Editors’ welcome

It is with great excitement that this year’s committee introduces to you the first online edition of the Queen Mary Undergraduate History Journal for the 2014/15 academic year. Established in 2011, the History Journal continues to publish brilliant essays from undergraduates month after month, year after year, a fact that pays testament to the high standard of work expected by the School of History, and of which our undergraduates are capable.

This year has been no different and, on behalf of our fifteen essay editors, we would like to thank all of the undergraduates who submitted their essays for this edition; it was an absolute pleasure reading them and putting them forward for peer review. The History Journal would also like to congratulate those of you whose submissions were successful. A special thank you must also be given to the School of History; without their unwavering support, the transition from last year’s committee to the incumbent would not have been nearly as smooth. Furthermore, without their generous funding, we would have been unable to organise the successful social launch at the beginning of this new academic year.

Queen Mary University of London boasts the largest self-contained student campus in central London and is minutes away from some of the capital’s most famous landmarks and institutions. It was with this in mind that the History Journal committee chose this month’s theme of ‘Architecture in London’. We hope that this edition serves to intrigue and enlighten you, and that next time you find yourself wandering around the capital, you look around that little bit more.

Graciously yours,

Shabbir Bokhari (Editor in Chief) and Catriona Tassell (Commissioning Editor)
What was the effect of aesthetic theories of the sublime and the picturesque on Sir John Soane’s architectural designs?

Sam Allen

The designs of Pitzhanger Manor, Ealing and The Soane Museum at Lincoln Inn Fields are the most expressive representations of Sir John Soane’s poetic and idiosyncratic architectural style. Designed and constructed as personal projects, the two sites show Soane working without the curtailments of private financiers or the public authorities and offer compelling demonstrations of Soane’s personal, architectural “principles”. Soane drew from a variety of styles; Roman, Greek, Italian, Gothic, all of which he sought to subvert in some manner. However, it is the effects of aesthetic theories, namely the picturesque and the sublime, that make Pitzhanger Manor and the Soane Museum unique. This essay will examine the effect of these theories. After a brief delineation of these aesthetic principles I will examine Soane’s treatment of space in both buildings and how these are complimented by his manipulation of light in relation to contrast and fragmentation. The exteriors of the buildings will then be analysed, ending with a consideration of the buildings as “ruins”. It will be argued that while the picturesque plays a more dominant influence in the buildings through Soane’s emphasis on variety and ‘the unexpected,’
Soane’s unique manipulation of the observer’s “experience” of his buildings invokes sensations closer to the aesthetic principle of the sublime.

While Soane’s early works demonstrated a preoccupation with neo-classical forms, by the late eighteenth century he had begun to develop a more distinctive style, one that was partly informed by a contemporaneous interest in aesthetic theory. The aesthetic theories of the sublime and the picturesque emerged in the eighteenth century as Romanticism superseded accepted notions of enlightened rationalism in art and literature. With Romanticism came new conceptions of aesthetics and the classical conceptions of beauty in art and architecture were challenged. Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful published in 1756 stands as the most influential account of the sublime. Burke sought to dichotomise the sublime on the one hand the beautiful on the other. The sublime, according to Burke, related to the awe-inspiring effect of a scene often drawing shock or horror from the observer. Indeed, Burke described the sublime in physiological terms which emphasised the emotional experience of the observer; hence tension playing a significant part in its effect. The picturesque emerged later in the eighteenth century and it related to the pictorial value of art and architecture. This often related to nature and landscape and thus emphasised variety, irregularity and lack of symmetry. Both theories thus deconstructed the classical conception of beauty that emphasised order and symmetry and implied the subjection of humans to the natural world.

These aesthetic principles are particularly evident in the manipulation of space in The Soane Museum and to a lesser extent in Pitzhanger Manor. While the Soane Museum appears to be based on a basic axial plan (fig. 1), the ways in which space is utilised within this framework is highly inventive. Robin Middleton observes that Soane created “what appear to be perfectly regular, symmetrically framed spaces but wraps layers around skeletal frameworks and subverts geometry by dematerialising the architecture.” This is demonstrated by a section of the whole building (fig. 2). Soane created a “labyrinth of space” in which the observer encountered unexpected views, further complicated by mirrors. The building cannot be apprehended as a whole but rather experienced in a very individual sense.

Figure 1. Plan of the Soane Museum.

Ostensibly the building is designed on a basic axial plan but the several openings of each room provide a multiplicity of passages...
The museum is built on two floors connected by a spiral staircases. There is no clear route for the visitor hence the sense of a ‘journey’. Furthermore, the manipulation of space works on two levels: first within the rooms themselves, and secondly as a series of connecting spaces. Richard Lorch has highlighted the Breakfast Room as a ‘space within a space’ (fig. 3). The dome of the room provides an additional enclosure within the room thus playing with the feeling of interior and exterior.

The domed ceiling of the breakfast room gives a sense of enclosure within an enclosed space. However, this is compromised by the opening in the centre of the ceiling and the spaces between the ceiling and the walls. Hence Soane plays with the concept of space to invoke a peculiar spatial awareness in the observer.

"The view from this room into the Monument Court and into the Museum, the mirrors in the ceiling and the looking glasses, combined with the variety of outline and general arrangement in the design and decoration of this limited space, present a succession of those fanciful effects which constitute the poetry of architecture...."

However, Soane’s “poetry of architecture” effects can be seen to induce a more profound experience in the observer with closer ties to the sublime. As Lorch argues, the contrasting character of the rooms, the multiplicity of visions, the strong contrasts of light and distinct lack of order all serve to build up to an immense experience that connotes the sublime rather than the picturesque. Lorch suggests that the incomprehensibility and unpredictable aspects of the differing and connecting spaces works to leave the viewer “astonished through the unexpected interruption.” Hence the power of these ‘picturesque’ effects essentially invokes a sense of the sublime in that they bring about sensations and sentiments of awe in the observer.
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Soane also manipulates internal space and light in Pitzhanger Manor and plays with the notion of enclosed space and implicit routes through his building. Indeed, a similar use of ceilings in the Breakfast room (fig. 4) and library (fig. 5) focus the rooms inwards giving the sense of enclosure which is then undermined by the openings of the walls.⁹ According to Ptolemy Dean the starfish vault ceiling of the library emphasises “enclosure and release.”¹⁰

Soane’s use of light, the several openings and the domed ceiling serve to give a similar effect as that invoked in the Soane Museum’s breakfast room.

Fig. 4. The Breakfast Room, Pitzhanger Manor.

Enclosure and release defines the space in the library at Pitzhanger manor. The vegetation detail of the ceiling nods to the Picturesque principles of nature, while the various openings lead to a feeling of disorientation that can be associated with the sublime.

The exteriors of the buildings also invoke effects of the sublime and the picturesque. In both the Soane Museum and Pitzhanger Manor, Soane subverts classical forms to create unique facades. Indeed, the front façade of the Soane Museum demonstrates a toying with the classical triumphal arch form (fig. 6). The loggia and portico protrude outwards announcing the building to the street and giving it a pronounced status. Anthony Jackson has argued that the unique façade breaks with the uniformity of the surrounding Georgian terraces and thus nods to picturesque values of variety and the unexpected ¹¹.
Fig. 6. The Front Façade of the Soane Museum.

The façade immediately draws the observer’s attention to the museum giving it a marked status compared to the conventional Georgian town houses.

Similar observations can be made of the front façade of Pitzhanger Manor (fig. 7), with Soane playing with classical forms. Four fluted ionic columns and the balustrading all nod to classical Greek architecture. However, the building is decorated in yellow paint giving it an appearance that evokes a picturesque taste for variety. The landscape design of the surrounding grounds seem to be directly influenced by the picturesque with the front gate constituting a triumphal arch which offers a glimpse to a winding path leading to the façade. The false ruins at the eastern side of the building complete the effect of the “unexpected”, while also evoking a scene of melancholic decay. This offers a picturesque landscape view of the grounds from the house while also hinting at grandeur and fragmentation, which can be attributed to the sublime in a similar vein to the fragments of antiquity in the Soane Museum.

Notes

5. Ibid p. 29.
8. Ibid p. 45.
10. Ibid p. 95.
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http://www.soane.org/john-soanes-diary/archive/august_10th_1812

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**Figure 3.** The Breakfast Room, The Soane Museum:

http://omelo.co.uk/2012/10/light-in-the-dark

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Why the name Brutalism? Discuss the theoretical origins of the English movement by analysing three key projects in London.

Hannah Askari

The term Brutalism spread throughout England after the Second World War describing ‘a programme or an attitude to architecture’. Although it has come to be identified with brutality, it does not advocate anything linked to brutality. It is ‘an ethic, not an aesthetic’; Brutalism has an imperative role in recognising the everyday, the ordinary and the mass culture rather than projecting a vision of high culture.

The three Brutalist London projects: The Barbican Complex, Royal Festival Hall and Robin Hood Gardens differ slightly in function, yet all embrace socio-political ideas crucial to post-war urban planning. Aesthetically, Brutalist architecture asserts itself in an unattractive and threatening way, but ethically Brutalism champions a Welfare State ideology and seeks to encapsulate a utopian dream.

Peter and Alison Smithson, the most obstinate pair of Brutalist architects, demanded that this movement ‘tries to face up to a mass-production society and drag a rough poetry out of the confused and powerful forces which are at work’. They resisted the simplistic viewing of Brutalism as merely Béton brut (raw concrete) and stand firm on the fundamentally ethical nature of the architectural movement.

The couple were committed to a post-war Welfare State ideology in their architecture. Robin Hood Gardens (fig. 1), completed in 1972, is a residential estate in Poplar, East London. It pioneered the idea of ‘streets in the sky’, highlighting their devotion to combining amicability and practicality in social housing.

The Smithson’s denounced Le Corbusier’s architectural philosophy that towns and cities should be segregated into specific areas of residential, occupational, and leisurely. Their ideal city coalesced a multitude of activities within one area. Thus, Robin Hood Gardens gives the tower block complex, ‘streets in the sky’, a large garden space and wide balconies on each level (fig. 2). This was an attempt to encourage the residents to feel as though they belonged to a community, similar to those on a conventional street. Peter and Alison Smithson have gone a step further in building social housing by thinking about creating a social ethos through architecture that would not usually be found in social housing. It is a housing estate like no other, recognising that no matter what class one belongs to, all have a right to peaceful, healthy and harmonious living, which begins with the structural design of one’s home.

Similarly, the Royal Festival Hall (fig. 3), built in 1951 for the Festival of Britain, asserts itself as a democratic hall in a number of ways. When it was first built, everyone passed through the same door upon entering, wandered around the central foyer space, had equal vision of the stage and access to fine acoustics wherever one was sat; due to the fairness which infiltrates the Royal Festival Hall, it is a ‘monument to the Welfare State’. Nikolaus Pevsner described the Royal Festival Hall
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as ‘a freedom and intricacy of flow in their own way as thrilling as what we see in the Baroque churches of Germany and Austria’.5 This is a telling association not just because of the reference to historicism (something that is rarely found in Brutalist architecture), but because it is a direct reference to the way one encounters space (fig. 4), no matter what the building type. One can argue that, whether religious or not, feelings of peace, approval, awe and social harmony are just some senses to describe encounters with some religious locations. These are similar feelings one acquires when entering the Royal Festival Hall, especially for the first time. The building creates a sense of space and draws one to think about how we feel about the space. Similarly to a church or cathedral, the sense of hierarchy is broken down deliberately and cleverly. Therefore, the comparison draws imperative reference to a welfare ideology; in religion everybody is equal in the eyes of God and, similarly, Royal Festival Hall gives the feeling that everyone is equal in the eyes of a Welfare State. Consequently ‘its significance as architecture, its aesthetic or political being, does not reside in its concrete, steel, glass and marble elements, nor in their combination but in the minds of those who have gone into it’.6 Therefore, to argue this building is democratic, one must think about the experience not its material features, emphasising that Brutalist architecture is ‘an ethic, not an aesthetic’.

The Barbican Estate (fig. 5) was built in an area of London that had been almost completely devastated by the Blitz bombing in 1940 during the Second World War. It should therefore encompass the idea of rebuilding Britain from scratch with a Welfare State ideology. However, it is arguable that despite being built after the war, when the country was committed to consensus politics and seeking regeneration, the Barbican Estate is an estate that does not have the intention of providing for those who depended upon the Welfare State. ‘Chamberlain, Powell and Bon recognised that only upper and middle-class housing would provide the required return for the area’.7 Therefore, the Barbican Estate cannot be regarded as a success to social housing. Despite the capitalist notions, one can not deny the positive sense of community it seems to have provided amongst residents: ‘retired people - doctors, lawyers, lords and ladies - love it. They join its societies, hold competitions for the best window boxes and generally fuss over the place as they do over grandchildren’ (fig. 6).8 Ultimately, Brutalist architecture does aim to have a Welfare State ideology, which Robin Hood Gardens and Royal Festival Hall manage to exert. Whilst the Barbican Estate is only attainable as housing for a select elite, it does manage to achieve a utopian dream, arguably more superior than the other two buildings.

The Barbican Complex succeeds in ‘providing an experience that mixes exhilaration with hesitation’.9 It is a concrete complex that exposes rawness and brings new life to the city, flaunting its concrete utopia. The rough, exposed concrete is distinctly sixties and as one enters the estate it feels as though they are walking back in time; at first glance the concrete is punishing to fresh eyes, yet through exploration of the Estate, one discovers lakes, gardens and waterfalls which clash

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beautifully with the sinister concrete (fig. 7). Furthermore the Barbican Complex represents a mood of hope and creates an insight into the Brutalists utopian dream which, in turn, makes it an incredible success story for the aggressive Brutalist aesthetic. Equally, as one gets tangled up in this utopian dream it is incredibly hard to pry yourself away from its magnetising concrete (fig. 8.).

The Royal Festival Hall in 1951 had the similar qualities: Bernard Levin reminisces that ‘at the end of a concert, the audience could not bear to leave, to go from this beauty and opulence into the drab world of postwar Britain’.\(^\text{10}\) This describes the powerful impression that the Royal Festival Hall had on its visitors, one that portrays a utopian dream and outside of it lays a postwar nightmare. Today, although the Festival Hall has given in to consumerist requirements, it still has a settling atmosphere, a place where one can just be without needing an excuse or reason to be there (fig. 9). Compare this to the reception Robin Hood Gardens has recently received; crime, decay and social deterioration encroach the Brutalist masterpiece to the extent that Tower Hamlets Council believe its fate is in demolition. Thus, unfortunately, Robin Hood Gardens has ceased to realise the Brutalist utopian dream even though it is a pioneering piece of architecture. In questioning why this has happened, one could argue that it is a social problem, not an architectural one. However, the ominous concrete mass that is Robin Hood Gardens does not render its survival to some. As one approaches Robin Hood Gardens (see fig. 1 again), the first reaction is that of surprise. Although it is very big, it is not as tall as the tower blocks that encircle it. As one gets closer and recognises the drab and abandoned aura (fig. 10) the concrete transfers the sense that ‘the 40-year-old building is having a mid-life crisis’.\(^\text{11}\) However, it is simple to discover that flats under social housing are not made like this anymore. Robin Hood Gardens is successful as ‘streets in the sky’ (fig. 11) but the Smithsons’ housing clearly differs to social housing today which suggests that the higher the tower block, the better.

The demolition of Robin Hood Gardens signifies the end of an era for a part of Britain’s housing history; it represents the end of democratic housing that provided for the masses whilst simultaneously considering harmonious living.\(^\text{12}\) Equally, if we compare Robin Hood Gardens to Park Hill in Sheffield (fig. 12), a Brutalist housing estate opened in 1961, which by the 1980s had ‘descended into dilapidation and was no longer a place people wanted to live in’.\(^\text{12}\) Park Hill has now been listed as a Grade II building and has thus been the recipient of some much needed admiration, yet still has almost ‘gone to rack and ruin’.\(^\text{13}\) There is a clear difference in the management to fulfil the Brutalist utopian dream between the Barbican Estate, Royal Festival Hall and Robin Hood Gardens; possibly because of the different amount of care and attention each has experienced since its construction. This emphasises that Brutalist social housing tends to go unnoticed and is often disregarded. Many do not care for Brutalist architecture because it asserts itself in an ugly, confrontational and fierce way (fig. 13). However unsightly brutalism is for some, ‘the problem was not the fabric of the houses, but the deprivation of the people who lived in them’.\(^\text{14}\)
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Ultimately, Brutalism is ‘an ethic, not an aesthetic’ and I would argue that it is because of this, that it has often been overlooked because of its unusual beauty. Jonathan Meades claimed that ‘something that is universally tolerated is likely to be pretty boring. Anything that’s any good, and original, is going to incite hatred as much as it does adoration – because of the very fact that it’s so unfamiliar’. Arguably, this is true of Brutalism. The beauty is in the ethics it yields: a Welfare State ideology and its aspirations for a utopian dream for the people. Robin Hood Gardens (fig. 14), the Barbian Estate and the Royal Festival Hall are all fundamental buildings of the Brutalist movement and encapsulate these ethics; however some of them are less successful in imparting the ethics in today’s individualist society.

Notes

2. A term introduced by Reyner Banham.

Bibliography

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Fig. 4. The democratic foyer of the Royal Festival Hall. Image by author.

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Fig. 6. Very well kept homes from the outside. Image by author.

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Fig. 9. Mothers and meetings; a contrast of people taking advantage of the ‘settling atmosphere’. Image by author.
Fig. 10. Abandoned Image by author.

Fig. 11. A street in the sky! Image by author.

Fig. 12. Park Hill, ‘framed by itself’. Image by Davis Stilli-

Fig. 13. ‘ugly, confrontational and fierce’ (and stunning) Image by author.
How is the Classical style expressed in St Paul’s Covent Garden and Christ Church Spitalfields?

Sam Allen

If we are to define classical style as one that derives its decorative elements from the architectural canon of Greek and Roman antiquity, a comparison of Inigo Jones’ St Paul’s Church Covent Garden (1630-1633) and Nicholas Hawksmoor’s Christ Church Spitalfields (1714-1729) offers significant insight into how the interpretation and appropriation of this ‘architectural language’ changed and developed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Constructed nearly a century apart, both buildings display an adoption and manipulation of the classical style to project contrasting conceptions of the Anglican Church. Whilst Jones opted for the primitive grandeur of the Tuscan temple, Hawksmoor evoked towering authority through Baroque creativity.

Both Jones and Hawksmoor give their church facades an austere appearance through their use of minimal decorative ornamentation and choice of the plain Tuscan order to define their exteriors. However, as one of the earliest examples of classical architecture in England, Jones’ faithful adaptation of the Roman temple keeps St Paul’s piazza-facing façade strictly within the parameters of Roman classical style (Fig. 1).

Jones employed the basic port and lintel system with four widely spaced Tuscan columns supporting the trabeation. This forms the un-ornamented architrave and the base of the large pediment that together with the columns makes up the church’s Roman inspired portico. The widely spaced Tuscan columns (fig. 3), each with squared plinths, and the plain architrave work to give the portico a primitive and functional appearance. The wall on the inside of the portico is dominated by a large doorway that is flanked by arched windows on each side (fig. 4). This is mirrored on the West-facing façade, the primary entrance to the church.

Much has been written about the adoption of the Tuscan temple as the church’s architectural template, resulting in widespread agreement that it was an attempt to emphasize the austere mentality of the Protestant religion, which was also a demand made by the financier of the project. Giles Worsley advances this theory by contending that Jones attempted to architecturally restore the church building to its early Christian age by alluding to late pagan and early Christian architectural forms, such as the Prostyle temple plan (fig. 2). St Paul’s Covent Garden was one of the first churches built in London following the establishment of the Anglican Church and it was highly likely Jones’ was cognizant of the growing debate concerning the appropriate character of the Protestant church. While it is almost impossible to postulate Jones’ true objective, it is clear that his employment basic and functional classical elements reflected a particular conception of the Anglican...
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Whilst Hawksmoor also used Tuscan columns to evoke an austere mood in the West-facing façade of Christ Church Spitalfields (fig. 5), his inversion of many classical conventions gave Christ Church a very different impression compared to that of St Paul’s. The front façade can be divided into three stages. The first incorporates two sets of Tuscan columns supporting separate porticos joined by an arched pediment which shelters the entrance to the Church (fig. 6). While Jones elected for a plain architrave for the portico at St Paul’s, the pediments at Christ Church are more sophisticated and nuanced (fig. 8). Indeed Hawksmoor embellishes the entablature through the installment of a frieze and a pronounced cornice that is cyma-bracketed. The portico resembles a Venetian window that features in truer form in the rear façade of the church (fig 7.). The round arch features as a motif throughout the rest of exterior and in particular the upper two levels of the front façade.

These upper levels feature more inventive manipulation of classical elements with Hawksmoor experimenting with round and linear shapes such as arch headed openings that would come to define the English Baroque as well as porthole windows that feature on all four sides of the church. The installment of the steeple completes the progression from the classical to gothic and gives the church its distinctive and towering presence (fig. 9).

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Hawksmoor’s inclusion of large pedestals supporting the Tuscan columns, aided by the large set of steps leading up to the front façade of the church, helps augment the feeling that the observer remains below the structure if observing from the front. Indeed, this works to establish Christ Church as a towering structure raised above the level of the surrounding area. While the financing and construction of Jones’ St Paul’s was a private undertaking, Christchurch on the other hand, was commissioned by the government following an Act of Parliament in 1711. The state commissioning of the church certainly influenced the manner in which Hawksmoor designed the building. The imposing structure would have stood as a beacon of Anglican authority reflecting contemporary efforts to combat the growing religious non-conformity in the surrounding area.

A comparison between St Paul’s Covent Garden and Christ Church Spitalfields simultaneously charts the changing appropriation of the classical style in English architecture, as well as the development and changing conceptualization of the Anglican Church. While Jones strived to evoke grandeur by communicating through ancient simplicity and austerity, Hawksmoor creatively combined the classical and the gothic to highlight the political and religious superiority of the Church of England.
Notes

4. Ibid.
7. Ibid., p. 99

Bibliography


Images

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Figure 8: (Allen, Samuel, 2013)

Figure 9: (Allen, Samuel, 2013)
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Figure 4: The doorway, which is mirrored in the Western entrance to the Church, constitutes the only decorative detail.

Figure 5: The front façade of Christ Church Spitalfields.

Figure 6: Christ Church Spitalfields’ arched portico supported by Tuscan columns and large pedestals.

Figure 7: The rear of the church features a Venetian Window with an emphasised cornice. This mirrors the design of the portico at the front of the church.
An examination of All Saints, Margaret Street, with a focus on its architectural style and the relationship between this and the key material employed; brick.

Charlotte Herington

Designed by architect William Butterfield the construction of All Saints, Margaret Street, began in 1850 and, with it, the High-Victorian phase of the Gothic revival emerged.¹ Built of brick, All Saints’ is one of the first major buildings to make use of colour through constructional polychromy; a crucial characteristic which is present throughout the church. In this piece I will look more closely at the Gothic style of the church and the way in which this is expressed. As well as focusing on the employment of its key material – brick. By analysing the material and constructional details, I will explore their links to the architectural style, and the more general context, of the church in High-Victorian London.

The origins of All Saints is closely linked with the Ecclesiological society because Alexander Beresford-Hope – one of the founders of the society - funded its construction. The society sought to rekindle Anglican ardour by encouraging a return to the glories of medieval architecture. It was quickly identified with Tractarianism. Which sought to restore traditional Catholic teachings and ceremonies within the Church of England following the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829.²
When the Ecclesiological society proclaimed its desire to erect a model church the decision was soon made that Margaret’s Chapel – originally located on the site of All Saints – would be rebuilt for this purpose. However, the chapel had a Tractarian congregation and as such was unfit for Anglo-Catholic ceremonial. The Ecclesiologists decided that Middle-Pointed – otherwise known as fourteenth century Gothic – would be the style for its model church.

When facing the façade of All Saints from Margaret Street Butterfield’s masterful exploitation of a limited space is striking. He accommodates not only the church, but also a choir school and a clergy house. The seemingly individuated components are situated around a small entrance courtyard which is dominated by the church’s overbearing tower and steeple. Gothic embellishment is evident in the lancet arch entrance, in the recurring gable motif of the buildings that flank the church, and in the arched clerestory windows (1,2). Furthermore, the buttress, which is constructed in stages and terminates in a pinnacle, appears to be typical of fourteenth century Gothic buildings. Notable amongst these Gothic elements is the widespread use of brick throughout. This choice of material seems practical for the sooty atmosphere that permeated London at the time of the church’s development. It also connotes a strong sense of modernity and urban character at a time when brick was being mass produced.

For a deeper understanding of the use of brick and its relevance to Gothic revival though we must turn to the influences of architectural theorists. For instance, Augustus Pugin and John Ruskin. As a Catholic, Pugin proclaimed Gothic’s superiority. Its architecture, he believed embodied the Christian faith. For him it was imperative that a building’s style fitted its purpose and he saw the revival of medieval architecture as linked to the revival of Catholicism. For the Ecclesiologists and Tractarians however, it signified the potential for the much needed Anglican resurgence. John Ruskin published his Seven Lamps of Architecture in 1849, coinciding with Butterfield’s designs for All Saints, and much of it is based upon...
Pugin’s principles. Most importantly, Ruskin advocated the natural use of colour as seen in the polychrome architecture of Italy. Although he, among others, still viewed stone as superior his influence and the search for coloured materials seems to have led to a new evaluation of brick under Butterfield. Influenced by Ruskin and the brick churches of Italy and northern Germany All Saints displays the characteristics admired in medieval buildings. However, it expresses this through the materials of the modern industrial age. The exposed red brick of the church’s exterior includes bands and zigzags of black brick. In addition to, the insertion of broad bands of stone which great an extraordinary contrast that highlights the arched windows and doorways (3). This polychrome patterning is confrontational to some extent but the sober colouring prevents the structure from capturing the eye. Perhaps crucial given its already hidden nature? Chris Brooks has argued that Butterfield’s use of polychromy reinforces the honest and expressive values of Gothic principles highlighted by both Pugin and Ruskin.¹

The journey made through the courtyard to inside the church creates a sense of being progressively drawn into the most important holy area. Light pours in through the western stain-glassed window to illuminate the constructional polychromy which suffuses All Saints from floor to ceiling with ornate detail. Consequently, on a dull day the colours are not highlighted to their full potential. Nevertheless, when stood within the nave, confronted by the rich colour and decoration you might mistakenly think you were in a Catholic church. As we have seen, however, this was the whole idea of the Anglo-Catholic movement; the colour is an assertion of Catholicism in the Protestant church. The polychromatic effect of the exterior continues internally but is much richer and more strident. Brick is still apparent but the materials and patterns vary remarkably. Decoration is linked with separate constructional parts of the church and so the boundaries of different patterns meet abruptly; brick encountering stone, coloured tile, granite and marble. This is apparent in the contrast between the predominantly brick wall of the baptistery which is more muted in its colour and design, and the elaborately patterned marble and tile spandrels of the nave arcade (4). The constructional polychromy is even present in the pulpit which is constructed of various types of marble which create a geometrical colour mosaic. Furthermore, Butterfield’s tiled floor exhibits polychrome design, the nave featuring a deep red background with white stone diaper and black check. These different classes of material - rare and common, expensive and cheap - are placed in juxtaposition. Representing the openness of the

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Fig. 3. Photograph showing the structural polychrome patterning of All Saint’s street-facing façade. The black zigzags of black brick injected into the red brick is circled. The bands of stone stand out in contrast to the brick, highlighting the window and the door into the baptistery.

Herrington, C., 10/02/2014
church at a time when the Anglo-Catholic movement was trying to reinforce the faith of the masses.

**Fig. 4.** Photograph depicts the contrast in the colour and patterning of the predominantly brick polychromy of the northern wall with the elaborate and multi-coloured spandrels of the nave arcade. These patterns alter abruptly.

Herrington, C., 10/02/2014

With regard to the interior, All Saints suffers from a chequered history. It took many years to complete, with alterations made to original aspects of Butterfield’s design. This includes the grand ‘re-redos’ of the chancel; originally completed by William Dyce in 1853-9, it was reproduced in 1909 by Ninian Comper.6 Butterfield’s intentions are still very apparent in All Saints however. He was clearly influenced by Ruskin and his endorsement of constructional polychromy. But what Butterfield has managed to do, according to James Steven Curl, is create a perception of the medieval architecture so yearned for, combining the differing influences at the time to produce his own original design.7 Butterfield, with the practicability of brick, which was mass produced and weathered well, created a modern church. The insertion of lavish colour and decoration, as well as the large size of the chancel, despite the restricted space, fulfilled the demands of revived Anglican ritual. Overall, All Saints marked a new stage in the Gothic revival. Indeed, Paul Thompson has claimed that the influence of the widespread and excessive use of constructional polychrome became the hallmark of High-Victorian church gothic.8

**Notes**

3. Thompson, P., ‘All Saints’ Church, Margaret Street, Reconsidered’, *Architectural History*, vol.8, (1965) p.74.

**Bibliography**


Thompson, P., ‘All Saints’ Church, Margaret Street, Reconsidered’, *Architectural History*, vol.8, (1965) pp.73-94.
