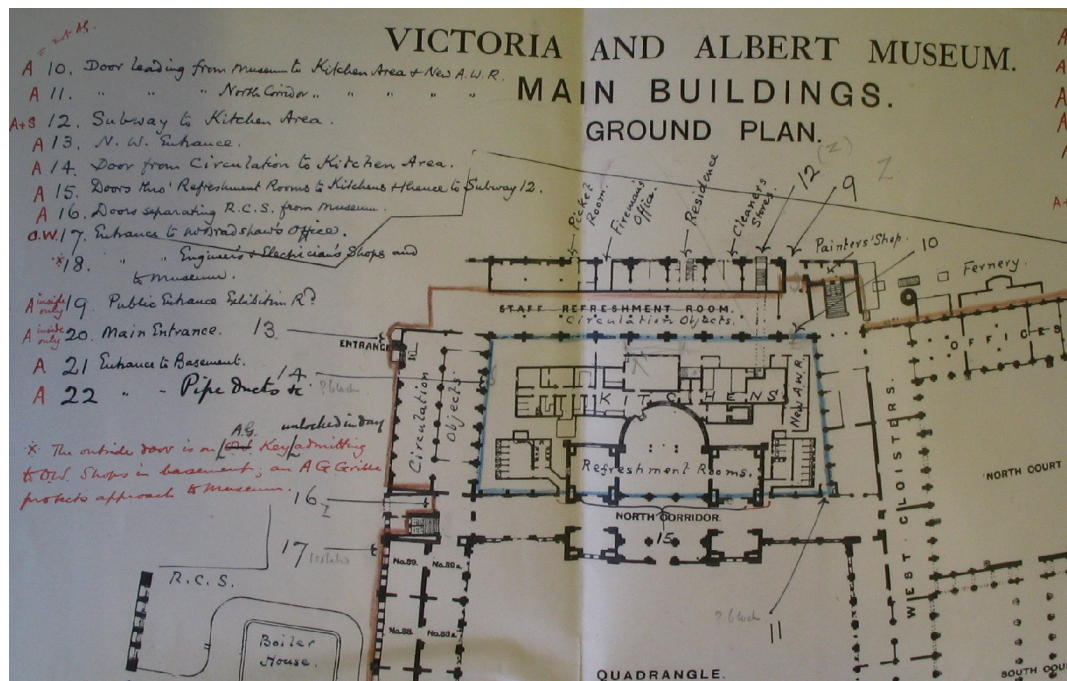


Figure 6-8: Ground floor plan of the museum, showing vulnerable points of access (numbers 10, 11, and 14). VAA, ED 84/194A, 11/3012.

Meanwhile, despite her hard work, Cottam’s time at the V&A was running out. Museum officials were eyeing bigger caterers (such as the Aerated Bread Company) because they believed, rather naively, that a large firm (making its profits elsewhere) would be willing to run the museum business at a loss – serving good food at low prices – in exchange for association with the sterling reputation of a world-class museum. It was also thought that a large contractor’s staff would be more flexible and better able to cope with the museum’s diminishing hours of operation. Furthermore, if much of the food was prepared offsite, the threat of fire at the museum would be lessened considerably.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶Oppé, V&A Minute Paper (12/2137M), 16 October 1912, p. 4 [VAA, ED 84/223].

Cottam was aware of her job's insecurity: for several years, at intervals of six months, she was advised that her contract could be terminated.¹⁴⁷ She responded to threats of dismissal by reminding her superiors of her loyalty to the museum: "I should be very sorry to relinquish my connection with the Museum, where my Father & myself have been identified with the Refreshment Rooms for so many years."¹⁴⁸ In her pleas for continued employment, Cottam also noted the devotion of her staff. Well-paid and eager to work, her staff included five individuals who had served the refreshment department for twenty-five years. She boasted of them: "I think they have always been a credit to the Museum."¹⁴⁹

Cottam's entreaties fell on deaf ears and in May 1913 she was informed that her contract would be terminated at the end of December.¹⁵⁰ She was understandably distraught; responsible for her elderly father's care, she was a widow and entirely dependent on her own income.¹⁵¹ The museum, moreover, would soon realize that larger catering establishments were not keen to take Cottam's place. Desirable firms declined to submit tenders and so it happened that another widow took Cottam's place. Emily Morgan, a resident of Brixton, became the new purveyor of refreshments at the V&A.¹⁵² Morgan had previous catering experience (at the Lyceum Club, the Ladies Block of Artillery Mansions, and the Alexandra Club), but at the V&A she and her staff found

¹⁴⁷Letter from Cottam to "Sir," 3 December 1913 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁴⁸Letter from Cottam to Sir Cecil Smith, 10 December 1910 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁴⁹Letter from Cottam to "Sir," 3 June 1911 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁵⁰Letter from Cecil Smith to Mrs. Cottam, 16 May 1913 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁵¹Letter from Cottam to "Sir," 3 December 1913 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁵²Copy of refreshment room contract (registered 29 April 1914), p. 1 [VAA, ED 84/224].

themselves working hard for little reward.¹⁵³ In July 1914, her chef earned £1.10.0 for one week's labour while her waiter and runner, working only half-days, each received six shillings.¹⁵⁴ Suffragist activities disrupted the opening hours of the museum and thereby decreased guest numbers. Morgan then suffered the loss of "all teas and evening work" with the early closing of the museum during WWI. And, by her account, all of these challenges were superseded by her dismal reception as Cottam's successor: "It is only now that I am overcoming the effects of the prejudices and bad feeling that, as is well known, were caused by my predecessor."¹⁵⁵ Moreover, Morgan's predecessor was operating a restaurant near the Underground and stealing customers from the Grill Room, or so Morgan believed.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, Cottam was very active: she still catered to the Natural History Museum and she provided light refreshments from a bar in the Science Museum.¹⁵⁷ Cottam may have been ousted from the V&A, but she could not be ousted

¹⁵³It is not clear whether or not Morgan retained members of Cottam's staff when she assumed control of the refreshment department. A report, written prior to Morgan's employment, recommended the retention of current staff members. In particular, the waiters and the Grill Room cook were valued for providing efficient service; "Report of the Committee appointed to consider the arrangements to be made for refreshments at the Victoria and Albert Museum," 20 March 1913, p. 9 [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁵⁴The wages were calculated using Morgan's general statements for the week of 12 July 1914; Minute Paper (1914/4464M) [VAA, ED 84/224].

¹⁵⁵Letter from Morgan to Sir Cecil Smith, 13 August 1915 [VAA, ED 84/224].

¹⁵⁶Davidson, V&A Minute Paper (14/4464M), 20 October 1914, p. 2 [VAA, ED 84/224].

¹⁵⁷Cottam had been catering to the Natural History Museum for twelve years; letter from C. E. Fagan to Sir Cecil Smith, 4 February 1916 [VAA, ED 84/224]. See also "Report of the Committee appointed to consider the arrangements to be made for refreshments at the Victoria and Albert Museum," 20 March 1913, p. 10 [VAA, ED 84/223].

from South Kensington.¹⁵⁸

Emily Morgan was less fortunate. The museum came to recognize her tender as a “foolish” one that undermined her ability to make any real profit.¹⁵⁹ Her final contract expired on 31 May 1916 and she was promptly replaced by Letheby & Christopher, a firm that promoted itself as “High Class Caterers and Confectioners.”¹⁶⁰ Like the caterers who served the museum before them, they struggled with the double responsibility of providing modest meals that appealed to cash-strapped students and more ambitious dishes that satisfied “visitors with means and taste.”¹⁶¹ Clearly, museum catering was plagued with difficulties, but as late as 1924 Cottam was seeking to resume her station as caterer to the V&A.¹⁶² Her loyalty was still intact, if not appreciated.

Cottam’s desire to return to the V&A’s restaurant may have been encouraged by the negative publicity that the current caterers were receiving. Her request to be reinstated as the V&A’s caterer, dated 16 September 1924, was written several days after a complaint appeared in *The Times*. The correspondent, Edward Russell, had dined at the V&A in the company of an art critic. By his account, it was an awful ordeal:

Our experience in the tea-room might have been in Whitechapel. Unclean

¹⁵⁸Apparently, however, officials at the Natural History Museum were unhappy with the catering arrangements and wished to relieve Cottam of her duties; Minute Paper (13/3964M) [VAA, ED 84/223].

¹⁵⁹Davidson to Director, V&A Minute Paper (14/4464M), 15 December 1914 [VAA, ED 84/224].

¹⁶⁰Contract with Emily Morgan, 8 March 1916 [VAA, ED 84/224]; contract with Messrs. Letheby and Christopher, Ltd., 9 June 1916 [VAA, ED 84/224].

¹⁶¹Letter from Eric Maclagan to Sir Lionel Earle, 3 February 1931 [VAA, ED 84/225].

¹⁶²Letter from Annie P. Cottam to the V&A’s Director, 16 September 1924 [VAA, ED 84/225].

food, unclean crockery, and a noisy, slap-it-about service which a decent midnight coffee stall would be ashamed of seemed strangely discordant with the lovely collections among which we had spent the afternoon.¹⁶³

Russell's complaint initiated a series of responses, beginning with Dr. D. Colquhoun's defence of the refreshment department, which also appeared in *The Times*.¹⁶⁴ A resident of Kensington, Dr. Colquhoun also wrote to the caterers, assuring them of his high regard for their establishment.¹⁶⁵ However, another correspondent to *The Times*, James Ferguson, resumed Russell's argument:

The fact is that for some years the rooms have been given up to students, and the catering adapted solely to their needs. The Museum exists for the public, who expect something appropriate, in neatness and nicety, both to the beauty of the collections and to the rooms decorated by Morris and Poynter.¹⁶⁶

The public's expectations were high: the food needed to accord with its surroundings, rooms that were now valued as important works of art by William Morris and Edward Poynter.

¹⁶³Edward C. Russell of Midhurst, *The Times* (13 September 1924), p. 6.

¹⁶⁴Dr. D. Colquhoun, *The Times* (18 September 1924), p. 8. He dined (very occasionally) at the V&A and enjoyed his meals. He only disliked the early hour at which the museum closed.

¹⁶⁵Letter from D. Colquhoun to Messrs. Letheby and Christopher, 19 September 1924 [VAA, ED 84/225].

¹⁶⁶James L. Ferguson, *The Times* (20 September 1924), p. 6.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GREEN DINING ROOM TO THE PRESENT DAY

In the early twentieth century, the Green Dining Room was a place where people ate and drank; it was also a place where people consumed a little culture. It received random tourists with empty stomachs and it attracted discerning connoisseurs with appetites for art. Guides to the museum began to acknowledge the Green Dining Room's distinction as a master work by making special mention of it. For example, *The Red Line Guide to the Victoria and Albert Museum* discouraged its readers from attempting to see the entire museum in one visit and instead advised them to seek out a small selection of showpieces, including the Green Dining Room.¹ In addition, officials were keen to guard the museum's little treasure, still a functioning refreshment room, against extraneous mishaps. They would not allow the room to be cleaned by outsiders, who might not recognize its worth:

The Board undertook to clean the Refreshment Rooms up to the counter [in the Centre Refreshment Room], the cleaning of everything behind the counter being left to the contractors. It . . . was thought that this practice is justified by the fact that the Refreshment Rooms may be regarded as Museum objects (particularly the Green Room, which has elaborate decorations by William Morris and others) and that it is consequently

¹*Red Line Guide* [190-], p. 2. The guide described the interior as an exemplary work of William Morris and his associates.

undesirable to run any risk of damage consequent upon the employment of cleaners who are unfamiliar with the Museum.²

The experimental interiors (and, in particular, the Green Dining Room) had acquired an aura of historic interest and aesthetic value. However, their very existence would be challenged in the near future.

In 1909, Cecil Smith became the new director of the V&A and his appointment sounded the death knell for many of Henry Cole's most ambitious decorative projects. With lightning speed, the new director pursued his vision of a modern museum, an uncluttered house of art. The passing of time had led to new architectural trends, new sets of principles and values, and the halls of the V&A were rather dated. The nation's greatest collections, Smith believed, deserved to be housed in grand buildings and, in hoping that these grand buildings would be filled with quiet halls and 'neutral' walls, Smith was not alone, nor was he a pioneer. Even in the Victorian age, some individuals defined the ideal museum as a structure without superfluous ornament:

On the whole, we think . . . the decoration of buildings or apartments destined to contain pictures, statues, or objects of rich and beautiful workmanship should be restrained and kept in subordination. It need not be poverty-stricken or bald, but it should be quiet and refined; and there should be no attempt at either imitation of, or competition with, the character of the contents, and the colours chosen should be such as would enhance by contrast those of the objects exhibited. . . . Are we by this limitation imposing an undue restriction upon the talents and efforts of designers? Not so; there is ample space in every public building, and certainly there is at South Kensington, for their employment and encouragement, and their work could be wisely confined to such apartments as the refreshment-rooms, and the staircases, corridors, &c.³

²"Refreshment Contract: Memorandum of Interview," V&A Minute Paper, 7 June 1916 [VAA, ED 84/224].

³*Building News* (5 August 1870), p. 93.

In no way did this particular Victorian envision the stark white interiors of recent date, but his language foreshadows the decline of the decorated museum. Smith went much further, describing the modern museum as an unobtrusive backdrop to the main attraction, the collections:

It is I believe generally accepted as an axiom by those best qualified to judge that the chief decorations of a Museum are the objects placed there for exhibition; the rooms containing these should be like the setting of a fine gem, dignified, harmonious and self-effacing: the decoration should assist the lighting where necessary but otherwise not challenge attention. A Museum like the Victoria and Albert, stocked with countless objects of study, is apt to be confusing and wearisome to the visitor, however simple and clear the arrangement of the floor and wall space may be: we do not need to confuse and weary him further.⁴

Smith objected to figurative representations because, he opined, they distracted viewers from the objects on display. He also disapproved of using figurative representations to define gallery spaces because, however permanent all arrangements might seem at their inception, displays will always need improvements and they will change. The relevance of figurative representations can evaporate when a gallery acquires a new function and the decorations of the old Ceramic Gallery proved Smith's point.⁵

When the ceramic collection moved to another area of the museum, the thematic ornaments of the Ceramic Gallery lost their relevance. The stained-glass windows, with their "amateurish" depictions of the evolution of ceramic manufacture, were strangely out

⁴Cecil Smith, *Report on 'Mr. Brangwyn's offer to paint a lunette in the Octagon Court: and to submit a sketch for the decoration of the whole Court'*, 15 September 1909, p. 3 [VAA, ED 84/68].

⁵Cecil Smith, *Report on 'Mr. Brangwyn's offer to paint a lunette in the Octagon Court: and to submit a sketch for the decoration of the whole Court'*, 15 September 1909, p. 2 [VAA, ED 84/68]. The interior was known previously as the Ceramic Gallery.

of place.⁶ The majolica columns, ornamented with the names of ceramic manufacturers, were equally incongruous in a gallery without ceramic exhibits. Smith considered them “a most obtrusive and objectionable part of the decoration.”⁷ The tiled floor, no longer a modern complement to historic examples of the ceramic art, was derided as “crude” and impractical.⁸ Smith desired to create a self-effacing museum and he succeeded in effacing a large portion of the museum’s Victorian decorations, much to the consternation of Alan Cole (Henry Cole’s son) and many others. In the years leading up to WWI, the appearance of the Ceramic Gallery changed dramatically. The stained-glass windows were removed, the columns were pulled down, and the floor was torn up.⁹ Smith made a clean slate of the Refreshment Room Corridor as well. The ceiling had been decorated in the mid-1880s by Hugh Stannus (1840-1908), but, only a few years after his death, his work was obliterated by a fresh coat of paint.¹⁰ Smith excused himself from any wrongdoing; he claimed that the ceiling had deteriorated badly, its design was relatively unimportant, and the need to brighten the gallery space was paramount.¹¹

By the 1920s, the Green Dining Room’s state of disrepair was a new cause for concern. Electric lights had been added in the early years of the twentieth century,

⁶Cecil Smith, Memorandum (10/3402M), 12 October 1910, pp 4-5 [VAA, ED 84/68]; Sheppard 1975, p. 122.

⁷Cecil Smith, Memorandum (10/3402M), 12 October 1910, p. 3 [VAA, ED 84/68].

⁸Cecil Smith, Memorandum (10/3402M), 12 October 1910, p. 5 [VAA, ED 84/68].

⁹Physick 1982, pp. 12, 260; Sheppard 1975, p. 122-23.

¹⁰Physick 1982, p. 142. An architect by training, Stannus devoted much of his energy to designing decorative details for existing structures; Waterhouse 2004 (internet).

¹¹Smith to Oppé, V&A Minute Paper (11/6664M), 3 January 1912 [VAA, ED 84/69]; Physick 1982, p. 256.

without any regard for the ceiling's painted designs.¹² This unsympathetic update caught the eye of the architect W. R. Lethaby (1857-1931), who was an ardent admirer of Philip Webb. Worried that the interior was deteriorating badly, he wrote to the V&A's new director, Eric Maclagan, in 1925. He advised Maclagan to consider employing George Jack to repair the room, which he described as a 'Morris exhibit'.¹³ Maclagan, in turn, contacted Sir Lionel Earle of the Office of Works. He identified the Green Dining Room as a "Museum exhibition," the creation of Morris and his associates (with "a good deal of work" by Webb). Maclagan explained that it was now "very dingy and dirty," but the ceiling had suffered the most damage and required repair.¹⁴ With a little extra prodding from Maclagan, Earle took action.¹⁵ An inspection of the room, assisted by George Jack, was followed by a report.¹⁶ The techniques used by the firm to decorate the room had become unfamiliar, if not unknown, but the authors of the report concluded that the interior could be renovated cautiously, "in such a way that this room should continue to represent the work and period of the great men who designed and executed it."¹⁷ The

¹²Letter from Eric Maclagan to W. R. Lethaby, 5 March 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)]; letter from Maclagan to Sir Lionel Earle, 5 March 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

¹³Letter from Lethaby to Maclagan, 28 February 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)]; Physick 1982, p. 135, note 77.

¹⁴Letter from Maclagan to Lionel Earle, 5 March 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

¹⁵In early May, Maclagan wrote to Earle again, informing him that the ceiling had worsened; letter from Maclagan to Earle, 2 May 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

¹⁶Letter from Earle to Maclagan, 27 May 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

¹⁷"The Green Dining Room. Victoria & Albert Museum, South Kensington. Report on Examination of the Above Room and Recommendations as to the Treatment of its Decorations" (hereafter referred to as Report 1925), p. 1 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris

report listed a number of flaws that demanded attention. For example, the panelling of the lower walls had been painted, much to the regret of the inspectors; they recommended efforts to reproduce the effect of the original green stain.¹⁸ The painted panels were in good condition overall, but several were flaking (one rather badly).¹⁹ The ceiling, disfigured by discolouring and flaking paint, was in far worse shape.²⁰ The inspectors could not foresee satisfactory results from a light cleaning, so they recommended the ceiling be stripped clean and redecorated to match its original appearance.²¹ Earle believed the renovations could be executed by capable members of his staff,²² but Lethaby balked at the idea. He implored Maclagan to involve Jack, whom he viewed as a living representative of the “Morris tradition.”²³ Lethaby was also eager to close the room to diners so that it might be exhibited as a worthy example of the firm’s work.²⁴ Maclagan was willing to involve Jack, but he refused to turn the Green Dining Room into a Morris exhibit:

It could not under any circumstances serve as a Morris Room in which we could put the other examples of work connected with Morris now in the Museum. . . . After all, the room was designed as a dining-room, and I do not believe its use as a dining-room is a serious danger. The trouble hitherto has been caused by dirt and certain operations with regard to

Room File)]. The room was inspected twice, on 24 March and 30 March 1925.

¹⁸Report 1925, p. 4 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

¹⁹Report 1925, p. 2 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²⁰Report 1925, p. 3 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²¹Report 1925, p. 5 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²²Letter from Earle to Maclagan, 27 May 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²³Letter from Lethaby to Maclagan, 3 June 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²⁴Letter from Lethaby to Maclagan, 3 June 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

lighting; not by honest use.²⁵

Lethaby continued to worry over the fate of the Green Dining Room,²⁶ but by mid-November, Jack was helping members of the Office of Works to prepare the interior for its restoration.²⁷ Jack also designed four new lights for the room (fig. 7-1). Manufactured by Osler & Faraday, they were installed in 1926.²⁸ A decade later, further restoration work was required: the painted panels were cleaned.²⁹



Figure 7-1: Green Dining Room: light fixtures by George Jack, 1926.

²⁵Letter from Maclagan to Lethaby, 4 June 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²⁶Letter from Lethaby to Maclagan, 6 June 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²⁷From a note (dated 18 November 1925) written on the back of a letter from Earle to Maclagan, 30 October 1925 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

²⁸Letter from A. Heasman to Maclagan, 7 May 1926 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)]; Sheppard 1975, p. 112.

²⁹Letter from J. P. Willcock to James F. S. Jack, 17 August 1937 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)]; Parry 1996b, pp. 204-05.

Despite these efforts to maintain the Green Dining Room's appearance, the restaurant's days were numbered. It was considered a weak source of income, facilities at the nearby Science Museum competed with it, and departments that were pressed for space (e.g., Circulation or Stained Glass) could make better use of the rooms, or so it was argued.³⁰ Maclagan was unamused by proposals to close the restaurant and possibly dismantle the rooms: "I must say that I find a certain grim humour in the suggestion that while we are celebrating the centenary of William Morris by an Exhibition in the North Court, the Office of Works should propose destroying the Green Dining-room, which is his most considerable surviving achievement!"³¹ The director acknowledged that economic considerations had impaired the restaurant's quality since WWI. However, he believed each refreshment room possessed artistic merit and he hoped they would continue to be used as dining areas: "I do not see any possibility of preserving these rooms except by leaving them as they are. They cannot be transported; and I do not see how they can possibly be used for any purpose except that of providing food and drink. I should therefore again feel bound to oppose very strongly any suggestion that they should be destroyed."³² Fortunately, the refreshment rooms were not destroyed, but the restaurant closed in 1939, soon after the outbreak of WWII.³³ For many years to come, the rooms were unseen by the public.

³⁰Letter from Sir Patrick Duff to Maclagan, 27 February 1934 [VAA, ED 84/71].

³¹Letter from Maclagan to Duff, 3 March 1934 [VAA, ED 84/71]. The William Morris centenary exhibition, to which Maclagan referred, ran from 9 February to 8 April 1934.

³²Letter from Maclagan to Duff, 13 March 1934 [VAA, ED 84/71].

³³Sheppard 1975, p. 111.

Although the original refreshment rooms closed in 1939, dining activities continued at the V&A. During World War II, the Royal Air Force used the South Court as a mess hall. Then, in 1950, the eastern portion of the South Court was transformed into the museum's new restaurant.³⁴ In comparison with the three original refreshment rooms, with their robust decorations, the new restaurant was more clearly rooted in practical endeavour than in aesthetic experiment (although in the late 1950s, five students of the Royal College of Art decorated its walls with large paintings that celebrated the city of London).³⁵ The restaurant's two seating areas, which offered alternate forms of catering (self-service and waiter-service), accommodated approximately 300 patrons.³⁶ The South Court restaurant remained in use until the 1980s.³⁷ Then a new restaurant opened in the Henry Cole Wing. It was the focus of a Saatchi and Saatchi advertising campaign, which aimed to attract hip Londoners to the museum with a catchy slogan, "an ace caff with quite a nice museum attached." The campaign was widely criticized along with the director who had approved of it, Dame Elizabeth Esteve-Coll.³⁸ The new restaurant, however, served its purpose well and was still in use when I first visited London in 2004. Operated on a self-service basis, it could accommodate roughly 260 people at a time.³⁹ Diners could select from a variety of sandwiches and salads stored in open refrigerating units, a central island provided an appetizing assortment of baked

³⁴Physick 1982, p. 56.

³⁵*The Times* (3 July 1959), p. 9.

³⁶Pope-Hennessy 1952, p. 29.

³⁷Physick 1982, p. 110.

³⁸Chong 1998, pp. 423-24; BBC News 2001 (internet).

³⁹V&A Board Minutes 2002 (internet), p. 4, par. 18.

goods, and hot dishes were ordered from one of several food stations and prepared on the spot; this is just a sampling of the restaurant's offerings. As a student with limited finances (and a low Canadian dollar to tighten the pinch), I did not use the restaurant very frequently, even though its meals were far preferable to my packed lunches.⁴⁰ The restaurant had a rectangular floor plan, subdivided into an L-shaped seating area and a (more or less) square kitchen area. The restaurant's front section (south) and side section (west) were occupied by wooden tables, chairs, and benches. Additional seating could be found in a room tucked into the northwest corner of the restaurant (this was used particularly during periods of overcrowding). The kitchen or food gallery was in the northeast corner of the restaurant, but much of the heavy work was hidden from view.



Figure 7-2: Ceramic fountain in the V&A's restaurant, Henry Cole Wing.

⁴⁰I do not believe that my experience, as an infrequent user of the dining facilities at the V&A, is unique. The new restaurant, along with other museums' catering venues, was reviewed by Dave Lee in early 1986. Lee was impressed by the comfortable atmosphere, decent food, and efficient service, but he considered the V&A's prices too steep for the 'average family'; Lee 1986, p. 68. By Lee's account, the average two-course dinner at a museum restaurant cost £3. It did not include wine or any extra trimmings; Lee 1986, p. 69. By my estimation, a modest two-course lunch (consisting of a salad, a sandwich, and a non-alcoholic beverage) at the V&A could cost £10, if not more.

Although it was situated below ground level, the restaurant did not feel cavernous. It was brightened by expanses of white paint and warmed by exposed red brick. Overall, the decor was simple, but I noted a few artistic flourishes, including a half-hidden ceramic fountain (fig. 7-2).

In early 2004, the V&A sought new caterers for its restaurant. The catering contract had been held by Milburns, a subsidiary of Compass Group, for twelve years.⁴¹ By February a shortlist of six caterers was narrowed to two candidates: “One caterer was more practised in delivering a restaurant experience while the other specialised in café food for the general public.”⁴² The café operator Benugo won.⁴³ Founded by brothers Ben and Hugo Warner in 1998, Benugo specializes in sophisticated sandwich bars that incorporate fresh, local, and organic ingredients.⁴⁴ The company took on a twelve-year contract, set at £3 million per year, and accepted forty staff members from Milburns before assuming control of the restaurant in August.⁴⁵

I wish now to return to the subject of the original refreshment rooms, closed at the outbreak of WWII and never seen by the public until years later. In the interim, they were damaged by bomb-blast, employed as storerooms, treated by conservationists, used as

⁴¹*Caterer & Hotelkeeper* 2004, p. 8. Milburns presently caters to numerous cultural establishments, including the Royal Academy of Arts and St. Paul’s Cathedral; Milburns 2007 (internet). Coincidentally, another subsidiary of Compass Group is Letheby & Christopher (presumably the same firm that managed the V&A restaurant in the early part of the twentieth century).

⁴²V&A Board Minutes 2004a (internet), pp. 2-3, par. 6.

⁴³V&A Board Minutes 2004b (internet), p. 3, par. 9.

⁴⁴Benugo 2006a (internet); Benugo 2006b (internet). It also began catering for corporations in 2000 and by 2004 it had ten British clients; *Caterer & Hotelkeeper* 2004, p. 8.

⁴⁵*Caterer & Hotelkeeper* 2004, p. 8.

atmospheric settings for art exhibitions, and reintroduced to the public as the Morris, Gamble, and Poynter Rooms. Their twentieth-century history is a rich mosaic of multiple uses and meanings. It merits further examination, although I will focus most of my attention on the Green Dining Room.

The air raids of WWII took a terrible toll on Londoners and their architectural heritage. The V&A did not suffer as horribly as some London landmarks, but it was scarred. The Green Dining Room's stained-glass panels, packed in a protective crate, were ravaged during the Blitz: thought lost for good, they were rediscovered in storage, albeit in a dismal state of disrepair (fig. 7-3).⁴⁶ Because the Green Dining Room was closed to the public, few outsiders likely knew of its decay. It only reopened in 1952 in conjunction with the *Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts* exhibition and the event's organizers displayed Morris embroideries in the window spaces.⁴⁷ The V&A hoped to reinstate the windows, but it needed to decide how to handle the shattered remnants (sizeable portions were missing).⁴⁸ The Morris firm had favoured large glass surfaces for the figurative sections of their windows, meaning the figures had fewer lead supports and were less able to sustain bomb-blast, whereas the heavy leading of the borders kept these sections relatively intact.⁴⁹ Believing they represented an integral feature of the Green Dining Room's decor, the V&A opted to reconstruct the windows (c. 1960), using as

⁴⁶Lowe 1960, p. 121; Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 30; Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104. The damage occurred in November 1940; Floud 1952, p. 40.

⁴⁷Lowe 1960, p. 121.

⁴⁸Sewter 1975, vol. 2, p. 104.

⁴⁹Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 30.

much salvaged glass as possible.⁵⁰ Large shattered fragments and missing portions (e.g., pieces of the figures and elements of the architectural backdrops) were recreated and, as part of the recreation, the museum's conservationists attempted to imitate the style of the old glass.⁵¹ It was an invasive treatment, restoring the old windows with so much new glass and with so few visual cues to help viewers discern the modern repairs. However, the original panels barely survived the war, with huge material losses, and the museum wanted to retain the imagery of the old windows. The conservationists did this to the best of their abilities and a foremost expert on Morris stained-glass has since described their work as truly admirable.⁵²



Figure 7-3: Shattered window from the Green Dining Room, after WWII. Reproduced from Lowe 1960, p. 121.

⁵⁰Lowe 1960, p. 121; Sheppard 1975, p. 112.

⁵¹Lowe 1960, p. 122.

⁵²Sewter 1974, vol. 1, p. 85.



Figure 7-4: The Green Dining Room as a showroom for art objects. Reproduced from J. Cooper 1987, p. 157.

The Green Dining Room reopened to the public in 1952, but the two other refreshment rooms remained hidden from view. They served only as humble storage spaces.⁵³ Disregard for their Victorian interiors continued for several decades. Meanwhile the Green Dining Room became a unique showroom for objects associated with William Morris and his firm. The room had been used in a similar manner during the aforementioned 1952 exhibition: Morris embroideries covered the spaces of the missing stained-glass windows, but other items exhibited in the Green Dining Room included the St. George cabinet, a Burne-Jones grand piano with gesso decoration by Kate Faulkner, and a three-fold screen with embroidered panels.⁵⁴ It is unclear whether or not these three items were removed at the close of the exhibition, but they were

⁵³Baldwin 1960, p. 163; Bryant 1986, p. 113.

⁵⁴Floud 1952, pp. 41, 42, and 44. The embroidered panels are generally attributed to Elizabeth Burden, Jane Morris's sister.

conspicuous features of the Green Dining Room in the 1960s, a practice that seems to have continued (off and on) until the early 1990s (fig. 7-4).⁵⁵ These objects, on permanent display with other singular jewels like Seddon's King René cabinet, spoke to the wealth of Morris's grandest productions and those of his associates. Photographed in this state, the Green Dining Room looked less like a functional dining room and rather more like a palatial chamber, or a magnificent stage for beautiful objects. Moreover, some texts that employ these photographs do not encourage their readers to identify the elaborate furnishings as latter-day additions to the interior. Take, for instance, Philip Henderson's caption to an image, which shows the room filled with exquisite furniture:

Webb's green dining-room, designed for the South Kensington Museum [plate] (40), contains windows and painted wall-panels by Burne-Jones, an embroidered screen by Morris and his wife illustrating Chaucer's *Illustrious Women*, and a grand piano with gesso work by Kate Faulkner. The walls, with raised gesso decoration, frieze and ceiling, are by Webb himself. The 'St George' cabinet stands under the window.⁵⁶

The information presented here is factually correct, but its delivery could mislead persons unaware of the independent origins of the screen, piano, and cabinet. Described in unison with the original decorations of the room, a careless reader might conclude that the furnishings were also original to the interior, but each object has a separate history. The screen, made in the late 1880s for George Howard and his wife Rosalind, incorporated

⁵⁵For descriptions of the room as a setting for furnishings created by Morris and his contemporaries, see Laver 1963, p. 8; Watkinson 1967, p. 19; Stansky 1985, p. 38; and Harvey/Press 1991, p. 56, for example. The room was deprived of its Morris furnishings, on a temporary basis at least, in 1978; John Russell Taylor, "Showing off the V&A," (16 August 1978) [WMG, File: Morris & Co. (houses decorated by the firm in London; public commissions for decorative schemes), clipping].

⁵⁶Henderson 1967, pl. 40.

embroidered panels that had been intended for the drawing room at Red House, the residence Webb designed for Morris.⁵⁷ The screen is not owned by the museum. It belongs to Castle Howard, the ancestral home of the Howard family. As for the grand piano, it was made in the mid-1880s for the luxurious residence of Alexander Ionides at 1 Holland Park.⁵⁸ It was only acquired by the museum in 1927. The St. George cabinet, it will be remembered, was first exhibited in 1862 at the International Exhibition. Eventually it passed into the ownership of Laurence Hodson of Compton Hall, near Wolverhampton; then it was purchased by the museum at a Christies auction in 1906.⁵⁹ These unique histories are not communicated by Henderson's photograph (wherein the elaborate furnishings match the rich surfaces of the room) nor are they alluded to by his caption.⁶⁰

Other photographs of the former refreshment room depict an empty gallery space. Repeatedly reproduced, these images represent the Green Dining Room as a work of art unto itself.⁶¹ They also speak to the interior's new identity as the Morris Room, an identity that first emerged in the private correspondence of museum officials with

⁵⁷Linda Parry in Parry 1996a, pp. 236-37, cat. M.7.

⁵⁸Floud 1952, p. 42; Collard in Parry 1996a, p. 178, cat. J.31.

⁵⁹Frances Collard in Parry 1996a, p. 172, cat. J.18.

⁶⁰In his caption to a similar photograph of the Green Dining Room, David Crowley also gave his reader room to assume that the screen and piano were original to the space. He wrote: "The Green Dining Room designed by Webb in 1866 for the South Kensington Museum was a tremendous success. The stained glass and wall paintings were by Burne-Jones, the polychrome raised gesso decorations by Webb, embroidered screen by Morris and his wife, and the piano was decorated by Kate Faulkner." Crowley 1990, p. 133. See also Bradley 1978, p. 39 for a similar presentation of the interior.

⁶¹Such photographs appear in Darby 1983, p. 6, Parry 1996a, p. 141, and a V&A postcard (G83), for example.

Lethaby and other admirers of the refreshment room. However, the official name of the room did not change until the second half of the twentieth century.⁶² I will address the significance of the name change later in this chapter, but presently I wish to focus on photographs that depict a denuded Morris Room. Interestingly, scholars will identify the three refreshment rooms as the world's first museum restaurant, but they normally illustrate them with photographs that omit the paraphernalia of a working restaurant. Narratives of the Green Dining Room are often supplemented by photographs of a vacant space – photographs that celebrate the aesthetic elements of the architecture and deny the social history of the interior.⁶³ Readers do not see the old Green Dining Room filled with tables and chairs, ready to receive hungry visitors; readers must use their imaginations to fill in the blanks, so to speak. Admittedly, historic photographs that show the museum's interiors being used as dining areas are rare, but they do exist. It is remarkable that so few scholars have employed these visual records to emphasize the practical origins of the rooms.⁶⁴

In 1969, only the Morris Room could be seen by the public,⁶⁵ but a decade later,

⁶²A 1934 exhibition catalogue made reference to the 'Morris Room' (Mackail 1934, p. 38) and the museum's internal documents embraced the new name from that point on; see VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File). However, the earliest reference (that I could find) to the official renaming of the Green Dining Room was made in 1960; Lowe 1960, p. 121. I believe the public came to know the Green Dining Room as the Morris Room sometime after the V&A hosted the exhibition of Victorian and Edwardian decorative arts in 1952 (the exhibition catalogue still described the interior as the Green Dining Room); Floud 1952, p. 40.

⁶³Photographs of this type, which focus on the material aspects of an object, can obscure the processes by which the object was created and used; Walker 1989, p. 12.

⁶⁴Photographs of the restaurant's interiors have appeared in Sheppard 1975, pl. 16b; Physick 1982, p. 137; and Parry 1996b, p. 201, for example.

⁶⁵Pope-Hennessy 1952 [3rd impression, 1969], p. 28.

all three refreshment rooms could be seen again. The Centre Refreshment Room and the Grill Room, used for years as storage areas, were emptied in 1974 and their restoration went into full swing.⁶⁶ In 1976, the Centre Refreshment Room reopened as the Gamble Room.⁶⁷ In some respects, its appearance had changed considerably. For instance, it lacked its light-admitting walls of glass (the three south-facing glass screens, with doors that led into the corridor, had been bricked up at an earlier date).⁶⁸ In their place stood an imposing chimneypiece flanked by two large mirrors and a pair of marble statues (fig. 7-5). On one side of the chimneypiece stood *Diana Hunting* (1859), a work by the Italian sculptor Giovanni Maria Benzoni (1809-73). On the other side stood a copy of Canova's *Italic Venus*, another work attributed to Benzoni (c. 1860). Alfred Stevens designed the marble chimneypiece (1863-75); it had adorned the dining room of Dorchester House in Park Lane originally (the mansion's owner, Robert Stayner Holford, commissioned Stevens to decorate the dining room, but the artist's elaborate scheme never reached completion).⁶⁹ Stevens's mantelpiece is dominated by two crouching caryatids, which were finished after his death by James Gamble (although some accuse him of polishing

⁶⁶Physick 1977, unnumbered page. In 1978, more work was done on the Morris Room as well. Under the V&A's supervision, it was repainted by Paul Humphrey of Campbell, Smith and Co. However, a narrow strip (seen to the left of the south entrance) remained untouched in order to show how much the Morris Room had aged before conservators intervened. See V&A Press Notice [WVG, File: Morris & Co. (houses decorated by the firm in London; public commissions for decorative schemes)]; Physick 1982, p. 135. Barbara Morris duly criticized the repainting (which she described as "flat") for failing to capture the effect of the original green stain; B. Morris 1986, p. 39. The 1978 redecoration was also censured by Stamp/Amery 1980, p. 64.

⁶⁷The Grill Room reopened also, but as the Poynter Room. See Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 3; Bryant 1986, p. 113; B. Morris 1986, p. 35.

⁶⁸Physick 1977, unnumbered page.

⁶⁹MacColl 1915, p. 3; Beattie 1975, p. 12.

the figures with too much zeal).⁷⁰ Holford's mansion was torn down in 1929, but the chimneypiece was salvaged; it was held by the Tate Gallery before its transfer to the V&A in 1975.⁷¹ Coincidentally, several years before his retirement, Henry Cole had visited and admired the Dorchester dining room, so it is quite interesting that Stevens's mantelpiece became a feature of the Gamble Room, an interior that had meant so much to Cole.⁷²



Figure 7-5: Gamble Room: chimneypiece designed by Alfred Stevens (1863-75) for Dorchester House, Park Lane (demolished).

⁷⁰Armstrong 1881, pp. 27-28; Beattie 1975, p. 12; Gamble 1975, p. 6.

⁷¹Gamble 1975, p. 6; Physick 1977, unnumbered page.

⁷²Cole, diary, 30 June 1870 [NAL, 45.C.131].



Figure 7-6: Gamble Room: Minton exhibit, 1976. Reproduced from Atterbury/Batkin 1990, p. 105.

Since their reopening, the former refreshment rooms have been used by the V&A as evocative settings for various exhibitions and commercial displays. For example, the Gamble Room housed part of the *Minton, 1798-1910* exhibition in 1976 (fig. 7-6).⁷³ This exhibition featured singular examples of the ceramic art, including one of two majolica elephants. The elephants were made for the Paris Exhibition of 1889 and have been proudly displayed at the Mayfair shop of Thomas Goode & Company ever since.⁷⁴ These temporary installations helped to illuminate the bygone age in which the Gamble Room was created. Although other interiors were stripped of their ceramic ornaments many years before, depriving the central refreshment room of its cohesion with the rest of the museum, twentieth-century visitors to the Gamble Room could appreciate the Minton firm's mastery of ceramic manufacture as well as the breadth of that industry in the

⁷³Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 3.

⁷⁴Aslin/Atterbury 1976, p. 97; Atterbury/Batkin 1990, p. 75.

nineteenth century.

In 1988 all three former refreshment rooms served as rich backdrops for a line of soft furnishings, the so-called Habitat V&A collection. Habitat, Sir Terence Conran's chain of home furnishing stores, had agreed to sponsor the V&A's *Textiles of the Arts and Crafts Movement* exhibition and, in exchange, the V&A permitted Habitat to issue a line of soft furnishings inspired by the museum's textile collections.⁷⁵ This lucrative arrangement was advertised by brochures for the exhibition.⁷⁶ It was also made abundantly clear at the press launch for the Habitat V&A collection (figs. 7-7 and 7-8).



Figure 7-7: Morris Room: launch of the Habitat V&A collection, 1988. VAA, AAD/1995/12/13/148.

⁷⁵Bayley 1989, p. 9. A royalty on all sales would go to the V&A; "The Habitat V&A Collection Story," p.4 [AAD, AAD/1995/12/16/72].

⁷⁶AAD, AAD/1995/12/7/2.



Figure 7-8: Gamble Room: launch of the Habitat V&A collection, 1988. VAA, AAD/1995/12/13/148.

The old refreshment rooms were brimming with Habitat fabrics. Whether they intended it or not, the event's coordinators created a funny montage in a corner of the Gamble Room: a beribboned Venus turns her back on a sadly unoccupied – but inherently sober – twin bed. The press received the Habitat V&A collection enthusiastically and at least one Habitat representative believed that the V&A's ornate interiors helped to influence the positive outcome.⁷⁷ In this example, the refreshment rooms had a new (if temporary) use: to share their aura of value and history with a new commodity.

Disused since the outbreak of WWII, the old kitchens fared worse than the former refreshment rooms. Some structures were demolished in the 1970s, while other areas

⁷⁷Habitat memo from Eve Tate to Maurice Libby; AAD, AAD/1995/12/7/2.

were adapted for new purposes.⁷⁸ The V&A's sculpture conservators worked in an area behind the Gamble Room, in a long and narrow studio – they called it the “pickling shed” – with a lead-lined sink that extended from one end of the room to the other.⁷⁹ To the rear of the so-called pickling shed stood a small structure with deep walls and a ceiling impregnated with meat hooks. This was the old larder, which conservators used to store their equipment and materials.⁸⁰ However, these last remnants of the Victorian kitchens were demolished in the early 1990s.⁸¹

When the museum planned a major William Morris exhibition for 1996, the centenary of his death, the Morris Room came under scrutiny again. Structural changes to the room's external environment obstructed its sources of natural light, imbuing the dark Victorian interior with a modern gloom. Plans were made to illuminate the north window with artificial back-lights.⁸² Peeling paint above the north window and cracks in the ceiling caused concern.⁸³ The floor had to be repaired; this was accomplished with new tiles that closely matched the originals, although officials had hoped that old tiles salvaged from other areas of the museum would be used to patch the floor instead.⁸⁴

⁷⁸Physick 1982, p. 109.

⁷⁹Cook 1996, p. 14.

⁸⁰Because the structures were not interconnected, Richard Cook dryly noted, the sculpture conservators had to be “waterproof.” Cook 1996, p. 14.

⁸¹Cook 1996, p. 14; Lyon 1996, p. 7.

⁸²Memo from Samantha Clutton (Furniture and Woodwork) to Linda Parry, Julian Litten, etc., 22 April 1996 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)]. The back-lights would be installed after the exhibition took place.

⁸³Notes from a meeting about the paint-works in the William Morris Room, 1 February 1995 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

⁸⁴Memo from Fiona Leslie (Sculpture Collection) to Linda Parry (T&D/Research) regarding Works in William Morris Room, 20 February 1995 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

Years earlier, a greater eyesore had been created by the theft of a figurative panel from the room. Snatched away was *February* (Pisces) and, regrettably, the museum possessed no colour reproduction of the missing work. Organizers wondered how they could redress the lacuna in time for the exhibition. Linda Parry supposed a newly duplicated foliage panel could assume its place.⁸⁵ She also suggested the void could be filled with a reproduction of one of the darker figurative panels, perhaps either *September* (Libra) or *October* (Scorpio), in the hope that visitors would overlook the repetition of one composition on two distinct walls.⁸⁶ Fellow curator Julian Litten cautioned against this approach, fearing it would only raise the ire of the V&A's discerning audience.⁸⁷ In the end, the space was left bare.

When I made my first visit to the V&A in the summer of 2004, the Morris Room adjoined a quiet corridor filled with ceramic treasures of Renaissance date. To enter the room, I stepped through a fifteenth-century doorway.⁸⁸ The interior that I encountered represented a self-contained work of art, an “exhibit” in its own right.⁸⁹ Unlike the Gamble and Poynter Rooms, which could be pressed into cafeteria-style service during

⁸⁵Memo from Parry, 27 March 1996 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

⁸⁶Memo from Parry to Litten, 20 March 1996 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

⁸⁷Litten's response, 21 March 1996 [VAA, MA/2/M (Morris Room File)].

⁸⁸Dated 1472, the slate doorway was designed by a Genoese artist, Giovanni Gaggini (d. 1517). It was made for the Certosa of Rivarolo where it was used as an entrance to a funerary chapel. At the time (i.e., between May 2004 and April 2005), the Poynter Room was ornamented with a complementary doorway, also made of slate and dating to 1480. It had provided the entrance to another funerary chapel at the Certosa of Rivarolo.

⁸⁹Klein 2002, p. 91.

regular visiting hours (fig. 7-9), the Morris Room was pristine and empty.⁹⁰ No extraneous pieces of furniture, save for the aforementioned *May Day* buffet, detracted from its decorative surfaces.⁹¹ During my many visits to the Morris Room, I often found myself in the company of other museum-goers. Some stumbled upon the room haphazardly, hoping to sate their appetites in the hard-to-find restaurant nearby. Some came to the room purposefully, as Arts and Crafts enthusiasts and Morris admirers, or as dutiful tourists who refused to leave the museum without seeing *everything*. However, still others came to the Morris Room when casual visitors could not, namely when the room was hired for special events.



Figure 7-9: Cafeteria-style service in the Poynter Room.

⁹⁰At different times of the year (2004-5), the Gamble and Poynter Rooms were empty like the Morris Room and not used to feed museum patrons.

⁹¹The buffet, which I briefly described in Chapter Three, was placed under the north window.

Although casual visitors were not permitted to bring food into the Morris Room, members of the public could reserve the room for a price and treat their guests to memorable meals.⁹² The rental fees provided the V&A with a necessary source of income, but Stephen Klein saw irony in this new use for the original refreshment rooms: the public spaces of the world's first museum restaurant were now blatantly reserved for persons of affluence.⁹³ In 2004, the Morris Room could be reserved for daytime and evening events. A reception for 60 people could be hosted there, but it accommodated only 40 guests for lunch or dinner. The V&A's website advertised the interior's availability, describing it thus: "The classic William Morris design of our smallest room gives it the air of a private club. With its green and gold plasterwork, stained glass windows and gilded ceiling, the Morris Room creates a warm and intimate setting for smaller functions."⁹⁴ For the privilege of a private lunch in the Morris Room, the aspiring host could expect to pay at least £1500, a reception's starting price was £2000, and a private dinner's starting price was £4000.⁹⁵ The Gamble Room – promoted as "a unique and glamorous space" – could also be hired and the Gamble Room packages included the use of the Morris Room.⁹⁶ Prices ranged from £2500 for lunch to £6500 for dinner.⁹⁷ These may not be the most princely sums imaginable, but neither are they cheap. Much more accessible were the Gamble Room souvenirs in the museum's gift shops. On one

⁹²Klein 2002, p. 91.

⁹³Klein 2002, p. 91.

⁹⁴Room Hire 2004c (internet).

⁹⁵Room Hire 2004a (internet).

⁹⁶Room Hire 2004b (internet).

⁹⁷Room Hire 2004a (internet).

occasion, while I was in the Gamble Room and taking notes on its appearance, a V&A guide reminded her tour group that tiled letters, modelled after Sykes's alphabet, could be purchased from the main shop. Intrigued, I visited it myself (in 2004, it was located near the grand entrance, just west of the information desk). There I found a large ceramic letter (priced at £49.95) and a small placard that explained such tiles were made "by a skilled artist working in the traditional style" using the original moulds; potential customers were directed to contact a staff member for assistance. Tourists with less money could opt instead for a small tile (£12.95) or a 'tasteful' 200g chocolate bar (£3.95) in the shape of a Sykes initial.⁹⁸ Ironically, casual visitors could not always eat in the Gamble Room, but they could always consume an edible symbol of it. Things were about to change, however. The V&A's director, Mark Jones, was eager to return the Morris, Gamble and Poynter Rooms to their roots and use them again as "refreshment areas."⁹⁹

When Benugo won the V&A catering contract in 2004, plans for a new museum restaurant were under way and it appears that the contract obliged Benugo to finance the project. An internal record of the museum stated: "The company would pay the costs of setting up the new kitchen and restaurant spaces."¹⁰⁰ The *Caterer and Hotelkeeper* predicted that the new restaurant would accommodate 350 people: 100 diners in a waiter-

⁹⁸The tiles and chocolates were readily available in 2004, but they existed in sparser numbers in 2005 and I believe they were phased out by my last trip to London in 2006.

⁹⁹BBC News 2001 (internet).

¹⁰⁰V&A Board Minutes 2004b (internet), p. 3, par. 9.

service restaurant and another 250 diners in a self-service area,¹⁰¹ but this scheme seems not to have materialized as such. I have been informed that the new restaurant, known simply as the V&A Café, accommodates approximately 200 patrons and is operated on a self-service basis.¹⁰² Patrons select their meals from food and beverage stations located on the ground floor of the old Lecture Theatre building (fig. 7-10).¹⁰³ More importantly, the V&A Café makes full use of the three original refreshment rooms. Diners can sit in these rooms and in the adjacent corridor that runs along the north side of the quadrangle.¹⁰⁴ Open daily, the V&A Café was designed by MUMA (McInnes, Usher, McKnight Architects), an up-and-coming architectural practice based in London.¹⁰⁵



Figure 7-10: The delicatessen in the new V&A Café by MUMA, 2006. Reproduced from DHA Designs 2007c (internet).

¹⁰¹*Caterer & Hotelkeeper* 2004, p. 8.

¹⁰²E-mail from Moira Gemmill, Director of Projects and Design, 14 March 2007.

¹⁰³FuturePlan 2006 (internet).

¹⁰⁴The quadrangle was redesigned recently by Kim Wilkie and now it is called the John Madejski Garden.

¹⁰⁵FuturePlan 2006 (internet).

MUMA also worked on the Royal Academy of Arts Restaurant, a Classical interior designed by Richard Norman Shaw in 1885 and reinvigorated by a dramatic lighting installation by DHA Designs.¹⁰⁶ MUMA employed a similar design formula in both restaurants. The firm relied on neutral finishes and simple furnishings to brighten the historic interiors without detracting from them. Bold light fixtures, also by DHA Designs, were installed in two of the V&A's refreshment rooms. The elegant fixture in the Poynter Room (fig. 7-11) is a far cry from the unsympathetic fluorescent screens that formerly marred its ceiling. The Gamble Room is graced by three large wire-sphere luminaries (Fil de Fer by Catellani & Smith).¹⁰⁷ Up-lights enliven the tactile surfaces of the ceramic walls (fig. 7-12). Chocolate-coloured bench seating runs along the arc of the apse, allowing patrons to sit directly below the stained-glass windows. Modern brown chairs, much like the sleek white chairs in the corridor nearby, welcome weary guests.



Figure 7-11: Poynter Room: new lighting by DHA Designs, 2006. Reproduced from DHA Designs 2007b (internet).

¹⁰⁶French 2005, pp. 327, 328.

¹⁰⁷DHA Designs 2007b (internet); DHA Designs 2007c (internet).



Figure 7-12: Gamble Room: up-lighting by DHA Designs, 2006. Reproduced from DHA Designs 2007c (internet).

Access to the Gamble Room has improved considerably: the twentieth-century brick walls, which replaced the original glass screens, have been removed in two places, allowing easy movement between the room and the corridor.¹⁰⁸ I have a limited number of photographs of the Gamble Room since its transformation by MUMA and, without any firsthand experience of the new environment, it is difficult to gauge the significance of their details. For example, in one daytime photograph of the Gamble Room, its tables are unadorned. However, in other photographs of the interior, a more formal arrangement appears (fig. 7-13). A grand piano sits in a corner of the room and the tables are laid with linens, crystal glasses, and flatware. This degree of formality does not accord with my conception of “self-service” catering (i.e., no frills and no fuss). The formal arrangement seems rather more suited to a waiter-service restaurant. If self-service truly is the norm at the V&A Café, I am inclined to believe that the three original refreshment rooms adopt formal arrangements on a limited basis, perhaps on Friday evenings when the museum

¹⁰⁸FuturePlan 2006 (internet).

has longer opening hours or during special events.

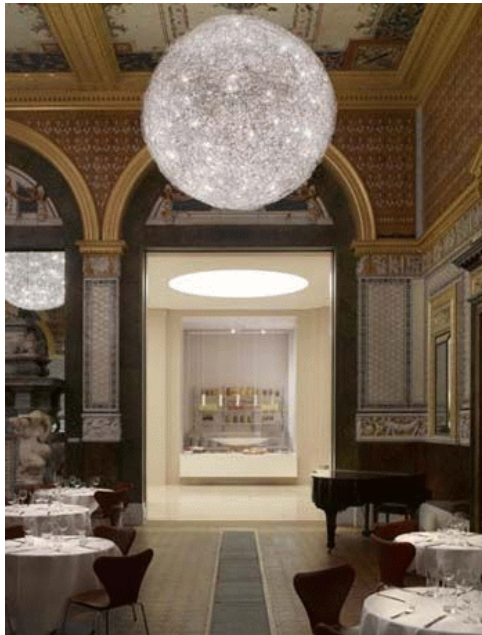


Figure 7-13: Gamble Room: a formal arrangement. Reproduced from DHA Designs 2007c (internet).

The contemporary “garden rooms” of the restaurant’s main corridor provide a stark contrast to the historic refreshment rooms. When I last strolled through the corridor in 2005, it was dimly lit and lacked windows. Now, seated in the bright and airy garden rooms, patrons can look out onto the John Madejski Garden. Sparsely decorated, the corridor is furnished with white tables and chairs, stone-coloured benches, and a gleaming expanse of mirrors (fig. 7-14). Although I have not seen the new restaurant since its November 2006 debut,¹⁰⁹ Katherine Tyrrell (a London-based artist and associate

¹⁰⁹The V&A expected the new restaurant to open on 7 November 2006; V&A Board Minutes 2006b (internet), p. 3, par. 8.1. Indeed, the restaurant had opened by the next meeting of the Board of Trustees on 23 November; V&A Board Minutes 2006c (internet), p. 3, par. 10.1.

member of the Society of Graphic Fine Art) has posted several illuminating works on her blog, including *The Marble Dog*. An unfinished drawing, it shows Benzoni's *Diana Hunting* in its new location in a garden room (fig. 7-15).¹¹⁰ On her first visit to the V&A Café on 21 November 2006, Tyrrell lunched on a sandwich (salami, mozzarella, and rocket on focaccia) and found “an awful lot of people” enjoying the restaurant.¹¹¹



Figure 7-14: Seating in the corridor of the new V&A Café by MUMA, 2006. Reproduced from DHA Designs 2007c (internet).

¹¹⁰Tyrrell 2006b (internet). The company website of DHA Designs has been an important resource for me as well; DHA Designs 2007c (internet). It includes multiple photographs of the V&A Café, which have helped me to visualize the new environment.

¹¹¹Tyrrell 2006a (internet).

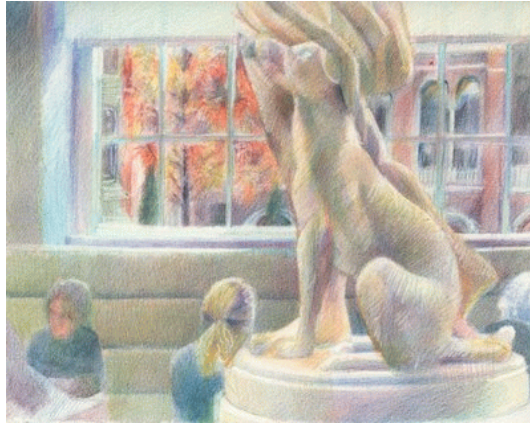


Figure 7-15: Katherine Tyrrell, *The Marble Dog*, 2006. Coloured pencil. Reproduced from Tyrrell 2006a (internet).

However, one question lingers: do “an awful lot of people” recognize the Morris Room as the work of Philip Webb, or do they assume it to be the creation of William Morris?

When the Green Dining Room was renamed the Morris Room, the interior’s identity changed in several ways. First of all, its primary function as a public eating area was obscured. Without the word “dining” in its title, and without the fixtures of a working restaurant, there were few clues to inform newcomers to the V&A of the Morris Room’s first incarnation as a refreshment room. Secondly, the room acquired new significance as the work of William Morris. Webb’s authorship as the interior’s principal designer is denied by the new designation, while the authorship of the other two rooms is apparent. It is quite likely that tourists assume the Poynter Room to be the work of Poynter; they may not be familiar with the artist, but their intuition would likely lead them to assume that the room shares its name with its maker. In all probability, first-time visitors to the Gamble Room would know nothing of Gamble, but they would guess that the room was designed by someone named Gamble. However, when asked to name the

designer of the Morris Room, I strongly doubt that most museum-goers would answer Webb. After all, the room does not bear his name; it is named after Morris and I expect casual visitors would associate the interior (and its making) with him. Admittedly, there were two signs in the Morris Room when I visited the museum in 2004, one of which explained that Webb had supervised the scheme, but tourists did not always pause to read the signs. Undoubtedly, many left the Morris Room without knowing of Webb's contribution.

The interior's designation as the Morris Room is misleading, perhaps deliberately so. As I noted earlier in this chapter, the term "Morris Room" surfaced in the early decades of the twentieth century, in letters written by representatives of the museum and members of the general public, so when museum officials opted later in the century to rename the interior, their decision may have simply reflected an established trend. However, the strength of Morris's reputation probably played a significant role in their decision as well. Webb was an excellent architect, but he shunned publicity. Morris, on the other hand, was famous and, consequently, his name appealed to a broader audience. Renaming the Green Dining Room after Morris promised lucrative possibilities. Morris drew attention; perhaps officials hoped to draw more visitors (namely, Morris admirers and aficionados of the Arts and Crafts movement) by linking Morris's name with the fabric of the building. This hypothesis might also apply to the very origins of the term "Morris Room." I believe the term developed, in part, from calculated efforts to guarantee the Green Dining Room's safekeeping in the early twentieth century. Lethaby understood the Green Dining Room to be the work of Philip Webb (in the main), as did

Maclagan, but in letters to their peers, both men associated the interior with Morris. Significantly, however, their letters were written in the hope of saving the Green Dining Room from disrepair, disuse, and destruction. In other words, they had to prove the interior's worth. Morris's reputation eclipsed Webb's; well aware of this, Maclagan and Lethaby undoubtedly emphasized Morris's name to capitalize on his stature. His art's appeal had diminished with the passing of time, but Morris was remembered as a powerful pioneer of design. By associating Morris's name with the interior, its guardians ensured its greater appeal. Thus, the term "Morris Room" would be less a reflection of Morris's personal involvement in the room and more an indication of his unflagging reputation.

In conclusion, although it was a collaborative endeavour that produced the Green Dining Room, its current designation as the Morris Room suggests that a single man created it. Morris certainly helped to decorate the west refreshment room, but the extent of his involvement is debatable. He was not its chief architect; such recognition is due to Webb. Clearly, then, the identity of the Morris Room is a crafted one. Its name, or label, is unusual because it does not reveal its history of manufacture. Normally, a museum label is meant to be objective; it is an important tool used to qualify the object on display. A standard label describes an object's provenance: when it was made, where it was made, and who made it. This last piece of information is very important because objects that can be attributed to great (and marketable) artists usually sell for larger sums than anonymous works or the productions of so-called second- and third-rate artists. As an individual without a central position in the artistic canon, Webb is not nearly as

marketable as Morris and I believe this detail is the main reason for the room's new name.

CONCLUSION

The Green Dining Room was created especially for the South Kensington Museum and so this dissertation commenced with a survey of the institution's rich history. My second chapter explored the circumstances of its establishment and its subsequent development under Henry Cole, its first director. Filled with fine pieces of ornamental art and practical examples of industrial design, the museum urged guests to produce better wares through their own manufacturing companies and to sponsor those improvements through their purchasing powers as conscientious consumers. However, situated in the West End, the South Kensington Museum was not readily accessible to London's artisans, so many of whom lived and laboured in the East End. Nevertheless, administrators hoped that the museum's restaurant, a novel amenity, would help weary visitors to refresh themselves after long journeys to (and through) the museum. In this chapter, I limited my description of the Green Dining Room to its physical appearance, using nineteenth-century sources to guide my account.

As the restaurant consisted of three refreshment rooms, and not just the Green Dining Room, I devoted my third chapter to a discussion of these other spaces, focussing on their design and execution. Clad with ceramic tiles, the Centre Refreshment Room was first conceived by Godfrey Sykes, but largely completed by James Gamble. Both

men were employed as decorative artists by the Department of Science and Art. Because they worked from a studio within the precincts of the museum, Cole could monitor their progress. Indeed, he took a keen interest in the interior's development and, consequently, the Centre Refreshment Room reflects many of Cole's preoccupations. It was shaped by the hands of decorative artists, but it is stamped with the personality of their director. The adjacent Grill Room was designed by Edward Poynter, a young painter of academic training. It also has a ceramic veneer, but its tiles were painted by female members of the South Kensington Museum Porcelain Class, an important initiative that aimed to prepare young women for respectable and remunerative employment. The decoration of the Grill Room was protracted and only reached completion when a stained-glass window, an object for which I established a new provenance, was inserted above the iron grill.

In my fourth chapter, I returned to the subject of the Green Dining Room: specifically, I questioned how the project was awarded to the young firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Because Cole is widely credited with commissioning Morris and his associates, I had expected to encounter praise for the firm (or, at least, one or two of its members) when I consulted Cole's papers, but I found no such praise. His remarks, recorded in administrative documents or penned in private diaries, fail to demonstrate any measurable interest in the firm, its artists, or the Green Dining Room. I considered occasions when Cole could have become acquainted with the firm and its products, but he never openly enthused over any aspect of that enterprise, which led me to suspect that another person played a larger role in the commission of the Green Dining Room. Looking for new leads, I considered individuals with connections to Cole and individuals

with connections to the firm. In the end, I believed the most likely candidate was an individual with connections to both: Henry Austin Bruce, the Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. As Cole's superior, Bruce had the ability to push the commission in the firm's direction; as Rossetti's acquaintance, he had the motivation to do so.

In my fifth chapter, I analysed the Green Dining Room's relevance to nineteenth-century design reform. In the firm's embrace of brotherhood and the interior's embodiment of careful workmanship, the Green Dining Room is bound to the Arts and Crafts movement, which had only begun to blossom. The interior also shares stylistic affinities with the art of the Aesthetic movement, another development that had only begun to germinate. Building on the scholarship of previous writers, I also demonstrated strong links between the figurative panels of the Green Dining Room and works of art collected by Frederick Leyland, one of Britain's greatest patrons. Most important, however, was my recognition of Webb as the primary designer of the Green Dining Room.

The Green Dining Room was not simply an artful creation. It was a refreshment room and, therefore, a vital component of a functioning restaurant. In my sixth chapter, I explored the social fabric of the three refreshment rooms. I focussed on how they were used, and by whom, from their heyday in the Victorian era through to their decline in the 1920s. Using Cole's diaries and other primary sources, I identified specific persons who dined at the museum. Documents kept by the V&A Archive helped me to shed light on the working lives of the restaurant's managers, Fred Hill and his daughter Annie Cottam.

Though the catering business was strenuous and rewarded them with small profits, the pair persisted, ever loyal to the museum.

In my seventh chapter, I described the Green Dining Room's twentieth-century transformation from a tired Victorian refreshment room to a magnificent display case for *objets d'art* attributed to William Morris and other men of genius. However, the Green Dining Room's story did not end here. It would undergo other changes, including the receipt of a new (and problematic) name. More recently, it returned to its original function. Amalgamated with the new V&A Café, it now serves as a refreshment room, a very attractive one.

Countless Victorian refreshment rooms have disappeared from memory, but the Green Dining Room still occupies a parcel of London's urban landscape and its story continues to evolve.

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