'Buried Empires': Showmanship and the Staging of Aesthetic Knowledge at the Sydenham Crystal Palace, 1854–1855

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Abstract

In June 1854, the second Crystal Palace opened at Sydenham in South London. The media reported keenly on Sydenham's large-scale archaeological reconstructions known as the Fine Arts Courts. These exhibits were designed by prominent design reformers as a means to improve public knowledge and public taste. However, the Courts attracted frequently hostile reviews from notable art critics who derided the displays as entertainment spectacles. This essay reevaluates the Courts by examining their deliberate showmanship. I trace the origins of the Sydenham display techniques in the archaeological representations made by the Sydenham Court designers for the London print, performance, and exhibition markets. Following the lead of historians of popular science, this essay emphasises the significance of popular formats and popularisation in Victorian visual culture and knowledge formation. It examines the reconstructions as visualising technologies designed to popularise, stage and communicate Victorian visual knowledge. I argue that both designers and showmen presented a virtual past through shared strategies of showmanship, the staging of expertise, and dramatic, poetic narrative. The Sydenham Fine Arts Courts were complex visual commodities, offering both instruction and diversion. Some Victorian critics found these aims mutually incompatible.

Introduction

[1] When the second Crystal Palace opened at Sydenham, South London in June 1854, the metropolitan press paid keen attention to the large-scale reconstructions of architectural antiquities in Sydenham's ten "Fine Art Courts" (Fig. 1). The Courts were reproduced in newspapers, periodicals, prints and photography across the globe, and their media fame probably shaped the popularity of the period room as a display format for nineteenth-century museums and exhibitions.[1] However, when Sydenham first opened, contemporary reviewers in the periodical press were frequently hostile. Art critics derided the displays in anti-theatrical terms as an "attractive spectacle to the greatest number", as "scenic effects" that are comparable to "Madam Tussaud's waxworks", and as a "panorama".[2] The snobbish dismissal with which the Sydenham Courts were often confronted by contemporaries has given way in recent scholarship to a more appreciative approach to culture and knowledge popularisation.[3]
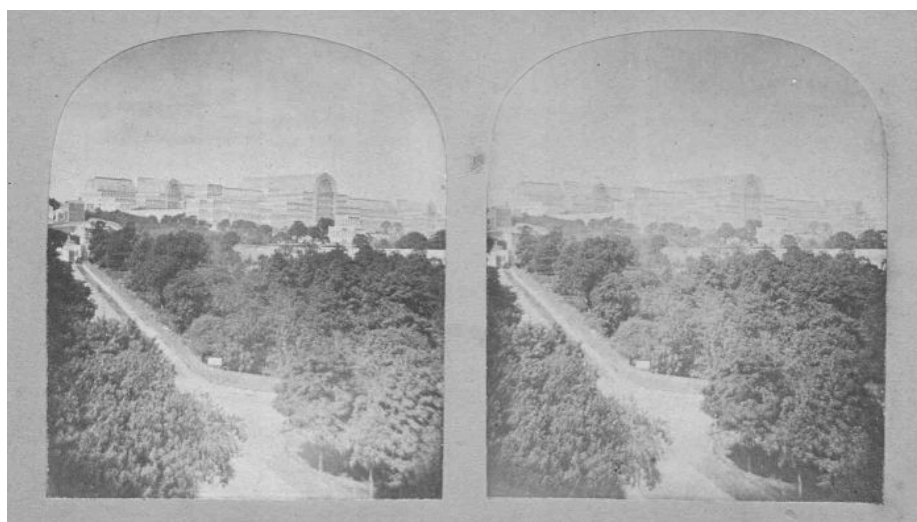
1 Crystal Palace, Sydenham, after 1854, undated, unauthored stereoscope. Bromley Local Studies and Archives, Bromley, England (photo: Bromley Local Studies and Archives)

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[1] Architectural guides, photo albums etc. were taken as far as Australia, see e.g. Samuel Phillips, *Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park*, illustrated P. H. Delamotte, London 1854, in: State Library of Victoria, Heritage Collections, and Box for Crystal Palace Art Union stereoscopic views, Negretti and Zambra, London 1859, in: Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney, HP82.56.21.

[2] Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, review of the handbooks of the Crystal Palace and related correspondence, in: *The Quarterly Review* 96 (1855), no. 192, 303-354: 312, 317; Harriet Martineau, "The Crystal Palace", in: *The Westminster Review* 6 (1854), no. 122, 534-550: 537; and William Michael Rossetti, "The Epochs of Art as Represented in the Crystal Palace", in: id.: *Fine Art, Chiefly Contemporary. Notices Re-printed, with Revisions*, London 1867, 51-92: 54. For the anti-theatrical animus in European thought and specifically in the nineteenth century, see Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice,* Berkeley and London 1981, 295-349.

[3] See in particular, Kate Nichols, *Greece and Rome at the Crystal Palace: Classical Sculpture and Modern Britain, 1854–1936*, Oxford 2015, 87-126. See also Stephanie Moser, *Designing Antiquity: Owen Jones, Ancient Egypt and the Crystal Palace*, New Haven and London 2012, 183. The standard reference work is Jan R. Piggott, *Palace of the People: The Crystal Palace at Sydenham 1854–1936*, London 2004.

2 The Egyptian Court in the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, 1854–1862, glass stereograph, sheet 8.4 × 17.3 cm. Wellcome Collection, London, no. 567779i (photo: https://wellcomecollection.org/works/duhhct59)

This essay explores Sydenham by examining the significance of popular formats and popularisation in Victorian visual culture. It approaches cultural forms as "neither corrupt nor authentic" in themselves and sidesteps the hierarchies that attribute a positive cultural value to some modes whilst assigning negative evaluations to other formats.[4] Sydenham's archaeological reconstructions are understood as a visualising technology, concerned with producing, staging, communicating, and popularising aesthetic knowledge (Fig. 2). The Courts will be situated within a longer series of archaeological reconstructions that the Sydenham designers produced for the London print and entertainment markets between 1848 and 1853. Across varied formats and diverse sites, these reconstructions used recurring communication strategies of showmanship, staged expertise, and dramatic, poetic narrative. I argue that these media forms were complex visual commodities. They challenge period and current cultural hierarchies assigning cultural value to some forms and sites over others.

[2] The Sydenham Courts can be understood within a broad analytic category of knowledge formation. 'Knowledge' as an organising idea offers a history from which the popular has not already been excluded.[5] Knowledge making can be understood as a set of communicative practices.[6] Communication provides a broad integrating frame for unifying a diverse set of activities which are often conventionally designated as expert or amateur.[7] The emerging role of experts, and the authorisation and contestation of knowledge formats was part of the Sydenham story.[8]

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[4] Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, "Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularization and Science in Popular Culture", in: *History of Science* 32 (1994), 237-267: 247.

[5] Lorraine Daston, "The History of Science and the History of Knowledge", in: *Know: A Journal on the Formation of Knowledge* 1 (2017), no. 1, 131-154: 143.

[6] James A. Secord, "Knowledge in Transit", in: *Isis* 95 (December 2004), no. 4, 654-672: 672.

[7] Jonathan R. Topham, "Introduction" [to focus section *Historicising 'Popular Science'*], in: *Isis* 100 (June 2009), no. 2, 310-318: 311.

[8] For similar debates see Ralph O'Connor, "Reflections on Popular Science in Britain: Genres, Categories and Historians", in: *Isis* 100 (June 2009), no. 2, 333-334.

[3] The Fine Arts Courts were part of a larger archaeological turn that sought to popularise and communicate the value of archaeological knowledge through the medium of reconstructed antiquities. Key members of the Sydenham design team developed visual technologies of archaeological reconstruction for the London exhibition and print markets between 1848 and 1853. These diverse formats of print and exhibition are uneasily categorised as either expert or popular, or as archaeologically authentic reproductions or inauthentic speculative reconstruct-ions.[9] Viewing Sydenham within this longer history of the production of antiquity and its reception, foregrounds the exceptional hostility the Crystal Palace Courts attracted. At Sydenham, the displays aimed for both knowledge popularisation and leisure time entertainment, but some Victorians saw the fields of instruction and diversion as morally incompatible. The Sydenham Courts, panoramas, stage sets and independent commercial guidebooks to Sydenham were complex commodities, providing education and entertainment through multiple visual and auditory media.[10] These artefacts confirm the intersection of multiple media in Victorian visual consumption.

Promoting aesthetic knowledge

[4] In 1854 Matthew Digby Wyatt (1820–1877), architect, design reformer and designer of a number of the Sydenham exhibits, wrote in his general Sydenham guidebook, that people had not yet recognised the Fine Arts as "inexhaustible sources of innocent, and at the same time stimulating pleasure. To supply such a defect, it has become imperatively necessary to popularise them".[11] Wyatt and his fellow Victorian design reformer Owen Jones (1809–1874) were capitalising on a long-standing interest in aesthetic knowledge. From the mid-eighteenth century, British artists and critics had exhorted the value of art for the aesthetic education of citizenry. They urged the moral and commercial benefits of "educating taste". The mid 1830s focussed this interest in a 1835–1836 Select Committee inquiry into "Arts and Their Connections with Manufactures", which included scrutiny of the role of public art galleries and print and cast reproductions in circulating works of art.[12] After the Select Committee, the market for aesthetic knowledge also expanded and 'experts' addressed broader audiences with a conscious rhetoric of popularisation. In the early 1840s art historian and writer Anna Jameson (1794–1860) promised readers that her handbooks to greater London's public and private galleries would provide

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[9] Ralph O'Connor, *The Earth on Show: Fossils and the Poetics of Popular Science, 1802–1856*, Chicago and London 2007, 227.

[10] The term is developed by O'Connor (2007), 292.

[11] Matthew Digby Wyatt, *Views of the Crystal Palace and Park*, *Sydenham. From Drawings by Eminent Artists and Photographs by P. H. Delamotte*, London 1854, 30.

[12] See Peter James Cunningham, *The formation of the schools of design, 1830–1850, with special reference to Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 1979, 6-31, https://etheses. whiterose.ac.uk/636/; and John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt: "The Body of the Public"*, New Haven and London 1995.

"popular and concise explanations" to the "uninitiated".[13] In 1839 Samuel Carter Hall founded *The Art Journal* and reflected years later "*I had to create a public for art* [my italics] [...] My duty was to make the work respected as well as popular".[14] The Sydenham Crystal Palace of 1854 also promoted their exposition as contributions to the reformist drive for art education for a broader public; an aspiration endorsed by commercial guidebook writers who shared the popularising aims of the Crystal Palace Company. *Routledge's Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park at Sydenham* (1854) cast Sydenham as an heir to the movement to popularise scientific knowledge, noting that the project would achieve, "What the Polytechnic Institution in 1838 and the popular lectures of Dr. Myers first accomplished for science – rendering it attractive and intelligible".[15]

[5] At the Sydenham Crystal Palace, Jones and Wyatt presented architectural antiquities as a new medium for communicating design reform. The reform project had been largely concerned with modern manufactures and historical decorative arts although it always supported art as an instrument for improving public taste. At Sydenham reformers allied themselves with other experts who were also popularisers. Anna Jameson wrote the guidebook to the free-standing sculpture collection and artist Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins (1807–1894) who amongst other things had produced a drawing book for the education market, worked on the geology display. The new direction for reform offered by Sydenham was overseen by architects Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt. They centred architecture and architectural ornament as the primary sites for the knowledge and practice of design. Jones noted in 1854 that "The several styles of architecture have uniformly been the result of the religion, habits, and modes of thought of the nations which produced them" and "the decorative arts are of one family and must go hand in hand with their parent architecture".[16]

[6] The archaeological art mission of the Sydenham Crystal Palace found potent form in the ten Fine Arts Courts constructed from plaster casts. These large-scale exhibits were rooms, or suites of interconnecting rooms that housed free-standing sculpture and models. Each separate court was designed in a historic architectural style and the Courts were idealised as a historical sequence, although the physical placement of Courts confounded this ideal. On the west side of the northern nave they built the Egyptian, Greek, Roman, the Alhambra (the Nasrid Palace, Granada) and Nineveh (Mesopotamia) Courts and on the east side of this northern nave they constructed the Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance and Italian Courts (Fig. 3). The Pompeii Court was located in the south nave since it was converted to a Fine Arts Court when construction was already underway. A set of modern French, Italian, English, and German sculpture galleries bounded the central transept. The northern transept near the Nineveh Court contained an

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[13] Susanna Avery-Quash, "Illuminating the Old Masters and Enlightening the British Public: Anna Jameson and the Contribution of British Women to Empirical Art History in the 1840s", in: *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* no. 28 (2019), DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.832 (accessed 2 Oct. 2020).

[14] Samuel Carter Hall, "Retrospect of A Long Life", quoted in: Frederick N. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture: Imagining Mesopotamia in Nineteenth-Century Europe,* Cambridge, UK 2003, 161.

[15] *Routledge's Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park at Sydenham,* London 1854, iii.

[16] Owen Jones, *The Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace*, London 1854, 7, 15.

avenue of sphinxes flanking a sixty-one-foot installation of four seated figures from "Aboo [sic] Simbel in Nubia".[17]
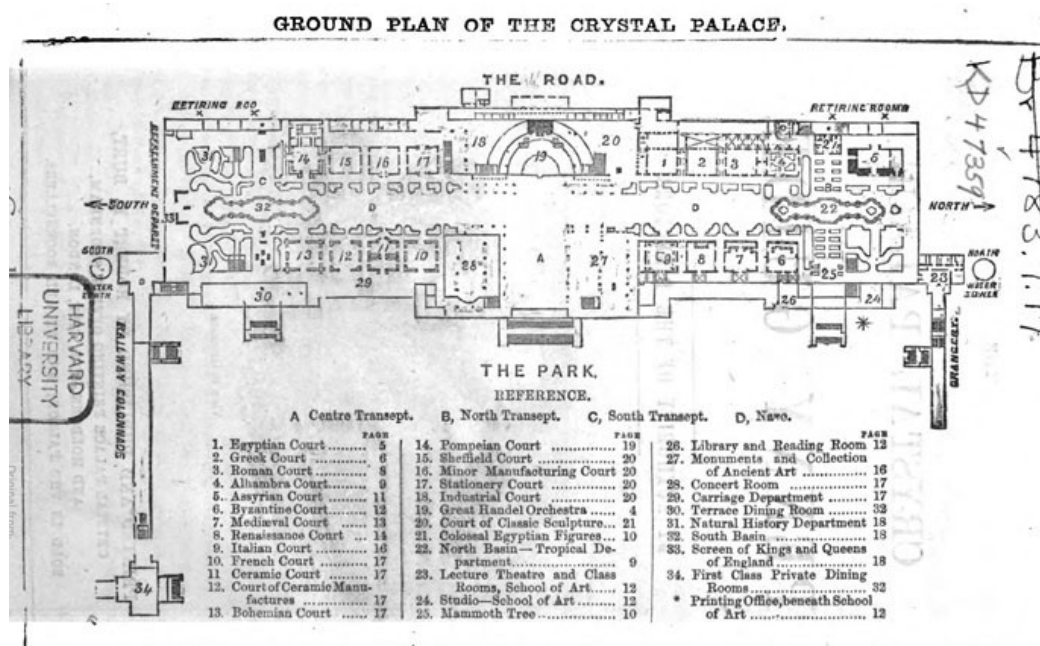
3 Ground Plan of the Crystal Palace, in: *The Crystal Palace Penny Guide*, ed. Crystal Palace Company, Sydenham 1863, p. 2 (digital image: courtesy of HathiTrust)

[7] The archaeological Courts made predominant use of the visual technology of reconstruction. Geology provided an important precedent. The emergence of huge public interest in geology was fuelled by its promoters' use of literary and pictorial "visualising moments", textual and illustrative reconstructions which "helped to focus and define the past".[18] The Sydenham collaborators noted the impact of geology. Digby Wyatt's 1854 guide to the Crystal Palace declared that "In Geology the student's imagination is no longer called upon to clothe with fleshy and muscular tissue the fragments of skeletons which our national collections have alone hitherto provided for his study."[19] In 1850 James Fergusson, designer of Sydenham's Assyrian Court, borrowed the geological metaphor for archaeology, arguing, "[…] at Persepolis we have the bones of a palace without the flesh, at Nineveh – the flesh without the bones".[20] Geological writers and illustrators produced dramatic images of vanished worlds which publicised geology "in spectacular and theatrical forms" that helped garner significant "cultural authority" for the discipline.[21] This technique of visualising moments entailed some risk. The boundary between geology, popular geology and science fiction was mutable. There was no firm line dividing "cautious restoration"

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[17] Wyatt (1854), 19.

[18] O'Connor (2007), 34.

[19] Wyatt (1854), 12.

[20] James Fergusson to Austen Henry Layard, "1 August 1850", as quoted by Bohrer (2003), 210.

[21] O'Connor (2007), 1.

from "full-scale voyages back in time".[22] After the opening of the Sydenham Courts, experts and sceptics focussed on this problematic boundary, but the archaeological reconstruction as both a voyage back in time and an expert format had already been entangled in a series of projects leading up to Sydenham.

Popularising archaeology in print culture, 1848–1853

[8] In the years before Sydenham's opening in 1854, archaeology was also seeking cultural authority and public recognition for its projects. Popularisation was part of its appeal to a broad public who would fund expensive editions of British archaeological research.[23] Key members of the Sydenham design staff participated in these projects to promote and popularise archaeology. They helped to develop the visualising technologies of reconstruction in print and three-dimensional formats. In the years between 1848 and 1853, architect Owen Jones, together with the self-trained architect James Fergusson who would design Sydenham's Assyrian Court, the Egyptologist Joseph Bonomi who would collaborate on the Egyptian Court, George Scharf who would work on the Greek, Roman and Pompeii Court guides, and Jones's assistant Albert Henry Warren, were engaged in various presentations of archaeology for the commercial print and entertainment markets. As a group their primary contribution was the production of illustrations for the publication of Austen Henry Layard's Assyrian expeditions. Scharf and Bonomi also provided knowledge of antique architecture and material culture for the design of sets and images in the panorama and theatre market. Publisher John Murray, with whom Owen Jones had a long-standing business relationship, funded and issued five books on Austen Henry Layard's Mesopotamian expeditions in the years 1849 to 1854, and lent some illustrations for the guide to the Sydenham Assyrian Court. Joseph Bonomi brought Layard's shipments to public attention with a series of anonymously authored articles in the *Illustrated London News* and the *Athenaeum* in 1847 and 1848.[24] With growing public acclaim for Layard's expeditions and an appetite for the artefacts he brought to Britain, Murray realised that there was an audience for archaeological tales. He stepped in to fund the expensive publication of a folio of Layard's expedition drawings (*Monuments of Nineveh*) after Layard's request for government financing was rejected. In order to offset the costs, Murray asked Layard to write a narrative of his experience which became *Nineveh and Its Remains* (1849).[25] A brief examination of these publications reveals the interdependence of experts, the entertainment market, and publics. These reconstructions and the development of the experts' own scientific knowledge were fuelled by complex emotional investments.

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[22] O'Connor (2007), 196.

[23] Amara Thornton, "Exhibition Season: Annual Archaeological Exhibitions in London, 1880s–1930s", in: *Bulletin of the History of Archaeology* 25 (2015), no. 1, art. 2, DOI: http://doi.org/10.5334/bha.252.

[24] Shawn Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle in Victorian Britain: The Case of Assyria, 1845–1854*, Farnham 2012, 42.

[25] Malley (2012), 48.

[9] Victorian audiences expected to have knowledge presented and consumed in instructive and attractive ways.[26] Murray's *Monuments of Nineveh* publication managed this combination by fusing the archaeological narrative, the travel genre and the scientific work on identification and reconstruction of antiquities. Publisher John Murray employed Scharf to enhance Layard's drawings as well as illustrating Layard's narrative with views embellished with ethnographic detail. The expensive visual technology of chromolithography, a new colour plate reproduction process, further transformed *Monuments of Nineveh* (1849) into a luxurious visual commodity. Murray had paid Owen Jones in December 1849 for four colour plates, and the sumptuous frontispiece of *Monuments of Nineveh* (1849) is designed in the signature style Jones brought to his title pages.[27] The frontispiece is a reconstructed composite – which foreshadowed the technique used at Sydenham. It fuses key Assyrian motifs taken from various archaeological finds into a combined doorway, frame, entablature and dado setting (Fig. 4).
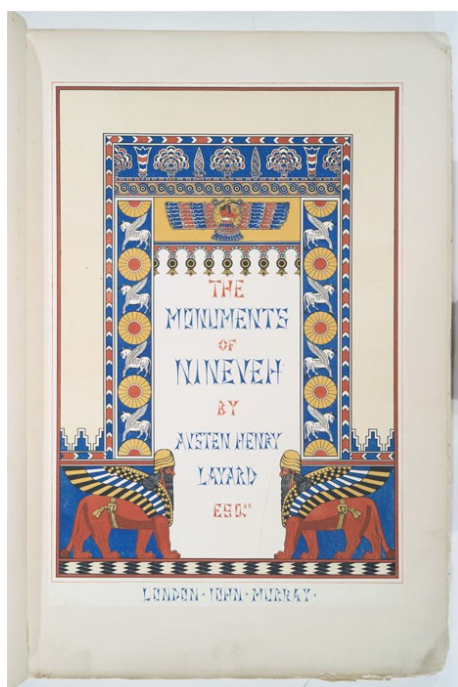
4 Owen Jones (attrib.), frontispiece to Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh*, London 1849, chromolithograph, 56 × 38 cm. New York Public Library, New York City, Digital Collections

Jones had been working with reconstructive visual technology from the early 1840s. His collaboration with Joseph Bonomi on chromolithographed illustrations for the second series of Sir John Gardner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* was published by Murray in 1841.[28] For Wilkinson's book, Bonomi and Jones produced a colour reconstruction of

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[26] Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, "Science in the Marketplace: An Introduction", in: *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences*, eds. Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, Chicago/London 2007, 1-20: 1.

[27] Ada Cohen and Steven E. Kangas, *Inside an Ancient Assyrian Palace: Looking at Austen Henry Layard's Reconstruction,* Hanover, NH/London 2017, 41.

[28] Sir John Gardner Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, ser. 2, 2 vols., London 1841.

columns. In *Monuments of Nineveh* they were much bolder and depicted a completely reconstructed doorway. The frontispiece gave the book a distinctive graphic identity and immediately located the reader within a 'lost' world.

[10] In *Monuments of Nineveh*, Jones, Bonomi and another artist developed archaeology's capacity for "pictorialising moments" by reconstructing an interior of a "Hall in an Assyrian Temple" (Fig. 5). Their interior was not a reconstruction of an excavated room, but a reconstituted generic interior style described as "Hall in an Assyrian Temple or Palace, Restored from Actual Remains, and from Fragments Discovered in the Ruins".


5 Owen Jones, Joseph Bonomi and Carl Hambuch, "Hall in Assyrian Palace Restored", in: Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh*, London 1849, plate 2, chromolithograph, 56 × 38 cm. New York Public Library, Digital Collections

The reconstruction of style rather than specific site was a significant step. It was authorised by Layard, who noted, "I have endeavoured with the assistance of Mr. Owen Jones to give my work on the Monuments of Nineveh a representation of a chamber or hall as it originally appeared."[29] Jones and Bonomi created their reconstruction from the most visually arresting of Layard's Mesopotamian finds: the repeating motif of the painted and glazed clay tile image of the king and his retinue and the large human-headed winged lion-men from the Northwest Palace of King Ashurnasirpal II. They also used wall tiles that had been found in different rooms.[30] Reconstruction was a key part of architectural knowledge and an important tool in the recovery of a period architectural style rather than the resurrection of a single building or single space. The reconstruction of a generic period style would be contested at Sydenham, as we will see, by knowledge experts from the visual arts who brought other methods and values to their evaluations. The visualisation of an origin moment was a technique for producing knowledge, and this pictorial sense of the past also infused 'expert' and popular imaginings.

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[29] Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Second Series of the Monuments of Nineveh*, 2 vols., London 1853, vol. 2, 265.

[30] Cohen and Kangas (2017), 31.

[11] The lure of the past as a vanished world awaiting rediscovery was visualised in the frontispiece to Austen Henry Layard's expedition report, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Narrative of An Expedition to Assyria During the Years 1845, 1846 & 1847*. Recording the moment of "Lowering the Great Winged Bull" (Fig. 6), the viewpoint of George Scharf's image exactly replicated the viewing position of Jones's and Bonomi's restored hall (Fig. 5).[31] This visual link between the buried and the reconstructed interiors reinforced the drama of recovery and affirmed the logic of archaeological retrieval as a means for conjuring up a vanished world. A shared expert and popular desire for an immediate and pictorialised past was evident in the 1853 adaptation of Jones's and Bonomi's reconstruction, which was used for Charles Kean's theatrical staging of Lord Byron's *Sardanapalus* (Fig. 7). The stage set and Layard illustration (Fig. 5) are quite similar and the stage set may have proclaimed its authoritative status by quoting so closely from the expert interior. Both images produced a glorious full-colour rendition of the past.
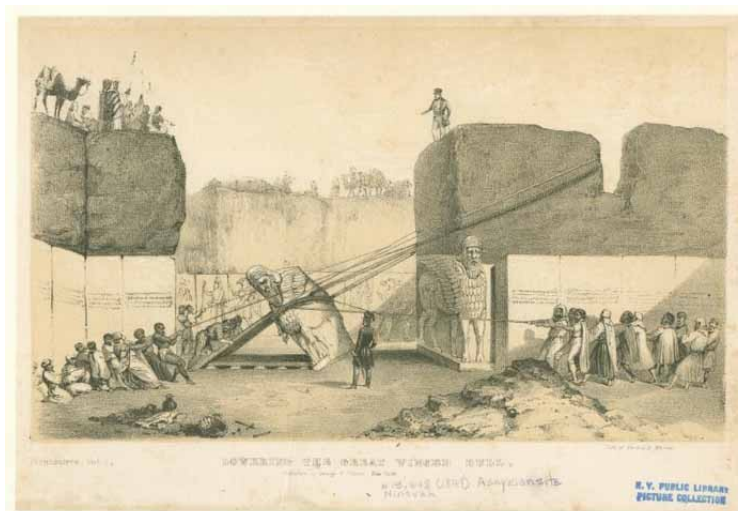
6 George Scharf, "Lowering the Great Winged Bull", frontispiece to Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, London 1849, frontispiece, vol. 1. New York Public Library, New York City, Digital Collections

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[31] Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Narrative of An Expedition to Assyria During the Years 1845, 1846 & 1847*, 2 vols., London 1849, vol. 1, frontispiece.
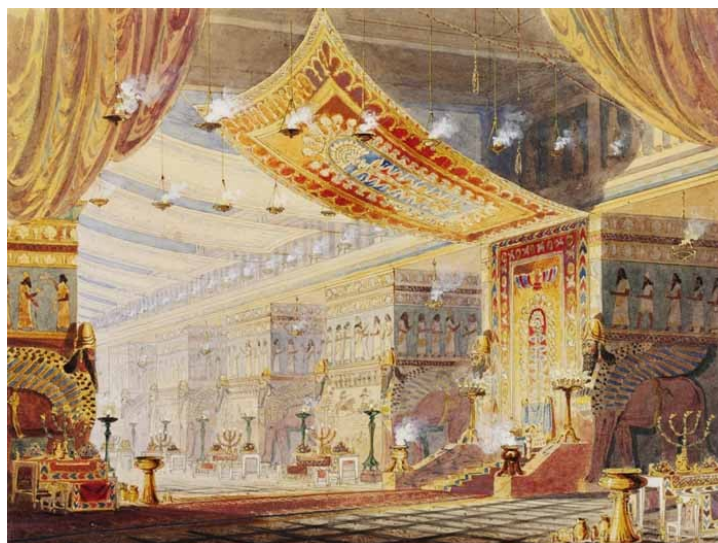
7 Frederick Lloyds, design of a stage set for Lord Byron's *Sardanapalus*, directed by Charles Kean, ca. 1853. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, D.14447-1901 (photo: V & A Museum)

[12] The cross-fertilisation of visual traditions in generating reconstructions was also evident in James Fergusson's work. The relationship between James Fergusson and Layard began around mid-1850, eventually leading to a collaboration on the Sydenham Court. Fergusson established his credentials with an 1851 Murray publication, *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored*, which included a black and white view of a restored section of the Palace Court of Khorsabad. For Layard's *A Second Series of The Monuments of Nineveh* (1853) Fergusson produced a more ambitious colour reconstruction of the original citadel of Nimrud towering over the river Tigris.[32] In his *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (1853), Layard wrote of Fergusson's colour plate "The Palaces of Nimrud Restored": "I have endeavoured, with the able assistance of Mr. Fergusson, to convey in a coloured frontispiece to the Second Series of my larger work on the Monuments of Nineveh, the general effect of these magnificent edifices when they still rose on their massy basement, and were reflected in the broad stream of the Tigris."[33]

[13] Fergusson's colour reconstruction fused different visual traditions. A self-trained architect, Fergusson appears to have drawn on Romantic artist John Martin's dramatic apocalyptic painting of *The Fall of Babylon* (1819) for his reconstituted palace. Martin's large-scale paintings were well-known, having been publicly exhibited and acclaimed. His images were further circulated through prints (and plagiarised copies) of his *Illustrations of the Bible* in the years 1831 to 1835. Martin's paintings and prints influenced the views painted in the panorama market.[34] His works blended

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[32] James Fergusson, *The Palaces of Nineveh and Persepolis Restored*, London 1851 and Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains: A Second Series* (1853), vol. 1, pl. 1. For an account of the orientalist world framework in the presentation of these 'discoveries' see Zainab Bahrani, "Untold Tales of Mesopotamian Discovery", in: Zainab Bahrani, Zeynep Çelîk and Edhem Eldem, eds., *Scramble for the Past: A Story of Archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, 1753–1914,* Istanbul 2011, 125-155.

[33] Austen Henry Layard, *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, New York 1853, 556.

[34] O'Connor (2007), 307. John Martin's (1789–1854) painting is now in an Italian private collection; for an 1831 print in the British Museum see https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_Mm-10-6.

dramatic staging with the scriptural narratives of the catastrophic destruction of biblical cities. One historian of archaeology has argued that archaeology as a cultural product has always existed within a dramaturgical imagination.[35] Catastrophe, ruination and the revelation of buried empires were dramatic narrative forms that helped promote the popular appeal of archaeology. Fergusson's view would have resonated with this visual narrative tradition. His depiction of a flourishing Nineveh was portentous of its coming decline.

Entertainment markets, 1850–1852

[14] Archaeology was a cultural product that could be consumed in edifying and entertaining ways, across the different but intertwined markets of print culture and performance.[36] Reference to expertise and the use of experts formed an essential part of the claims to legitimacy and instructive potential made by the theatre and panorama makers. Three of the Sydenham design team used their expertise as illustrators of antiquity to work across both the print and entertainment markets. Sydenham collaborator George Scharf worked as a consultant on Charles Kean's Shakespeare plays at the Princess Theatre (1851–1857) where he provided 'correct' classical costumes and scenery.[37] Joseph Bonomi was part of a team, together with Jones's assistant Albert Henry Warren, that provided archaeological and historical detail for a Grand Moving Panorama of the Nile in 1850 at the Egyptian Hall, a private exhibition space in Picadilly. One broadside advertising the Nile panorama was brilliantly illuminated in blue, maroon and gold, and prominently decorated with Egyptian motifs such as hieroglyphs and lotus plants. It promoted the panorama as "Painted by" Henry Warren (the artist and father of Albert), Joseph Bonomi and James Fahey.[38] Another promotional bill emphasised the Nile panorama's educational potential and proclaimed it "will be found to form a most complete and instructive illustration of the collection of Egyptian antiquities in the British Museum".[39] Murray's Nineveh publication formed the basis for Robert Burford's *Panorama of Nimroud* (sic) which opened in Leicester Square in late December 1851. Although Layard was consulted on this production, no evidence exists of his involvement with the design of the panorama, but it appears to be based on the Murray images provided by Scharf. Layard and his aristocratic relations visited this panorama three times over the course of its very popular season of eighteen months. His repeated visits suggest he was satisfied with the production.[40]

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[35] Malley (2012), 80.

[36] John Malcolm Russell, *From Nineveh to New York: The Strange Story of the Assyrian Reliefs in the Metropolitan Museum and the Hidden Masterpiece at Canford School*, New Haven, CT/New York, NY 1997, 77.

[37] Peter Jackson, "Scharf, Sir George (1820–1895)", in: *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 September 2010), https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24796.

[38] Albert Henry Warren, *Scrapbook*, Private Collection.

[39] Erik Huhtamo, *Illusions in Motion: Media Archaeology of the Moving Panorama and Related Spectacles* Cambridge, MA 2013, 192.

[40] Russell (1997), 90.

[15] These crossovers and relationships between the Murray commercial publications and the entertainment world reveal entanglements between experts and purveyors of entertainment. The investment of desire by mid-century Victorians in visualising moments – in picturing the past and imaging the moment of 'discovery' and retrieval – was not clearly divided between experts and lay communities, or between scientific and theatrical formats. Rather, modes of presentation were interrelated. Newspaper reviewers staged their authority. They presumed that readers were in possession of cultural knowledge and referenced authoritative textual sources. After a private viewing of the *Panorama of Nimroud* on December 18, 1851, *The Illustrated London News* declared that the vista was "sketched with a fidelity which strikes every spectator who has read Layard and the other authorities […]".[41]

[16] Authority was also staged by the entertainers. The showmen of science publicly staged their knowledge and fashioned status and authority for their presentations.[42] Showmen sought to present, and their audiences sought to consume, information in attractive and intelligible ways.[43] In the handbill advertising his 1853 adaptation of Lord Byron's *Sardanapalus*, theatrical entrepreneur Charles Kean quoted at length from Joseph Bonomi's *Nineveh and Its Palaces* (1852). *The Times* reviewer praised the play for not being a "mere gaudy spectacle, but for using his stage for the purpose of historical illustration" which exactly "suits such an information age". It declared that the production completed Layard's Assyrian studies and "presents a more animated picture of ancient life than would be afforded by the engravings in his book or the sculptures in the British Museum" and noted that it was by "making his theatre do the work not only of the theatre but also of the panorama and the lecture-room that Mr Kean has secured a success".[44] The lecture room used techniques of performance and showmanship to engage audiences. Turning science or archaeology into a lecture room or panorama commodity did not "imply levity or exclude serious reflection".[45] In her critical evaluation of the ways in which the Crystal Palace has been interpreted through twentieth century discourses of mass culture, Kate Nichols observed that this long-standing viewpoint has identified popular culture with commodification and aligned commodification with a loss of authenticity.[46] A more useful term to describe these archaeological reconstructions in the print and theatre markets might be as "complex commodities".[47]

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[41] "Panorama of Nimroud", in: *The Illustrated London News*, December 20, 1851, 734.

[42] Fyfe and Lightman (2007), 15.

[43] Joe Kember, John Plunkett and Jill A. Sullivan, "Introduction", in: *Popular Exhibitions, Science and Showmanship, 1840–1910*, ed. Jill Sullivan, London 2014, 1-18: 5.

[44] "Princess's Theatre", in: *The Times,* September 3, 1853, 12.

[45] O'Connor (2007), 292.

[46] Kate Nichols, "Marbles for the Masses: The Elgin Marbles at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham", in: *Making Sense of Greek Art: Ancient Visual Culture and its Reception*, ed. Viccy Coltman, Exeter 2011, 179-201: 190.

[47] O'Connor (2007)*,* 292 uses this term.

The archaeological model on display

[17] Three-dimensional archaeological models offered another visual precedent for Sydenham. Archaeological models were exhibited in both private and public spheres in small-scale reconstructions that fused both education and entertainment. Knowledge embodied in models was encountered in research, lecture room and leisure settings.[48] From the 1760s, cork models of decayed ancient buildings were purchased for elite private collections. A popular public exhibition of cork archaeological models, sometimes accompanied by dramatic lighting and simulated eruptions, was presented by Richard Du Bourg (1738–1826) in multiple London locations over a forty-year period, from the 1780s to 1819. This display sought to engage a broad public in classical history, some forty-odd years before Sydenham.[49] Du Bourg's exhibition became one of London's key sights. In 1807 a Birmingham family visiting the metropolis described them as "remarkably well done".[50]

[18] In the second half of the 1840s, in the wake of increased scholarship on the Parthenon and its marbles, physical archaeological models could be used to provide an imaginative medium of speculative reconstruction. In 1846 the British Museum purchased a large model (six feet by three feet, or 182 cm by 91 cm) of the restored Parthenon created the year before by sculptor Richard Cockle Lucas (1800–1883). His model reconstructed the Parthenon sculptures and modelled them in wax.[51] The museum exhibited it in the Elgin Marbles Room where it was acclaimed as a huge public success and discussed across diverse sites from *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* to *The Artizan* magazine.[52] There were dissenters. On February 9, 1846, Lucas presented a paper on his model to the Institute of Architects. He was met with a robust response from the Foreign Secretary of the Institute, Thomas Donaldson, who had served on the 1836 Committee to determine whether the Elgin Marbles and other Greek Statuary in the British Museum had been coloured. Donaldson ruthlessly questioned the accuracy of numerous architectural details, dismissed its "feeble" polychrome scheme, suggested Lucas should have kept to sculpture and declared that the model impugned the knowledge and research of the British architectural profession.[53] The criticism had some effect. By 1848 the model had been moved to the adjacent Phigalian Saloon.[54] However visitors continued to admire it and *Routledge's Guide* to Sydenham approvingly noted that the British Museum's two models juxtaposed the "ruinous state" with "a

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[48] Soraya de Chadarevian and Nick Hopwood, "Dimensions of Modelling", in: *Models: The Third Dimension of Science*, eds. Soraya de Chadarevian and Nick Hopwood, Stanford, CA 2004, 1-15: 3.

[49] Richard Gillespie, "The Rise and Fall of Cork Model Collections in Britain", in: *Architectural History* 60 (2017), 117-146: 126-129.

[50] Jenny Uglow, *In These Times: Living in Britain Through Napoleon's Wars 1793–1815*, London 2014, 494, quoting Birmingham City Archives, Galton MS 3101/D/10/9/15, Samuel Galton to John Howard Galton, June 2, 1807.

[51] George Thomas Noszlopy and Fiona Waterhouse, *Public Sculpture of Staffordshire and the Black Country*, Liverpool 2005, 274.

[52] "Dearth of Sculpture", in: *The Artizan: A Monthly Journal of the Operative Arts* 4 (1846), 7-8.

[53] "Feb. 9 Meeting", in: *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* 9 (1846), 89.

[54] *Synopsis of the Contents of the British Museum,* London 1848, 129.

beautiful restoration".[55] Lucas's work revealed, or capitalised on, a public appetite across a wide social spectrum for "restored models" as a visual technology for picturing the past. Yet as Lucas and the British Museum discovered, the exhibition of restorations invited expert scrutiny by inadvertently providing a public space for vocal dissent over reconstruction choices. The friction between Lucas and Donaldson was underpinned by a clash of disciplinary knowledges and methods. Despite expert disputes, the exhibition of models of antiquity and archaeological reconstructions seems to have played a role from the very late eighteenth century in popularising knowledge as well as producing expert knowledge. However hostile critique, as we will see, could also cast these entangled histories into a binary system.

Showmanship and the performance of expertise, Sydenham, 1854

[19] In the late 1840s the drawn, chromolithographed, and three-dimensional archaeological restorations were transformed by a new plaster medium that enabled an innovative, cheaper, faster and more durable technology for plaster moulding.[56] This technique allowed the Sydenham designers to reconstruct and present archaeological and architectural knowledge at the scale of rooms, interiors and facades. There is no doubt that the designers deliberately used the tactics and aesthetics of showmanship. As the period photographs document, the Sydenham nave was filled with luxuriant tropical foliage and ponds. In this setting the archaeological exhibits could be 'discovered' as lost sites buried in jungles (Fig. 8).
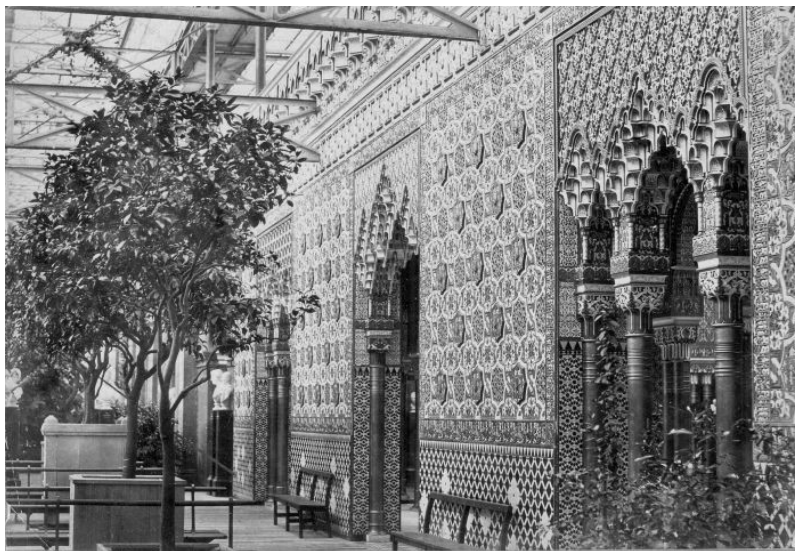

8 Art Courts at Sydenham Crystal Palace, ca. 1859, photographer Philip Henry Delamotte (attrib.). Top left: *Foot of Abu Simbel and Nineveh Court* (mislabelled as Egyptian Court) | Top right: *Nineveh Court* | Bottom left: *Monti's Fountain and Nineveh Court* | Bottom right: *Nineveh Court*, albumen silver prints from glass negatives, 7.9 × 8.1 cm each. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gilman Collection, Museum Purchase, 2005, acc. no. 2005.100.801 (14a-d) (photo: The Met Museum)

[55] *Routledge's Guide* (1854), 52.

[56] Geoffrey Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain*, reprint, London 2015, 17.

The entrance ways and exteriors of the displays used visually arresting and well-known artefacts. Winged bulls and gigantic figures crowned the entrance to the Nineveh (Assyrian) Court. An avenue of sphinxes led to the Egyptian Court. The brilliantly coloured diapers of the Nasrid Palace interior were relocated to the exterior of the Alhambra Court (Fig. 9). The display of the towering Abu Simbel façade close to the Assyrian Court used scale to produce a dramatic effect (Fig. 10).

9 The Alhambra Court at Sydenham Crystal Palace, undated photograph. Bromley Local Studies and Archives, Bromley, England (photo: Bromley Local Studies and Archives)

10 The Nubian Court at Sydenham Crystal Palace, ca. 1854, lithograph, tint with one stone tint. Victoria & Albert Museum, London, SP.682:2 (photo: V & A Museum)

Wyatt and Jones had already worked on the interior of the Great Exhibition where they had also made key choices for visually arresting displays, such as the orientalist suite of Courts around the transept crossing and the use of large statuary and enormous objects to fill up the main aisles. But the vivid, visual reconstructions of a vanished past in Sydenham brought peril. In a parallel field of reconstruction, geologists who called up images of lost worlds feared being challenged as fantasists.[57]

[20] The popularisation of science in the Victorian period frequently raised questions about the status of the knowledge on display. Popularisation provoked questions about the authority and expertise of the showmen. The official handbooks to the Courts were an important space for demonstrating the designers' expertise. These guides documented, often in elaborate detail, the visual and textual sources used to construct the displays. The guides included careful enumerations of the scale at which source material was reproduced. The official handbook to *The Nineveh Court in the Crystal Palace*, authored by Austen Henry Layard, opens with a performance of his expertise:

> *The Nineveh or Assyrian Court in the Crystal Palace has been erected from the designs and under the immediate superintendence of Mr. Fergusson, a gentleman who has especially devoted himself to the study of Assyrian architecture, and has spared no pains to examine and compare every fragment of architectural and ornamental detail, as well as every monument which might throw light upon the subject, discovered during the researches of M. Botta and the Author in Assyria, and to consult all the authorities on the question in this country and in France.*[58]

[21] A concern with sources, site documentation and scale all reflected the knowledge formats and techniques of the discipline of architecture. Architectural methodology underpinned the project of reconstructing period styles rather than striving to reproduce one building as a Court. A limited range of prototypes was generally used as the basis for the stylistic depiction of one Court and its interior.[59] The archetypal approach underlined the terminology used by the designers in their guides to the Courts. They noted that one display was the "illustration of one phase of art", and observed of another that it provided "as exact an idea as possible".[60] An emphasis on archetypes rather than individual specimens was scholarly and pedagogical. Reconstruction furnished an opportunity for generating new knowledge; particularly of those periods of architecture awaiting extensive scholarly work to determine the elements and operations of their period style.

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[57] Kember, Plunkett and Sullivan (2014), 12.

[58] Austen Henry Layard, *The Nineveh Court in the Crystal Palace Described by Austen Henry Layard*, London 1854, v.

[59] With the exception of the Alhambra and Pompeian Courts. The general guide distinguished between the Courts designed by Jones claiming they were based on the forms and characteristics of one structure whereas Wyatt's were a "collection of details". This distinction does not hold but Jones was the more experienced architect and his Courts are more effective as integrated designs. See Samuel Phillips (rev. F. K. J. Shenton), *Guide to the Crystal Palace and Park*, London 1860, 47.

[60] Phillips (rev. F. K. J. Shenton; 1860), 43; and Layard (1854), 52.

[22] The Sydenham strategy of displaying a period style rather than recreating individual buildings provoked one of the sharpest conflicts between the designers and critical literary and art reviewers. The latter's aesthetic knowledge systems placed a high premium on the individual work of art. Fragmentary survivals were cherished as an original remnant. Key art and literary critics derided the Sydenham 'composites', but the architectural press was supportive.[61] Viewing the Courts' reception through the lens of knowledge formation allows us to recast these debates beyond the binary of false versus truthful representation, as some critics averred, and to see this contest instead as the clash of different disciplinary knowledge systems. Kate Nichols has observed that the Courts never attempted to conceal the illusion of reconstruction, but this strategy was overlooked by hostile reviews.[62] The art critic William Rossetti (1829–1919) viewed the speculative expert reconstructions through his disciplinary lens when he observed that the Sydenham displays obtained "what is assumed to be an improved general appearance at the expense of positive fact".[63] As hybrid interdisciplinary objects melding architecture, sculpture and image, the Courts held different meanings for distinct social groups and failed to satisfy a number of these audiences.[64]

[23] As new audiences for aesthetics came under scrutiny, unsympathetic evaluations often used the trope of the uninitiated viewer who would mistake the reconstructed archetypes for replicas of once extant buildings.[65] The polarisation of the debate concealed the shared concern of architects and art and literature critics with the nature and status of visual truth.[66] Training audiences in their judgement enabled spectators to become confident about the reliability of their own visual experience. Sydenham architect Matthew Digby Wyatt emphasised that judgment would be fostered through comparison of works, and quoted Francis Bacon's remarks on "materials for comparison and experiment".[67] Readers of the general guide were introduced to the comparative method as a technique for training. The editor Samuel Philipps opined:

> *This bringing together and into series the great examples of art, so that comparison may enlarge and amend our judgment, is perhaps the greatest aim achieved by the Crystal Palace.*[68]

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[61] Moser (2012), 181.

[62] Nichols (2011), 93.

[63] Rossetti (1867), 53.

[64] Anne Secord, "Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire", in: *History of Science* 32 (September 1994), no. 3, 269-315: 285.

[65] For a selection see Moser (2012)*,* 157-183.

[66] Iwan Rhys Morus, "Illuminating Illusions, or, the Victorian Art of Seeing Things", in: *Early Popular Visual Culture* 10 (2012), no. 1, 37-50: 37.

[67] Wyatt (1854), 12.

[68] Phillips (rev. F. K. J. Shenton; 1860), 114; Jordan Bear, *Disillusioned: Victorian Photography and the Discerning Subject*, University Park, PA 2015.

Owen Jones wrote that the spectator will have "an opportunity of examining side by side portions of the building of every age".[69]

[24] The Crystal Palace designers used a range of visual strategies to further this aim of knowledge cultivated through comparison. An enfilade view from one court to the other, as seen in the photograph from the Alhambra Court's Court of the Lions, literalised the ideal of the visual series (Fig. 11).
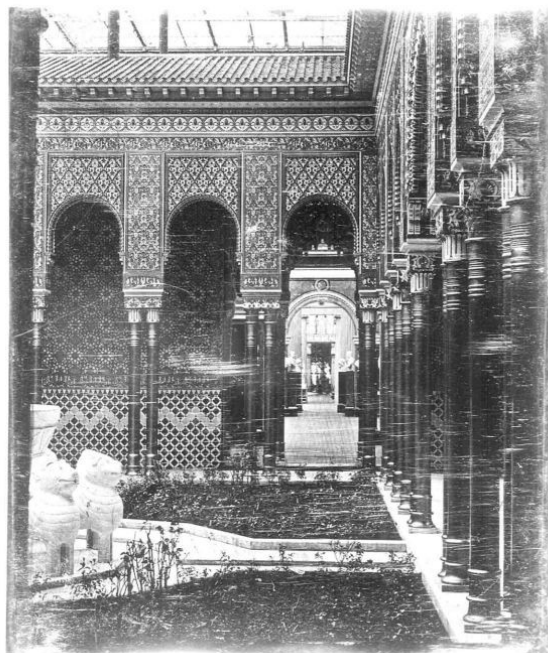
11 Sydenham Crystal Palace, view of the enfilade from the Alhambra Court to the Greek, Roman and Egyptian Courts, photograph, ca. 1854–1860. Bromley Local Studies and Archives, Bromley, England (photo: Bromley Local Studies and Archives)

Numerous models and photographs promoted comparisons across scales and media formats. The museum room at the Alhambra Court demonstrated the technology of in situ casting at archaeological sites and exhibited some of the original casts Jones had made of the Nasrid Palace. The display and the guidebook emphasised the construction technique used in the exhibit, showing how multiple pieces could be taken from one mould.[70] Putting production formats on display, showed the technology behind the 'illusion'. This position was at odds with the artistic claim that inexperienced viewers would mistake the simulacra for the original.

[25] The clash between Rossetti and the Sydenham designers was also a contest over the role of the spectator's imagination in viewing displays. The general guide to Sydenham explained the reconstructed polychromed display of the Parthenon in the Greek Court in these terms:

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[69] Owen Jones, *The Alhambra Court in the Crystal Palace*, London 1854, 7.

[70] For the descriptions of the casts used in the construction of the Alhambra Court see *Routledge's Guide*, 68.

those colours which there is reason to know or to believe they originally possessed; to restore them, in fact, as far as possible, to their pristine state, in order that the imagination of the spectator may be safely conducted back in contemplation to the artistic characteristics of distant and distinctive ages.[71]

This guide emphasised the expert knowledge provided by the reconstruction of the original state. Rossetti however, valued "the thing as it was found [now]".[72] He was working within a literary tradition which cherished the incomplete object. This trope was a key element of Romantic era poetry which frequently staged the writer's encounter with a ruined artefact.[73] The poem *The Burdens of Nineveh* (1856) by the art critic's brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was firmly located in this tradition. The protagonist's encounter with "a winged beast from Nineveh" cast the artefact as a time portal that transported the viewer into the past. Boundaries between viewer and object were blurred. The statue was imagined as both the witness to the past and as the eye of a spectator situated amidst historical scenes, watching them unfold.[74] Despite William Michael Rossetti's unhappiness, the Romantic era genre of inner time travel and emotion-charged poetic effect was not displaced by new mid-Victorian formats. In the next section I turn to a number of the commercial guidebooks to understand how the Romantic vision of the artefact as time portal was part of the viewer experience at Sydenham. The spectacular reconstructions could work in tandem with the affective memory of literary poems; a conjunction that challenges the binary of the theatrical versus the poetic.

Poetry and popularisation

[26] Within months of Sydenham's opening, commercial writers and numerous reviewers engaged with the archaeological exhibits by reinstating the poetic, dramatic narrative of time travel and its method of imaginative identification with historical figures. The official guides were centred on expert interests, with elaborations of the constituent elements of architectural style, examination of details, and the enumeration of lists of visual and textual sources used to construct the architectural display. Key historical events and actors were noted in the official guides, but historical narrative was frequently subordinated to the techniques of stylistic research, a pre-eminent concern driving the guides' focus on the column as a structural object for understanding and ordering architectural development. The foregrounding of the column as the locus of stylistic development was a method that infiltrated even the general guide to Sydenham. At the Egyptian Court the visitor was informed that one of the displays exhibited the "first order of Egyptian columns" and upon arrival at the Greek Court, the spectator was instructed that she was now taking a "step from gloom into the columnar structure of Greek art".[75] Not all reviewers appreciated the expert thrust. The review in *The New Monthly Magazine* praised *The Ten Courts*

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[71] Phillips (rev. F. K. J. Shenton; 1860), 32.

[72] Rossetti (1867), 51-92: 53.

[73] Andrew M. Stauffer, "Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Burdens of Nineveh", in: *Victorian Literature and Culture* 33 (2005), no. 2, 369-394: 372.

[74] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Burden of Nineveh", in: id., *Poems,* London 1870, 21-30.

of the Crystal Palace for offering a different vantage point but then declared: "It is all very well to be told in an appropriate guide-book that in the Egyptian Court the central colonnade, with its starry ceiling, is taken from the temple of Karnac – the lesser one from Philae […] with a great deal of detailed information. Still much more was wanted."[76]

[27] In contrast to scholarly concerns, the commercial guides to Sydenham of 1854 and 1855 promoted frameworks of historical engagement already familiar to its readers. *The Ten Chief Courts* guide noted that its adoption of "a popular style" meant discarding "technical terms". It promised readers "a short readable compass" providing "the historical, legendary, or poetical associations of the respective Courts, to point out their peculiar excellencies, and their artistic and architectural distinctions". It recommended tourists read the book before, during or after visiting Sydenham in "the chimney-corner", "the railway carriage" or "while resting in the gardens of the Palace, or during the necessary intervals of sight-seeing".[77]

[28] The turn to literary techniques as a method of popularisation was not unique to Sydenham's archaeological displays. Popularisers of earth history in this period successfully used poetic forms of presentation, a strategy that acknowledged the importance of "taste and literary cultivation to polite society".[78] The literary turn was declared on the first page of *The Ten Chief Courts* guide. It opened with quotations from Leigh Hunt's *A Thought of the Nile* (1818), Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Witch of Atlas* (1820) and a paraphrase of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's lines from a lecture on the Gothic mind in the Middle Ages: "'A Gothic Cathedral', says Coleridge, 'is a petrified religion'."[79] In taking this literary turn, archaeology could emulate the promoters of geology, who had embraced a more "spectacular and self-consciously poetic style".[80] Geology's capacity to summon dramatic images of a vanished world was part of its claim to poetic skill.[81]

[29] Theatres and panoramic representations of distant times and places also provided guidebook writers with a crucial template for the concept of the imaginary voyage.[82] Poetry used dream-vision, reverie and visionary transport to provide poetic access to past lives. Reviews and guides to Sydenham promoted time travel as an affective mode for engaging with the past. *The Ten Chief Courts* guide urged its readers: "[…] you must, with the spirit of a dramatist, throw yourself into

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[75] Owen Jones and Joseph Bonomi, *Description of the Egyptian Court Erected in the Crystal Palace, With an Historical Notice of the Monuments of Egypt by Samuel Sharpe, Esq.*, London 1854, 41, 45.

[76] "The Ten Courts of the Crystal Palace", in: *The New Monthly Magazine,* vol. 101 (July 1854), 378.

[77] *The Ten Chief Courts of the Sydenham Palace*, London 1854, vii.

[78] O'Connor (2007), 236.

[79] *The Ten Chief Courts* (1854), 1. This is a paraphrase of Coleridge whose phrase was "the petrefaction of our religion". Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Lecture 1: General Character of the Gothic Mind in the Middle Ages", in: *The Literary Remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry Nelson, 4 vols., London 1836–1839, vol. 1, 67-69: 69.

[80] O'Connor (2007), 197.

[81] O'Connor (2007), 358.

[82] O'Connor (2007), 199.

his position, think as he thought, and share his aspiration".[83] The reviewer of this guide endorsed its imaginative mode: "to appreciate the art of a nation, amongst other things […] you must feel his wants and remember his pleasures".[84] Readers immersed themselves in the emotions attending contemplation of mortality, loss and wonder. The imaginary voyage fostered identification between spectators and the historical actors of past civilisations.

[30] Even a more prosaic guidebook like *Routledge's Guide* turned in poetic prose when it rhapsodised the Egyptian Court as "the country which saw the first daybreak of civilisation and whose soil is hallowed by so many scriptural and patriarchal scenes". Familiar rhetorical conceits included dramatic contrasts of rise and decline. The author noted "the present dreamy desolation of this once flourishing empire".[85] Stressing knowledge of climate, geography and art, as key ingredients in the comprehension of a culture, the *Guide* also used these elements to evoke the compelling (orientalist) otherness of place for British audiences: "In Egypt every sculpture wears some aspect of the desert, the sky, or the Nile; over everything there is the perpetual silence of Eastern noon."[86] The *Routledge Guide* author summoned the familiar trope of visionary transport to describe the role of imagination in recovering historical knowledge through emotional affect when the spectator is "whirled back in imagination through thousands of years to a period scarcely a century removed from the deluge, to the days when 'Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth' and made Babel the seat of his authority."[87] Like Rossetti's poem on Nineveh, this guidebook conjured up Layard's original encounter with the site by drawing on the archaeological adventure narrative. Visitors could stand in the shoes of the archaeologist adventurer to examine "those fac-similes of Persepolis and Nineveh – thankful that we have an opportunity of doing so without fear of attacks of the Turcoman and the Kurd".[88]

[31] Another guide, William Arthur's *The Crystal Palace, an Essay, Descriptive and Critical* also worked with the familiar dramatic conceits and figurative language inherited from Romantic poetry. Arthur quoted directly from poetic texts and used them to locate historical events and personages. For example when the reader arrived at the Alhambra Court, Arthur recited Lord Byron on Granada – "The Moorish King rode up and down/Through Granada's royal town" – to summon up the historical figures whose lives are narrated in the poem and who linger as the spirits of place.[89] Even when not directly quoting from well-known poetic texts, Arthur built on familiar tropes made famous by widely circulated poems. At the Egyptian Court he summoned the familiar Byronic comparison between the endurance of stone monuments and the mortal and forgotten quests of men. In a beautiful passage he observed: "[…] so you turn from this wilderness of columns, look through the huge door, and see but the lonely footmark, which soon disappears

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[83] *The Ten Chief Courts* (1854), 1.

[84] "The Ten Courts of the Crystal Palace", in: *The New Monthly Magazine* 101 (July 1854), 378: 378.

[85] *Routledge's Guide* (1854) 34, 37.

[86] *Routledge's Guide* (1854), 37.

[87] *Routledge's Guide* (1854), 69.

[88] *Routledge's Guide* (1854), 70.

[89] William Arthur, *The Crystal Palace, an Essay, Descriptive and Critical*, London 1855, 55.

under the wave of eternity".[90] The contrast between the eternity of the ocean and the temporary, ruined monuments of men echoed the poetic imagery of Byron's *The Siege of Corinth* (1816).[91] Following Byron, Arthur personified change as generational and wrote: "the world is growing old […]. Is it not, also, young, very young? Moses is not far off. Adam within view." In *The Siege of Corinth* Byron had written, "What we have seen, our sons will see,/ Remnants of things that have passed away,/ Fragments of stone, reared by children of clay."[92]

[32] Some guides used tropes of the theatre to image their own role in reconstructing history. Arthur drew on the image of a diorama or magic lantern as he declared, "Conceptions of things ancient and distant, which were but profiles in black – colourless outlines – will assume the full visage and complexion of life."[93] The Sydenham displays activate the spectator's internal storehouse of knowledge: "[…] your eye pilots your imagination. What shades cross your path! What scenes come and go!". Arthur urged readers to experience the past by actively inhabiting the viewpoint of famous historical personages: "What Joseph looked on, you look on: what Xenophon trod upon, but saw not, you see: what Vesuvius swallowed, is anew displayed."[94] Other guidebook writers used the scene-changing technology of the diorama to evoke visionary transport in the journey from one Court to the next. As already noted, *Routledge's Guide* described the spectator moving between the Alhambra and Assyrian Courts as "whirled back in imagination".[95] Guidebooks also deployed the dramatic device of spectacular destruction, ruination and human mortality shared by the panorama and poetry. The history evoked by the Alhambra Court was not one of spectacular ruination, nevertheless the Court was included within the familiar terms of violent destruction by the passage from *The Ten Chief Courts* guide:

> *It was not molten in an hour like Nineveh, or buried in a day like Pompeii; it was not drowned in fire like Sodom, ingulphed [sic] like the seas-shore of India by the ocean, or swallowed whole in the jaws of an earthquake; it was not smitten down at a blow like Corinth, or sapped for centuries like Athens.*[96]

[33] These visionary modes of transport evoked the dream space, a condition which has so often functioned as the privileged visual trope of modernity. A "romantic culture of somnolence" depicted dream states as "heightened states of awareness for the perception of objects".[97] But the dream state could also be negatively encoded as the dazzle and disorientation produced by

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[90] Arthur (1855), 56; George Gordon Byron, *The Siege of Corinth*, canto XVI, in: *The Complete Works of Lord Byron,* Paris 1835, 294.

[91] Byron, *The Siege of Corinth*, canto XVIII, in: *The Complete Works of Lord Byron* (1835), 295.

[92] Arthur (1855), 56.

[93] Arthur (1855), 58.

[94] Arthur (1855), 54-55.

[95] *Routledge's Guide* (1854), 69.

[96] *The Ten Chief Courts* (1854), 97-98.

[97] Victoria Mills, "The Museum as 'Dream Space': Psychology and Aesthetic Response in George Eliot's Middlemarch", in: *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* no. 12 (2011), p. 11, DOI: https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.596.

consumption. Lady Eastlake (1809–1893) drew on this characterisation when she dismissed Sydenham as "all rapid, vivid but fleeting".[98] She did not harness the positive tradition of the dream state as inward, historical travel. The poetic (and dioramic) modes of the commercial guides provide a balance to the anti-theatrical stream of Victorian thinking evident in Eastlake's remark. These complex exchanges between poetry, panorama narratives and the commercial guides challenge the association of Sydenham with simple forms of consumption.[99] However, the anti-theatrical tradition was harnessed in the knowledge struggles around the Courts.

[34] Reviews revealed on-going competing disciplinary claims to tell the public story of aesthetic knowledge. The Foreign Secretary of the Institute of British Architects had derided Richard Cockle Lucas's large Parthenon restoration model as "the work of a sculptor", and in turn Lady Eastlake caricatured the Sydenham designer as "the polychromatist".[100] As interdisciplinary objects the Courts provoked a clash of disciplinary values over the meanings ancient "architectural sculpture" had for distinct professional audiences. It was a debate also fought out in parallel in the arguments and evidence for the reorganisation of London museums in this period.[101] Arguments over expert and popular knowledge were intrinsically linked. Popularisation was intimately tied up with a construction of expertise by new elites whose claims over knowledge reinforced their role as gatekeepers of increasingly legible disciplines.

[35] This essay has recast the Sydenham Courts as attempts to popularise, stage, and communicate aesthetic knowledge. The visualising technology of the Courts emerged from a longer tradition of archaeological reconstruction sited in a dramaturgical and poetic archaeological imagination. Analysing the varied formats and sites of reconstructed antiquities in the print, theatrical and display markets reveals shared communication strategies. Across illustrations, performances and models, designers, artists, and cultural entrepreneurs used showmanship, the staging of expertise, and dramatic, poetic narrative to produce complex visual commodities for Victorian audiences. Sydenham proved an influential model, whose impact can be seen in the suite of reconstructed pavilions on display at the 1867 Paris Exposition. London's South Kensington Museum eventually exhibited huge scaled architectural elements in its 1872 Architecture Court. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century plaster cast reproductions of architectural antiquities continued to generate fierce boundary disputes over the dividing line between the popular and the scholarly.[102] Casts were justified in museum contexts for their pedagogical value, but their widespread use also testified to their dramatic and affective popular appeal.[103]

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[98] Eastlake (1855), 306.

[99] Kember, Plunkett and Sullivan (2014), 10.

[100] "Feb. 9 Meeting", in: *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* 9 (1846), 88; Eastlake (1855), 314; O'Connor (2009), 333f.

[101] See Christopher Whitehead, *Museums and the Construction of Disciplines. Art and Archaeology in Nineteenth-Century Britain,* London 2009.

[102] See Isabelle Flour, "'On the Formation of a National Museum of Architecture': The Architectural Museum versus the South Kensington Museum", in: *Architectural History* 51 (2008), 211-238.

[103] See Mari Lending, *Plaster Monuments: Architecture and the Power of Reproduction*, Princeton, NJ 2018.

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Karen Burns is a design, architectural and cultural historian who researches 19th-century design, race, and gender, and histories of women and architecture in the late 20th century. She is currently writing a new history of women and 19th-century design reform: *Making Women: Gender, Space and Making Practice in Early British Design Reform*. Relevant recent publications include "Time and Telegraphy: Nineteenth-Century Contexts for Stained Glass", in: *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* no. 30 (2020), https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.2902. She is co-editor with Professor Lori Brown of *The Bloomsbury Global Encyclopedia of Women in Architecture, 1960–2015* (2 volumes, London 2023) and with Katie Lloyd-Thomas co-wrote the new foreword to the 2022 reprint of the feminist collective Matrix's *Making Space: Women and the Man-made Environment* (original ed. 1984).

Special Issue

Buket Altinoba, Alexandra Karentzos and Miriam Oesterreich, eds., *'Gesamtkunstwerk' World's Fair. Revisioning International Exhibitions*, in: *RIHA Journal* 0300-0312 (31 May 2024), DOI: https://doi.org/10.11588/riha.2024.2.