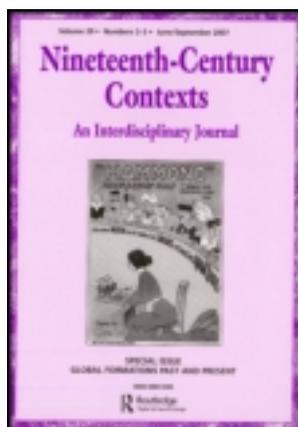


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### "A Strange Incongruity": The Imaginary India of the International Exhibitions

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# “A Strange Incongruity”: The Imaginary India of the International Exhibitions

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Consider the Gwalior gateway, the “elegant stone archway,” as the *Illustrated London News* put it, that “forms a noble entrance to the [Indian] Palace” at South Kensington’s Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 (“Colonial and Indian Exhibition” 510). Constructed for the Calcutta Exhibition of 1883–84, donated to South Kensington by the Maharajah of Scindia, repurposed for the 1886 exhibition, and finally repositioned in the South Kensington Museum,<sup>1</sup> the gateway was celebrated in the exhibition’s own retrospective catalog as a “remarkable example of modern Indian art” (Cundall 17), and thus a perfect entryway to the adjoining Indian Palace. But what kind of Indian art was it, exactly? The work was the production of Indian artisans working from the designs of Major James Blaikie Keith, then Assistant Curator of Indian Monuments, essentially as a philanthropic project: “I had endeavored to bring the stone-carving industry to notice, numbering, as it does, some 2,000 workmen, chiefly unemployed, and to find work for these poor people” (Keith 468). The design was, Keith wrote, “not a copy of a conventionalised entrance, as hinted, but an eclectic piece of work . . . elaborated with some care. . . . This would best be compassed by illustrating the carving of many periods” (qtd. in Swallow 59). Even at the time, the *Art Journal* found a bit unusual the “strange incongruity, the intermixture of Hindoo and Mahommedan architecture” in the attachment of the gateway to the palace, while crediting Major Keith’s aim “to show what native artificers could do” (“India” 4). But that incongruity, in fact, fit the themes of the exhibition perfectly well, inscribing in the metropole the tropes developed in India of the hybridized “Indo-Saracenic” architectural mode, a blend of traditional Hindu and Mughal-era Moslem architectural elements (with a touch of neo-Gothic thrown in) that was becoming a principal expression of (and central argument about) the post-1857 Raj.<sup>2</sup>

How well the gateway fit the construction of Indianness by British imperial authorities and bureaucracies can also be seen in the rest of the 1886 exhibition. The palace to which the gateway provided an entrance was the construction of Caspar Purdon Clarke, and the response to it in *The Graphic* complained: “A Hindu structure is made the entrance to a Mahomedan *serai* and Sikh modern carved woodwork has been adapted in the interior fittings . . . and, still more incongruous, old English stained windows have been added to this aggregation of ideas” (qtd. in Barringer 24). The Durbar Hall within the palace was, as David Beevers points out, Clarke’s conceptualization of “typical” Indian architecture, carried out by Indian artificers to his designs (16). Similarly, Beevers notes, the Jaipur Gate, through which most visitors entered the Indian courts, while again the work of Indian craftsmen, was not their design. It was conceptualized by two Englishmen with the Indian military, Col. Samuel Swinton and Surgeon-Major Thomas Holbein Hendley, and reflects above all else their fascination with “Indo-Saracenic” architecture. As Beevers concludes, “[a]lthough executed by Indian workers, the screens were mostly hybrid constructions” (12). Many of the screens that represented different regions of India in the exhibition space have similar histories. As noted in the discussion of the *Journal of the Society of Arts*, the screen for Bombay followed “the general design which was made by Mr. Griffiths, the Superintendent of the Bombay School of Art”; that for Bhavnagar “was constructed in Bhavnagar itself, under the immediate supervision of Mr. Proctor Sims, the state engineer” (“Indian Screens, Part 1” 880); and that for “Mahomedan” Indian art “was designed by the late Mr. John Schaumberg, artist to the Geological Survey of India, on the lines of the architecture of the ancient city of Gaur” (“Indian Screens, Part 2” 896). Such hybridity defined the image of India in London in 1886.

And, for that matter, even the Indian artisans who were part of the display, working their arts live before the visiting spectators, were a bit suspect when it came to their credentials as traditional artisans. Most, Saloni Mathur has shown, were recruited by Dr. John William Tyler, superintendent of the central prison in Agra and subcontractor to a private shipping company commissioned to obtain workers for London, from among his prisoners; at least one homeless Indian in London was added for the show. Underlining the way such figures were deployed to reinforce established images of a changeless village-culture India, Mathur concludes, “the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was an elaborate fiction that staged itself through yet another fiction: the fiction that nation and colony were brought into a materialized union by Queen Victoria’s jubilee” (515). The India staged in London for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition was a hybrid construction designed by Orientalist art professionals, and merely carried out by native craftsmen to add color and authenticity.

There are multiple ironies in the fact that this, the last South Kensington exhibition, would represent India primarily through such hybridity. It had been, after all, the aim of Henry Cole and the other organizers of the South Kensington complex from the start, even before the opening of the Great Exhibition in 1851, to utilize models of pre-industrial arts to heal the Ruskinian split between design and manufacture in the industrial age. We must begin, here, with a fundamental recontextualization.

The modern historian's standard interpretation of the Great Exhibition of 1851, as a triumphant display of British industrial might and power, misunderstands the basic purpose the exhibition had in the eyes of its creators. The displays the Crystal Palace housed were not intended as a self-congratulatory celebration of British achievements, but as a carefully organized warning that British primacy was under threat, above all else, because of the inadequacies of British design. This was the message repeated in every issue of Henry Cole's *Journal of Design and Manufacture*, from its inaugural issue in 1849, when the journal decried the "morbid craving in the public mind for novelty as *mere novelty*, without regard to intrinsic goodness," and warned that "this course is detrimental to the advance of ornamental design" (Cole, "Multitude" 4). For Cole and others in his circle, following the line of argument of John Ruskin (at least this far), industrialization had separated the artisan from the art, producing a crisis in the state of design.<sup>3</sup>

Out of the need to reorganize British design systematically, Cole had moved from the journal, with its limited outreach, to the conception of the exhibition, precisely because the exhibitionary format could target multiple audiences; as Cole put it in an address concerning one of the preliminary design exhibitions that paved the road to the Crystal Palace, "the artist, the practical chemist, and the ingenious mechanic, were thus brought into nearer relations with the manufacturer, and the latter with the public . . . the public is thus educated in the most practical way to appreciate excellence, and, by a judicious patronage, to reward all parties who have contributed to produce it" ("Exhibition" 59). This is the essential mechanism of the Great Exhibition, and for that matter of the whole museum complex that evolved out of it: simultaneously to target for training in design principles the artisan (through schools of design associated with the complex as well as through the exhibition itself), the consumer (through exposure to better-quality design), and the manufacturer (who could be taught by the success of the Great Exhibition that there were profits to be had in good design).

The message of the Great Exhibition thus concerned not the triumph of British industry, but the need to reform British design. As Cole himself put it, "[t]he absence of any fixed principles in ornamental design is most apparent in the Exhibition—not among ourselves only, but throughout all the European nations." In contrast to those failings, Cole noted, "[m]any other nations shew better faith and better practice in design than those of Europe. Does the progress of civilization . . . destroy principles of taste?" ("Universal" 158). This message was framed in terms of growing industrial competition, as by Lyon Playfair, one of the commissioners of the Great Exhibition, who addressed the results of the exhibition before the Society of Arts, the show's sponsoring organization: "The result of the Exhibition was one that England may well be startled at. Wherever—and that implies in almost every manufacture—Science or Art was involved as an element of progress, we saw, as an inevitable law, that the nation which most cultivated them was in the ascendant. Our manufacturers were justly astonished seeing most of the foreign countries rapidly approaching and sometimes excelling us in manufactures" (194). Playfair warned his audience against complacency: "Do not let us nourish our national

vanity by fondly congratulating ourselves that, as on the whole we were successful, we had little to fear. . . . It is a grave matter for reflection, where the Exhibition did not show very clearly and distinctly that the rate of industrial advance of many European nations . . . was at a greater rate than our own; and . . . in a long race the fastest-sailing ships will win” (195). Because it was by producing well-designed industrial goods that foreign manufacturers most challenged British industry, the need to redress the lack of understanding of design principles among British artisans, consumers, and industrialists was a central priority for Cole’s circle.

From the start, Indian artisanal craftsmanship had a central place in this argument-through-exhibition begun in 1851,<sup>4</sup> and that work continued to hold pride of place in the developing museum complex of South Kensington as well as in subsequent international exhibitions. As Playfair put it: “So far as regards beauty of design and the harmony of colours, European nations had little to teach, but much to learn.” Pointing in particular to the displays of Indian textiles at the Great Exhibition, he insisted: “So long as the manufactures involve human labour and a perception of beauty as their principal elements, the less civilized states equalled, and often excelled, the productions of Europe” (160). M. Digby Wyatt echoed Playfair’s conclusions, denouncing on the one hand, in the case of English design, the “debilitating effects of nearly a century’s incessant copying without discrimination, appropriating without conjunction, and falsifying without blushing,” and offering for contrast the design skills of preindustrial artisans: “It was but natural that we should be startled when we found that in consistency of design in industrial art, those we had been too apt to regard as almost savages were infinitely our superiors” (“Attempt” 229). For Wyatt, it was the non-European exhibits at the exhibition that provided the best models for a revivification of British design.

Architect and designer Owen Jones similarly lamented that from the Great Exhibition “we have thereby learned wherein we are deficient. . . . we have seen much of labour wasted, much knowledge imperfect, energy misapplied. . . . We have no principles, no unity,” and so produce “art novelty without beauty, or beauty without intelligence” (“Attempt” 255, 256). Jones similarly, too, drew his deeper lessons from Eastern craftsmanship: “the Indian and Tunisian arts were the most perfect in design of any that appeared in the Exhibition” (qtd. in Royle 537). Looking at these exhibits, and those of Turkey and Egypt, Jones asserted, “[m]any of the patterns here would defy the power of most European artists simply to copy them, with the same happy and certain distribution of form and colour” (“Gleanings” 92). For the reform of fundamental inadequacies of English design, therefore, Indian art provided an essential school in the eyes of those who established the Great Exhibition; not surprisingly, given their agenda, when collecting began of exhibited items from the Crystal Palace for permanent display in the museum that was still but a dream in Cole’s mind in 1851, works of Indian craftsmanship were among the first gathered.<sup>5</sup>

If modern historians have missed the centrality of the Great Exhibition’s look backward to preindustrial craft traditions, contemporary commentators most certainly did not. The London *Times*, in its account of the Indian works exhibited, asserted: “By their suggestiveness the vulgarities in art-manufactures, not only of England, but of

Christendom, may be corrected” (“Great Exhibition” 5). Even more strikingly, the *Illustrated London News* declared: “In splendour of costume, jewellery, and arms . . . we find it hard to approach people who do not carry pocket-handkerchiefs, and have not much to do with the washerwoman” (“Guide” 392). Much of the press coverage of the Great Exhibition overall holds up Indian crafts as a model for English producers.

The particular vision of India promulgated in the Great Exhibition was already geared toward a traditional and historical rather than progressive vision of Indian arts and crafts. As Lara Kriegel notes of both the exhibition’s promotional materials and press coverage of the displays, the accounts served “to elevate the laborers of the subcontinent to a mythic status while simultaneously confining them outside of industrial modernity” (112; see also 112-20). Peter Hoffenberg, referring to the ways in which the displays in 1851 and successor international exhibitions served to underline the unprogressive changelessness of Indian society, similarly points out that “[t]raditional arts and crafts were among the most popular Indian exhibits at overseas shows. They represented popular notions of ‘permanence’ in Indian society and culture; most certainly, Cole held such beliefs” (*An Empire* 158; see also Dewan 33-37). Such an understanding of the place of Indian artisans in the scheme of things perfectly coincided with the agenda of design reformers; if, after all, Indian artisans had been identified as progressive in character, they would have been subject to the same alienation from craft that was the source of the crisis of design in industrial Europe.

The emphasis on India as a source for the revivification of English design continued in the development of collections—funded first of all from the profits of the Great Exhibition—and the design of the museum complex in South Kensington from 1852 through the end of Cole’s tenure at the helm in 1875 (Dewan 37-41; Mitter, “Imperial” 222-29). With a strikingly more imperialistic emphasis, it continued after Cole’s departure, evident, for example, in the complex’s acquisition of the India Museum in 1879 and Clarke’s major collecting expedition of the early 1880s.<sup>6</sup> Similar ends, and a range of close associations with South Kensington museums and personnel, also informed John Forbes Watson’s work. Centrally involved in the reorganization of the India Museum’s collections as they were brought under the aegis of South Kensington,<sup>7</sup> he also was responsible for the extensive *Collections of the Textile Manufactures of India* (1866-78) in eighteen volumes, which Forbes Watson himself described as “industrial museums.”<sup>8</sup> His method—the insertion of actual textile samples in the volumes—hearkens back to Cole’s *Journal of Design and Manufacture*, and his understanding of museums and their utility in reshaping British artisanship owes much to Cole and his circle.

The logic of the South Kensington collection’s emphasis on India is especially clear in the work of Owen Jones. The basic arguments are crystallized in Jones’s masterwork, *Grammar of Ornament* (1856), which offered, alongside richly colored plates of the design work of a range of ancient and uncivilized cultures, what was by then a familiar contrast. Jones used a review of the Great Exhibition as his central model: “The Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations in 1851 was barely opened to the public

ere attention was directed to the gorgeous contributions of India. Amid all the general disorder everywhere apparent in the application of Art to manufactures, the presence of so much unity of design, so much skill and judgement in its application, with so much elegance and refinement in the execution . . . excited a degree of attention from artists, manufacturers, and the public”—precisely the targeted audiences Cole had in mind for the exhibition. As usual, Jones contrasts the clear coherence of Indian design with the inferiority of Western artisanship: “in the works contributed by the various nations of Europe there was everywhere an entire absence of any common principles . . . a fruitless struggle after novelty, irrespective of fitness . . . without one single attempt to produce an Art in harmony with our present wants and means of production” (*Grammar* 77-78). But it is less Indian genius in particular that produces such results, according to Jones, than a much more primitive instinct. For Jones, “savages” were “guided by an instinctive observation of the forms in . . . Nature” (15), and that close association with nature, for Jones the source of all good design, was characteristic of these peoples precisely because they were uncivilized. Such a view was entirely consistent with the dominant view, expressed most clearly by the great sage of Victorian art history, John Ruskin, that the most coherent cultures of design were the organic expressions of a more unified community, lost precisely because the progress of civilization undermined the organic unity of earlier social orders.

Jones asserted, “[i]f we would return to a more healthy condition, we must even be as little children or savages” (*Grammar* 16), but he did not really mean it. The kind of design that was practiced by instinct by what he called primitive races, without understanding the principles underpinning it, civilized cultures could re-approach through more rational, systematic training: “the future progress of Ornamental Art may best be secured by engrafting on the experience of the past the knowledge we obtain by a return to Nature” (2). Jones’s message is there in his very title: *The Grammar of Ornament*. What primitive races like the Indians practice through instinct and rote, modern Europeans can rediscover by understanding its grammar, by elucidating the underlying principles that Indians themselves expressed in their work but could not define. And this set of principles could be fully articulated in the expanding museum/school complex of South Kensington, the museum that served as the source for the plates in *Grammar*, and the Schools of Design, folded into Cole’s expanding enterprise not long after the Great Exhibition’s close.

All that was needed to achieve Jones’s aim were adequate collections. At the close of the exhibition, Jones could complain, “[w]hen our collection of the valuable hints in ornament which the Indian collection offers to manufacturers is somewhat more ample, we shall indicate some of the uses to be made of them” (“Gleanings” 177). Even in *Grammar*, he could still lament, “[w]e have not been able, with the materials at hand in this country, to procure sufficient illustrations for a fair appraisal of the nature of Hindoo ornament” (152). The solution to such a problem was clear: expansion of the collections, a project of acquisition on which the South Kensington complex, rich with the profits of the Great Exhibition, immediately set about.

But meanwhile, the arts of India, the font for this inspiration, were, in the perceptions of some viewers, in serious decline.<sup>9</sup> A striking conjunction of arguments about the significance of Indian arts manufactures and the need to educate Indians to preserve it can be found in the testimony of Charles Trevelyan before Parliament in 1853:

I would also establish a college for instruction in art. The natives have great capacities for art. They have remarkable delicacy of touch; they have great accuracy of eye; and their power of imitation is quite extraordinary. The extent to which they are capable of successfully cultivating the decorative and fine arts has been shown by the result of the recent Exhibition in London. I beg leave to read two or three extracts from reports upon the Great Exhibition, which will establish that point. This is a report from Mr. Owen Jones upon the decorative arts in connexion with the Exhibition: "In the East Indian collection of textile fabrics at the Great Exhibition, the perfection at which their artists have arrived is most marvellous; it was hardly possible to find a discord." . . . In another paper, Mr. Owen Jones says, "In the Indian collection, we find no struggle after an effect. . . . The temporary exhibition of the Indian and other Eastern collections in the Great Exhibition of 1851, was a boon to all those European artists who had an opportunity of studying them." . . . The last extract I will give is the following, from Mr. Redgrave's work on Design:—"If we look at the details of the Indian patterns, we shall be surprised at their extreme simplicity, and be led to wonder at their rich and satisfactory effect." ("Government of Indian Territories" 155)<sup>10</sup>

But Trevelyan went on to lament that the competitive disadvantage of Indian goods vis-à-vis English manufactured goods—which resulted “partly from levying no duty upon English manufactures imported into India, and partly by levying a heavy duty upon Indian manufactures imported into England, in addition to the natural manufacturing superiority of England”—had had dire impacts on Indian artisanship, and had indeed “swept away great branches of manufacture, and . . . caused great distress in India” (156). With industrial manufacturing and free trade undermining the traditional economy of India, and thus the traditional mechanism for preserving artisanship, it became imperative to intervene to save the threatened arts, through education. The model for preserving Indian arts was to be found in the English Schools of Design, since “[a]rt is taught there systematically, beginning with the principles of geometry, drawing, [and] perspective” (156); Trevelyan seemed not to note how instruction might change the direction of Indian art. But he did see a reconnection to the museum complex and to design issues on the home front. The installation of such schools in India, and thus the preservation of Indian arts manufacture, he argued, “shall benefit ourselves as much as them,” since “the results of Indian art would be displayed for the imitation of the world, [and] would be quite as important in its relation to European art as it would be in its relation to Native art” (156). Trevelyan thus brings his argument full circle: Indian arts revivify British design, but British school-of-design art education rescues Indian art, in part so that it can continue to revivify British design by its display in museums and exhibitions.

Still, the decline of Indian arts, in the view of British commentators (who, it will be recalled, were especially interested in “traditional” crafts, and acerbically uninterested in accommodating Western tastes), accelerated over the following decades. The end of the East India Company’s monopolies on Indian trade after 1857 was one of the signal

events routinely pointed to when seeking an explanation for this decline; competitive advantage, in a new free-trade environment, was seen as favoring Western industrial production. The other was growing European demand for Indian production, prompted in part by the very success of the Great Exhibition and its successors, which both strained the capacities of traditional producers and tempted them to alter their traditions to play to the European market. Even Cole noticed the pattern of decline as early as 1866, noting that, beyond the fine work selected in 1851, there were “some most abominable imitations of European patterns. Indeed, there was nothing so bad as when an Indian attempted to copy European art; and he confessed he had some fear lest the schools of design in Calcutta, Madras, and Bombay, instead of leading the natives to advance in their own styles of art, would create a hybrid style, the most detestable ever seen” (qtd. in Fergusson 76). Cole’s critique echoes the terms of his own earlier attacks on British design in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures*.

George Birdwood’s devastating critical account of the state of Indian arts, prepared somewhat surprisingly for the official *Handbook to the British Indian Section* of the Paris exhibition of 1878, illuminates the fundamental, and deeply ironic, problem: in the first instance, the flooding of India with cheap industrial manufactured goods after the end of East India Company rule in 1857 was undercutting craft production; in the second instance, the very solutions the imperial government was employing to revivify and keep alive the artisan traditions of India were undermining indigenous arts traditions. About the impact of imported industrial manufactured goods, Birdwood is repeatedly emphatic. The Indian trade, he argued, was “exactly the trade which the Portuguese and Dutch and French found going on along the coasts of India; and so it remained until the extinction of the English East India Company’s monopoly exposed the natives of India to the stark competition of Manchester and Birmingham” (52).<sup>11</sup> The result, he insisted, was clear: “The great export cotton manufactures of India have long fallen before the competition of Manchester” (94), and Birdwood offered many other examples of Indian craft industries suffering from British competition. But he is equally emphatic that expanded European demand for Indian goods, inspired in good measure by international exhibitions, was also at fault for the deterioration of quality, as was particularly clear in the carpet trade: “Unfortunately, there has been a great falling off in the quality and art character of Indian carpets since then, partly, no doubt, owing to the desire of the English importers to obtain them cheaply and quickly... The reputation which Indian carpets gained at the Great Exhibition of 1851 gave an impetus to their production” (113). So the very success of South Kensington’s promotion of Indian arts manufactures served, by creating new levels of demand, to undermine the quality of their production.

Birdwood’s views, while highly critical of state solutions to the problems of Indian artisans, nevertheless themselves reflect the same range of perspectives on Indian art enunciated by South Kensington’s partisans. As Partha Mitter notes, Birdwood was “[a]n upholder of romantic primitivism” who “emerged in this period as a major critic of the evils of Western industrialism which he contrasted in his work with the ideal village community of India” (*Much Maligned* 236). The same could be said of

Cole or Jones. For them, what gave the arts their vitality in that village setting was that they “sprang from a cohesive and self-sufficient communal life, something that was entirely absent in industrial Britain” (*Much Maligned* 237). The same sort of argument informed the understanding of medieval artisanship promulgated by Ruskin or William Morris. And to compound still more the layered ironies, the solutions promoted by English officials to solve the crisis of Indian artisanal manufactures—Schools of Design, deliberately modeled after those at South Kensington—made everything far, far worse in Birdwood’s view:

We therefore incur a great responsibility when we deliberately undertake to improve such a people in the practice of their own arts, and hitherto the results of our attempts to do so have been anything but encouraging. The Cashmere trade in shawls has been ruined through the quickness with which the weavers have adopted the “improved shawl patterns” which the French agents of the Paris import houses have set before them, and presently we shall see what the effect of the teaching of our Schools of Art has been on Indian pottery, the noblest pottery in the world until we began to meddle with it. (57-8)

Birdwood prophesied that such tendencies, as well as the introduction of machinery to India, “will inevitably throw the decorative art of India into the same confusion of principles . . . which has for three generations been the destruction of decorative art and of middle-class taste, in England” (58).<sup>12</sup> And he saw numerous examples of such tendencies already, in what he identified as the increasingly mongrelized arts produced in India in the 1870s.

By the time of Birdwood’s critique, the School of Design solution to the arts crisis of India was deeply imbedded in the official policies of the Indian state. It fed directly into the South Kensington project in multiple ways. For example, John Lockwood Kipling (Rudyard’s father) was inspired by the Great Exhibition’s display of Indian arts, and came to teach at the Bombay School of Art and then to run the Mayo School of Art in Lahore.<sup>13</sup> Kipling did, it can be noted, seek to instill respect for the traditions of art in his adopted home. Syad Muhammad Latif noted, in 1892, of Lahore’s Wazir Khan mosque: “advanced students of the Mayo School of Arts, Lahore, are taught lessons from those designs by reproducing them on paper. So eminent an authority as Mr. J. L. Kipling, Principal of the institution, writes of the decorations . . . in his official report:—“This beautiful building is in itself a school of design” (215). But if his models were Indian, his methods remained firmly English.

Nor was Kipling alone. As Mitter has pointed out, “[t]he uniform art policy in India was not only based on South Kensington precepts; that institution was also the recruiting ground for teachers. The best among them, Henry Hoover Locke, John Lockwood Kipling, John Griffith, and the most celebrated of them all, Ernest Binfield Havell, were trained there.” Mitter further notes that “[t]he South Kensington curriculum, devised by Cole’s associate, Richard Redgrave, for art schools in Britain had far-reaching consequences for colonial art in India” (*Art and Nationalism* 34). Arindam Dutta, also noting the South Kensington training of all four Indian School of Design leaders, adds that “[m]uch of the pedagogical model of art and artisanal training in India, the drawing textbooks, the casting formats, the pattern models, drew from the [South Kensington’s Department of Science and Art] monopoly on art education in

the British empire” (94). The South Kensington principles, shaped by the encounter with Indian artisanship, thus became the solution adopted by British officials to save Indian artisanship.

And from the Schools of Design in turn sprang other formations that echoed their South Kensington roots: museums, exhibitions, and one critically significant journal. As in South Kensington, schools of design came to be associated with museums whose collections centered on ornamental art. As Hoffenberg has demonstrated in significant detail, the productions of these schools of design came to represent Indian arts in the proliferating range of international and semi-international exhibitions—first in the metropolitan centers (especially Paris and London), then, by the 1880s, in India itself (perhaps most notably in India’s first international exhibition, in Calcutta in 1883-84) as well as elsewhere in Asia (and most especially in Australia). The contexts for these exhibitions firmly imbedded them in the politics of imperial display.<sup>14</sup> The *Journal of Indian Art and Industry* was indeed directly spawned by Calcutta’s international exhibition, but it also reflected earlier South Kensington ones.<sup>15</sup> Kipling fought with Birdwood over principles and methods in the pages of the journal. But, however divergent the views exchanged in its pages might be, the model for the magazine, in everything from the direction of its arguments to its style of presentation, was clearly Cole’s own *Journal of Design and Manufactures*. And, to complete the feedback loop, officials associated with the Indian schools of design were, by the 1880s, governing the selection of Indian arts seen in the exhibitions and museums of the metropole. As Sonia Ashford notes of Clarke’s collecting tour in the subcontinent in 1881-82:

Clarke’s itinerary was controlled by government agencies in London and India, informed officially by Department of Science and Art policy, filtered through the South Kensington Museum and Birdwood’s published opinions, and informed by broader networks of texts and scholarship. . . . It was enabled by formal and informal contacts with contacts within India from Indian government officials, including staff from the Schools of Art (145).

The loop was thus complete, linking design reform in India and the metropole around a singular South Kensington axis. At the same time, the South Kensington-sourced aesthetic was increasingly connected to government policy agendas in India, as officials incorporated the Indian schools of design into their educational programs, oversaw the promotion of the hybridized product at both Indian and international exhibitions and museums, and executed a new aesthetically equivalent “Indo-Saracenic” architecture to define the rule of the Raj. Indian artisanal labor, whether recruited to showcase Indian traditions in London at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition or trained in the Schools of Design operating in India itself, worked under the oversight of colonial officials whose own vision of empire and of Indian history was articulated in the “traditional” designs produced, but no longer conceived, by the Indians themselves.

As should be clear, it had become impossible by the 1880s, if it had ever been possible before, to separate the promotion of Indian arts through the mechanics of exhibitions from the ends of empire and imperial authorities in India. Commenting on the increasing coincidence of purpose between the Indian schools of design and the interests of the state (especially as embodied in the Public Works Administration), Arindam

Dutta notes the correlation between design principles and imperial designs: “[t]he preservative impulse [of the Department of Science and Art] in fact served as a perfect foil for the hallmark strategies of late imperialism: ‘indirect rule’ and ‘decentralized despotism’” (95). The explicitly imperial purpose of the enterprise should not surprise, given the close conjunction between those engaged in the arts in India and official circles on the subcontinent, and given the increasingly imperialistic aura of international exhibitions themselves near the turn of the century.<sup>16</sup> However much their purpose was the promotion and principles of Indian arts, it is certainly clear that the purposes of Kipling and his fellow South-Kensington-trained design reformers closely aligned with the aims of the colonial administration of India.

From that nexus of design schools, exhibitions, and Indian public works to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition was—as the transposition of the Gwalior gateway from the Calcutta Exhibition to London shows—a simple step. For some, the process had ensured the salvation of Indian artistry. For Richard Temple, a strong partisan of the Indian schools of design in the 1880s, that message was clear: “There was a danger at one time lest, while exhibiting to the nations the fruits of European art and culture, we should choke and stifle their own. That danger, however, has been overpassed, and now the real merits of Indian art are beginning to be appreciated in England” (“Duty” 195).<sup>17</sup> But there are good reasons, in Temple’s own confusion about the aims of art education in India, to distrust his confident certainties. He had also asserted, for example, that “[t]he Asiatics have an indigenous art, which . . . is yet, in genius, in perception, and in sentiment, peculiarly their own. . . . Still, we can teach them one thing . . . namely, drawing objects correctly” (“Social Science” 485). The limitation of British reformers’ understanding of the character of Indian art is clear in such comments.

For others, the results of South Kensington’s intervention in the processes of design production in India were less hopeful. The damage to craft traditions such feedback loops entailed was a threat on both sides of the exchange, Birdwood had argued back in 1878: “But if it is a terrible error to darken by the force and teaching of English Schools of Art, and the competition of Government Jails, and other state institutions of India, the light of traditions by which the native artists work . . . it is equally an abuse of the lessons to be taught by such an exhibition of the master hand crafts of India as the collection of the Prince’s presents affords, for the manufacturers of Paris and Lyons, and Birmingham and Manchester, and Vienna, to set to work to copy or imitate them” (123). The very exhibitionary mechanisms that had been developed to revitalize craft traditions in Britain would be the doom, Birdwood insisted, of true craft not just in the industrial world, but in India itself.

But perhaps this prophecy of doom is perfectly appropriate. Consider the Gwalior gateway. Writing of it among several efforts he had undertaken in Gwalior, Keith opined in 1884: “In Gwalior I tried to unearth and rescue several industries, but no sooner had I partially succeeded than an evil genius interposed, and by a negative procedure brought about a collapse of the work” (468). In Keith’s own view, his efforts had failed: the employment he brought to the stonemasons was but a brief respite in their trade’s decline. Meanwhile, back in London, exhibition goers saw in the treasures arrayed before them in the Indian Courts less an image of India than the hybrid

products of their own projected vision of India, a mongrelized imperial art sourced in South Kensington itself.

## Notes

- [1] For details, see Swallow; and Hoffenberg, *An Empire* 154, 156.
- [2] The literature on Indo-Saracenic architecture is extensive. To get a sense of it, see Metcalf 135-160; Chopra 31-72; Tillotson, "Indian Architecture," esp. 133-137; and Scriver 32-45.
- [3] In other respects, however, including the promotion of Indian arts as a model for design reform, Cole's circle and Ruskin were far apart. The details of the complex rivalry between the two factions, however united in their sense of the crisis of design in Britain, require far more detailed analysis. But for a sense of Ruskin's harumphing disparagement of South Kensington's focus, see his belly-of-the-beast denunciation of Indian art's "unnatural" character in the address he delivered at South Kensington Museum in 1858, "On the Deteriorative Powers of Conventional Art over Nations."
- [4] Auerbach argues of the Indian materials at the exhibition that "Cole and [J. Forbes] Royle were in some conflict with Owen Jones, Matthew Digby Wyatt, and Richard Redgrave" (100). Cole and Royle, Auerbach asserts, had in mind a display that underlined the possibilities of the raw resources of India, as against the design-reform agenda of Jones, Wyatt, and Redgrave. This conflates two different ranges of display from India, which, like other nations, contributed both raw resources and arts manufactures to the exhibition. Any real difference in agendas is belied by Cole's firm embrace of design reform in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures* from the journal's inception in 1849 and by his own statements of the lessons the exhibition afforded.
- [5] See Wyatt's discussion of the early development of this collection, introduced into the discussion of whether to retain the Crystal Palace after the closure of the Great Exhibition in 1851, in the *Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Cost and Applicability of the Exhibition Building in Hyde Park* ("Statement of Origin" 166-169).
- [6] For a detailed account of Clarke's extensive buying expedition of 1881-82, see Ashford.
- [7] He discusses the details of that work in *On the Establishment in Connection with the India Museum and Library of an Indian Institute for Lecture, Enquiry, and Teaching* (1875).
- [8] On these textile collections generally, see Driver and Ashmore, and specifically 365-366 for Forbes Watson's employment of the term "industrial museums" for the books.
- [9] On the recurrent argument about Indian arts' decline from 1851 forward to the 1880s, see Dewan 37-40.
- [10] Testimony of 21 June 1853; ellipses added. Mitter quotes the beginning of the same passage, but stops short of Owen Jones, in *Art and Nationalism* 34. Trevelyan would be assigned to Madras in 1858.
- [11] Birdwood would lift extensive passages from this account, and expand upon them, in *The Industrial Arts of India* (1880); see esp. 146-158.
- [12] Other government programs—notably the state promotion of carpet production by inmates in jails—also undermined the traditional artists of India, Birdwood notes; see 113-115.
- [13] For background on Kipling's activities in this sphere, see both essays by Tarapor.
- [14] Hoffenberg, *An Empire*, *passim*, but esp. 148-165; see also Dutta 95. On the Calcutta International Exhibition, see Hoffenberg, "Photography and Architecture"; and Prasch 75-77. See also Tillotson, "The Jaipur Exhibition."
- [15] For interesting accounts of the journal's role in promoting South Kensington's pedagogical and aesthetic methods in India, see Hoffenberg, "Promoting"; and Dewan 29-44.
- [16] Greenhalgh sees this imperial dynamic as a constant from 1851 on, but his own evidence of the growing scale of specifically colonial display after the 1870s suggests otherwise (52-81).
- [17] On Temple's advocacy for the schools of design, see Mitter, *Art and Nationalism* 32.

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