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Pre-Raphaelites: A Modern Renaissance

Department of History of Art
University of York, York, YO10 5DD, UK
April 17, 2023

Peter Trippi [Peter Trippi - History of Art, University of York](#) (London 1992, Newport 2005, and Chicago 2015), Liz Prettejohn and Francesco Parisi, are the lead co-curators along with their fellow co-curators Cristina Acidini, Tim Barringer, Stephen Calloway, Véronique Gerard-Powell, and Charlotte Gere of the forthcoming exhibition '*Pre-Raphaelites: A Modern Renaissance*'



Opening in February 2024 at the Musei di San Domenico in Forlì, near Bologna, is the exhibition *Pre-Raphaelites: A Modern Renaissance*. It will trace the profound impact of historical Italian art on the Pre-Raphaelite movement between the 1840s and 1920s by placing British works alongside their Italian prototypes.

The art of Evelyn De Morgan and her uncle, John Roddam Spencer Stanhope, will form a crucial part of the exhibition's narrative. The one-venue-only project will particularly intrigue English-speaking visitors by considering, for the first time, pieces by late 19th-century Italian artists inspired by their British forerunners. On view will be approximately 300 works of fine and decorative art borrowed from museums and private collections worldwide

Two artworks committed to the Forlì exhibition (Edward Burne-Jones's *Sidonia von Bork* 1860, Tate, above; and Frank Cadogan Cowper's *Vanity*, 1907, Royal Academy of Arts, below) were clearly influenced by Giulio Romano's *Portrait of Margherita Paleologo* (c. 1531, Royal Collection, bottom), which will not be exhibited.



Members of the London Summer School Class of 2017 will remember the tour Peter conducted for the class of his exhibit at the Leighton House: **Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity, a touring retrospective of the Anglo-Dutch painter Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema RA (1836–1912)**. The exhibit placed unprecedented emphasis on his artistic/architectural collaborations with wife Laura and daughter Anna bringing to light the important work of women artists in the Alma-Tadema family circle.

[Liz Prettejohn](#), Professor of History of Art and Head of Department, History of Art, at the University of York (UK). Her recent research centres on relationships between the arts of past and present, explored in *Modern Painters, Old Masters: The Art of Imitation from the Pre-Raphaelites to the First World War* (2017).

Peter Trippi is Editor-in-Chief of **Fine Art Connoisseur**, the magazine that serves collectors of contemporary and historical realist art, and President of Projects in 19th-Century Art, a firm he established to pursue research, writing, and curating opportunities. He is also President of the Foundation for Advancement in Conservation, which supports and raises awareness of the American Institute for Conservation, the leading society of conservation and preservation professionals in the U.S.

The Hispanic Society Museum & Library's Quiet Restoration

After being closed since 2017, the institution has reopened after undergoing a series of subtle improvements and restorations in advance of its planned expansion.

By Michael J. Lewis May 31, 2023



The Hispanic Society Museum & Library PHOTO: NICHOLAS VENEZIA/SELLDORF ARCHITECTS

It is a remarkable testimony to the American capacity for national reconciliation that just six years after the bitter Spanish-American War a private citizen could create an institution that proclaimed to the world the glory of Spanish culture. The Hispanic Society was founded in 1904 by Archer M. Huntington, whose family's railroad fortune gave him free rein to indulge his love of Spanish art and literature. Believing that the public should have access to his private collection, he found a site at 155th Street and Broadway in New York's then fashionable Washington Heights. There he built the superb museum and library that is one of New York's triumphs of Renaissance Revival architecture.

The Hispanic Society is now looking forward to a renaissance of its own. It reopened in May having been closed since 2017. It will soon undertake a major expansion, planned by Selldorf Architects, working in collaboration with Beyer Blinder Belle and landscape architects Reed Hilderbrand. But it has now gotten off to an unexpectedly early start with what the architects jokingly call an “accidental restoration.”

The vast architectural ensemble on which the Hispanic Society sits is itself somewhat accidental. Huntington built his museum and library as a freestanding object on a terrace, a jewel box in a park. But no sooner had he completed his museum than he was coaxing other institutions, on several of whose boards he sat, to join him. He would give them building sites on condition that they build within five years and on plans approved by him.



The first two were built in 1909, the Numismatic Society to the west and the American Geographical Society across the terrace to the north. The Museum of the American Indian followed in 1916, adjoining the Hispanic Society to the east. The last to build was the American Academy of Arts and Letters, added to the far west of the terrace in 1921. It is perhaps the largest collection of learned societies ever to be shoehorned onto a city block.

All of these buildings, except for the American Academy, were designed by Charles P. Huntington, Archer’s cousin. (He also designed Our Lady of Esperanza, built to give the complex a Catholic church in which Spanish was spoken.) They have an exquisite visual unity that comes from their construction in Indiana limestone, their continuous cornice height and the repetition of the colossal Ionic order.

Arrayed on a monumental axis over 500 feet in length, they represent the urbanism of the City Beautiful at its best. Or rather would have if the axis actually led somewhere. By the time Huntington realized he was building a cultural acropolis, developers had taken the parcel at the west end of his site. Rather than pointing majestically to the Hudson and the Palisades beyond, his formal ensemble leads to the 11-story Riviera apartments, at whose unlovely brick buttocks its heroic axis dies.

Beginning in the 1980s, most of the cultural institutions pulled up stakes and moved elsewhere. But this presented the Society with an opportunity. It could now expand eastward into the former Museum of the American Indian (whose collections had been transferred to the Smithsonian). Here it will be able to display more of its permanent collection, the bulk of which is in storage, but also have room for temporary exhibitions. In preparation for that campaign, and to announce that the Society was about to awaken from its slumbers, it decided to improve access to its Sorolla Gallery, the room that Huntington added in 1914 to house the “Vision of Spain,” Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida’s 14-painting cycle celebrating the geography and life of that country.

The latest project was modest, little more than adding emergency lighting, new signage, and ADA disability lifts for the multilevel terrace. But even so, the bids were shockingly under the roughly \$10 million budget—something that almost never happens. The startled architects realized they could restore the original building and the covered courtyard at its center. After the formal dignity of the facade, this space comes as a happy surprise. A kind of Spanish cloister, it consists of an open central space surrounded by an arcaded walkway of deep-red terra cotta, Renaissance in style and richly ornamented.

But it had fallen into disrepair, and both the terra cotta and the floor of red Mercer tile were badly chipped and missing pieces. All were given a deep cleaning, the missing elements patched, a new system of flexible lighting installed, and the plaster walls rendered in neutral gray (the kindest background against which to hang paintings).

The architects did not re-create the original skylight, alas. That was removed long ago when the building received a new copper roof. Instead, they plan to install electric lights above the laylight over the space, suggesting daylight. Otherwise, this is the best kind of restoration, the one that is practically invisible.

But the real challenge for the Hispanic Society was never technical but psychological. Over time it had come to seem like a private club rather than a public institution. With the first phase of the restoration, it has now rolled out its red carpet. One hopes its heavily Dominican neighborhood—and New Yorkers in general—will accept the invitation to Huntington’s quirky, plucky institution created to honor the Spanish and Portuguese speaking cultures of the world.

Mr. Lewis (former member of the VSA National Board of Directors) teaches architectural history at Williams and reviews architecture for the WSJ.. Appeared in the June 1, 2023, print edition as 'A Modest Upgrade for a Grand Building'



London Summer School 2022

Ryleigh MacDonald

As a photographer participating in the Victorian Society in America's London Summer School, subject matter never ran dry. An array of beautiful Victorian architecture, interior design, garden work, stained glass, artwork, and picturesque landscapes embody this summer school program. Exposure to locations such as these collided perfectly with the dreamy & ethereal aim in my photographs.

Initially I was drawn to the program through my growing interest in 19th century photography and Pre-Raphaelite art. The Victoria & Albert Museum, visited on Day 2, contains a large display of Victorian cameras, and the archives store thousands of photographs created via 19th century photo processes i.e wet plate collodion, tintypes, gum bichromate (processes I hope to soon learn). Among the photographs stored live the images of my favorite photographer Julia Margaret Cameron. Other museums and National Trust homes contained photographs, but within these spaces it was the artwork that flourished most.

I was able to absorb Pre-Raphaelite art in large capacities and immense detail. Works by Millais, Rossetti, Burne Jones and other important names in this movement were widely displayed across the trip. A real treat was exploring Pre-Raphaelite art in private collections - if existing in a living or studio space, the pairings of wallpaper, textiles, accompanying furniture, and other design touches, completely painted the picture of Victorian taste.



During my time in England, creating a personal routine for myself was critical in the development of my skills. As the program followed an extensive itinerary throughout the day, my camera accompanied me on all of our visits. I would shoot during the day and edit at night. Creating images at such a frequent yet consistent rate helped to polish and reshape my workflow. The constant change in environment (requiring new camera

settings upon each new location entered) allowed me to further my technical camera skills as well.

At the London Summer School, lectures introduced me to the concept of “paint what’s in front of you”, and the extremes in which artists would go to complete this - painting only segments at a time, using separate experiences and settings to create a whole image. The attention to detail and value in accuracy was quite interesting, especially to me, an artist who prefers to distort reality rather than capture it. My images present some truth, but also suggest a momentary escape to a dreamy world of my own creation.

Another value of Victorian artists and tastemakers that attracted me most was their constant rejection of modernity. Art movements were created in rebellion to popular culture and would most often return to the past. The largest Victorian example being Gothic Revival and the other strong Medieval fixations. Old aesthetics recycle themselves, and with an addition of modern touches live on in society yet again. I relate strongly- while I do appreciate modern art and the wonders of digital photography, I find myself going back in time when I want to create art.

When approaching my next semester as a photography major, I carry with me absorptions from Victorian aesthetics. I emerge with newfound interest in wallpaper, church settings and religious iconography, Victorian dress wear, and the language of flowers. I also leave with many photographic images to add to my portfolio, but also a foundation of Victorian knowledge and a desire to learn more. Participating in the Victorian Society in America’s London Summer School was truly the next step in my photography development, and I am excited about where my Victorian learnings will take me next!

Chicago Summer School 2022

Roland McGee

The Victorian Society in America Chicago Summer School was a fabulous opportunity that I was offered. I was very excited as I am a recent graduate of Pennsylvania College of Technology. The trip was a once-in-a-lifetime trip and I enjoyed all of it. I had never traveled to Chicago but had wanted to for a very long time.

The week was broken down into multiple different lectures and tours. The day before it was to begin, I flew in from my home state of Pennsylvania. On the first day, I went to the Cliff Dwellers Club for introductions to the other students and lectures on Chicago History Overview and Introduction to Chicago Architecture. After the lecture, we went on a walking tour of The Loop and The Art Institute of Chicago. It was interesting going to the art institute because the building was above a train terminal. The tour of the museum was intriguing as were some of the larger stained glass art pieces. The day wrapped up with a small reception at the Cliff Dwellers.

On the second day, we met back at the Cliff Dwellers to start the day. We had a few more lectures that were very informative and interesting. After the lectures, we went to the Auditorium Theater and The Rookery Building. This was exciting for me as I had always heard about the Rookery in class and had always wanted to tour the building. Both of the tours were fascinating for me.

The third day was different than the first and second days. For the whole day, we were loaded onto a bus and traveled around Chicago, touring different places. It was interesting to see

Ragdale and the William Clow House. It was also riveting to see Graceland Cemetery and see where many famous architects were buried. If I had the chance, I probably would have stayed all day to see who else I could find. The cemetery also had many monuments that were interesting to see as each monument was different and many showed different types of architecture incorporated into the design.



The fourth day was very similar to the third as we loaded up the bus and went to tour Jackson Park.



The Robie House was another building that I had always wanted to see, as it is another building I had learned about in college. The Macy's building, formerly Marshall Field & Co., was another type of building that has been modernized but still retains some of its original mosaic ceilings and designs. Later in the evening, there was a lecture on H. H. Richardson in the Glessner House's carriage house.

On the fifth day, we started the day by visiting Frank Lloyd Wright's Home and Studio and taking a walking tour around Forest Avenue. After lunch, we visited Unity Temple. While in Unity Temple two separate lectures explained the prairie home-style architecture and where some old, torn-down mansions once stood.

The sixth and final day started by taking the final bus of the trip to the Driehaus Museum. The Driehaus Museum interior was interesting to take in. After the Driehaus Museum, we ventured around the McCormickville Neighborhood and also visited the Second Presbyterian Church. After the walking tours, we visited the Glessner house, this time touring the whole house and not just the carriage house. The last tour was a boat tour on the river that showed off some of the buildings that were on the riverfront. The last part of the day was a dinner as a final meeting before the summer school was finished.



The Victorian Society in America Summer School trip was a great time and was very informative. I saw a lot of interesting buildings and collections that I might not have the chance to see again. I also enjoyed the lectures that explained how and why some buildings and furniture were done in a specific style or didn't exist. This trip was something I would do again as it was fun will also being very informative and will always be something to look back on and smile on.

Lessons from Newport

Alfred Portman

Thanks to the generosity of the donors to the scholarship fund I was able to attend **Richard Guy Wilson's** rigorous whistle stop tour of Newport and environs. I had been working at the Victorian Society in the UK for around six months when a colleague who is also an alumnus of the Summer School suggested I apply. Frank Llyod Wright and Henry Ford are on the UK school curriculum but I had no real knowledge of American history let alone architecture. So, my first trip to the US was a window into America from the comfortable and somewhat familiar-feeling vantage point of the East Coast.

I valued the way the course was organised chronologically so as to start with the Georgian clapboard houses by the harbour. I felt like Herman Melville walking around the quiet streets of the old town amongst the houses Henry James referred to as 'little old ladies', quite the contrast to our accommodation in the vacated 'cottages' of the Gilded Age's nouveau riche, lapped up by Salve Regina's expanding university campus.

I grew up in an ancient town, Rye, in East Sussex that has its namesake in New York state. While reading Henry James's '*An International Episode*' on the flight across the Atlantic I reflected on my journey as being the reverse of his, after holidaying in Newport throughout his life he would settle in Rye at Lamb House. In the book two wealthy Englishman venture to America on business and leisure and are startled by the friendly hospitality of the Americans they meet. My experience of the course felt lifted from the pages not only in the generosity and kindness shown to me during the course but to the entire group on being received in Newport's beautiful historic homes, many of which were family homes not open to the public.

Despite having seen Julian Fellowes's *The Gilded Age* which is filmed in many of the Newport mansions the exuberance of some of the houses owned by the Newport Preservation Society was staggering. Trudy Coxe CEO of the Society said something that struck me when she gave her talk at one of the receptions. She mentioned that when Julian Fellowes visited Newport for the filming of the series he remarked on how close the houses were to each other and the street. On arrival I was instantly struck by the same thing, for me houses of this scale are tied to an estate and represent the feudal system. But in the land of the free supposedly anyone can make it to the top and Trudy's reply was something to the effect of: "WE ARE NOT ENGLISH! WE ARE PROUD AMERICANS, and WE ARE PROUD TO SHOW OURSELVES OFF TO THE STREET". Despite landing on English ears as an exceedingly brash statement, she nonetheless encapsulated everything Victorian Newport was and perhaps still is about. In a way the American disregard for humility is rather refreshing, why hide who you are with airs and graces. If you've got it flaunt it!

The topography of this Victorian resort's houses and streets is an early example of that strange urban plan of wealthy-suburbs, seeded in America and now seen from the deserts of Saudi Arabia to outskirts of London. These houses fascinate me as the pinnacle of 'Keeping Up with The Joneses'. At one house we visited the owner explained the huge trellis surrounding the veranda was installed by his mother who was convinced her best friend, and next-door neighbour, was spying on her.

This amiable rivalry is well illustrated in an anecdote about the construction of Marble House (1892). The prolific Richard Morris Hunt was commissioned by Alva and William Vanderbilt to build Marble House directly adjacent to the cottage of New York high society queen, the infamous, Mrs Astor. Alva had previously used Hunt to dazzle her way into 'The 400' with the construction of her Fifth Avenue Chateau (1883). At Newport during the construction a fence was



erected so it was impossible for anyone to see in until the house was finished, the final unveiling sparked the competition of conspicuous consumption that would convert the summer colony of Newport into a social battleground of marble palaces. At the time Marble House was unrivalled in opulence but where is competition more rife than within one's own family? Three years later Hunt was commissioned by Alice and Cornelius Vanderbilt to remodel their stick style cottage The Breakers (1895) into a Renaissance Revival palazzo that remains the crown jewel of the Newport Mansions.

There is a valuable lesson to learn from these houses, Henry James referred to them as white elephants and saw them as 'inevitable waste'. Which of course they were... as times changed, servants on which the houses relied were less willing to live in and offer cheap labour and inheritance tax crippled family finances. The Gilded families' heirs struggled or had little interest in struggling to maintain these huge houses which are so much a product of their socio-historical moment - they embody the short-burst opulence of obscene wealth.

I left Newport reflecting on the lessons the Newport mansions teach us about the ego and consumer culture. The problem with following the latest fashion and craze is that it will always age. The Vanderbilt houses are placed so firmly in a time and era while other houses like McKim Mead and White's Isaac Bell House (1882) or Irving Gill's Wildacre (1901), even Edith Waughton's former home, John Sturji's Land's End (c. 1880s), have a timeless quality. While times change, human nature does not. In the current ecological and economic climate, at a time when resources are so scarce it is now more than ever before that we should take heed of the rise and fall of families like



Irving Gill's Wildacre (1901)

the Vanderbilts. The preservation of these houses and thus the stories they hold are so important for informing us on the ills of class and status in a consumer society.



The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association

The Heritage Society of the Alumni Association supports our efforts to provide scholarships to the Summer Schools in the future. Join this special group of Alumni by making a planned gift such as a bequest in your will or beneficiary designations of IRAs or retirement plans.

Hank Dunlop has joined the Society with an RMD designation from his IRA. **John C. Freed**, a longtime VSA and Alumni Association supporter made provisions for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association in memory of his partner, **Paul Duchscherer**. **Paul Duchscherer** very thoughtfully made provisions in his trust for a \$10,000 bequest to the Alumni Association as well as designating the Alumni Association as the beneficiary of all future royalties from his many books and other publications.

The **Bob and Carole Chapman Fund** very generously awarded a grant of \$10,000 to the Alumni Association Chapter in memory of **Carole Chapman**. **Darrell Lemke & Maryellen Trautman** made provisions for a bequest to the Alumni Association. These gifts and designations help ensure that current and future generations of students will be able to attend the educational opportunities presented by the VSA Summer Schools.

You can join these members of the Heritage Society of the Alumni Association and support the mission of the Alumni Association while maximizing the benefits of a deferred gift. Your gift becomes part of your estate planning to protect valuable assets from income, capital gains and/ or estate taxes. Here are some popular estate planning techniques:

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Sample Bequest Language

To include the Alumni Association in your will or trust, the following is suggested wording to take to your attorney: "After fulfilling other provisions, I give, devise and bequeath _____% of the residue and remainder of my estate (or \$_____ if a specific amount) to the Alumni Association of the Victorian Society Summer Schools, a 501 c (3) organization to benefit the Alumni Association (tax ID # 23-1710978), located at 24 Wilkins Ave Fl 1, Haddonfield, NJ 08033

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The Officers and board members of the Alumni Association also give special thanks to those members at the Household level and above. Your generosity is appreciated.

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