

The Manchester Man and *Bildung*:
German Influences on the Public Art of Nineteenth-Century Manchester

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Abstract

Friedrich Schiller's enduringly influential 1795 treatise, *On The Aesthetic Education of Man*, outlined his belief that art and beauty are key to the advancement of humanity. Propelled by the inner drive for improvement of self and society, known as *Bildung*, the nineteenth-century middle classes in German-speaking states such as Prussia and Bavaria viewed access to the arts, in all their forms, as fundamental to spiritual growth and self-realisation. During the twentieth century, critical literature largely underestimated or shunned the influence of ideas and models emanating from Germany on the culture and society of Victorian Britain. In recent decades, several authors have addressed this deficit and acknowledged its enduring legacy. However, the impact of German ideas on the development of early public art and arts institutions remains significantly underestimated. Furthermore, writers who explore the theme using a Foucauldian analysis, based on power relationships, or view galleries as agents of social control, through the hegemonic lens of Pierre Bourdieu or Antonio Gramsci, present just one version of a multifaceted story. This thesis provides an alternative to the dominant narratives, which, while valid and persuasive, are largely based on evidence drawn from the well-documented London-based institutions.

In this study, the existing research base has been broadened by shifting the focus away from London, 200 miles north, to Victorian Manchester. This burgeoning industrial centre provides a less thoroughly explored context that enables a fresh examination of the philosophies, ideas, and debates that influenced the initial drive for public art and arts education. Four diverse case studies, documented by extensive archival research, show how German ideas shaped the development of

some of the most innovative and intellectually engaged public art and arts institutions in the United Kingdom.

Introduction

The early nineteenth century witnessed the widespread shift, across many European countries, from the display of artworks in what were essentially private collections, accessible to a small group of connoisseurs and the social elite, towards museums open to the general public. The development of European public galleries is sometimes portrayed, as in the French example of the Louvre, as the seizing and democratising by the populace of the ill-gotten treasures of the elite, royalty and despots.¹ In the case of the German states, early art galleries and museums have been viewed as the calculated use of visual display to bolster the power and status of the ruling families.²

The motives for this striking social and civic development and the impact of the creation of a new interface between the public and the “art world” across Britain and Europe have been the focus of a substantial amount of scholarship. My thesis builds on this foundation by examining the extent to which the founding principles for the public display of visual art, in galleries, public monuments, public buildings and exhibitions, were a response to what were identified as German theories and ideas.³ My core argument is that the approaches developed by German theorists, educationalists and early art historians—and then put into practice in German public

¹ For discussion of the Louvre, see Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (University of California Press, 1999).

² See James Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

³ During the mid-nineteenth century, the area that I will be referring to as “Germany” was divided into various German-speaking independent states, such as Prussia, Bavaria, Saxony and Austria.

galleries and public art projects—provided a far more influential intellectual model for the development of British public art and arts institutions than previous research has indicated.

While this German influence was evident to varying degrees throughout Britain, I have chosen to focus on Manchester due to the large resident German population. As I will outline in Chapter 1 - “The Manchester Man”, there is clear evidence that German influences pervaded the social and commercial life of the Victorian city. Through a series of Manchester-based case studies, using evidence largely drawn from archival sources, I shall demonstrate that the civic leaders of Manchester looked not to London and the emerging British art establishment, but to the guidance and advice of German nationals, German models of gallery display, and German theories of vision. In this innovative and cosmopolitan commercial and civic centre, German theories and ideas were openly received and reshaped in experimental ways. I will explore, for example, how the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures (MAT) exhibition provides specific evidence of German influence on the development of public art. This was one of the largest public art exhibitions ever staged, with over 16,000 objects shipped from across the UK. The exhibition was German-inspired, German-organised and promoted by the German Prince Albert. I will draw evidence from this exhibition where relevant throughout my thesis. However, as some of the German influences on the MAT exhibition have already been identified in the writings of myself and others, I have chosen to focus on other, less well-researched subjects for my case studies.⁴

⁴ For further information about the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, see: Paul Cottrell, “Art Treasures of the United Kingdom and the United States: The George Scharf Papers”, *The Art Bulletin*, 94:4, 618-640, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43188780> accessed 22/1/2025; Melva Croal, “The Spirit, the Flesh and the Milliners: Hanging the Ancient Masters at the Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition”, in *Art, City, Spectacle: The 1857 Manchester Art Treasures*

By focusing on a provincial city in Northern England, this study contributes to a rebalancing of the research base as comparatively little scholarship has directly engaged with early public art initiatives in provincial settings.⁵ This less-explored context enables a fresh examination of the philosophies, ideas and debates that influenced the initial drive for public art and arts education. This thesis also highlights the potential for further exploration of the development of public arts in other important UK cities, such as Birmingham and Liverpool.

It may seem surprising that long before universal state education, when basic infrastructure such as power supplies and sewerage systems had yet to fully evolve, many of the museums and galleries still in existence today were established in towns and cities across Britain.⁶ A key influence here was the passage of the 1845 Museums Act, which allowed individual Town Councils to levy rates for establishing their own museums.⁷ Further catalysts were the growing civic pride and huge expansion of municipal centres such as Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. This led to the creation of new public buildings and spaces, including museums and to the commissioning and exhibiting of public artworks, such as monuments and mural schemes for public buildings. However, as this was not a centralised initiative, British museums and galleries developed in a rather piecemeal

Exhibition Revisited, papers from a University of Manchester conference held in November 2007, organiser Helen Rees Leahy published in a special edition of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, University of Manchester, September 2009; Elizabeth Pergam, *The Manchester Art treasures Exhibition of 1857, Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public* (Routledge, 2011); Francis Haskell, *The Ephemeral Museum; Old Master Paintings and the Rise of the Art Exhibition* (Yale University Press, 2000), 99-107 and Kate Stubbs, unpublished Master's Dissertation, "Ways of Seeing – Berlin to Bolton. The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 and the transnational influence of the subjective eye" (University of Essex, 2018).

⁵ There are a number of notable exceptions, such as Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*. Waterfield analyses the architecture, site, space and exhibitionary strategies of a wide range of provincial institutions, seeking to determine the aims and philosophical beliefs of those responsible for their creation.

⁶ The 1870 Education Act stands as the very first piece of legislation to deal specifically with the provision of education in England and Wales on a national scale. It was not until 1880 that a further Education Act finally made school attendance compulsory between the ages of five and ten. Fees were payable until 1891. <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/livinglearning/school/overview/1870educationact/> accessed 24/07/2024.

⁷ The Museums Act was also known as the Museums of Art Act. This Act granted Councils of towns with over 10,000 inhabitants the right to buy land and erect buildings for galleries and museums, funded by an increase in rates.

way, with significant variations in organisational structures, aims and funding. The institutionalisation of art further extended to Government involvement in art education. As discussed in Chapter 3 - “Manchester School of Design”, the enquiries of the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures led to the establishment of the first “Government School of Design”.

The contribution made by German theorists and early art historians to the intellectual foundations of British public art institutions in general is yet to be fully explored or acknowledged. Critical literature in the twentieth century appears to have underestimated, ignored or shunned the influence of German ideas and models on the culture and society of Victorian Britain. In recent decades, several authors have addressed this deficit. Notable among these is John R. Davis. His overview of German influences on art, aesthetics and philosophy is largely based on secondary sources, rather than contemporary material. However, he effectively combines the research findings of a range of scholars. Davis argues that the difficult twentieth-century political history between Britain and Germany has led to a reluctance to acknowledge the role of Germany as the intellectual leader of Europe from the 1840s.⁸ It is also likely that the political complexities of Europe in the early nineteenth century, with the various, separately governed German-speaking states, discouraged investigation. The Unification of Germany, excluding Austria and the German-speaking areas of Switzerland, did not occur until 1871. While outlining various complex interrelations of art, literature, religion, music, philosophy, politics, and science, Davis only briefly discusses the influence of German models on the early institutionalisation of art in England.

⁸ John R Davis, *The Victorians and Germany* (Verlag Peter Lang, 2007), 4.

A similar, extensive attempt to reinstate influential German figures, map the conceptual connections between them, and highlight the influence of the German output in philosophy, science, industry, visual art, and literature has been undertaken by Peter Watson.⁹ As Watson suggests: “The United States and Great Britain may speak English but, more than they know, they think German.”¹⁰ German influence was undoubtedly felt across much of the rapidly evolving British civic and civil society, occasionally directly but more frequently in less tangible ways, which are not always easy to define or document. Neither were German ideas and models uniformly well received. For example, debates surrounding suggested German involvement in the 1840s Westminster fresco project, discussed in Chapter 5 – “Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos”, revealed elements of resistance to German influence and to what was perceived as the interference of the German Prince Albert. As Davis declares, “...the intensity with which German ideas were promoted had in fact a great deal to do with the existence of opposition to them, and the mutual persuasion and recrimination which resulted. Indeed, the whole Victorian discourse about Germany was that much more voluble because the notions being discussed were so contested.”¹¹

Context for German influence

German influence pervaded many aspects of nineteenth-century British society, from town planning and local government to universities and scientific research. To provide context for my discussion, it is worth briefly outlining the general geopolitical

⁹ Peter Watson, *German Genius: Europe's Third Renaissance, the Second Scientific Revolution and the Twentieth Century* (Simon & Schuster, 2010).

¹⁰ Watson, *German Genius*, 37.

¹¹ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 11.

and social factors that led to the direct and increased German influence, specifically on the development of public art and art galleries in England during the nineteenth century.

During the eighteenth century, Classical Greece and Rome, and academic French art dominated the British art discourse.¹² Several factors combined to shift the focus of interest and aspiration to Germany. For centuries, the royal families of Britain and Germany had been closely interconnected. While the rule of a succession of German-born Kings had not always been well received in Britain, the marriage of Albert of Saxe-Coburg to his cousin Victoria in 1840 came to be widely accepted as a positive alliance.¹³ Albert's active promotion of the visual arts and significant role as a conduit for German ideas on art, art education, and the sciences are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 – "Manchester's Albert Memorial".

Ties with France, previously a particular influence on the development of the visual arts in Britain, were significantly disrupted by the events of the Revolution and the subsequent rise of Napoleon. However, as I will explore in Chapter 2 – "The Royal Manchester Institution", during the mid-nineteenth century, French textile designers were considered significant rivals to the British trade.¹⁴ Unrest in France and across

¹² Emma L. Winter, "German Fresco Painting and the New Houses of Parliament at Westminster, 1834-1851", *The Historical Journal*, June 2004, Vol. 47, No. 2, 291-329, (Cambridge University Press), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4091561> accessed 02/06/2018.

¹³ George Louis, elector of Hanover, succeeded to the British crown as George I in 1714. There were six Hanoverian monarchs: George I (reigned 1714–27), George II (reigned 1727–60), George III (reigned 1760–1820), George IV (reigned 1820–30), William IV (reigned 1830–37), and Victoria (reigned 1837–1901). <https://www.britannica.com/topic/House-of-Hanover> accessed 04/10/25. For commentary on the reception in England of Albert as Prince Consort, see Theodore Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, vol 1 (Smith, Elder & Co, 1877), 53-57.

¹⁴ House of Commons, *Report from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures: together with the minutes of evidence, appendices and index, 1835-1836*. Publication date 1835. For example, see examination of James Morrison, of Morrison & Company, textile wholesalers, 30 July 1835, questions 161-269, 13-21 and examination of Benjamin Spalding, buyer for Messrs. Harding & Smith in Paris, questions 300-314, 23-24. <https://archive.org/details/1835SelectCommittees/page/n5/mode/2up> accessed 25/10/2025.

Europe at the end of the eighteenth century also disrupted popular travel routes through Europe.¹⁵ Tourist itineraries came instead to include routes through the Rhineland. Travel had also become more accessible for the middle classes, women and family groups. Travel books, which included political and social references and recommendations, were widely circulated. For example, Anna Jameson's (1794-1860) 1837 "Sketches of Germany" in *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad* contained interviews with philosopher August William Schlegel and Ottilie von Goethe, daughter-in-law of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and a commentary on the life of Friedrich Schiller. This was among a number of publications that raised awareness of German art and ideas.¹⁶ In the post-Napoleonic era, various private art collections came up for sale or were auctioned. This considerably broadened the European art market and allowed access to Northern European artworks previously inaccessible to British buyers.¹⁷

By the nineteenth century, influential artists from German-speaking states were a well-established presence in the institutions of the British art world. For example, German-born Sir Gottfried Kneller (1646–1723), a prominent portrait painter and court artist, came to England in 1675 and was made director of the new Academy of Paintings in 1711. German-speaking Johann Heinrich Füssli, known as Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), from Zurich in Switzerland, was elected Keeper of the Royal Academy in 1804, a post he held for 20 years. Germans were prominent among the fellows of

¹⁵ The Grand Tour was the custom, at its height in the mid-eighteenth century, of a trip through Europe, with Italy as a key destination, undertaken as an educational rite of passage by upper-class young European men. It was associated with a standard itinerary, featuring key Classical and Renaissance sites.

¹⁶ Mrs Jameson (Anna Brownell Jameson), "Sketches of Germany. Art - Literature - Character", Vol. 1 (of 3), 4- 2005, *Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad, with Tales and Miscellanies Now First Collected* (Saunders and Otley, 1835). <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/36818> accessed 26/04/2020.

¹⁷ Lucy Hartley, *Democratising Beauty in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 19.

the Royal Society from its foundation in 1663.¹⁸ Angelika Kaufmann (1741-1807), a German-speaking Swiss Neoclassical painter, was one of only two female founding members of the RA.¹⁹ The impact of German models on the style and content of British visual art production during the nineteenth century has been quite widely acknowledged and discussed in studies such as William Vaughan's *German Romanticism and English Art*. However, as Vaughan identifies, the British interest in German pictorial art, the "German Manner", as it was often called, or indeed German literature or poetry, lay more in the underlying philosophy than it did in seeking to emulate the pictorial style of the work itself.²⁰

Initiatives employing public art and architecture to consolidate and promote state identity in the German-speaking states such as Bavaria and Prussia were keenly followed in the British press and discussed in Parliament. For example, during the 1830s and 1840s, King Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786- 1868) commissioned a series of lavish public buildings, in Neoclassical style, such as the *Befreiungshalle* (Hall of Liberation) near Regensburg; the *Walhalla* (Hall of Fame) at Kelheim, and the *Glyptothek* gallery in Munich. The group of German artists known as the Nazarenes, discussed in Chapter 5 – "Ford Madox Brown's Manchester Frescos", were employed to create large-scale public mural projects, featuring religious and symbolic scenes, executed in fresco. Such was the level of national interest in the purpose of art and the nature of its benefits for different sections of society that, from the 1830s, there was a series of Parliamentary interventions into the debate. Discussions were played out in the Select Committee on the Arts and their

¹⁸ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 39.

¹⁹ <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/angelica-kauffman> accessed 04/04/2024.

²⁰ William Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art* (Yale University Press, 1979), 2.

Connection with Manufactures (1835-36); in the Select Committee on Fine Arts (1841), and in the Royal Commission on the Fine Arts (1841-1865). The art galleries of Prussia and Bavaria were also promoted as models of good practice during the lengthy Government Select Committee investigations about the running of the National Gallery in the 1850s.²¹

The general interest in visual art and access to artworks was also illustrated in the rise of the popular Art Union Movement, established in London in 1837, which was modelled on Bavarian *Kunstvereine*. Art Unions were formed to promote the patronage of artists, with members paying a small annual subscription.²² The union would spend the subscriptions on works of contemporary art, which were distributed among its members by means of a lottery.²³ The associated *Art Union, Monthly Journal of the Fine Arts*, published from 1839, frequently included coverage of German artists and art-related publications.²⁴ As Davis recounts, *Art Union* editor Samuel Carter Hall named German art as first in Europe and was strongly in support of German-style art education.²⁵ Interest in the ideas of German thinkers was promoted by a number of nineteenth-century journals. *The Edinburgh Review*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Blackwoods Magazine*, *The Foreign and Quarterly Review*, and

²¹ In the 1850s, the art galleries established in Germanic states were also seen as models for museum architecture, internal spaces and display practice during the lengthy Government Select Committee investigations about the reorganisation of London's National Gallery. See Avery-Quash and Crookham, "Art Beyond the Nation. A European Vision for the National Gallery" in *The Museum is Open, Towards a Transnational History of Museums 1750-1940* (De Gruyter, 2014), 65-179. This is discussed in detail by Christopher Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth-Century Britain – the Development of the National Gallery* (Routledge, 2005). Waagen offered advice when it was proposed to either relocate the gallery to South Kensington or redesign the existing building, which was perceived as inadequate. See "Thoughts on the New Building to Be Erected for the National Gallery of England, and on the Arrangement, Preservation and Enlargement of the Collection", *Art Journal*, 1, April 1853, 101-3 & May 1853, 121-25.

²² Two members of the Management Committee for the London Art Union organisation had close associations with Manchester. Charles Barry was the architect who designed the Royal Manchester Institution. William Ewart was on friendly terms with a number of Manchester's leading figures, such as the Gaskells. He was MP for the nearby town of Wigan from 1839 to 1841. See S. M. Farrell, "Ewart, William (1798–1869)". *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online ed.). (Oxford University Press). doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/9011.

²³ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 211.

²⁴ *Art Union* archive <https://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=artunion1839> The *Art Union* was renamed *The Art Journal* in 1848. It continued to be published until 1912.

²⁵ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 211.

The Manchester Guardian, among others, regularly contained articles and reviews of German literary works. For example, *The Edinburgh Review*, volume 92, published in 1850, contained a number of articles in the “Arts” section written in German, about Goethe, marking 100 years since his birth. These covered Berlin’s Goethe Festival: “Das Göthe feier zu Berlin im Jahre 1849” and “Goethe in Berlin. Erinnerungs-Blätter zur Feier seines hundertjährigen Geburtsfestes.” Commentaries on Goethe’s work were also included with “Zu Goethe’s Jubelfeier. Studien zu Goethe’s Werken. Von Heinrich Dünzer. Elberfeld, 1849” and a review of the publication of his letters to Frau von Stein entitled: “Goethe’s Briefe an Frau von Stein. 2 vols. Weimar: 1848.”²⁶

Improvements in the process of producing steel engravings enabled publications such as the *Art Union* magazine to be extensively illustrated. The publishing of lengthy exhibition reviews and coverage of cultural events, alongside philosophical debate, commentary, correspondence and opinion, enabled the sharing of ideas and personal interests across class and community boundaries.

Diverse Concepts of the “Public”

In the early nineteenth century, increased public access to visual art and the institutionalisation of arts education occurred in the context of radical debates about the purpose and definition of art, aesthetics and the role of art in society. Who were the “public” envisaged for this new civic drive? As John Barrell explores, the idea that art can improve the “spiritual health of the nation” had been promoted since the eighteenth century by figures such as Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), Benjamin Haydon (1786–1846) and Sir Charles Barry (1795–1860).²⁷ During this period of

²⁶ *The Edinburgh Review* 1850: Volume 92, 3.

https://archive.org/details/sim_edinburgh-review-critical-journal_1850_92_contents/page/n3/mode/2up accessed 04/10/25.

The Edinburgh Review was an influential and widely read journal, published between 1802 and 1929, which promoted Romanticism and Radical politics. See John Clive, “The Edinburgh Review”, *History Today* (1952), 2 (12): 844–850.

²⁷ John Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt* (Yale University Press, 1986), 21.

nineteenth-century imperialism, the intention for some was the cultural development and promotion of the British “nation” to an undefined, perhaps even international, public.²⁸ For example, in 1841, a Parliamentary Select Committee was established to oversee the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament with an ambitious series of fresco paintings. Discussions about this project, covered in detail in Chapter 5 - “Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos”, revealed broader aims for art to be used in the construction of a socially inclusive and patriotic national culture.²⁹

Driven by the urban expansion of the Industrial Revolution, there seems to have been an element of expediency in the broadening of “public” access to include all social classes. Governing groups saw worrying levels of immorality, ill health and poverty in the rapidly growing cities. They were equally alarmed by the increasing politicisation of the working classes, as exemplified by the rise of the Chartist Movement and events such as the 1819 Peterloo Massacre in Manchester, the 1838 Birmingham riots, and the protests of March 1848 in Trafalgar Square.³⁰ In response, initiatives such as the moralising “Rational Recreation” movement sought, among other things, to encourage the working classes to use their leisure time for self-improvement by visiting museums, using reading rooms and libraries or viewing performing arts.³¹ As Jonathan Conlin outlines, there was a belief that cultural alternatives such as art galleries could help wean the working classes from “drink,

²⁸ The most detailed account of these proceedings is still that of T. S. R. Boase, “The Decoration of the New Palace of Westminster, 1841-1863”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, Vol. 17, No. 3/4 (1954), 319-358.

²⁹ Winter, “German Fresco Painting”, 295. Hansard, HL Deb 15 June 1835 vol 28 cc774-9.
<https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1835/jun/15/new-houses-of-parliament>.

³⁰ Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience, Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (Yale University Press, 2009), 46. Chartism was a working-class political movement in the 1830s and 1840s that aimed to gain political rights such as universal male suffrage. The Peterloo Massacre took place at St Peter’s Field, Manchester. Eighteen people died, and it is estimated that over 400 people were injured when the cavalry of the Yeomen charged into a crowd of around 60,000 people who had gathered to demand the reform of parliamentary representation. See research by Shirin Hirsch on *The People’s History Museum* website, <https://phm.org.uk/protest-and-peterloo-the-story-of-16-august-1819/> accessed 19/10/25.

³¹ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (Croom Helm, 1980); Jonathan Conlin, *The Nation’s Mantelpiece, A History of the National Gallery* (Pallas Athene Ltd, 2006), 66.

rough pastimes and political radicalism.”³² Providing access to the privileged civic space could be considered as a means of enfranchising, and thereby ensuring the good behaviour of the “masses”.³³

Of all the initiatives that brought the experience of visual art into the public realm, the most obvious was the provision of public art galleries and museums. During the nineteenth century, the terms “museum” and “gallery” were used interchangeably, without any implication that gallery displays contain fine art (paintings or sculpture) and museums hold collections of what we would now refer to as applied art or other artefacts or objects.³⁴ Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institution” will explore the founding, in 1823, of the RMI, one of Britain’s first public art galleries. Regional museums in particular have been seen as representing a new type of institution, influenced by liberal ideals and providing democratic access to knowledge and the potential for self-improvement.³⁵ The collections available for public view in the early British museums and galleries were varied, as were the ways in which they were displayed. Thomas Greenwood (1851–1908), a prominent advocate of public libraries and educational institutions, published a commentary in 1888 which vividly describes the vagaries of some provincial collections. “The orderly soul of the Museum student will quake at the sight of a Chinese lady’s boot encircled by a necklace made of shark’s teeth, or a helmet of one of Cromwell’s soldiers grouped

³² Conlin, *The Nation’s Mantelpiece*, 66.

³³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (Routledge, 1995), 28. Bennett describes the museum as “...an instrument of public instruction..., an exemplary space in which the rough and raucous might learn to civilise themselves by modelling their conduct on the middle-class codes of behaviour to which museum attendance would expose them.”

³⁴ These terms continue to have different usages in British and American contexts.

³⁵ Giles Waterfield, *The People’s Galleries* (Yale University Press, 2015). While his study does consider the practices of the London-based National Gallery and the V & A, the main focus of discussion is the hugely popular new museums in municipal centres such as Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester. Waterfield employs an analysis of exhibitionary strategies and visitor engagement to support his assertion that these galleries specifically aimed to cater for working-class audiences, adopted particular strategies appropriate to their local populations and were truly democratic in their approach.

with some Roman remains.”³⁶ The aims of these collections may, at times, have been conflicted and occasionally confused; nevertheless, “education” was, for most, the overriding aim and driving force, as repeatedly stated in founding documents written by organising committees and Town Councils.

This exploration builds on the work of Giles Waterfield who links this educational motivation not just to a political drive, but also to a prevailing social phenomenon, encouraged by the German community – *Bildung*. “The endeavour to diffuse a form of *Bildung* among the huge new urban population of Britain was to be a cornerstone of nineteenth-century cultural innovation.”³⁷ Relating to theories of subjectivity and self-consciousness, *Bildung* refers to the highly personal process of *Selbstbildung* (self-building) through cultural and spiritual development. *Bildung* as an educational philosophy was initially promulgated by Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), who, as Privy Counsellor in the Prussian Interior Ministry from 1809, standardised the system of public education and founded the University of Berlin. Humboldt, although never specifically naming it, envisaged an ideal of *Bildung* as education in a broad sense, which aimed not merely to provide professional skills through schooling along a fixed path, but rather to allow students to develop their individual character by choosing their own way. It was recognised as a German phenomenon from the early nineteenth century.³⁸

³⁶ Thomas Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries* (Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1888), 4. <https://archive.org/details/museumsandartga00unkngoog>, accessed 05/09/2022. Alistair Black, “Greenwood, Thomas (1851–1908), promoter of public libraries and publisher,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33546> accessed 21/11/2025.

³⁷ Waterfield, *The People’s Galleries*. This theme is also explored by Sheehan in *Museums in the German Art World*.

³⁸ Wolfgang Odendahl, “Bildungskrise – PISA and the German Educational Crisis”, *IAFOR Journal of Education* Volume 5 – Issue 1 – Spring 2017, <https://iafor.org/journal/iafor-journal-of-education/volume-5-issue-1/article-11/> accessed 28/07/2022. The German-language education sciences (Pädagogik) continue to this day to see *Bildung* as fundamental to the German education system and the more recent educational challenges as resulting in a *Bildungskrise*.

Exploring the early development of public museums in the context of German history, James Sheehan identifies how princely courts across the German states retained considerable influence over the collecting and exhibition policies of museums until well into the nineteenth century. In the 1870s and 1880s, trained academics began to be recruited as curators as supervisory responsibility for museums moved from courts to government agencies. Sheehan describes how these influential new museums and galleries were identified closely with the philosophy of *Bildung*. The Munich Glyptothek and the Berlin Königliches Museum (now the Altes Museum), together with institutions such as the Königliches Schauspielhaus, libraries, and lecture halls, were public architecture projects built to facilitate communal access to cultural activities while also encouraging personal, independent and reflective learning journeys. The mission to educate could be seen as a key factor in distinguishing newly accessible public collections from the previous private collections of the aristocracy.³⁹ Greenwood outlined his view of the educational “rationale of art galleries” in 1888. “They place us in direct communication with some of the best thoughts and feelings of highly gifted people. Pictures and other works of art cultivate the wholesome habit of finding out information for ourselves. Pictures thus become powerful aids in education, as well as giving pleasure and restfulness to the mind.”⁴⁰ Here we see echoes of *Bildung* in the promotion of empowerment and self-motivation in the pursuit of knowledge by each individual. Engagement with an artwork provides a means of self-development and an insight into the greatest human minds. The viewer was not envisaged as a

³⁹ See Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre*, 4.

⁴⁰ Greenwood, *Museums and Art Galleries*, 10-11.

passive recipient but was required to participate in active looking and engagement with the artwork.⁴¹

Wider moral and philanthropic motives were also frequently part of the narrative, sometimes linked to Protestant religious beliefs. Writers such as Raymond Williams, in *Culture and Society*, outline the way in which “culture” was identified as an antidote to the alienation and denial of individual subjectivity caused by the increasing industrialisation and mechanisation of society.⁴² As also envisaged by Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) and other German-inspired Romantic thinkers, culture stood in opposition to the destruction caused by modernisation. A number of writers have explored ways in which the philanthropic “Art for the People” art gallery movement, inspired by the ideas of reformers such as John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896), worked to establish municipal art museums as part of a wider transformation of industrial society in the mid-to-late nineteenth century.⁴³ The influential body of research which explores the philanthropic motives of nineteenth-century municipal art galleries is, however, just one part of a wider narrative. This focus on the role of public art as a means of philanthropy, education and social control aimed at the lower classes has led to insufficient acknowledgement of the activities of the middle classes, creating institutions and cultural opportunities for themselves. This is a topic that I will explore in detail in Chapter 2 - “The Royal Manchester Institution”.

⁴¹ Watson, *German Genius*, 162. “Any given artwork and product of genius reflected a higher realm that listeners [and viewers] had to work on, to play their part in.” This idea was also reflected in “active listening”, which led to an increased focus on instrumental music.

⁴² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Columbia University Press, 1983).

⁴³ See for example Giles Waterfield, *Art for the People: Culture in the Slums of Late Victorian Britain* (Art Books International, 1994); Shelagh Wilson, “‘The Highest Art for the Lowest People’: The Whitechapel and Other Philanthropic Art Galleries, 1877–1901,” in *Governing Cultures: Art Institutions in Victorian London*, Paul Barlow and Colin Trodd (eds.) (Aldershot, 2000), 172–86; Michael Harrison, “Art and Philanthropy: T. C. Horsfall and the Manchester Art Museum,” in *City, Class, and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, Alan J. Kidd and Kenneth Roberts (eds.) (Manchester University Press, 1985).

In using the term “middle class”, it is necessary to acknowledge that this concept is a disputed social and political construct, the meaning of which has changed over time.⁴⁴ Alan Kidd, writing with Kenneth Roberts, produced a particularly relevant exploration of the nineteenth-century middle class in the specific context of Manchester.⁴⁵ The increasing decentralisation of power during the Victorian period, Kidd claims, created a significant role for the provincial middle classes.⁴⁶ Simon Gunn outlines the established narrative that sees an identifiable middle class emerging as Britain was transformed by the Industrial Revolution between the 1780s and 1830s.⁴⁷ During this period, factors such as education and entrepreneurship began to supersede the previous hereditary hierarchies. The term “middle class” during the period under discussion carried a specifically urban referent.

It would be incorrect to assume that the motives and driving influences for the display of art to the public remained static during the nineteenth century. The early arts institutions that allowed public access were quite limited in their scope. For example, the British Museum collections, which opened in 1758 to “all studious and curious persons”, in practice could only be visited in a small guided group by prior appointment.⁴⁸ Several studies of Manchester City Art Gallery, such as that by Amy Woodson-Boulton, begin at the point it became a city-owned, incorporated institution

⁴⁴ For a history of this term, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁴⁵ Alan J. Kidd, “Introduction: The Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century Manchester” in *City, Class, and Culture*, Kidd and Roberts (eds.) (Manchester University Press, 1985). This publication resulted from a 1985 conference focused specifically on the middle classes of Victorian Manchester. The conference attempted to address the fact that the middle classes of the Victorian era, in general, have received less attention from social historians than their working-class counterparts and that middle-class social thought and policy had been widely oversimplified. Essays included in the compilation focus specifically on the influence of the middle classes on the reconfiguration of public spaces in the newly industrialised towns of northern England.

⁴⁶ Kidd, “Introduction: The Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century Manchester”, 5.

⁴⁷ Simon Gunn, “Class, identity and the urban: the middle class in England, c.1790-1950”, *Urban History*, May 2004, Vol. 31, No. 1, 29-47 (Cambridge University Press), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44613439> accessed 23/07/2002.

⁴⁸ <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/history> accessed 01/04/2024.

in 1888 and pursue a Ruskinian line as a motive for its development.⁴⁹ As I will explore, the RMI, forerunner to Manchester City Art Gallery, had been functioning as a gallery and exhibition space since 1824, holding several exhibitions annually, running extensive programmes of lectures and building a permanent collection. The original institution, as I will discuss in detail in Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institution”, clearly did not prioritise working-class access. It was a membership-only organisation, charging a significant annual fee and drawing an organising committee and members from among the established middle and upper classes of the city. The exhibitions were open, for a fee, to all, but access to the wider educational programme of lectures and discussions was for members only.

Recorded discussions about general access to fine art collections, as evidenced, for example, in the Parliamentary debates around the organisation of London’s National Gallery in 1838 and minutes of the meetings of the organising committee for the Exhibition of 1857 (MAT), actually reflected some concern about the admission of the general populace to the art venue. The MAT Exhibition had a purpose-built police barracks on the site, and forty-two officers from the City of Manchester police force were “engaged in preserving order and watching the building and its contents by day and night.”⁵⁰ While this was partially in response to the concerns of those lending items to the exhibition, the extent to which this proved to be a complete overreaction was evidenced by the low number of crimes recorded over the five-month run.⁵¹ The Director of the National Gallery was summoned to Parliament at regular intervals

⁴⁹ Amy Woodson-Boulton, “Industry without Art Is Brutality: Aesthetic Ideology and Social Practice in Victorian Art Museums”, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (January 2007), 47-71, <https://doi.org/10.1086/508398> accessed 17/03/24.

⁵⁰ *Exhibition of art treasures of the United Kingdom: held at Manchester in 1857: report of the Executive Committee*, 43 and appendix XIV. <https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofartt00artt> accessed 21/07/2022. The precautions proved excessive as only ten incidents of minor crime were recorded during the entire three-month run of the exhibition.

⁵¹ Op. Cit. Appendix XIV. There were seven incidents of pickpocketing, one of larceny and two assaults. Eight individuals were prosecuted.

throughout the nineteenth century to describe how the public behaved in the gallery, why they went, and whether they were in any way endangering the pictures.⁵²

In mid-nineteenth-century Manchester, physical access to display spaces such as the Royal Manchester Institute and the MAT exhibition was encouraged by lower prices and longer opening hours. For example, at the MAT exhibition, “the Committee tried the experiment of reducing the entrance money to sixpence on Saturday afternoons after two o’clock, being the day when owing to the general half holiday, they believed the working classes could most conveniently attend.”⁵³ The RMI, which had the benefit of gas lighting, opened its temporary exhibitions in the evening until nine o’clock and on Sundays, specifically for working-class visitors.⁵⁴

There is an enduring belief that viewing objects defined as “art” or deemed to be of aesthetic value can be life-enhancing and educational. At the time of writing, a project is underway in Lancashire to restore Preston’s local history and fine art museum, The Harris, which first opened to the general public in 1893. The website states that, “this sixteen million pound project is set to restore and reimagine The Harris for 21st-century audiences as a cultural learning space... and to protect the building and the architecture for future generations.”⁵⁵ Since 2018, a £300m project has been underway to restore the incredible multimedia artwork that is the Manchester Town Hall, in use since 1877.⁵⁶ The state and privately funded British

⁵² Neil MacGregor “A Pentecost in Trafalgar Square”, *The Antioch Review*, Vol. 69, No. 4, Anniversary Issue (Fall 2011), 648-662. <http://0-www.jstor.org.serlib0.essex.ac.uk/stable/41> accessed 12/6/2019.

⁵³ *Exhibition of art treasures of the United Kingdom: report of Executive Committee*, 42.

⁵⁴ D. Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution: Its History from Its Origin Until 1882, when the Building and Contents of the Institution Were Presented to the Manchester Corporation and Became the City Art Gallery* (Manchester City Art Gallery, 1931), 15. MCL GB127.M6/1/79/10

⁵⁵ <https://www.theharris.org.uk/> accessed 13/03/24.

⁵⁶ https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500354/our_town_hall/7297/our_town_hall_project_-_the_transformation accessed 13/03/24.

Museum, which first fully opened to the general public in its current building in 1857, averages over six million visitors a year.⁵⁷

Method

The institutionalised display of visual art has been productively examined through various social, political, economic and educational lenses. Research directly addressing the influence of German ideas and approaches on the development of British public art galleries and public art display is, however, relatively limited. Based on the work of theorists such as Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and earlier work by Antonio Gramsci, museums and galleries have often been viewed as sites of social hegemony and control, and as vehicles of social engineering.⁵⁸ Under the same frameworks, gallery collecting, classifying and displaying have frequently been explored as vehicles for maintaining historical power structures and promoting dominant ideologies.⁵⁹

Writing primarily in the 1960s and 1970s, Foucault's examination of power relationships in areas of modern society, such as the criminal justice system, medicine, and psychiatry, did not extend directly to the discussion of arts institutions. However, since the 1980s, his theoretical framework has been the single most influential lens through which historians of visual culture have examined histories of art institutions. His work has been particularly significant in questioning the narrative that modern institutions are more advanced and more beneficial for society in

⁵⁷ Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, table of visitor numbers. <https://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=610> accessed 18/04/2025.

⁵⁸ Relevant works included *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Gallimard, 1975) and *Archaeology of Knowledge*, translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith (Routledge, 2002); Pierre Bourdieu, "Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste" in *Inequality* (Routledge, 2018), 287-318; Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks*, a series of essays written between 1929 and 1935, https://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/prison_notebooks/ accessed 31/05/2025.

⁵⁹ Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991).

general than historical examples. For Foucault, historical social structures and institutions are not to be viewed merely as a primitive evolutionary step on the way to modernity, but as an alternative possibility, a potential model and a prompt to encourage us to question our current social structures. Initially explored in the influential work of sociologist Tony Bennett and socio-political art historian Carol Duncan, among others, this framework has led to an examination of art galleries in particular, as sites of behavioural control, surveillance, spectacle and social engineering.⁶⁰ Applying the work of Foucault largely to nineteenth-century contexts, Bennett formulated what he termed the “exhibitionary complex”: the museum as a site which cultivated suitable publics by implementing particular ritualised functions, behaviours and ways of viewing, in response to underlying power relations. Highlighting art institutions as forums for social division and exclusion, later writers such as Kate Hill grounded these theories in contemporary contextual detail.⁶¹ Over the past 50 years, the development of the field of critical museology has also led to a re-examination of the foundational assumptions of museums and a questioning of aspects such as the provenance of their objects, their curatorial strategies and their exhibition programming. For example, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, applying Foucauldian approaches, examines how the curation of objects in a museum setting is used to reinforce or create particular types of knowledge.⁶² Critics such as Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach have also explored how museums and

⁶⁰ Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum and Pasts Beyond Memories: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* (Routledge, 2004) and “The Exhibitionary Complex”, *New Formations*, Number 4, Spring 1988, <http://seymourpolat.in/rp/texts/Tony%20Bennett%20-%20The%20Exhibitionary%20Complex.pdf> accessed 14/06/2025. See also Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (Routledge, 1995).

⁶¹ Kate Hill, *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850–1914* (Ashgate, 2005).

⁶² Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* (Routledge, 1992), 14. According to Hooper-Greenhill, this raises “theoretical questions about the social practices of looking and seeing, which are related to processes of learning and knowing.”

galleries structured knowledge in ways which promoted nationalistic, colonial and patriotic agendas.⁶³

In recent years, Foucault's influence has not diminished, prompting a number of divergent or contradictory approaches, which nonetheless use the Foucauldian lens as a central point of reference. Among these is the work of Helen Rees Leahy, who challenges, for example, models of ritualised behaviour with her analysis based on primary source material, of the "bodily techniques" of the exhibition visitors.⁶⁴

Examining the visiting practices at the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, she finds that a range of visiting behaviours were in fact accepted and encouraged. These included large groups processing through the exhibition hall, holding banners and accompanied by brass bands.⁶⁵ Focusing her scholarship on the opposite end of the chronological spectrum, Claire Bishop's "radical museology" challenges hegemonic Foucault-informed interpretations of contemporary European galleries, "to break with the pessimism of the most important critical writing on contemporary museums to date, which is dominated by tirades against spectacle and blockbuster exhibition."⁶⁶ Bennett himself has revisited his "exhibitionary complex" of the 1980s, "highlighting instead the need for engagement with other approaches that enable alternative ways of knowing museums to emerge." In his discussion of what he refers to as the "governmental assemblage", he characterises the museum as an "assembled organisation" or as a "peopled organisation" with motives and

⁶³ Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum", *Art History*, Volume 3, Issue 4, December 1980, 448-469.

⁶⁴ Helen Rees Leahy, *Museum bodies: The politics and practices of visiting and viewing* (Ashgate Publishing, 2012).

⁶⁵ Helen Rees Leahy, "Walking for pleasure? Bodies of display at the Manchester Art-Treasures Exhibition in 1857," *Art History* 30, no. 4, Sept 2007, 545-565, 660 <http://search.proquest.com/docview/822967018/> accessed 16/03/2019.

⁶⁶ Claire Bishop, *Radical Museology: or, What's 'Contemporary' in Museums of Contemporary Art* (Koenig Books, 2013), 27. Bishop, with Terry Smith, defends contemporary art galleries, claiming that they are in fact innovative, experimental and highly individualised institutions. Claire Bishop, "Museum Models, Radical Spectatorship", in *Talking Contemporary Curating*, Terry Smith (ed), (Independent Curators International, 2015), 140.

approaches determined by a complex web of individuals, rather than a single homogenous entity. Bennett claims that this approach, with its inevitable focus on primary sources, provides insight through the analysis of qualitative data and the removal of the interpretative distance that is imposed by applying a particular theoretical framework.⁶⁷

While in no way seeking to dispute these theoretical methodologies, the approach of this thesis is in the vein of scholarship that builds on the pioneering work of Steven Conn. Conn explored how early museums structured knowledge into categories and, while acknowledging the socio-political impact of these choices, he also recognised the significance of underlying educational and intellectual frameworks. As he writes, “the identification of categories of knowledge with power, risks ignoring the necessary intellectual function that classification plays... we must also acknowledge that understanding cannot happen and meaning cannot be constructed without some set of categories.”⁶⁸ Broadly in the spirit of Conn's approach, my own study aims to enhance the understanding of contemporary British arts institutions by exploring the influence of German ideas and models, in particular the phenomena of *Bildung*, on the origins and intellectual foundations of early public art. This builds on the work of scholars such as Charlotte Klonk, who have explored links between museology and intellectual theories. Klonk discusses how nineteenth-century theories of vision, originating in Germany, influenced early gallery display strategies. She highlights, for

⁶⁷ Bennett, “Thinking (with) Museums: From Exhibitionary Complex to Governmental Assemblage”, in Andrea Witcomb and Kylie Message (eds), *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies: Volume I*, 3-20 (Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

⁶⁸ Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 12.

example, the adoption of recommendations in Goethe's *Theory of Colours* in the selection of paint colours for the walls of the National Gallery.⁶⁹

The examination of critical literature reflecting on the “publics” for whom Victorian civic art was intended reveals a research bias towards philanthropic and socio-political motives, aimed at managing the lower classes. There has been some recognition of the activities of the educated middle classes in providing art institutions for their own use, in the writing of Klonk, for example, and in a German context, Alexis Joachimides.⁷⁰ Writing mainly in the 1980s and 1990s, a group of Manchester-based historians, Alan Kidd, Kenneth Roberts, and Simon Gunn, produced a particularly relevant exploration of the nineteenth-century middle class, in the specific context of Manchester.⁷¹ A 1985 conference focused specifically on the middle classes of Victorian Manchester, attempting to address the fact that the middle classes of the Victorian era, in general, have received less attention from social historians than their working-class counterparts and that middle-class social thought and policy had been widely oversimplified. The increasing decentralisation of power during the Victorian period, Kidd claims, created a significant role for the provincial middle classes.⁷²

This remains, however, an area that has much to be studied. This thesis will demonstrate that the drive for self-improvement or *Bildung*, a prevailing influence

⁶⁹ Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*.

⁷⁰ Alexis Joachimides, *The “efficient museum” in resistance to the “dictatorship of the wall”* https://www.kunstgeschichte-ejournal.net/563/2/Joachimides%20-%20The%20efficient%20Museum_14.07.2020.pdf accessed 16/03/2019.

⁷¹ Alan J. Kidd, “Introduction: The Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century Manchester” in *City, Class, and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, Alan J. Kidd & Kenneth Robert (eds) (Manchester University Press, 1985). This publication resulted from a 1985 conference focused specifically on the middle classes of Victorian Manchester. Essays included in the compilation focus specifically on the influence of the middle classes on the reconfiguration of public spaces in newly industrialised towns of northern England. See also Janet Wolff and John Seed (eds.), *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power, and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class* (University of Manchester, 1988).

⁷² Alan J. Kidd, “Introduction: The Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century Manchester”, 5.

among the middle-class German population, was a major factor in encouraging the provision of additional opportunities to engage with visual art. Evidence to support this assertion will be explored throughout this thesis's case studies. Furthermore, while the origins of the public display of visual art through the vehicle of the art gallery or museum have been widely examined, far less attention has been given to other early interfaces between the public and visual art. During the nineteenth century, for example, there was a proliferation of monuments and sculptures in public spaces, and sculpture and murals were employed to enhance new public buildings.⁷³ In Chapters 4 and 5, respectively titled "The Albert Memorial" and "Ford Madox Brown's Manchester Frescos", I will illustrate how an exploration of these wider contexts enables identification of common underlying influences and additional motives for the provision of public art.

The extensive body of existing research that has provided critical frameworks for British public display of visual art, most notably in galleries and museums, reveals an overriding focus on large international and London-based state-run institutions such as the National Gallery, the British Museum, and the National Portrait Gallery. London's National Gallery in particular has been the subject of a number of detailed monographs.⁷⁴ This London-centred focus potentially limits these analyses and could also be one of the reasons for the relatively limited recognition of German influences. To explore this premise, the geographical focus of this study has moved to Manchester. This is a city, 200 miles north of London, with a significantly different

⁷³ For an extensive survey of public sculpture in Greater Manchester, see Terry Wyke and Cocks and Harry Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, part of the *Public Sculpture of Britain* series, Public Monuments and Sculpture Association, National Recording Project (Liverpool University Press, 2004).

⁷⁴ See Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum*; Charles Saumarez Smith, *The National Gallery: A Short History* (Frances Lincoln Limited, 2009), and Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon, *Art for the Nation* (National Gallery Publication, Yale University Press, 2011).

political, social, and historical context. The study also takes a broad approach in examining examples of both public and privately funded initiatives. Several insightful new perspectives have been explored in recent publications by writers who extend their purview beyond London. Woodson-Boulton, for instance, examined the origins of key provincial institutions such as Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery, Birmingham City Art Gallery, and Manchester City Art Gallery. Her research highlights the specific social and political contexts that determined the nature of each institution and the contents of its collection.⁷⁵ Woodson-Boulton's approach focuses on the individuality of these institutions and the motives of individuals or groups, rather than seeking to find evidence of general influences and trends. Another writer who provides broader insights through his examination of the archive collections of a range of early provincial British galleries is Waterfield.⁷⁶ He asserts that by failing to investigate their intellectual foundations, critics have not fully understood the development of these early institutions.⁷⁷

This thesis seeks to add an additional, evidence-based, and historically informed strand to existing frameworks and to supplement Foucauldian accounts of art institutions with insights and connections revealed through the study of earlier historical examples. This follows the method advocated by Colin Trodd, who sought to avoid over-generalised approaches through the granular study of a single institution at a particular moment in time.⁷⁸ He sees this as a counterbalance to potential misreadings of Foucault, "in which the proclamations of post-structuralist

⁷⁵ Amy Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty: Art Museums in Industrial Britain* (Stanford University Press, 2012).

⁷⁶ Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*, 4.

⁷⁷ Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*, 4.

⁷⁸ Colin Trodd, "The discipline of pleasure; or, how art history looks at the art museum", *Museum and Society*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2003, 27. Trodd focuses on London's National Gallery in the mid-Victorian period, and claims that this research shows the art museum to be a "more fluid, ambivalent, or disordered environment than art history has allowed."

gurus are used in ways that they never intended.”⁷⁹ Trodd proposes that research based on contemporary commentaries, a method which in itself is informed by Foucault, enables a broader and more complex understanding of historical, social, and philosophical influences.⁸⁰ Grounding my research in primary sources also enables an exploration of early arts institutions through the “period eye” of their contemporary social, political, religious, and commercial context.⁸¹ In this study, the “period eye” is both specific to a single city, Manchester, during a particular time frame and focused on this city’s transnational links to the ideas and practices of another country.

Given that many of today’s arts institutions have their roots in the ideas and philosophies of the nineteenth century, this investigation supports a broader understanding of current practice. The evidence gathered is based on extensive exploration of first-hand accounts, correspondence, committee meeting minutes, exhibition catalogues, newspaper reports, prints, and other resources. This has enabled the inclusion of previously unpublished material and also supported the re-interpretation of a number of sources through the lens of German connections, influences, and models.

Chapter Overview

Having outlined the context and broader themes, the remaining part of my thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides information about the unique context of nineteenth-century Manchester and general philosophical trends

⁷⁹ Trodd, “The discipline of pleasure”, 27.

⁸⁰ Trodd, “The discipline of pleasure”, 19.

⁸¹ The “period eye” was conceptualised by Michael Baxandall in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

stemming from Germany that were influential on British thinking during this period. This supports the understanding of arguments presented in the subsequent individual studies.

The subjects chosen permit informative comparisons to be drawn with similar contemporary activities in London. A series of sites and projects across one city form the focus, rather than the more common methodology of selecting individual museums and galleries across different cities (e.g. Woodson-Boulton, Waterhouse). This provides an increased understanding of the effect of context and allows the gathering of evidence of society-wide development. Throughout my study, evidence from contemporary commentaries drives the argument. Examination of the subjective responses and direct experiences of individuals, via written records of speeches, letters, newspaper articles, and artefacts such as annotated exhibition catalogues, reveals the involvement of a range of organisations and individuals in shaping the cultural field of Manchester.⁸² As previously discussed, Bennett has suggested that this multi-agency approach enables research to be approached more qualitatively and removes the interpretative distance that can be imposed when applying a particular theoretical framework. As the thesis is also informed, to a significant extent, by my own critical visual analysis, case studies representing a range of visual media were chosen: architecture, interior design, painting and sculpture. The examination of previously unpublished archive material provides new

⁸² As previously discussed, this approach is influenced by Bennett's concept of the "governmental assemblage", a later development of his initial theoretical work on the "exhibitionary complex", viewing the museum as an "assembled organisation" or as a "peopled organisation" influenced and driven by multiple agents.

evidence of transnational links and a new understanding of how German theories and practices were reinterpreted within the Manchester context.⁸³

Given the already extensive focus on analysis of galleries and museums, my study illustrates the broader influence of German models and ideas by investigating examples of interfaces between the public and visual art that have been less fully explored. The sites of these case studies are in close proximity, within a city centre area of less than 300 square metres. All are still in existence today, largely unaltered, and they represent a small sample of the many nineteenth-century public art sites across the city that could have been productively examined.⁸⁴ They demonstrate the wide-ranging and tangible effects of German models and ideas and the spirit of *Bildung* at various points on a visual arts educational journey. The starting point on this journey is Manchester School of Design, an organisation delivering practical art training for artists/designers and the general public. The second case study, The Royal Manchester Institution, provided opportunities for continuing education across a range of art-related subjects and a forum for the public display of art. The Albert Memorial is an example of public art as a collaborative civic endeavour. It also represents the celebration of an individual who was influential in promoting the visual arts and a role model in terms of *Bildung* and self-determination. Finally, the discussion of Ford Madox Brown's frescos in Manchester Town Hall is used to illustrate German influence on the evolution of a large-scale

⁸³ For example, in Chapter 3 – The RMI, Waagen's letters to Stern discussing collaboration on an exhibition of work by German artists in Manchester.

⁸⁴ Manchester School of Art has been relocated several times and is now part of the Manchester Metropolitan University's All Saint's Campus.

public art fresco series and on the technique, composition and subject matter in the work of an individual artist.

These case studies have previously been the subject of very little scholarship or only historical scholarship. At the time of writing, the Albert Memorial and the Town Hall frescos are part of a large-scale restoration project, started in 2018. This has led to a recent revival of research interest in the frescos. These four diverse case studies, documented through extensive archival research and detailed critical analysis, further the understanding of how German theories and ideas were reshaped and reimagined in the Manchester context. This contributed to the development of innovatory and intellectually engaged public art and arts institutions. Examples of this, which are explored, include the Manchester *Bildungsroman*, the art and design curriculum at the School of Art, the new approach to history painting seen in Ford Madox Brown's fresco series and the symbolic portrait of the Romantic hero in the innovatory form of the Albert Memorial.

The cultural, social and economic Manchester stage on which the remaining four case studies will appear is outlined in Chapter 1 - "The Manchester Man". The aspirational nature of the "Manchester Man" as explored in Manchester *Bildungsroman*, and the prevalence of *Bildung* as a driving force behind the provision of public art in Manchester are discussed. An outline of the history of German connections with Manchester, and an exploration of nineteenth-century Manchester's social and cultural environment, aims to explain the particular historical, cultural, religious and political factors that led to the coalescing of German influences in nineteenth-century Manchester. Major German philosophical and psychological

trends that had a significant impact on the development of public art and art institutions in Britain are outlined as the historical, the subjective and the educational. Idealism and the drive for self-actualisation are explored, together with the role of the visual arts as a social and cultural signifier in Manchester's evolving civic spaces.

Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institution” investigates the operation of this privately run Institute of Literature, Science and the Arts (RMI) from its founding in 1823 until its incorporation by local government as Manchester City Art Gallery in 1883. Comparatively little scholarship has directly engaged with early public galleries in provincial settings.⁸⁵ This study aims to broaden the narrative by extending the current research base. Archive sources are used to uncover evidence of Manchester's close relationship with German cultural institutions and individuals and to explore the influence of these transnational links on the founding and operation of the Manchester organisation. The RMI, as an early cultural institution founded by Manchester's middle classes, represents an example of an under-recognised, transitional model of public art display. Promoting opportunities for cultural and spiritual self-improvement, the founding of the RMI also reflected the social phenomena of *Bildung*, encouraged by the German community. An examination of Charles Barry's Neoclassical RMI building reveals the influence of German models, particularly the design of the Königliches Museum in Berlin, where architect Karl Frederick Schinkel and gallery director Gustav Waagen collaborated to create one of the first purpose-built public art galleries. The RMI building's exterior, entrance foyer and floor plan, which remain largely unaltered since the institute's founding, are

⁸⁵ There are a number of notable exceptions, such as Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*. Waterfield analyses the architecture, site, space and exhibitionary strategies of a wide range of provincial institutions, seeking to determine the aims and philosophical beliefs of those responsible for their creation.

critically analysed, revealing further links to models and ideas originating in Germany. The chapter concludes with an examination of the exhibitionary strategies of the RMI, exploring what these reveal about the British response to the contemporary German-led approaches to art criticism and the newly established discipline of art history.

“Manchester School of Design” is the focus of Chapter 3, which examines the significant role played by individuals linked to Manchester and Germany during the first government intervention in British art education. Under consideration is the initial fifteen-year period between the establishment in 1837 of London’s “Normal School of Design”, overseen by the Board of Trade and its replacement by the new Department of Practical Art under the Directorship of Henry Cole in 1852. During this period, the first 21 state-funded regional schools of art were founded. Evidence from contemporary accounts and records is used to support the premise that, in both actively opposing and providing an alternative to the curriculum initially proposed by London, the Manchester School of Design played a significant and insufficiently recognised role in influencing the development of the first national curriculum for art education. Drawing particularly on evidence given to the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufacturers, the causes of the shift from private to politically driven and state-funded education, and the influence of German models, are explored. Records reveal the ways in which German ideas shaped the formation of the Manchester School of Design and the broader approaches to applied art education across the city, promoted by influential industrialists. These pedagogic approaches often diverged from those in London. This was particularly evident, as I will discuss later, in the shift away from the longstanding academic ideal of the human figure, as

promoted by the Royal Academy, and towards the observation of natural form as an inspiration. What makes this particularly intriguing is that the diverse systems proposed in London and in Manchester were both initially influenced by German models.

In 1863, seven years earlier than London, the devoted citizens of Manchester unveiled their own, highly personalised memorial to the late Prince Albert. Chapter 4 – “Manchester’s Albert Memorial”, uses contemporary sources to reveal the largely untold story of the relationship between the leading citizens of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester and the Teutonic Prince. The Prince had, for example, a particular engagement with the people of Manchester through his active promotion of the 1857 MAT Exhibition, where his suggested chronological display strategy, based on German models, was also employed. Albert’s promotion of German approaches to the visual arts and arts education in general is discussed, and his contribution to the development of the arts as a means of cultural and social self-improvement. The Manchester memorial is put into context through an analysis of other “Albert” memorials erected by towns across Britain, the prevailing cult of heroic leadership and the increasing interest in the public display of portraiture. A critical analysis of the monument itself in terms of its symbolic meaning, complex iconography, and creative design enables a sustained discussion of the connection between Manchester’s visual culture and German sources of influence. The monument is recognised as a unique and personal response to the life of the Prince as an individual and his influence on the institutionalisation of the visual arts in England.

The final chapter, “Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos,” examines the series of fresco paintings in the Council Chamber of Manchester Town Hall. These illustrate the continued influence of German thinkers on the development of public art late into the nineteenth century. Investigating the story behind the incongruous choice of media leads us once again back to Germany, via Rome to Berlin and Munich, to nineteenth-century German fresco series and specifically the artwork of the German Nazarenes. The influence of Prince Albert’s attempted revival of the fresco technique in England is traced back to the frescos produced for the newly built Palace of Westminster and the Buckingham Palace Pavilion in the 1840s. The chapter builds on existing scholarship to explore how ideas about the subjective and individual nature of experiencing historical events influenced Ford Madox Brown’s approach to the subject matter of the frescos. These new approaches were shaped and influenced by German thinkers and disseminated in Britain, particularly by Thomas Carlyle. A detailed critical analysis of three of the paintings allows the unusual compositional style and narrative content to be explored in the context of these new approaches.

Chapter 1 – The Manchester Man

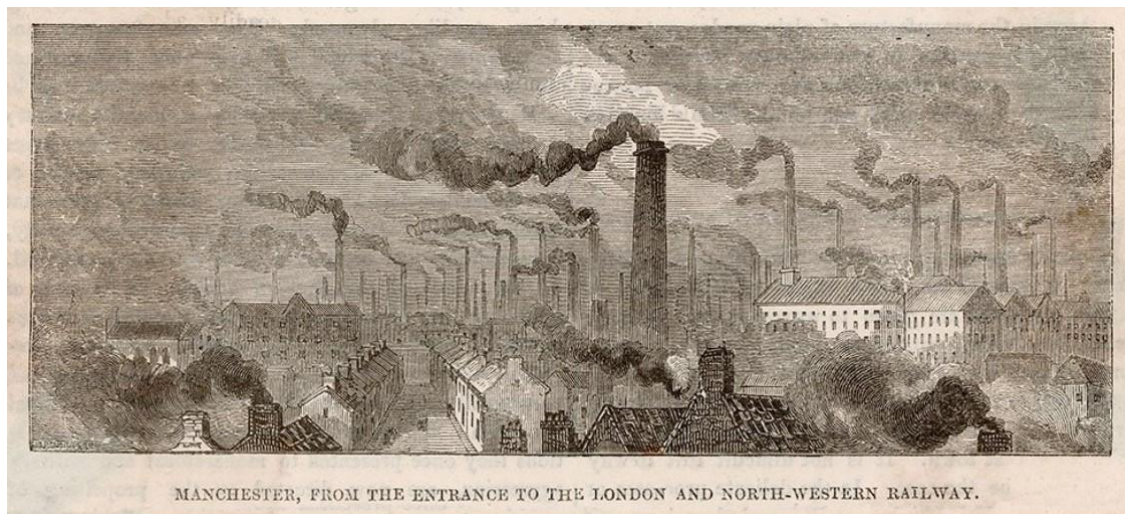


Figure 1.1 unattributed engraving showing a view of industrial Manchester in 1860. World History Archive. Illustration from the website of the Science and Industry Museum <https://www.scienceandindustrymuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/air-pollution> accessed 25/22/2025

Viewed by the visitor, mid-nineteenth-century Manchester came as something of a shock. Unmatched by any other city in the world for the scale and density of its factories and warehouses, the squalor of its slum housing, the filth of its smoke-choked atmosphere, visitors were also overwhelmed by the drive and pace of its daily working life (Fig. 1.1).⁸⁶ Beneath this complex and seemingly chaotic surface, a range of social and civic structures and organisations were rapidly forming, many for the first time in British history. Alongside the commercial infrastructure came the activities of municipal government, such as transport, gasworks, sewerage and sanitation, waterworks, markets, police, and fire services.⁸⁷ This chapter supports the understanding of arguments presented in the subsequent individual studies by highlighting relevant information about the unique context of nineteenth-century Manchester. This explains the particular influence of German models and ideas in

⁸⁶ See, for example, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *The English Journey: Journal of a Visit to France and Britain in 1826*, D. Bindman and G. Riemann, trans. (Yale University Press, 1993).

⁸⁷ Gary Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age, The Half-Known City* (Manchester University Press, 1985), 150.

the city. In this chapter I also discuss particular German-led philosophical and psychological trends, outlined as the historical, the subjective, and the educational, that had a significant general impact on the development of public art and art institutions in Britain. This broader contextual setting is essential for an understanding of the cultural and social environment that shaped the intellectual foundations of public art in nineteenth-century Manchester. In focusing on the emergence of visual art designed to be accessed by the general public, my thesis examines just one small aspect of what was an extensive German influence and wide-ranging impact, not just on the arts in general, music, literature, and poetry, but across the cultural, civic, and social life of the city on many levels. As *Manchester Examiner and Times* reporter Thomas Morris commented in 1857:

Before proceeding further, it is but justice to remark that there is scarcely any benevolent, educational or praiseworthy enterprise connected with this city in which intelligent and influential Germans do not take a zealous part: in return, they are met with utmost cordiality.⁸⁸

***Bildung* and the Manchester Man**

In 1874, *Cassell's Family Magazine* published, in instalments, *The Manchester Man* by Mrs George Linnaeus Banks (Isabelle Varley Banks, 1821-1897), wife of a Manchester businessman.⁸⁹ This melodrama recounts the life story of a foundling, rescued from Manchester's River Irwell, who succeeds in raising himself from poverty and misfortune to join the upper circles of Manchester's cultural, economic and social life as a prosperous cotton merchant. Set in the years 1790-1830,

⁸⁸ Thomas Morris, *An historical, descriptive, and biographical handbook to the exhibition of the United Kingdom's art treasures* (Houlston and Wright, 1857)
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a5/An_historical%2C_descriptive%2C_and_biographical_handbook_to_the_exhibition_of_the_United_Kingdom%27s_Art_Treasures%2C_at_Manchester%2C_1857%2C_%28IA_historicaldescri00morr%29.pdf accessed 05/07/2026.

⁸⁹ Mrs George Linnaeus Banks, *The Manchester Man*. First published 1874 (Abel Heywood & Son, 1897). Project Gutenberg Ebook 64320 <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/64320> accessed 15/04/2025.

protagonist Jabez Clegg, with his inner drive for self-improvement and belief in self-actualisation, came to symbolise the character and personal qualities of the “Manchester man”.

The limited reference to female participation in Manchester society largely reflects the composition of civic and political organisations of the time. However, as further research would reveal, “Manchester women” were powerfully present, if inadequately documented and insufficiently recognised, in many of Manchester’s intellectual, social and philanthropic initiatives, not to mention literary output. Manchester women also led the Women’s Suffrage Movement later in the century.⁹⁰ I would suggest that these dominant character traits, closely allied with and promoted by Manchester’s German residents, made a significant contribution to the development of Manchester as a civic centre and encouraged the provision of access to the visual arts as an integral part of civic life.

⁹⁰ Mary Fildes (between 1789 and 1792- 1876), leader of the Manchester Female Reform Group (MFRG), was a major speaker at the 1819 Peterloo meeting and was wounded during the violence. The Manchester Society for Women’s Suffrage was formed in 1867. This group’s actions included petitioning and public meetings, notably at the Manchester Free Trade Hall. The Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded by Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) at her Manchester home in 1903. See the People’s History Museum website: <https://phm.org.uk/collection/labour-history-archive-study-centre/womens-suffrage/#:~:text=The%20Women's%20Social%20and%20Political,themselves%20into%20supporting%20the%20war.> accessed 17/02/20205.

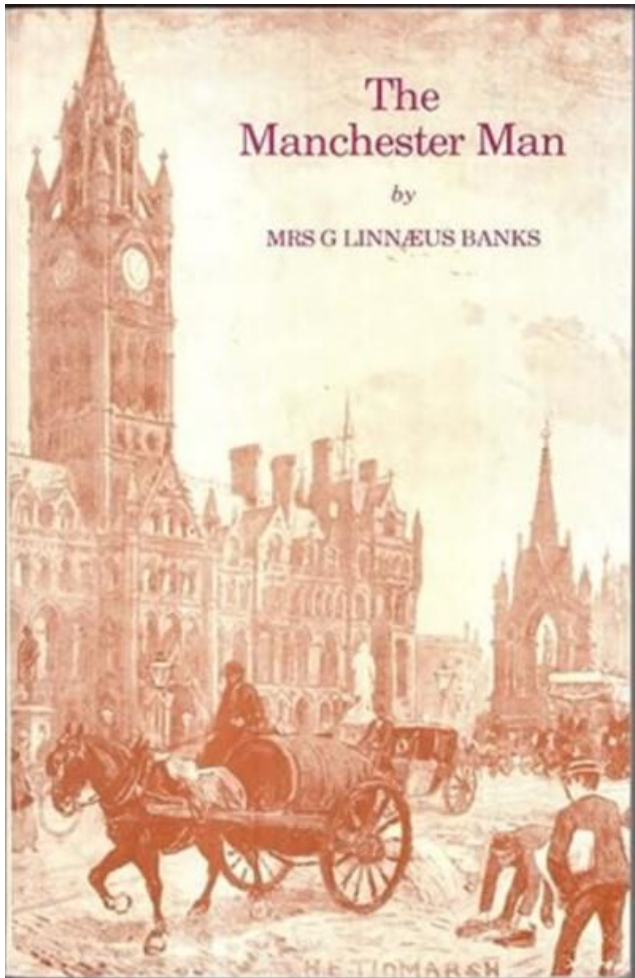


Figure 1.2 Front cover of *The Manchester Man* by Mrs George Linnaeus Banks. The novel was first published in 1874. This edition was published by Morten Publishers in 1991. The cover image is by Henry Edward Tidmarsh, *Manchester Town Hall and the Albert Memorial*. Illustration from William Arthur Shaw, *Manchester Old and New* (Cassell and Co., 1894), Vol. 1, 97. Cornell University Library. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t4sj22h58&seq=125> accessed 2/03/2025.

The cover of the 1991 edition of *The Manchester Man* (Fig. 1.2) featured a painting of Albert Square, by Henry Edward Tidmarsh (1855-1939), probably produced in the 1880s. The “Manchester Man” in question could perhaps be the well-dressed figure, carrying what might be a newspaper under his arm, who enters the prestigious square in the bottom right. This contemporary image may have been selected by publishers, many years after the initial publication, as symbolic of the commercial and civic success of which the “Manchester Man” aspired to be a part. It features the spectacular town hall, centre of municipal governance, and Albert Square’s

commemorative statues and monuments, including the Albert Memorial. In common with most contemporary images of Manchester, the busy scene is one of purposeful activity, drive and endeavour.

Bank's literary work, alongside that of other writers, came to be linked with the phenomenon of *Bildung*, through the literary form known as the *Bildungsroman*.

Manchester publications such as Geraldine Jewsbury's *Marian Withers* (1851) and Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) provided readers with a form of fiction chronicling a journey of upward mobility from humble beginnings. Protagonists demonstrated diligence, initiative and self-development. This frequently repeated trope led to the identification of a genre of rags-to-riches Manchester *Bildungsroman*.⁹¹ T. Thomas sees the Manchester *Bildungsroman* itself as a response to, and a promotion of, "the dominant social mythology of self-help and self-improvement" visible in Manchester at this time.⁹² Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship), published as a series from 1795 to 1796, is generally considered the first of this new genre.⁹³ This widely read work, translated by Thomas Carlyle in 1837, follows a young man's journey of self-education and the development of intellect, during which he comes to believe that, in fact, all of life is an apprenticeship. In the context of the visual arts, the verb *Bildung* relates to the noun *Bild* (image) and can translate as "to build" or "to create". It has been claimed that democratic access to the knowledge and potential for self-improvement offered by the public display of

⁹¹ T. Thomas, "Representation of the Manchester Working Class in Fiction, 1850–1900", in Kidd and Roberts (eds.) *City, Class and Culture*, 193.

⁹² Thomas, "Representation of the Manchester Working Class in Fiction", 199. The term was first used by philologist Karl Morgenstern in his university lectures in 1819 and was later promoted by Wilhelm Dilthey in the 1870s. See Giovanna Summerfield and Lisa Downward, *New Perspectives on the European Bildungsroman* (Continuum, 2010), 1.

⁹³ This was the second version of this novel; the first having been published when Goethe was just 25 in 1774. The second, much-revised version, produced while Goethe was working closely with Schiller, first appeared during 1795 and 1796, in three volumes divided into eight books.

visual art links directly to the prevailing social phenomenon of *Bildung*, encouraged by the German community.⁹⁴ Bill Williams, in his historical account of the large German Jewish community in Victorian Manchester, outlines how this population were moved by the contagious “spirit of improvement” amongst the middle classes. Williams even sees the eventual incorporation of Manchester as a city in 1853, allowing Manchester residents to describe themselves as citizens rather than townspeople, as symptomatic of this drive.⁹⁵

The role of the visual arts, alongside music and theatre, was considered particularly significant in offering opportunities for emotional and spiritual experience beyond everyday life. Encountering new ideas and perspectives and experiencing the unfamiliar provides the challenge necessary for *Bildung* to be achieved. In mid-nineteenth-century Manchester, German immigrants in particular actively sought and created cultural and educational opportunities. For example, as Peter Gay records, Hermann Leo, a calico print company owner, found that the 1848 public music scene in Manchester did not offer the same diversions as the major cities of his native Germany. He went to London to invite German piano virtuoso Charles Hallé, a German refugee then living in Paris, to move to Manchester. The move proved a great success for Hallé and the music lovers of Manchester, as he went on to found one of the first city orchestras, Manchester’s now world-famous Hallé Orchestra.⁹⁶ The spirit of self-improvement also pervades many official pronouncements and commentaries. As the *Manchester Guardian* reported, at the first Annual General

⁹⁴ Waterfield, *The People’s Galleries*, 40. This theme is also explored by Sheehan in *Museums in the German Art World*.

⁹⁵ Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875* (Manchester University Press, 1931), 88.

⁹⁶ Leo offered to set Hallé up with pupils, a rented house and a receptive audience. The European contacts of the German families brought other musicians to Manchester. When Frédéric Chopin visited in 1848, he stayed with “the kind Schwabes.” These examples are recounted by Peter Gay, *Pleasure Wars: The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud (Vol V)*, (W. W. Norton and Company, 1993), 76.

Meeting of the Athenaeum in January 1836, James Heywood, the President, spoke of the need for a younger generation of merchants to acquire “more elevated tastes, and improved habits, instead of passing their leisure hours in idleness and dissipation... (and so to raise themselves) in the estimate of all around them, by their increased intelligence, zeal and usefulness.”⁹⁷

In the nineteenth century, however, the laudable character traits of *The Manchester Man* would not have been universally recognised. The stereotypical caricatures of ignorant and philistine Northern industrialists, which were often promoted by the Southern press, influenced contemporary views and have been perpetuated to this day in the work of writers such as Charles Dickens and William Makepeace Thackeray.⁹⁸ Moore discusses how these views reflected “popular prejudices against the city’s ruling class – its industrial character and regional rivalries.”⁹⁹

In truth, the industrial middle class of Manchester were actually leading economic growth and productivity thanks to their creativity, imagination and intellectual rigour. The strong support from radical and Chartist groups in Manchester for reforming initiatives throughout the nineteenth century, often facing strong opposition from London-based interests, has been well documented.¹⁰⁰ These were also the people at the forefront of campaigns such as the working-class movement for political

⁹⁷ The Manchester Athenaeum for the Advancement and Diffusion of Knowledge was founded in 1836. See report in the *Manchester Guardian*, 14 January 1836.

⁹⁸ In Dickens’s *Hard Times* (London, 1854), characters such as Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby are caricatures of Manchester Industrialists.

⁹⁹ James Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys – Art Institutions and Urban Society in Lancashire 1780-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2018), 65.

¹⁰⁰ For example, there were a number of anti-slavery organisations in Manchester in the early nineteenth century, including the Anti-Slavery Society Union, the Constitutional Society, the Ladies’ Anti-Slavery Society, the Emancipation Society and the Manchester Union. The Manchester Anti-Slavery Committee organised a petition in support of MP William Wilberforce, calling for the abolition of the slave trade, and collected over 10,500 names: roughly one in five Mancunians.

<http://revealinghistories.org.uk> accessed 13/08/2022. For a summary of Manchester’s complex direct and indirect connections to the Atlantic Slave Trade, see https://www.bbc.co.uk/manchester/content/articles/2007/03/19/190306_slavery_history_manchester_feature.shtml accessed 25/11/2025. See also Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (University of California Press, 1993), chapter 3, “Manchester, Symbol of a New Age”, 97, 99 and 103.

reform known as Chartism, prominent from 1838 to 1858.¹⁰¹ Manchester figures such as Richard Cobden (1804-1865) and John Bright (1811–1889) promoted free trade and founded the Anti-Corn Law League. Expounding liberal principles, they called for a more equitable society, making essential products available to all. In 1844, the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers founded what became the model for modern co-operative societies.¹⁰² Manchester was also a driving force in the Abolition of Slavery. Jonathan Westaway discusses the way in which the Liberal and Nonconformist middle classes of Manchester also related in a wider context to the ongoing struggles of reformers and liberals in the German states, seeing in them a mirror of their own battle for regional autonomy against a centralising state driven from London.¹⁰³

In the period between 1774 and 1830, this area of North West England and the fifteen or so newly industrialised towns, for which Manchester acted as a key trading centre, grew dramatically in population. It was claimed that the population within an hour's ride of Manchester was greater than that in an equivalent radius around London. By 1844, the population of Manchester and Salford was around 350,000, and a total of over a million people were believed to inhabit the industrial districts within twelve miles of the Manchester Exchange.¹⁰⁴ With industrialisation and the growth in the urban population came an increased need for civic and governmental

¹⁰¹Chartism took its name from the People's Charter of 1838 and was a national protest movement, with particular strongholds of support in Northern England. It was launched in 1838 with a huge meeting held in Kersal near Manchester. <https://www.visitmanchester.com/ideas-and-inspiration/blog/post/manchester-s-political-history/> accessed 25/11/2025.

¹⁰² <https://www.visitmanchester.com/ideas-and-inspiration/blog/post/manchester-s-political-history/> accessed 25/11/2025.

¹⁰³Jonathan Westaway, "The German Community in Manchester, Middle-class Culture and the Development of Mountaineering in Britain, c1850-1914", *The English Historical Review*, CXXIV (508, 2009), 572.

https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/1133/1/westaway_german_community_manchester_middle-class_culture_mountaineering_britain.pdf accessed 07/11/2024.

¹⁰⁴ Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Trans. Florence Kelley Wiscunewetzky (John W. Lovell, 1877), 32. "The whole assemblage of buildings is commonly called Manchester, and contains about four hundred thousand inhabitants, rather more than less."

structures. Newly industrialised cities were home to a middle- and working-class population with disposable income to spend on leisure activities and an aspiration for both commercial and social success.

Manchester's German Connections

Manchester had a significant and longstanding German population linked to the textile industry, and the nineteenth century saw a considerable increase in their numbers. As Williams recalls, by 1838, there were 101 foreign export firms registered in Manchester, and seventy-five per cent of them were German.¹⁰⁵ Friedrich Engels came to Manchester in 1842 to work at the headquarters of the family firm *Ermen & Engels* in Weaste, just outside Manchester, and remained there for almost 30 years. James Ogden (1718–1802), a fustian cutter, author and school master, observed as early as 1783 that the openness of Manchester to strangers was the basis of a strong economy and a large wage-earning middle class.¹⁰⁶ The presence of these Germans and their families attracted other European residents and visitors. So well recognised was the German population that in 1876, boys' outfitter *Andrew Macbeth und Söhne* thought it worthwhile to publish an advertisement in *The Manchester Guardian* written wholly in German.¹⁰⁷ *The Manchester Guardian* advertised German publications, in German, and a new restaurant, *The Eureka*, in Market Street, supplied the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in its public coffee rooms.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 125. By the 1870s, there were several hundred textile and merchanting companies in the North West owned by Germans. See Su Coates, 'Manchester's German Gentlemen: Immigrant Institutions in a Provincial City 1840-1920', *Manchester Region History Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1991-92. Also see J. Scholes, *List of foreign merchants residing in Manchester*, MCL microfilm (MF 1286).

¹⁰⁶ James Ogden, *Manchester a hundred Years ago: being a reprint of A Description of Manchester by a native of the town, J. Ogden, published in 1783*, William E. A. Axon (ed.), republished 1866 (British Library, Historical Print Editions, 2011), 93. James Ogden was born in Manchester in 1718. He was a school master at a school connected to the Manchester Collegiate Church who published a number of volumes, including this one describing his native town. Dictionary of National Biography, https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography_1885-1900/Ogden,_James, accessed 18/10/2024.

¹⁰⁷ *Manchester Guardian*, 17 November 1876, 6.

¹⁰⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 4 July 1849, 4.

Even to casual visitors, the German population was very visible within the city. As a contemporary travel reporter recalled, "the Germans are sufficiently numerous to be able to form a society of their own, the most agreeable in Manchester."¹⁰⁹ While the German population clearly integrated widely and successfully into the wider social and commercial Manchester community, a variety of initiatives maintained and promoted German culture within the city. In 1841, as the *Manchester Guardian* recorded, newly arrived German exiles and "German gentlemen resident in Manchester" began to hold regular meetings of a *Liedertafel*, "for the purpose of the practice of their national songs."¹¹⁰ The society held open concerts, at which the invited guests were treated, according to the *Guardian*, to a "fine burst of patriotic spirit and sentiment, in good harmonious blending."¹¹¹ In April 1847, the society hosted Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), who was visiting Manchester as the guest of German-born textile manufacturer Charles Souchay (Carl Souchay, 1799-1872).¹¹² During the 1840s, a popular focus for social activities aimed at the German population was the Albert Anstalt (Club), named in honour of the German Prince Consort.¹¹³

The presence of educated German middle classes had a greater social and civic impact in Manchester than in other centres such as Liverpool or London. This may be because there was simply a much greater proportion of German residents per head of population. However, the newly expanding city also lacked the pre-existing organisational hierarchy of London, which was largely dominated by aristocratic

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Sidney, *Rides on Railways* (London, 1851), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13271/13271-h/13271-h.htm>. No page numbers; Manchester section, accessed 08/10/2024.

¹¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 11 February 1846, concerts were usually held in the Music Saloon of the Albion Hotel in Piccadilly.

¹¹¹ *Manchester Guardian*, 21 March 1847.

¹¹² *Manchester Guardian*, 21 March 1847.

¹¹³ Coates, "Manchester's German Gentlemen", 22.

families. There were more opportunities for immigrant families to influence the development of new and existing institutions. The many separate governments of the various German-speaking states also provided greater opportunity for the direct involvement of the university-educated classes in the practical organisation of society.¹¹⁴ This was also a period in which the rapid development of British provincial cities led to considerable local autonomy in relation to central government. As John Seed and Janet Wolff discuss, “the decentralised character of the Victorian state served the interests of the middle class by placing at its disposal a significant range of executive functions: the levying of a local rate, the management of police, poor and criminal law, the implementation of parliamentary legislation, the regulation of the local labour market...”¹¹⁵

The Power of Dissent

The city had a history of non-conformism and a strong Unitarian faction. Many writers on the Industrial Revolution have noted that a large percentage of the merchants, manufacturers, scientists and inventors who pioneered social and economic change during this period were members of dissenting sects, such as Unitarians and Quakers, outside the mainstream Anglican Church.¹¹⁶ The general openness to liberal and radical ideals in Manchester created a tolerance that also drew German émigrés and German families migrating due to the political and religious upheavals in Europe during this period. As Margaret Littler details, in the early nineteenth century many wealthy German merchant families were driven to settle in Manchester during the Napoleonic Wars. These included a number of

¹¹⁴ Watson, *German Genius*, 54.

¹¹⁵ Janet Wolff and John Seed, *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power, and the Nineteenth-Century Middle Class* (Manchester University Press, 1988), 32.

¹¹⁶ Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age*, 33.

names that will recur throughout this thesis, such as the manufacturer and exporter of cotton textiles Solomon Levi Behrens (1791-1873 - arrived 1814), the calico printer Salis Schwabe (Salomon ben Elias Schwabe, 1800–1853, in Manchester from 1818), the textile and shipping merchant Johann-Carl Schunck (1745-1800), grandfather of Manchester born chemist Henry Edward Schunck (1820-1903), and members of the banking and cotton trading Schuster family (arrived 1808).¹¹⁷

Dissent also appears to have fostered originality, as it involved challenging established norms and reinforced the drive to succeed despite oppressive forces.¹¹⁸ Unitarians were particularly prominent amongst Manchester's cultural elite, and dissenters in general benefited from close networks of social support and communication within the city.¹¹⁹ Both the Mosley Street Chapel and the Cross Street Unitarian Chapel, under the ministry of William Gaskell (1805-1884), from 1828 to 1884, husband of writer Elizabeth "Mrs Gaskell" (1810-1865), were significant centres for the intellectual life of Manchester.¹²⁰ The "Cross Street people" were also prominent in driving political and social reform in the City. John Edward Taylor (1791-1844), a Trustee of the Chapel, was a prominent town councillor and the first editor of *The Manchester Guardian*, "organ" of the Cross Street Unitarians.¹²¹ The Gaskell family home in Plymouth Grove was also a social and

¹¹⁷ Following the French Revolution of 1789, Napoleon took power in France in 1799. The French Revolutionary Wars followed, and for a short time, Napoleon conquered most of continental Europe. Military occupation led to national rebellions, particularly in Spain and Germany. See Margaret Littler, "Context, cosmopolitanism and connectivity. The German diaspora in Manchester", in *The Simons of Manchester* <https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526176400.00013>, Online Publication Date: 24 Sep 2024, <https://www.manchesterhive.com/display/9781526176400/9781526176400.00013.xml> accessed 05/01/2025. The mid-nineteenth century saw a further wave of immigration as, inspired by revolutions elsewhere, the German Revolutions of 1848-49 led to protests and riots throughout the German states. Liberal middle classes, nationalists, and workers demanded greater political and religious freedoms alongside a more representative government. The failure of these uprisings and the subsequent backlash led to many of the liberal middle classes fleeing into exile.

¹¹⁸ Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age*, 32.

¹¹⁹ <https://octagonchapelnorwich.org.uk/explore-the-chapel/what-is-unitarianism/history-of-unitarianism-in-england>

¹²⁰ Joseph Aston, *A picture of Manchester* (printed by the author, 1816), 96. <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007081359>

¹²¹ Geoffrey Head, "Cross Street Chapel in the Time of the Gaskells", <https://cross-street-chapel.org.uk/cross-street-chapel-in-the-time-of-the-gaskells/> accessed 17/01/2026.

networking centre for German families, particularly those, like Salis Schwabe, calico printer, philanthropist and member of the Council of the Manchester School of Art, who was also linked with the Cross Street Chapel.¹²² Charles Saumarez Smith cites the rising influence of Unitarians, with their belief in the importance of the arts to society, as a key factor in the rapid institutionalisation of the arts in Britain from the 1840s. “They believed that art had a wide social, political and educational value, should be taken away from the clutches of the traditional connoisseurs and used, instead, as an instrument of social amelioration.”¹²³

There was a complex and influential network of Germanophiles among the intellectual and political elites of Victorian Britain, which, at the start of the nineteenth century, had an estimated population of just ten million.¹²⁴ Key individuals played disproportionately important roles in facilitating discussion and stimulating thinking within their personal networks and more widely in their published works. As Angela Schwarz reminds us, “Germany was indeed debated by the most influential sections of society, but the group of debaters was not that large.”¹²⁵ This group appears to have been particularly well represented in Manchester. The Gaskells’ influential circle of Germanophiles included wider members of the close-knit Unitarian community, such as the Norwich-based Unitarian William Taylor (1765-1836). Taylor was a prolific literary critic and a notable supporter and translator of German Romantic literature. A significant biography of William Taylor was written by his second cousin, Norwich Unitarian John Warden Robberds (1789–1854). Robberds

¹²² <https://gaskellsociety.co.uk/elizabeth-gaskell/> accessed 30/05/2025.

¹²³ Charles Saumarez Smith, “The Institutionalisation of Art in Early Victorian England”, *Colin Matthew Memorial Lecture*, Gresham College, 11 November 2009, <https://charlessaumarezsmith.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/the-institutionalisation-of-art.pdf>

¹²⁴ <https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/population-of-england-millennium> accessed 25/03/2023.

¹²⁵ Angela Schwarz, review of Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, Siegen University, online publication, <https://www.uni-siegen.de/phil/geschichte/mitarbeiter/schwarz/rezension05.pdf>, accessed 12/05/25.

was another member of the interconnected Manchester-Norwich Unitarian circle, who became a senior Unitarian minister at Cross Street Chapel and served as a colleague to William Gaskell from 1828.¹²⁶ Norwich-born Unitarians Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), a pioneering sociologist, campaigner, and writer, and her brother James (1805–1900), a renowned Unitarian philosopher and theologian, were both strongly influenced in their different spheres by German thought.¹²⁷ They also had strong personal and professional links to Manchester.¹²⁸

Also closely connected with the Gaskells was Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881). Carlyle was particularly influential in popularising German literature in Britain through his translations of Goethe, such as *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1824), originally published in 1795, and his biography of Friedrich Schiller (1825).¹²⁹ Anna Jameson (1794-1860), an influential writer on travel, particularly in Germany, and art history, was a close friend of both Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau.¹³⁰ Avery-Quash

¹²⁶ [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Taylor,_William_\(1765-1836\)](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Taylor,_William_(1765-1836)) accessed 10/01/2026. John Gooch Robberds, who was William Taylor's second cousin and biographer, was also a senior Unitarian minister at Cross Street Chapel in Manchester and served as a colleague to William Gaskell from 1828. See https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Robberds,_John_Gooch accessed 10/01/2026.

¹²⁷ <https://www.martineausociety.co.uk/page3.html> accessed 10/01/2026.

¹²⁸ James taught at Manchester New College from 1840 <https://martineausociety.co.uk/the-martineaus/james-martineau/> accessed 10/01/2026. Harriet wrote an influential 1832 novella, "A Manchester Strike", as part of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* (Charles Fox, Paternoster-Row, 1834), Volume 3, of 9 <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/71169> accessed 08/01/2026. See John Vint, *Harriet Martineau and industrial strife: from theory into fiction into melodrama*. Working Paper (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2007) <https://e-space.mmu.ac.uk/14684/1/2007-02.pdf> accessed 10/01/2026. Henry Crabb Robinson (1775-1867), who was another leading Unitarian, spent three years as a student at the University of Jena, writing pioneering articles on Kant, Schelling, and on the developing field of aesthetics. He was later influential in making German literature and philosophy more widely known in Britain through his work as a foreign correspondent for *The Times of London* and his diaries and other writings. See *The Letters of Henry Crabb Robinson*, Wordsworth Library, Grasmere, transcribed and edited by Timothy Whelan (Queen Mary, University of London, 2013), <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/sed/religionandliterature/media/centre-for-religion-and-literature-in-english/HCR.pdf> accessed 05/01/2025. See also Barbara Brill, *William Gaskell, 1805–1884: A Portrait* (Manchester Literary and Philosophical Publications, 1984), 20. Crabb Robinson was based in London but retained Manchester links from his time as a student alongside Gaskell at Manchester New College from 1825 to 1828. He visited Manchester to speak at the Mosley Street Chapel, and he was also a member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society. Gaskell was a fellow member from 1840 to 1884 and Vice President from 1869 to 1876 and again from 1882 to 1883. <https://archive.org/details/williamgaskell180000bril/page/20/mode/2up> accessed 08/01/2025.

¹²⁹ Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of Friedrich Schiller: Comprehending an Examination of His Works*. (Carter, Hendee, 1833) <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.hwsnqh&seq=13> accessed 02/01/2026. For Carlyle's role in the promotion of German literature and particularly the work of Goethe in Britain, see Rosemary D. Ashton, "Carlyle's Apprenticeship: His Early German Criticism and His Relationship with Goethe (1822-1832)," *The Modern Language Review* 71, no. 1 (1976): 1–18. JSTOR <https://doi.org/10.2307/3724374> accessed 08/01/2025.

¹³⁰ Frances Clarke, *Biography of Anna Brownell Jameson* <https://www.dib.ie/biography/jameson-anna-brownell-a4254#:~:text=Her%20circle%20also%20included%20Fanny,Briggs%20RA%20in%201835>. During Jameson's extensive travels in Germany, she befriended Otilie von Goethe, a niece of Goethe.

has identified how Jameson was indirectly involved in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, assisting George Scharf (1820-1895), the future director of the National Portrait Gallery, in planning the 'Gallery of Ancient Masters'. In a letter to one of the lenders, Scharf wrote that he had "been guided not only by Waagen's notes, but what my friend Mrs Jameson has at various times mentioned to me."¹³¹ Other significant Germanophiles, while not directly connected with Manchester, were widely read and reviewed there, with mentions in local papers.¹³²

Education

The German education system, in general, was held in high esteem in Britain during the nineteenth century. The significant level of interest is evidenced by the publication of a number of studies on the subject.¹³³ Victor Cousin's *Report on the State of Public Instruction in Prussia* (Rapport sur l'état de l'instruction publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemagne, et particulièrement en Prusse) was translated into English by another of the Norwich Unitarians, Sarah Austin (née Taylor; 1793-1867).¹³⁴ Austin's many German translations did much to familiarise British audiences with German ideas.¹³⁵ This document was originally commissioned by the French Government to examine the state-controlled and compulsory education

¹³¹ Susanna Avery-Quash, "Postscript to 'Illuminating the Old Masters and Enlightening the British Public'", 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 2019, 28. <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.873> and Scharf to Fuller Maitland, 1 October 1856, Manchester City Library, M6/2/6/1/24-25, first cited in Elizabeth A. Pergam, "Waking the Soul": The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 and the State of the Arts in Mid-Victorian Britain' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Institute of Fine Arts/New York University, 2001), 118.

¹³² *Manchester Weekly Times*, Saturday March 12, 1888, 7. These included Unitarian philosopher, political economist, and advocate for civil liberties, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), English novelist, poet, journalist and translator George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) (1819-1880) and William Wordsworth (1770-1850), among others, <https://georgeeliotarchive.org/files/original/eac82c967369b32ff9ebb122b96f710b.pdf> accessed 05/01/2026.

¹³³ For example: W.E. Hickson, *Dutch and German Schools. An Account of the Present State of Education in Holland, Belgium and the German States* (Taylor and Walton, 1840) https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Dutch_and_German_Schools/rcpCAQAAMAAJ?hl=en&qbpv=1 J Payne, *A Visit to German Schools. Notes of a Professional Tour* (Henry S King & Co, 1876), and W. C. Perry, *German University Education; or, the Professors and Students of Germany* (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1845).

¹³⁴ Victor Cousins, *Report on the State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, Sarah Austin trans. (Effingham Wilson, 1834). <https://archive.org/details/reportonstatepu00cousgoog/mode/2up>

¹³⁵ Chisholm, Hugh, ed. "Austin, Sarah". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 02 (11th ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 940.

system in Prussia.¹³⁶ It advocates the Prussian model of structured progression from primary to secondary (Gymnasien) and specialised vocational schools, and state rather than church supervision, as a solution for educational reform. The report also highlights the importance of state-run training colleges for teachers.¹³⁷

In 1840, William Edward Hickson (1803–1870), editor of the *Westminster Review* and a prominent writer on education reform, published *Dutch and German Schools: An Account of the Present State of Education in Holland, Belgium and the German States*. This aimed to promote what he saw as the superior national education systems of Holland and Germany. He detailed, for example, how the German state of Bavaria, with a population of 4.3 million, had three universities, nine lyceums, seventy-four gymnasiums, eight “normal schools for school-masters” (teacher training colleges), three polytechnics and thirty-two “mechanic schools”. With a further 6,508 primary schools taken into account, Hickson estimated that one in five of the Bavarian population was engaged in a course of education.¹³⁸ This was in stark contrast to the English position. It is estimated that only around half of English children received any regular schooling in the 1840s. Until 1870, all English primary schools were charitable or private institutions, many with a very basic curriculum.¹³⁹

From 1809, Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835), as Privy Counsellor in the Prussian Interior Ministry, had standardised the system of public education. Humboldt's educational model aimed to provide more than professional or vocational training

¹³⁶ The report was commissioned by Count de Montalivet, the French Minister of Public Instruction.

¹³⁷ Cousins, *Report on the State of Public Instruction in Prussia*, 25, 28 & 38.

¹³⁸ Hickson, *Dutch and German Schools*, 7.

¹³⁹ Derek Gillard, *Education in the UK: a history* (online publication, 2018), Chapter 5, www.education-uk.org/history accessed 27/01/2026.

along a fixed path; his was education in its broadest sense, allowing students to develop their own skills and talents. The integration of the arts and sciences aimed to provide students with a general education, cultural knowledge and skills of critical engagement. While no single theory named *Bildung* exists in Humboldt's writings, many of which have been lost, the fragmentary ideas that do survive indicate that Humboldt promoted a philosophical approach to education that focused on self-improvement. He saw the aim of education as the development of a harmonious and well-balanced personality, proposing, for example, that young men learning carpentry should also learn Greek and vice versa. In this original German context, *Bildung* has no relation to physical work or commercial activity. It is a process engaged in for its own sake, without a defined aim or outcome and the product of leisure. Of particular relevance to the development of public art was Humboldt's view that education should not be a privilege for the few but available to all.¹⁴⁰ The model of higher education developed by Humboldt at the University of Berlin, now Humboldt University of Berlin, was widely adopted across Europe and in Britain in later decades. He introduced a faculty structure, which promoted academic freedom and a holistic approach to research-oriented teaching by professors who were experts in their fields.

Dissenters and others in Manchester benefited, both directly and indirectly, from German educational provision. From the seventeenth century, dissenters were excluded from Anglican institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge Universities, which required students to adhere to official Church doctrine. It was relatively

¹⁴⁰ Jan C. Bongaerts, "The Humboldtian Model of Higher Education and its Significance for the European University on Responsible Consumption and Production". *Berg Huettenmaenn Monatsh* 167, 500–507 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00501-022-01280-w> accessed 17/01/2026.

common for Mancunian families, particularly those from Non-Conformist backgrounds, to send their children to be educated in Germany.¹⁴¹ The professionalisation of German university study, particularly of science, under the leadership of Humboldt, meant that, according to Davis, "anyone wishing to pursue a career in science was forced to look to Germany for a training, and after 1830 it became practically obligatory for them to do so."¹⁴²

As Davis details, respect for the German education system motivated the election of Prince Albert as Chancellor of Cambridge University in 1847. The prestige of German education also meant opportunities for employment in Britain for German governesses and tutors. In Manchester, for example, as Rosemary Ashton records, Julie Schwabe (1818-1896), wife of the previously mentioned prominent German manufacturer Salis Schwabe, employed the German educationalist and author Malwida von Meysenbug (1816–1903) as a governess. Julia Schwabe was herself an important promoter of German, particularly Froebelian, teaching methods in Britain.¹⁴³ Dissenters also set up their own schools, with Warrington Academy, for example, in operation from 1756 to 1782.¹⁴⁴ Most significant among these schools was Owens College, founded in 1851, now the University of Manchester, which, almost uniquely in Britain, provided quality higher education open to Catholics, Jews and religious dissenters. The German-British locomotive designer, Charles Beyer (1813-1876), who had studied at the Dresden Academy Polytechnic, was the first

¹⁴¹ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 145.

¹⁴² Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 297.

¹⁴³ See Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany* (Oxford University Press, 1989), 154.

¹⁴⁴ Irene Parker, *Dissenting academies in England: their rise and progress, and their place among the educational systems of the country* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), 105–130.

governor of the college.¹⁴⁵ The research-based teaching approaches at Owen's College were modelled on those employed in German universities and polytechnics. Many of the key British staff had attended German universities, and the college also attracted German staff, including Carl Schorlemmer (1834-1892), Britain's first professor of organic chemistry and Edward Schunck (1829-1903), whose work on the chemistry of dyes brought him into close contact with the textile manufacturers of the area.¹⁴⁶ There was even a German chapel on the campus.¹⁴⁷ Students from this institution came to make important scientific and technological contributions to industrial change.

Early interest in the application of scientific and philosophical ideas, largely stemming from Germany, is evidenced by initiatives such as the establishment of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Institution in 1781. Records of this society provide evidence of the wider transnational cultural dialogue taking place in Manchester during the mid-nineteenth century. Memoirs of the society were published in London, Paris and New York.¹⁴⁸ Close links existed between the Society and other early research institutes.¹⁴⁹ While the Members of the Society included many of those also prominent in the development of arts institutions in Manchester, including Germans such as Salis Schwabe, Honorary Members included a number

¹⁴⁵ Charles Frederick Beyer was an anglicised form of his original German name Carl Friedrich Beyer. Beyer left the college the equivalent of £10 million in his will in 1876. <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/history-heritage/history/buildings/beyer/> accessed 06/05/2024.

¹⁴⁶ Manchester mill owner, Thomas Ashton, chairman of the group driving its expansion, had studied at Heidelberg University. Sir Henry Roscoe also studied at Heidelberg under Robert Bunsen, and they collaborated for many years on research projects. University of Manchester, Department of Chemistry Archive. University of Manchester Library. GB 133 DCH/2/19. See also the Archives Hub website, <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb133-dch/dch/2/19> accessed 06/11/2019.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Thompson, *The Owens College: its foundation and growth; and its connection with the Victoria University, Manchester* (J. E. Cornish, 1886), 300. <https://archive.org/stream/owenscollegeitsf00thomuoft#page/300/mode/2up/search/german+universities> accessed 18/05/2022.

¹⁴⁸ *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, Volume 10 (H. Bailliere, 1852), inner front page, not numbered <https://archive.org/details/memoirsandproce35socigoog/page/n8/mode/2up> accessed 25/11/2025.

¹⁴⁹ The 1852 list of books presented to the society during the preceding year includes no fewer than 19 items of recent research and proceedings from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, as well as proceedings from the American Institute for the Advancement of Science, two German scientific publications and three French. *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 230. <https://archive.org/details/memoirsandproce35socigoog/page/n252> accessed 27/03/2019.

noted as “Munich”, “Dresden” and “Berlin”, including German polymath Baron Alexander von Humbolt (1769-1859), and other prominent German figures such as bio-chemist Justus Freiherr (Baron) von Liebig (1803-1873).¹⁵⁰ Simon Gunn stresses the close connections between the social, cultural and organisational forms of middle-class culture in British industrial cities. He identifies that, by the mid-nineteenth century, these were part of a larger, international bourgeois culture and in many ways very similar to those found in Europe, especially Germany, which led to “a burgeoning network of voluntary associations, fostering sociability and cultural improvement.”¹⁵¹

The educational benefits of exposure to visual art seem to have been widely accepted in the mid-nineteenth century. For example, editor Samuel Carter Hall reflected with pride on the wider public access to art and its universally acknowledged educational value, in the twentieth issue of *The Art Journal* on 1 December 1857.

Art has largely progressed in England, Scotland and Ireland during the past twenty years... It is a Teacher of the many, and not of the few. Its lessons have been so widely disseminated that the Artisan and the Villager may command all, or nearly all, the resources which, until recently, were regarded as appertaining to the high-born or rich.¹⁵²

This commentary, in a distinguished and widely read journal, reveals two significant narratives that were part of the national conversation about the role of art. Firstly, that of art as cultural capital and a marker of national progress, and secondly, art as pedagogy, an instrument of education, which, in its extension across wider ranks of

¹⁵⁰ See *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 230.

¹⁵¹ Simon Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester University Press, 2000), 27.

¹⁵² Samuel Carter Hall, *The Art Journal*, Volume III, 361. <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015035426892&seq=431> accessed 29/03/2024.

society, became an indicator of national progress.¹⁵³ In addition, these endeavours often had a moral aim, with exposure to art credited with encouraging people to become better citizens. Woodson-Boulton claims that “as a result of art’s new moral status, reformers began to advocate art as a potentially active and democratic force for making nature, beauty, and the morality of expressive labour available in the industrial city.”¹⁵⁴

The Subjective

In the early nineteenth century, German Idealism and Romanticism as general philosophies had a particular bearing on the production and reception of visual art and also on the prevailing approaches to creative and aesthetic production in literature, poetry and music. The philosophical meaning of Idealism is that what we experience as reality is a subjective construct, formed through the filter of our minds and subject to alteration by both physiological and psychological forces. This concept of subjectivity, which gained acceptance in the nineteenth century, was pioneered by German philosophers from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) onwards, further developed by thinkers such as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762-1814), who brought a particular focus on self-consciousness and the idea of the “*Ich*”, or self, as the centre of free will.¹⁵⁵ Fichte, inspired by his reading of Kant, developed what he called *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge), the entire philosophical system of which is based on subjectivity.¹⁵⁶ Historian Andrea Wulf has documented the complex interrelations between the extraordinary group of German

¹⁵³ Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Woodson-Boulton, “Industry without Art Is Brutality”, 47-71.

¹⁵⁵ Fichte was at the University of Jena between 1794 and 1799. In the early nineteenth century, the Universities of Halle and Göttingen also embraced *Wissenschaft* as an active process of knowledge formation by the individual, based on scholarship and research rather than a static body of knowledge. See Watson, *German Genius*, 53.

¹⁵⁶ On Fichte’s doctrine, see Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/johann-fichte/> accessed 19/03/2024.

intellectuals, playwrights, poets, and philosophers, who were all, for a brief period, based in the small German University town of Jena in the 1790s.¹⁵⁷ Wulf explores the impact of their “obsession with the free self” and subjective expression through poetry, drama, philosophy and science, which initiated the Romantic movement and led to the modern conception of self-determination. This group included figures who will feature later in this discussion: creative writers Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805), philosophers Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831).¹⁵⁸

As Susanna Avery-Quash and Julie Sheldon identify, German thinking about the distinctiveness and individuality of character was a very significant and influential theme.¹⁵⁹ It was individuals, rather than corporations or governments, who largely took the lead in implementing public access to visual art during the early years of civic development. In Manchester, as will become apparent in my case studies, many of these drivers of change were first- or second-generation Germans or were strongly influenced by German models and ideas. While the Victorian bureaucracy of organisational committees and sub-committees inevitably followed in any major project, the initial leadership of individuals was key. This was, of course, not something unique to Manchester, as Avery-Quash and Sheldon claim “the rapid institutionalisation of the arts in this country owed much to the verve, wisdom and energy of particular individuals.”¹⁶⁰ In London, however, Germanophile Sir Charles

¹⁵⁷ Andrea Wulf, *Magnificent Rebels, The First Romantics and the Invention of the Self* (John Murray, 2022).

¹⁵⁸ Also included were Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, better known by his pen name of Novalis (1772–1801), brothers August Wilhelm Schlegel (1767–1845) and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854).

¹⁵⁹ Avery-Quash & Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 28.

¹⁶⁰ Avery-Quash & Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, xvi.

Eastlake (1793-1865), as first Director of the National Gallery from 1855, struggled to implement his German-inspired ideas against entrenched views, xenophobia and institutional inertia.¹⁶¹ In Manchester, where change and innovation were evident throughout the city and essential to commercial success, new ideas appear to have been met with less resistance.

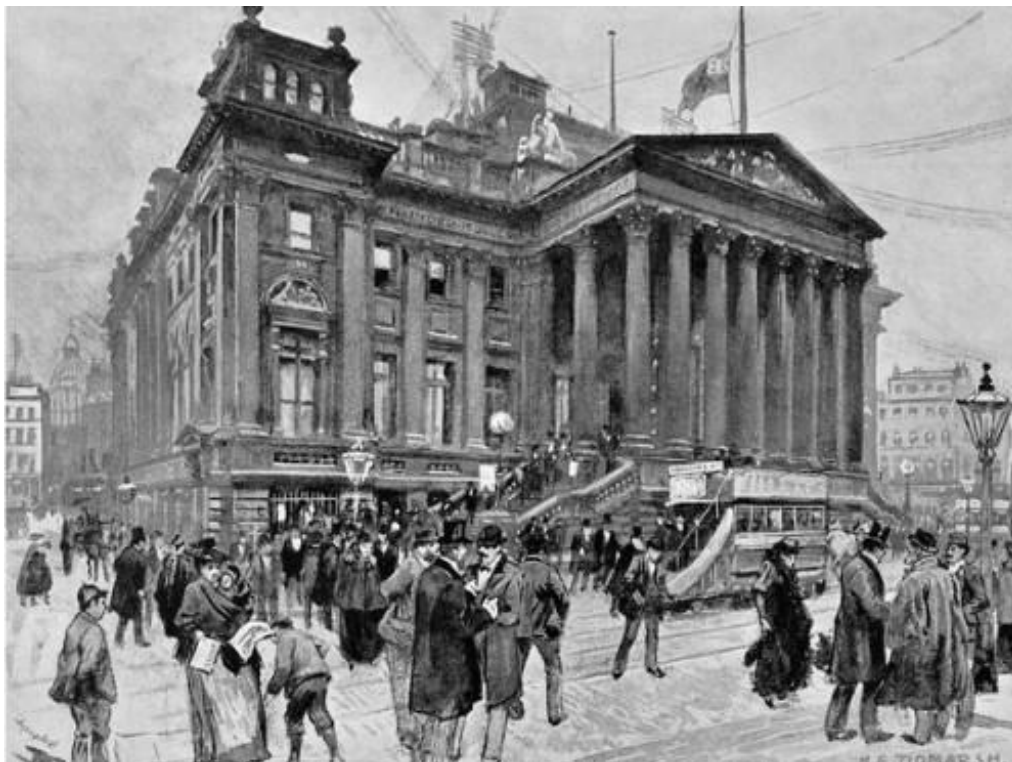


Figure 1.3 H. E. Tidmarsh, *The Royal Exchange, Cross Street*, 1894.
 Illustration from *Manchester Old and New*, by William Arthur Shaw (Cassell and Co. 1894), Vol 11, Plate 15, 32.
 Cornell University Library. <https://archive.org/details/cu31924052531781/page/n51/mode/2up>
 This building was designed by Mills & Murgatroyd and constructed between 1867 and 1874.

¹⁶¹ Avery-Quash & Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 177.

Manchester Society

The wide range of cultural and educational institutions established in Manchester during the period 1820-1850 provides further evidence of the growth of a vibrant and diverse intellectual environment. 1832-1837 alone saw, among other events, the founding of the Manchester Statistical Society; the Manchester Medical Society; the Geological Society; the Athenaeum; Salford Mechanics Institute; Manchester Architectural Society, the staging of a music festival and the opening of both the Manchester Natural History Museum and the zoological gardens.¹⁶² The first lending library in Manchester was established in 1757. This was followed by a range of reading rooms and libraries accessible to the whole population.¹⁶³ When the popular Manchester Foreign Library was established in 1830, over half the twenty-four-strong organising committee were of German heritage.¹⁶⁴ Within five years, the library was being cited in *The Manchester Guardian* as the symbol of Manchester's cosmopolitan outlook: "If the present age values itself on the extinction of some national prejudices, to what can this be attributed but to the extension of our intercourse with foreigners."¹⁶⁵ As discussed in Chapter 2, the 1823 inauguration of the Royal Manchester Institution, following donations of over £23,000, illustrates the commitment of the community to the arts.

Fig. 1.3 depicts a Manchester street scene with the grand portico entrance to the second Royal Exchange building, in Cross Street, designed by Mills & Murgatroyd,

¹⁶² Peter Cunningham, *The formation of the Schools of Design, 1830-1850, with special reference to Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds*, PhD thesis, University of Leeds, <https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/636/> accessed 05/05/2024. This thesis includes a chronological list of newly founded institutions and events in the appendix, Table 4.

¹⁶³ The Philological Society for the Diffusion of Literature and Useful Knowledge was founded in 1803. See Cunningham, *The Formation of the Schools of Design*, appendix, Table 4.

¹⁶⁴ *Minutes of Manchester Foreign Library*, Vol I, 1830-1873, & Vol II 1873-1903, MCL, MSF 027.3 MI.

¹⁶⁵ Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 77, gives a quotation from *The Manchester Guardian* of 31 January, 1835.

constructed between 1867 and 1874.¹⁶⁶ By the time that Tidmarsh created his 1894 image of the building, the twenty intervening years of city pollution had resulted in a complete blackening of the stonework. In this vision, social, cultural and commercial interests are united within the civic life of the city. The groups of well-dressed figures present an image of a society which is aspirational, orderly and purposeful. Life unfolds against the backdrop of the imposing classical-style building, in an impressive civic space. In Manchester's civic culture, as I will evidence later, patronising the arts bolstered social status and was seen as a responsibility for those involved in commercial activity. It would, however, be misleading to assume that all those involved in the newly emerging cultural environment of Manchester were either manufacturers, industrialists or brokers. According to Bud, the commercial register for the period reveals that among the first 100 names on the list of founders of the RMI were "five gentry, twelve owners of spinning mills, six lawyers, four surgeons, three bankers, four bleachers and sulphuric acid manufacturers and twelve dyers and calico printers..."¹⁶⁷ These individuals also represented a wide range of educational, political and religious backgrounds.

Several writers have identified the significant influence of the northern-based merchant classes, or industrialists, on the art market during the nineteenth century. This was evidenced, for example, in the shift away from privileging High Renaissance paintings to a focus on contemporary British artists, such as the Pre-Raphaelites. A significant player in this development was picture dealer Thomas Agnew (1794–1871), who operated in Manchester, from central premises in

¹⁶⁶ Clare Hartwell, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Manchester* (Penguin Books, 2002), 155.

¹⁶⁷ R. F. Bud, "The Royal Manchester Institution", in Donald Cardwell (ed.) *Artisan to Graduate: Essays to Commemorate the Foundation in 1824 of the Manchester Mechanics' Institution* (Manchester University Press, 1974), 121 & 123.

Exchange Street and Market Street, from where his firm, known simply as Agnew's, was crucial in selling contemporary British art to wealthy industrial patrons across Northern England. Barbara Pezzini explored Agnew's archives and stock records and found that leading Manchester industrialists were among the lists of repeat purchasers.¹⁶⁸ Several writers have explored the role of Agnew's both as a commercial and philanthropic enterprise during this period.¹⁶⁹

General interest in ideas about aesthetics and visual art is evident in the public lectures, which were frequently held at venues such as the Athenaeum and Mechanics' Institution from the 1830s onwards. In 1837, lectures by prominent History painter Benjamin Haydon (1786-1846) were paid for jointly by the Mechanics' Institution, the Athenaeum and the Royal Manchester Institution. George Wallis (1811–1891), then master of the Manchester School of Design, gave lectures at the Royal Institution in 1846 and 1847, "On the reproductive principles of ornamental art" and "On the early education of the hand and eyes". R. T. Hunt lectured in the same years, "On physiology of vision in the arts," and A. G. Henderson on "The philosophy of the fine arts".¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Barbara Pezzini's PhD thesis, "Making a Market for Art: Agnews and the National Gallery, 1855-1928". University of Manchester, 2018. For an early history of the dealership, see Geoffrey Agnew, *Agnew's 1817-1967* (B. Agnew Press, 1967). Thomas Agnew & Sons was established in Manchester in 1817 by Thomas Agnew (1794–1871) and Vittore Zanetti (1770-1855) as a print-selling and framing business. It grew into a premier art dealership for Old Masters and contemporary British art, expanding to London in 1860. The firm's archive is held at the National Gallery <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/research/research-centre/agnew-s-stock-books/about-agnew-s-stock-books>

¹⁶⁹ Dianne Sachko MacLeod has analysed the role of Agnew's in steering British collecting, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and the Making of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge 1996), 100. Elizabeth Pergam discusses Agnew's in the context of the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition, claiming that Agnew's had "gained success by cultivating a clientele of the newly rich manufacturing classes." Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition*, 32. She highlights correspondence between William Agnew (1825–1910) and Thomas Fairbairn (1823-1891) during the time that Fairbairn was chairman of the MAT Executive Committee. Fairbairn was also a prominent collector of Pre-Raphaelite work and a key member of a number of Manchester's civic institutions. The communication indicates that Agnew's were involved in the organisation of the MAT exhibition, lending works of modern art and providing valuable information about the whereabouts of artworks which could form part of the exhibition. William Agnew was the son of Thomas Agnew. He was responsible for establishing the family firm as a leading international art dealership, trading as Thos. Agnew & Sons. He was also a Liberal Member of Parliament from 1880 to 1886.

¹⁷⁰ *RMI Lecture Syllabuses and General Circulars*, MCL, GB127.M6/1/70.

Public interest in art and art education was also encouraged by an ever-increasing range of art periodicals and journals. In North West England, general news publications such as *The Manchester Guardian* prided themselves on the quality and breadth of their coverage of the arts. First published in May 1825, as David Ayerst recalls, *The Manchester Guardian's* "intense and continuous concern for art lovers", later driven by editor Charles Prestwich Scott (1846 –1932), was "vital to the kind of paper he wanted *The Guardian* to be."¹⁷¹ "In 1857, over a million and a quarter people had visited the MAT Exhibition. For weeks, *The Guardian* was filled with elaborate accounts of the pictures, gallery by gallery."¹⁷² Art institutions such as the RMI made use of the press to increase their reputation and credibility.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ David Ayerst, *The Manchester Guardian: Biography of a Newspaper* (Cornell University Press, 1971), 180. Ayerst chronicles the development of the *Manchester Guardian* from 1821. The paper moved to London in 1964, dropping "Manchester" from its title.

¹⁷² Ayerst, *The Manchester Guardian*, 181. Charles Prestwich Scott was usually referred to as "C. P." Scott.

¹⁷³ In 1857, just one of the locally produced newspapers, *The Manchester Daily Examiner and Times*, with an affordable price of one penny, had a daily circulation of 18,150. Quoted in an advertisement from William James Linton and Others, *The Art-Treasures Examiner - A Pictorial, Critical, And Historical Record of the Art Treasures Exhibition, At Manchester, In 1857* (published by the proprietors of the Manchester Examiner and Times, Alexander Ireland & Co, May 5, 1857), page not numbered <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100578248> accessed 27/08/2024.

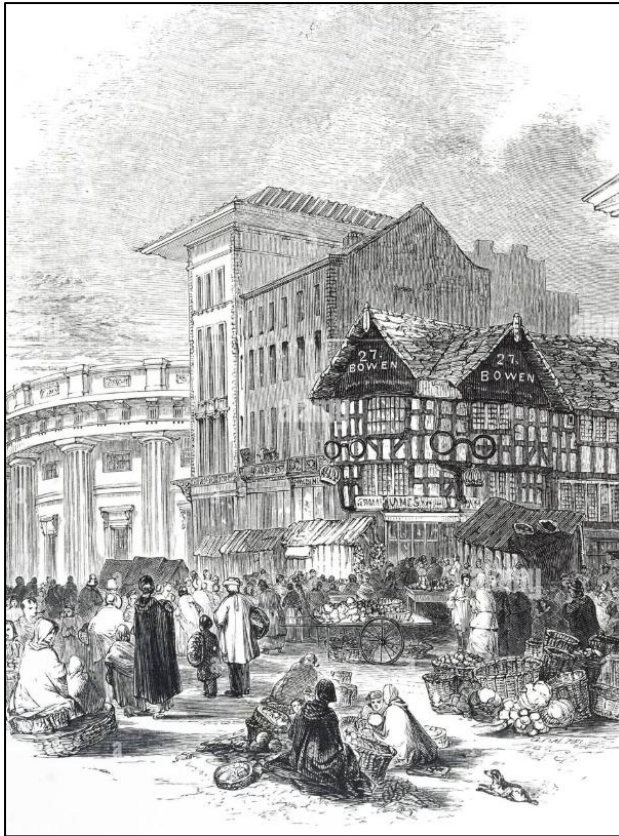


Figure 1.4 Engraving showing old houses with a portion of the Manchester Exchange. Unattributed illustration from *the land we live in: a pictorial and literary sketch-book of the British Empire* (Charles Knight, 1847), Vol. 1, 169. Credit: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112089729989&seq=184> accessed 06/02/2025

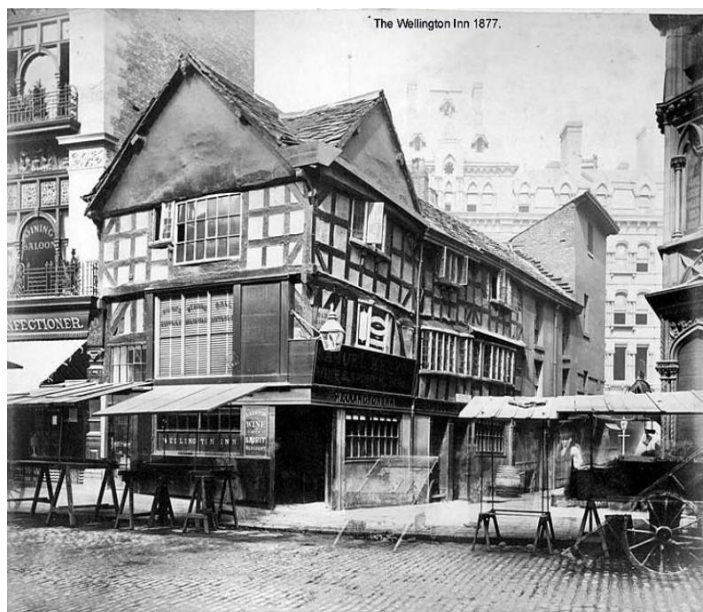


Figure 1.5 Photograph of The Wellington Inn, Manchester, 1877. Manchester Archive Plus (GB124.Q38). The building known as The Wellington Inn dates from 1552. It is situated in the Market Place and Shambles. Earlier in the century, the ground floor was known as the Wellington Inn, whilst the upper two floors served as a mathematical and optical instrument-makers.

City Planning

During 1849, also echoing the philosophy of *Bildung*, James Silk Buckingham, a writer, social reformer and one-time MP for the northern city of Sheffield, published “National Evils and Practical Remedies, with the plan of a model town...” Hoping to encourage people towards “a higher state of existence”, he recommends the inhabitant of a town should have “ready access to Libraries, Lectures, Galleries of Art, Public Worship, with many objects of architectural beauty, fountains, statues, and colonnades, around him... the circumstances in which individuals are placed, and the kind of training and education they receive, have a great influence in the formation of their character and materially assist at least the development of the noblest faculties of the mind and heart.”¹⁷⁴

On the blank canvas of rapidly expanding urban centres, local leaders were free to use town planning to create their own stage as a backdrop to the lives they aspired to live. As further explored in Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institution”, the urban models they chose were frequently German. Fig. 1.4 shows an engraving from the 1840s depicting older, sixteenth-century housing set against the sparkling white of the new classical architecture that housed the first Manchester Cotton Exchange, opened in 1807. The exchange, with a trading floor of 812 square yards, a members’ library with more than 15,000 books, a newsroom and restaurant, was a great source of pride within the city.¹⁷⁵ The engraving employs compositional devices such as the use of light and the vanishing point set low on the left, to represent the passage of

¹⁷⁴ James Silk Buckingham, *National Evils and Practical Remedies, with the plan of a model town ... Accompanied by an examination of some important moral and political problems* (Peter Jackson, 1849), 224, digital book https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/_/i0p1VZfN3QQC?hl=en&gbpv=1 accessed 12/02/2025.

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/england/pp221-247> accessed 31/05/2025.

time and to make a statement about the way in which Manchester's people have driven the positive progress of the city throughout history. As the eye moves with the crowds, who largely have their backs turned to us, we are drawn towards the bright, new future, symbolised by the Exchange building.

The Historical

Developments in German thinking about history had a significant influence on general British historiography and on the emerging discipline of art history. Stephen Bann, in *The Clothing of Clio* (1984), refers to the nineteenth century as “a forcing period” for a “wide variety of representational forms which were utilised throughout this period to express a new vision of the past.”¹⁷⁶ As Watson discusses, the questioning of traditional religious beliefs also led to a reconsideration of the nature and cause of historical changes. No longer was it the main purpose of history to “confirm Man's impotence in the face of God's will.”¹⁷⁷ If historical progress was not, after all, predetermined by a higher power, and individuals were not awaiting the afterlife for the achievement of perfection, there was scope for self-determination and for human power to influence change in the world.

German art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) had re-examined the ancient monuments of the Classical era, separating Greek Art into periods and time classifications. His introduction of stylistic categorisation challenged the deterministic idea of History as a predefined static phenomenon, informed by a limited repertoire of ancient, largely classical texts and the Bible.¹⁷⁸ His

¹⁷⁶ Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clio: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

¹⁷⁷ Watson, *German Genius*, 7.

¹⁷⁸ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 106.

new methodology used archival research, historical documents and scientific, comparative methods, following an academic research model. Building on this were the influential writings of Barthold Niebuhr (1776–1831), particularly his 1827 *History of Rome*, and the work of Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). Based on a range of primary historical sources, emphasising narrative and including international politics, these works introduced a new conception of history. As Davis outlines, “Historical scholarship showed the need to understand past thinkers and times on their own terms. Romantics argued against eternal values and, instead, for subjectivity and an evolutionary view of the past.”¹⁷⁹ Hegel, in his lectures at the University of Berlin, proposed that physical circumstances produce civilisations with overarching ideologies, and named the fundamental spirit of the age its “Geist”.¹⁸⁰ The urge to document from primary sources and draw conclusions based on empirical evidence can be seen, for example, in the volume of statistics gathered to support the Executive *Report* following the MAT exhibition. The Manchester Statistical Society was founded in 1833 and remains the oldest statistical society in Britain.¹⁸¹ Fig. 1.4 is an engraving from a work entitled *The land we live in: a pictorial and literary sketch-book of the British Empire*, which sought to use observation from primary sources to collect visual evidence of geographical and architectural features. The accuracy of the engraved depiction is clear when compared with a contemporary photograph (Fig. 1.5) of part of the scene.

In Fig. 1.4, the half-timbered building, featured to the right of the engraving and representing Manchester’s past, nonetheless houses an optician. The large glasses

¹⁷⁹ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 109.

¹⁸⁰ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 32.

¹⁸¹ Messenger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age*, 45.

that hang as shop signs symbolise huge scientific and philosophical advances, largely German-led, in the understanding of vision, both from a physical and psychological standpoint. Crowns added to the hanging signs indicate the approval of a royal warranty. The prominence of two giant pairs of glasses would also have been a reminder of the increased importance of the visual as a signifier in this new urban landscape. Theories of subjectivity stemming from Germany had a particular bearing on concepts of visual experience and, therefore, on the public display of art. A key change underlying many of the new explanations of visual perception in this period was the shift from a prevailing concept of vision as objective, external and empirical observation, common to everyone, to that of vision as an individual, subjective physiological and psychological construct.¹⁸² New physical experiments, such as those of Goethe on the perception of afterimages following exposure to direct light, and the challenges raised by the observation of the fast movement seen in new technologies, such as factory machinery and trains, led to an understanding of “vision” as a complex phenomenon, which could be examined as a biological, physiological and psychological process.¹⁸³ These ideas were further developed by creative writers and theorists such as Goethe, Schiller and others who strove to explore and explain visual perception. The 1830s and 1840s saw English translations of German works, which made earlier German philosophical writing more widely accessible.

Fig. 1.4 also illustrates progress over time in the marketing of goods, a process also involving progressively more sophisticated modes of visual display. In the same way

¹⁸² See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (MIT Press, 1990).

¹⁸³ Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), for instance, stressed the importance of the intellectual nature of perception; the senses furnish the raw material from which the intellect produces its own representation of the world. His 1818 work *The World as Will and Representation* (expanded in 1844) characterises the phenomenal world as subjectively produced.

that the psychological power of the visual in persuasive marketing was crucial to Manchester's commercial success, it also had a significant impact on Manchester's architecture and general urban environment. Moving from right to left in the image, we begin with simple baskets of goods on the ground, progress to a basic market stall, move into shops with basic window displays, and then on to what appear to be the quite significant corniced frontages of department store-like warehouses. Commercial display methods also had a profound influence on exhibitionary strategies employed within gallery environments. There is evidence of this in the MAT exhibition and also at the RMI, as I will discuss later. As Gordon Fyfe describes, "public exhibition transformed the eye's relationship to art-objects... for it was associated with strategies (gallery arrangement, décor, lighting, etc.) for determining the encounter between pictures and the public gaze."¹⁸⁴ Michael Tymkiw, in his extensive research into exhibition design under the later period of National Socialism in Germany, vividly illustrates how visual display strategies drawn from both commercial display and contemporary art were employed to psychologically and physically engage and influence the viewer.¹⁸⁵ Elizabeth Pergam, in her fascinating study of the MAT Exhibition, sees art promotion in Manchester as largely driven by entrepreneurs who had primarily commercial motives.¹⁸⁶ There could be a conflict for institutions such as the Royal Academy in combining cultural, educational and commercial roles. As Fyfe identifies, "in the fine arts there was a duality, for exhibitions entailed both a commercialisation of the power to consecrate artefacts and the consecration of the power to commercialise

¹⁸⁴ Gordon Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity: English Art Institutions, 1750-1950* (Bloomsbury, 2000).

¹⁸⁵ Michael Tymkiw, *Nazi Exhibition Design and Modernism* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

¹⁸⁶ Elizabeth A. Pergam, *The Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857: Entrepreneurs, Connoisseurs and the Public* (Routledge, 2011).

them.”¹⁸⁷ The original organising committee for Manchester’s Royal Institution, as discussed in Chapter 2, saw commercial and cultural interests as complementary.

Goethe and Schiller

Two of Germany’s most significant writers and thinkers, lifelong collaborators Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, were to be given particular acknowledgement in nineteenth-century Manchester. From the 1860s, much of the cultural life of Germans in Manchester centred on the Schiller Anstalt.¹⁸⁸ Co-founded by Friedrich Engels in connection with the centenary of Schiller’s birth, in November 1859, it conducted all its activities in German. The Manchester-based Journal *The Sphinx*, reviewing the club in 1868, found that “the intention of the founders was to impart a literary and artistic character to the institution.”¹⁸⁹ It aimed to actively promote German culture in the city, providing a large library, regular lectures, and a reading room with 55 different newspapers available, some 20 in German. As the Schiller Institute Circular stated: “Whenever possible the Institute does its best to further German intellectual activities and also offers opportunities for social gatherings to be held on its premises which are particularly beneficial to new arrivals from the fatherland.”¹⁹⁰

Interest in the plays, poetry and other writings of Schiller and his contribution to German culture had long been evident in Manchester, with *The Manchester*

¹⁸⁷ Fyfe, *Art, Power and Modernity*, 59.

¹⁸⁸ Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 334.

¹⁸⁹ “The Schiller-Anstalt”, *The Sphinx*, August 28, 1868, 48.

¹⁹⁰ “Schiller Anstalt”, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 July 1860. See also *Manchester Schiller Institute Circular* (International Workingmen’s Association, published as a leaflet in March 1866).

<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/iwma/documents/1866/schiller-circular.htm> accessed 29/03/2019.

Guardian publishing a sympathetic account of his death in 1824.¹⁹¹ *The Manchester Guardian's* account of the Schiller Festival, held in 1859, illustrates the involvement of leading figures from across Manchester's community. "The representation of *Wallenstein's Lager* necessitated the fitting of a stage in the Free Trade Hall; and this was most effectively done through the joint labours of Mr E Salomons, architect; Mr John Knowles, of the Theatre Royal; and Mr J A Hammersley, Head Master of our School of Art. Mr Hallé's band was placed on the floor in front of the stage..."¹⁹²

Schiller had particular significance in the context of the provision of public art, through his writings *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* (*Über Die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*). The German word *Menschen* is not gender-specific, and so the title could also be translated as *On the Aesthetic Education of the Human Being in a Series of Letters*.¹⁹³ Prompted by the crisis of the French Revolution, Schiller outlined his views in letters to his patron, the Duke of Augustenburg. First published in 1795 in the German art journal *Die Horen*, the letters outline Schiller's belief in the ability of art to support the individual in developing a balanced and harmonious personality, based on Greek ideals.¹⁹⁴ The first letter draws a connection between art, true human happiness and the moral nature of human beings. In the eighteenth letter, Schiller describes how the aesthetic experience of beauty harmonises the spirit and the senses. "Through beauty the sensuous man is led to form and to thought; through beauty the spiritual man is brought back to matter and restored to the world of sense."¹⁹⁵ In this

¹⁹¹ "The Last Moments of Schiller", *Manchester Guardian*, Saturday 18 September, 1824, 2.

¹⁹² "Manchester Schiller Festival", *Manchester Guardian*, 12 November, 1859, 5. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. As previously mentioned, the "Mr Hallé" referred to was Charles Hallé, German immigrant and founder of the famous Hallé orchestra.

¹⁹³ Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, translated and introduction by Reginald Snell, foreword by Michael Martin (Angelico Press, 2015).

¹⁹⁴ See Jürgen Oelkers, "Influence and development: Two basic paradigms of education", *Studies in Philosophy and Education* (Springer 1994), 13: 91, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01075817> accessed 24/08/2019. Oelkers additionally describes *Erziehung* as having an ethical dimension as "moral communication."

¹⁹⁵ Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, Letter 18, 340.

sometimes opaque and contradictory series, he develops the ideas of Kant, asserting that the moral character of a people can be elevated by touching their souls with beauty. He expresses his belief in the power of the arts (poetry, literature, visual arts, theatre, music) to provide access to higher-order thought and feeling.¹⁹⁶ As Lesley Sharpe discusses, this text has been widely credited with developing the concept of *Bildung*, although it makes no specific reference to it. A further influential text was, as previously mentioned, Goethe's *Bildungsroman*, *Werther's Apprenticeship*. Lesley Sharpe describes Schiller's cultural concept of *Bildung* as "a means to continually strive towards individual, societal and cultural improvement... a 'task', an activity, rather than as a static form of capital that simply could be acquired through status or some other privileged means."¹⁹⁷ According to Michael Martin, "for Schiller, the salvation of education – and of man – lies in the realisation of Beauty. Only Beauty, in his thought, has the ability to ennoble both thinking and sentiment."¹⁹⁸

In 1886, the Schiller Anstalt was the site of the founding of Manchester's Goethe Society, which provided its members with a lending library, a reading room and a programme of lectures and performances. According to the inaugural address given by Professor Adolphus Ward, Vice Chancellor of Manchester's Victoria University, the society aimed "to allow the most solitary of Goethe's countrymen who has his temporary home beneath our canopy of smoke to feel that if he chooses, he can here meet with sympathisers and friends... our demands are only the demands

¹⁹⁶ Kant's *Critique of Judgement* had been published in 1790. Schiller's Letters were first published in instalments in his short-lived magazine *Die Horen* ("The Graces") from 1795.

¹⁹⁷ Lesley Sharpe, "Concerning Aesthetic Education" in Steven D. Martinson (ed.) *A Companion to the Works of Friedrich Schiller* (Camden House, 2005), 152.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Martin foreword to Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, translated by Reginald Snell (Angelico Press, 2014).

which the poet himself makes upon those who desire to live in the sunshine instead of slumbering in the shade.”¹⁹⁹ Professor Ward was a prominent historian, writing extensively on German history. Through his work at both Owen’s College and Victoria University, he played an important role in the development of higher education in the city. His address illustrates the warmth of feeling towards German migrants in Manchester at the time. There is also the clear implication that a closer acquaintance with the work of Goethe would enhance and enlighten the life of the individual. The address also gives some indication of how significantly German thinking and German institutions were integrated into the consciousness of Manchester’s leaders, and of the extent to which Germans themselves formed a valued part of Manchester’s civic society.

... we have been able to enter into much of the inner life of Germany and have learnt to understand in what sense Weimar and Jena, Goethe and Schiller, are household words in every German home. You Germans in return, who form so active and influential a part of the community in almost every one of our great cities, and notably in the city where we live, have brought these cherished intellectual possessions with you to our shores, where you will not, and indeed you cannot, take them away again...²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ “The Opening Meeting of the Manchester Goethe Society”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 October, 1886, 6. <https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/manchester-goethe-society/docview/479584098/se-2> accessed 16/11/2023. Appointed Professor of History and English Literature at Owens College in 1866, Sir Adolphus Ward was active in the foundation of Victoria University, of which he was Vice-Chancellor from 1886 to 1890 and from 1894 to 1896.

²⁰⁰ “The Opening Meeting of the Manchester Goethe Society”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 October, 1886, 6.

Chapter 2 - The Royal Manchester Institution

Manchester, August 18, 1857

Dear Doctor,

It is some time since I had the pleasure of addressing you; but I can certainly assure you that we frequently think of you with sincere regards. It is with much satisfaction that I avail myself of the opportunity to ask your friendly advice and assistance in a matter which, if I mistake not, may be of much importance...²⁰¹

This letter, with its tawny, iron gall ink now fading, and the looping hand at times indecipherable, is held in the archives of the Manchester Central Library.

Correspondence from Manchester to Berlin during this period would have been nothing unusual, with many similar letters exchanged daily between Manchester and towns across Germany, as families, friends and businesses carried out their routine communications. Nineteenth-century Manchester, as previously discussed, was a particularly cosmopolitan city and, like other northern industrial cities, such as Liverpool and Leeds, had many cultural and trade links with Europe, particularly with Germany.

The sender of this particular letter was Frankfurt-born Sigismund J. Stern (1807-1885), a prominent Manchester-based manufacturer and promoter of the arts.²⁰² He wrote in his capacity as a member of the exhibition organising committee of The Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts, founded in 1823. Its recipient was one of the most influential German critics and early art historians of the period, Director of the Königliches Museum in Berlin from

²⁰¹ Letter from Sigismund J. Stern, to Dr Waagen, asking his opinion of a plan to exhibit works by German artists at the next R.M.I. Exhibition, 18 August, 1859, MCL M6/1/57/1.

²⁰² Sigismund James Stern arrived in Manchester around 1830 and became a partner in the cotton trading firm of Leo Schuster, Brothers & Company, a position he held for nearly 50 years. He was also one of the first members of the Council of the Cotton Relief Fund and one of the promoters of the MAT Exhibition at Old Trafford in 1857. See William E.A. Axon (ed.) *The annals of Manchester: A chronological record from the earliest times to the end of 1885* (John Heywood, 1886), 418. <https://archive.org/stream/annalsofmanchest00axon#page/418/mode/2up> accessed 20/9/2020.

1832, Dr Gustav Waagen (1794-1868).²⁰³ Waagen was a well-regarded and highly influential figure among British private collectors and the art establishment.²⁰⁴ *The Art Journal*, a leading arts periodical published by Henry Cole, regularly announced his forthcoming visits to England.²⁰⁵

The letter continues:

... My hope for this result is to obtain some works of living artists from Berlin, Dresden and other towns in Germany where certainly many talented painters are to be found who would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity to exhibit their works in this country.²⁰⁶

In organising this unprecedented large-scale, public exhibition of contemporary German artwork in Britain, Stern clearly thought that Manchester, and specifically the RMI, could provide a useful market for artists from his home country, and that the RMI patrons would benefit from the opportunity to experience their work. As James Moore describes: “Lancashire was arguably more cosmopolitan and outward-looking than the London art-world. Its international business connections, large European immigrant community and commercial networks encouraged a greater appreciation of overseas art than, perhaps, was possible in a metropolitan art world guarded by the canons of the Royal Academy.”²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Later known as the Altes Museum. See “Waagen, Gustav Friedrich”, *Dictionary of Art Historians* <https://arthistorians.info/waageng/> accessed 07/07/2024.

²⁰⁴ Giles Waterfield and Florian Illies, “Waagen in England,” *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 37 (1995), 47–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4125938> accessed 30/03/2024.

²⁰⁵ *The Art Journal*, 1 July, 1850, editorial, “Dr Waagen, we hear, is about to visit this country again during the summer to complete his work on *The Treasures of Art in Great Britain*.” From 1849 onwards Waagen also wrote a series of articles for *The Art Journal*. His letter introducing the series was published in v.11 (1849), 186.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t6rz3hh8v&seq=272&q1>

²⁰⁶ Letter from Sigismund J. Stern, to Dr Waagen, asking his opinion of a plan to exhibit works by German artists, MCL GB127.M6/1/57.

²⁰⁷ Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys*, 27.

This was not the first occasion in which Anglo-German links, and Dr Waagen in particular, had inspired a public exhibition in Manchester. During 1835, and again in the mid-eighteen-fifties, Waagen made extensive tours of Britain, visiting and recording in meticulous detail many of the significant holdings of art in the collections of private individuals, including those of Northern England.²⁰⁸ His findings were published as a series of volumes entitled *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, firstly in German in 1837 and then in an English translation by Lady Elizabeth Eastlake (née Rigby) in 1854.²⁰⁹ It was this publication that prompted the staging of the incredible 1857 Manchester Art Treasures (MAT) Exhibition, the 2,000 paintings exhibited being largely drawn from those included in Waagen's volumes. Artworks were assembled, as the evidence of payments confirms, with Waagen's direct collaboration and advice.²¹⁰ As a German-speaking member of the MAT Exhibition Executive Committee, Stern had also been key to this other significant collaboration with Waagen. Written just after the closing of the MAT Exhibition, the letter of August 1857 is part of a series of communications over three years. In this correspondence, Waagen and Stern discuss plans for an exhibition at the RMI in July 1860, including work by German artists.

The particular role of German models and cultural influences on the development of many of Britain's civic and governmental institutions in the mid-nineteenth century is now widely acknowledged. However, the potential significance of this influence on

²⁰⁸ Detailed in Waterfield and Illies, "Waagen in England", 47–59.

²⁰⁹ <https://archive.org/details/treasuresarting00gravgoog> accessed 30/03/2024.

²¹⁰ Linton and Others, *The Art-Treasures Examiner*, 1 "Several of the influential merchants and manufacturers of Manchester... forcibly struck, above all, with the important claims and uses of the fine arts, and calling to mind the remark made by Dr Waagen in his valuable work, that the art-treasures in the United Kingdom were of a character, in amount and interest, to surpass those contained in the collections upon the continent, bethought themselves of the grand idea of bringing the elite of these works into view under one roof, for the edification of their fellow men." There is a record of payment to Waagen, alongside all the other curators, in relation to "special services rendered in connexion (sic) with the collection and arrangement of the Works of Art" *Executive Report*, Appendix xiii *Summary of salaries & wages*.

the early emergence and longer-term practice of public art display in Britain remains yet to be fully explored.²¹¹ As Susanna Avery-Quash and Alan Crookham identify, influential individuals such as Charles Eastlake, Director of the National Gallery from 1855, were fully conversant with German thinking, gallery display practice and new art historical approaches.²¹² An examination of the initial development and operation of the RMI in the mid-nineteenth century provides the opportunity to gain additional insight into the influence of these transcultural trends.

The Founding of the RMI in 1823

Existing research examining the emergence of public art galleries and museums in Britain is quite extensive. As discussed in the introduction, the “exhibitionary complex” has been influentially examined as a site of social hegemony and control, and as a vehicle of social engineering based on the work of theorists such as Foucault and Gramsci.²¹³ Other scholars have viewed the gallery and museum through a variety of historical, political, social and cultural lenses. This, together with the wide-ranging additional analysis provided through the fields of museology and institutional critique, might seem to preclude the need for further investigation. However, previous research has largely focused on the major London-based, state-run institutions. Comparatively little scholarship has directly engaged with early public galleries in provincial settings.²¹⁴ A key aim of this chapter is to explore the potential insights that may be offered by extending the existing research base.

²¹¹ For a broad survey of German influence across British institutions and culture in the nineteenth century, see Watson, *The German Genius*.

²¹² Susanna Avery-Quash and Alan Crookham, “Art Beyond the Nation. A European Vision for the National Gallery” in *The Museum is Open, Towards a Transnational History of Museums 1750-1940*, Andrea Meyer and Bénédicte Savoy (eds.) (De Gruyter, 2014), 165-179. See also Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum*. Eastlake was unable to implement preferred initiatives, such as a chronological hang, due to institutional inertia and lack of space.

²¹³ The “exhibitionary complex” is a concept developed by Tony Bennett in *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (Routledge, 1995) and *Pasts Beyond Memories: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*, (Routledge, 2004), it refers to forums for exhibition and display such as galleries and museums, but also department stores and shops, which are seen as working to regulate the behaviour of individuals in society and promote hierarchies of power and nationalism.

²¹⁴ There are a number of notable exceptions, such as Waterfield’s *The People’s Galleries*, previously discussed.

The impact of early cultural institutions founded by the middle classes purely for the middle classes has also received relatively little acknowledgement. The high proportion of European, and specifically German, nationals gave Manchester's middle classes a distinctive composition. For the purposes of this thesis, the term "middle class" will refer to the most powerful commercial and industrial economic grouping in the city, alongside associated professionals such as lawyers, surgeons, bankers and scientists.²¹⁵ These individuals contributed significantly to the development of Manchester's cultural and social activities, and gave a particular drive to the provision of public art across the city. The association of the middle class with urban living and civic pride, as Gunn claims, was "openly and powerfully asserted."²¹⁶

In the wider discussion of provincial galleries, the charitable and philanthropic motives of individuals and groups frequently dominate. The idea that the opportunity to experience art, of a particular elevated type, could increase both personal and social virtue had been promoted since the early eighteenth century by figures such as Sir Joshua Reynolds.²¹⁷ Research has highlighted the influence of prominent individuals such as John Ruskin and William Morris, who promoted the employment of the visual arts in the social, civil and aesthetic education of the working classes. Manchester did have a close association with both Ruskin and Morris. Ruskin chose to present one of his most significant lectures at the RMI.²¹⁸ Given in connection with the 1857 MAT Exhibition, it was entitled "The Political Economy of Art, or, A Joy

²¹⁵ This does not include what came to be known as "white collar workers" – small shopkeepers, administrators, clerks etc.

²¹⁶ Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, 29.

²¹⁷ Barrell, *The Political Theory of Painting*, 21.

²¹⁸ Ruskin delivered a pair of lectures entitled *The Political Economy of Art, or, A Joy Forever (and Its Price in the Market)*, over two evenings in July 1857. *The Discovery and Application of Art* was delivered at Manchester School of Art on 10 July, and *The Accumulation and Distribution of Art* was presented at the RMI on 13 July https://www.gutenberg.org/files/19980/19980-h/19980-h.htm#Page_213 accessed 23/03/2024.

Forever (and Its Price in the Market)." "A thing of beauty is a joy forever" is the opening line of Romantic poet John Keats' (1795-1821) poem, *Endymion*, which was inscribed over the entrance to the MAT exhibition hall.²¹⁹ Ruskin's lecture made direct and swingeing criticism of what he saw as Manchester's rampant capitalism and dehumanising industrialisation.²²⁰ The latter part of the nineteenth century saw the establishment in Manchester of several well-recognised philanthropic arts institutions, libraries and museums that specifically focused on the education of the working classes. The Horsfall Museum, or Ancoats Museum, was founded by Thomas Coglean Horsfall (1841-1932) in 1877. Horsfall had been directly inspired by Ruskin to provide educational and inspirational opportunities for the industrial workers of Manchester.²²¹ Given the previous research focus on philanthropic public art provision for the working classes, the RMI is of particular interest. In this chapter I will explore the RMI as an example of an under-recognised, transitional model of public art display. Created by Manchester's middle classes to enrich their own cultural opportunities, the RMI was not founded with the aim of improving the lives of working people or with motives of social control. Culture is certainly not viewed as a philanthropic force against the evils of industrialisation. On the contrary, for Manchester's leaders, industrialisation was largely a positive force and form of cultural enrichment in itself, with museums, theatre, music and visual art representing a natural extension of, and complement to, commercial activity.²²² From

²¹⁹ Inscribed over the exit was a line from Alexander Pope's prologue to Joseph Addison's *Cato*: "To wake the soul by tender strokes of art."

²²⁰ Ruskin's views seem to have gained considerable sympathy in Manchester as the century progressed. Mancunians formed the first Ruskin Society (Society of the Rose) in 1879 and organised the first exhibition dedicated to Ruskin in 1904. See Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

²²¹ See Thomas Coglean Horsfall and John Ruskin. *The Study of Beauty: And Art In Large Towns : Two Papers* (Macmillan, 1883) https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=dul1_ark:/13960/t20c8838p&seq=12 accessed 25/11/2025. See also Shelagh Wilson, "The Highest Art for the lowest People: The Whitechapel and Other Philanthropic Art Galleries, 1877-1901", *Governing Cultures* (Ashgate, 2000), 172-86.

²²² Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys*, 65. Moore describes the RMI as providing a focal point for the industrial and commercial elite of Manchester as they sought to demonstrate that Manchester was a city of cultural, as well as commercial, achievement.

the granting of patronage by King George IV in 1826, as contemporary commentary and press coverage show, the RMI was key in establishing the role of art in Manchester's civic culture.²²³ The minutes of the RMI Council meeting on November 5, 1823, even drew parallels between themselves and the Renaissance merchants, such as the Medici. "The arts have uniformly pursued the footsteps of Commerce. The merchants of the Italian Republics were the patrons of genius... habits requisite to acquire are not incompatible with the disposition to enjoy."²²⁴

Patronising the arts was not only seen as a way of improving social status, but as a civic responsibility for those involved in commercial activity. The initial RMI proposal advocates the founding of an institution to promote cultural refinement among those engaged in business as "...the candid and reflecting will not deny that an exclusive interest in the pursuit of gain has a very unfavourable influence on the taste and manners."²²⁵ The association between viewing appropriate visual art and the refinement of "taste" was often reflected in commentaries of the period.²²⁶ The development of "taste" seemed to have implied a refinement of sensibilities, and a cultural and social development, similar in many ways to the German concept of *Bildung*. As the *Manchester Exchange Herald* stated on Oct 7, 1823, in a paragraph which seems to reflect the very essence of *Bildung*:

The History of the progress of Taste and a love of the Arts which more immediately have contributed to adorn a town, is very similar to that of an individual who has cultivated his mind.... The taste of the individual often lays dormant for a number of years, till some happy accident awakened it, and he discovers a new world of enjoyment attendant on his will. Delighted with the new sensation he cherishes it until it becomes incorporated with his being...²²⁷

²²³ See Proceedings of the Governors of the RMI, Minutes of Special General Meeting 1826, MCL M6/1/77/4.

²²⁴ RMI Council Minute Book, 5 November 1823, MCL GB127.M6.

²²⁵ *Proposal for Establishing in Manchester an Institution for the Fine Arts*, MCL M6/1/1/111. Also quoted in *Manchester Guardian* of 27 September 1823, 3.

²²⁶ The concept of "taste" in relation to art education is extensively discussed in Chapter 2 - "Manchester School of Design".

²²⁷ "Manchester, with the Origin of an Institution", pamphlet, first published in the *Manchester Exchange Herald*, Oct 7, 1823, 2.

In addition to a permanent venue for the display of visual arts, the RMI supported wider educational and social activities, providing a meeting place for several new cultural groups in the 1830s and 1840s. These included a choral society, the Chetham Society, the Architectural Society and the Madrigal Society. A room specifically set aside for the Choral Society was part of the original 1823 plan, as was a room for the “Drawing School”. Discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the first School of Design in Manchester was accommodated in the basement of the building from 1838.²²⁸

The founding of the RMI had initially been prompted by a group of artists who hoped to encourage “the more enlightened and opulent portion of the city” to provide them with an exhibition venue.²²⁹ It was clear, however, from the first official public meeting on 1 October 1823, held in the Royal Exchange, centre of Manchester’s commercial life, that the actual artists were to have very little input into the creation of the institution.²³⁰ Unlike later initiatives, which, as previously discussed, were frequently driven by openly philanthropic motives, sometimes linked to social engineering, this early institution was a privately financed organisation that members could join for a fee. The commitment to the arts by the middle classes, among whom were many industrialists and German nationals, was evidenced in the raising, in a matter of months, of over £23,000 through subscriptions from local donors.²³¹ The

²²⁸ The school was renamed the School of Art in 1853 when it became a sectional department of the RMI, MCL GB127.M6/1/49/5/ 414. In 1892 it became the Municipal School of Art, see *Pevsner Architectural Guides*, 131.

²²⁹ This group published a pamphlet, *Proposal for Establishing in Manchester an Institution for the Fine Arts, circulated by the committee previous to the General Meeting*, 1823, a copy of which is in the Royal Manchester Institution Council Minute Book for August 6, 1823, MCL M6/1/1/1. The initial idea arose following a visit to the Exhibition of Paintings and Works of Art of the Northern Establishment of Artists at Leeds by three Manchester artists - William Brigham, Frank Stone and David Parry in the summer of 1823. They thought it would be a good idea to have a similar annual exhibition in Manchester.

²³⁰ The most exhaustive account of the RMI’s founding remains that of the then Assistant Curator of Manchester Art Gallery, S. D. Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution: Its History from Its Origin Until 1882, when the Building and Contents of the Institution Were Presented to the Manchester Corporation and Became the City Art Gallery* (Manchester City Art Gallery, 1931) MCL GB127.M6/1/79/10

²³¹ Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 12.

Institution was run, for over 50 years, by a volunteer committee of predominantly middle-class professionals and industrialists. As Bud states, membership records across the mid-nineteenth century reveal “numerous merchants, cotton spinners and manufacturers among the doctors, lawyers and bankers.”²³² Many of the founding subscribers of the RMI were drawn from a social group already involved with other cultural and educational initiatives in the region. In promoting opportunities for cultural and spiritual self-improvement, the founding of the RMI also reflected the social phenomena of *Bildung*, encouraged by the German community.²³³ Focusing on opportunities to experience and learn about literature, science and art, the institution was to provide a forum for the personal development of the individual.

A further aim of the Institution, a *Manchester Guardian* article claimed, was for the presence of art within the community to become a focal point of liberal opinion.²³⁴ The initial organising committee stated in their proposal that they aimed to enhance the civic community by giving “...a new object and direction to public spirit” and having “the pleasing effect of removing prejudice, of softening the asperity of party-feeling [as in party political allegiance].”²³⁵ This implies that the Institute aimed to offer something beyond immediate political concerns or religious affiliations, something which transcended individual aims and beliefs. The first Governing Council consisted of three Unitarians, one from Cross Street Chapel, and two from Mosley Street Chapel, two Quakers, and an Anglican.²³⁶ The fact that Council members also held completely polarised political positions illustrated that the RMI

²³² Bud, “The Royal Manchester Institution”, 121 & 123.

²³³ This concept is discussed in the introduction.

²³⁴ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1823, 3.

²³⁵ *Proposal for Establishing in Manchester an Institution for the Fine Arts*, MCL M6/1/1/1. Also quoted in *The Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1823, 13.

²³⁶ Bud, “The Royal Manchester Institution”, 123.

project bridged ideological differences. For example, Hugh Hornby Birley (1778-1845) was a Tory who had commanded the troops at the Peterloo Massacre, and Robert Hyde Greg (1795-1875) was a prominent liberal who was to become president of the Anti-Corn Law League.²³⁷ The operational strategies had the dual aim of providing opportunities for the individual spiritual and personal development of its members and a wider aim of supporting the development of a positive and cohesive civic community. This drive to provide wider cultural and educational experiences was part of a city-wide movement during this period. By 1836, Manchester had three major venues offering programs of lectures on academic topics and staging exhibitions: the RMI, founded in 1823; the Mechanics' Institution, founded in 1824; and the Manchester Athenaeum, established in 1836. In addition, by the 1830s, the town had a Natural History Society, a Literary and Philosophical Society, a Geological Society, a Phrenological Society, the Manchester Statistical Society and a Gentlemen's Concert Hall.²³⁸

Key to the role of the RMI was the provision of a gallery space holding regular exhibitions. Exhibitions were largely to be patronised by members of the RMI but were also open, for a fee, to the general public.²³⁹ As the promoters of the Institute stated in an article in the *Manchester Guardian* on 27 September 1823, there would be exhibitions ...“consisting, sometimes of the productions of living artists, who would thus have a means of making their talent known: and sometimes, it be hoped, of the works of eminent masters, furnished by the liberality of gentlemen friendly to the institution from their private collections.”²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Bud, “The Royal Manchester Institution”, 122.

²³⁸ <https://www.magnetmanchester.org/ahistoryofthegallery2> accessed 31/04/2024.

²³⁹ RMI Minutes of First Meeting, October 1, 1823, RMI Council Minute Book, August 6, 1823, MCL M6/1/1/1.

²⁴⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1823, 3.

The RMI Architecture



Figure 2.1 Adolphe Valette, *Albert Square, Manchester, 1910*. Oil on jute, 152 x 114 cm. Manchester Art Gallery, inv 1928.37.

On the corner of two of Manchester's prominent streets, Mosley Street and Princess Street, stands the RMI. It is a solid, uncompromising slate-grey monolith, composed of three compact double-storey rectangles, its stone of similar colour to the surrounding streets. Work on the building, designed by Charles Barry (1795-1860), started in 1827, and its structure is largely unaltered since its completion in 1835. This was three years before the opening, in 1838, of London's National Gallery in its current building on Trafalgar Square.²⁴¹ Fig. 2.1 shows the view of Albert Square as

²⁴¹ As noted earlier, the National Gallery first opened as a collection of 38 paintings, in a small townhouse, in 1824. It moved to its third home in Trafalgar Square in 1838. See Alan Crookham, *The National Gallery. An Illustrated History* (National Gallery

captured by Adolphe Valette (1876–1942) in 1910, with the silhouette of the Albert Memorial spire visible to the far left. This image, with its underlying sense of mystery and lingering unease, reflects a number of dramatic literary and visual responses produced as individuals grappled with the onslaught of sensory input from new industrial cities. According to Thomas Carlyle, writing in 1839, Manchester was "every bit as wonderful, as fearful, unimaginable, as the oldest Salem or prophetic city."²⁴² With the modern tram system running yards from its main entrance and all the space around now infilled, the building must have had a significantly greater presence during the mid-nineteenth century. As John Seed summarises, "Its very existence and its fine building on the town's most fashionable street—built at considerable expense—declared that art was an important part of the emerging public culture of an increasingly powerful Manchester."²⁴³

Company, 2009) also <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/about-us/history/collection-history> and Saumarez Smith, *The National Gallery*, 12–14.

²⁴² Quoted in Messinger, *Manchester in the Victorian Age*, 90.

²⁴³ John Seed "Commerce and the Liberal Arts: the political economy of art in Manchester, 1775–1860", in Wolff & Seed (eds.) *The Culture of Capital*, 45–81, specifically 55.

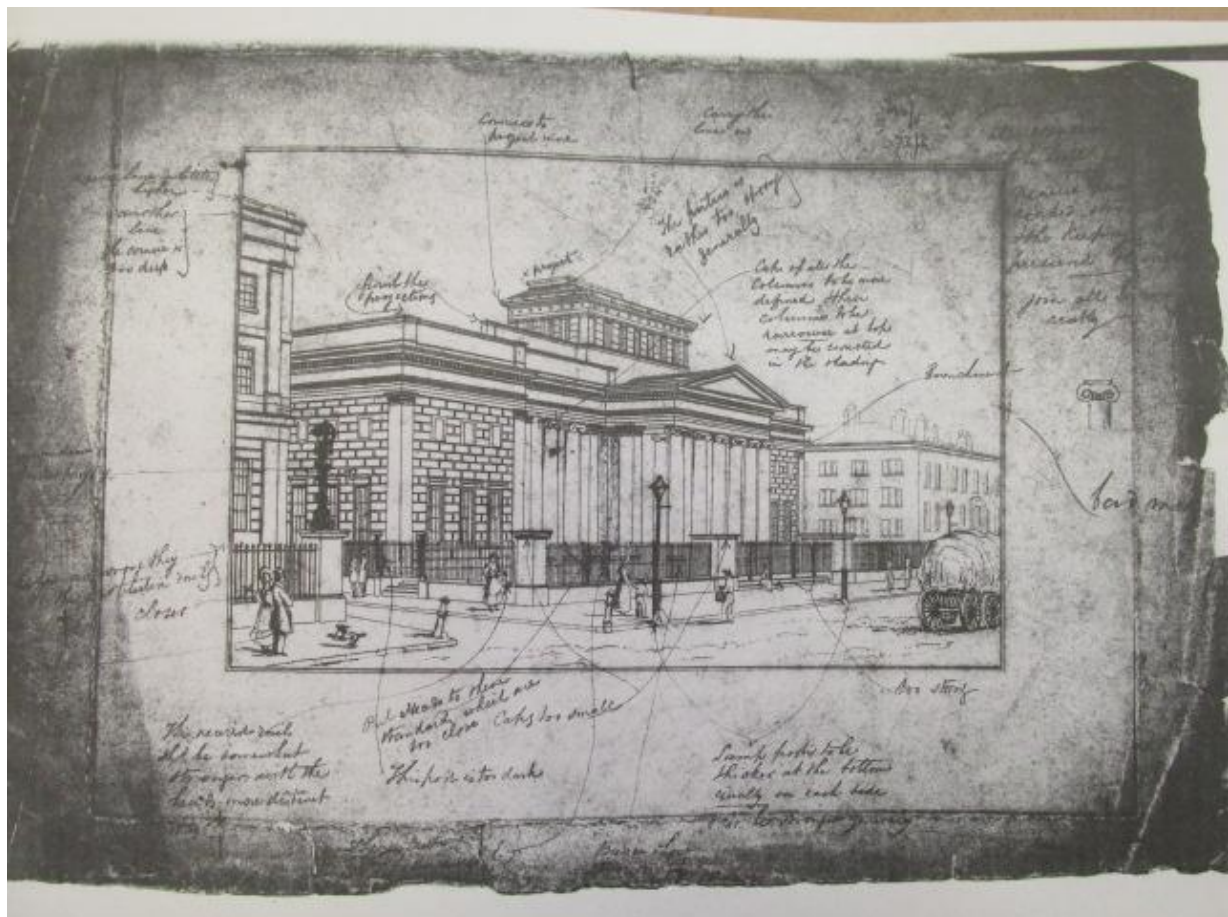


Figure 2.2 Charles Barry design for the R.M.I. building.
Ink sketch, 38 x 28cm, undated.
MCL M6/1/73/3. Written notes largely indecipherable. Photograph writer's own.



Figure 2.3 Recent photograph of the RMI building.
Architect Charles Barry, constructed 1824-1835, now the Manchester Art Gallery. Credit: public domain.

The very positive response to the initial 1823 RMI fundraising meant that by early 1824 plans could be underway for a substantial building that, in the words of the RMI Council, should combine "elegance and utility."²⁴⁴ The Institution's aim in promoting the civic community and providing refinement for the individual is again highlighted in the requirement that the building should reflect "honour on the public spirit and good taste of the founders and be considered more accordant with the wealth and consequence of the town of Manchester."²⁴⁵

As was usual at the time, several architects were invited to submit designs in a competitive process.²⁴⁶ The chosen architect, Charles Barry, is perhaps best known for the Palace of Westminster, designed from 1836, alongside Pugin, in High Gothic style.²⁴⁷ Barry also made an unsuccessful submission to the competition for a design for the National Gallery in 1832, employing a very different style derived from Renaissance Classicism, modelled on a Florentine or Roman palace.²⁴⁸ Barry employed this Italian Renaissance style in several of his building designs, notably the Travellers Club (1832) and the Reform Club (1837–41) in Pall Mall, London. The RMI building, however, is an early example of the Neoclassical style that was to become the regular language for the art museum, and indeed many other public buildings, in Britain.²⁴⁹ Other early examples were William Stark's (1770-1813)

²⁴⁴ RMI Minutes of First meeting, October 1, 1823, MCL M6/1/1/1.

²⁴⁵ RMI Council Minute Book, 48.

²⁴⁶ Six architects submitted designs: John Clark of Edinburgh, John Buonarotti Papworth (1775-1847) of London, Francis Goodwin of London, John Foster, jun. of Liverpool, Lewis Wyatt of London and the successful candidate Charles Barry. For the foundation of the Institution and its construction, see MCL M6/1/50. There are two sketches of parts of the building by Barry 1830 and 1835 (M6/1/50, 139, M6/1/51/71) and an undated unsigned ink sketch (M6/1/73/3). See also Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 9. A series of designs created for the competition by John Buonarotti Papworth is held in the RIBA archives, 68464, 1824, PB1309/PAP[99](1).

²⁴⁷ David Watkin, *Morality and architecture: The development of a theme in architectural history and theory from the Gothic revival to the modern movement* (Clarendon Press, 1977), 17.

²⁴⁸ This design is similar to that used by Klenze in the Munich Pinakothek (1826-36). See Conlin, *The Nation's Mantlepiece*, 376.

²⁴⁹ The modelling of a range of public buildings such as banks, town halls and museums on classical architecture, particularly the Greek temple, became commonplace in Britain during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Hunterian Museum in Glasgow, which opened in 1804 and the Yorkshire Museum in York, completed in 1830 by William Wilkins RA (1778 –1839).²⁵⁰ The classically inspired British Museum in London was designed by Sir Robert Smirke (1780–1867) as early as 1823, but was not actually completed until 1853.²⁵¹ The Neoclassical style employed in the RMI design did not merely involve a pastiche of architectural elements from ancient buildings, as seen in later classical and Greek Revival structures. During this period, architects sought to understand and apply the findings of early archaeologists working on sites such as Herculaneum and Pompeii. Authoritative volumes such as *The Antiquities of Athens* by James Stuart and Nicholas Revett's publications in 1762, 1787 and 1794 contained illustrations of ancient monuments that were studied by architects in Britain. The series was sufficiently popular to be republished in 1816 and again in 1830, edited by RA Professor of Architecture Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863).²⁵² The Neoclassical style represented empirical and scientific knowledge, something which would have held great appeal for the industrialists of Manchester.

It has been argued, with reference to London-based examples, that the choice of classical style, as in the case of the British Museum and later the National Gallery, was an attempt by one section of society, usually the upper classes, to promote its preferred subjective visual choice or to impose this on another section of society.²⁵³ One might question why Manchester's manufacturers, largely self-made, regionally marginalised and, for the Nonconformists and Unionists, excluded from the country's

²⁵⁰ This original Hunterian Museum building no longer exists.

²⁵¹ Completed after his death by his brother Sydney Smirke.

²⁵² Revett, Nicholas Revett and James Stuart, *The Antiquities of Athens*, vol. I-IV (London, 1762, 1787 and 1794).

²⁵³ Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture, The Politics of Order* (MIT Press, 1986). Tzonis and Lefaivre argue that classical architecture, with its clarity and its logical, mathematical structures, signified state control, pre-ordained natural order and acceptance of the status quo.

leading educational establishments, would select a style of architecture which some saw as synonymous with centralised control by an exclusive elite.²⁵⁴ Ruskin, for example, described classical architecture, particularly that of the Renaissance, as expressing the conceit of the aristocracy at its worst.²⁵⁵ Nonetheless, the RMI Council, comprising industrialists, manufacturers and professionals, chose a design inspired by Greek temple architecture. It has been suggested that in the increasingly secular society of the nineteenth century, classical and Renaissance architecture came to symbolise a shift away from the power of the church towards secular and civic governance. Duncan identifies the new museums “built to resemble temples, palaces and ceremonial monuments” as “places of rational and verifiable secular knowledge, preservers of the community’s official cultural memory.”²⁵⁶ It could also be conceivable that the classical style, originating in the independent democracy of the city-states of Ancient Greece, was seen as fitting for the confident and innovative civic forum of Manchester. In Germany, as I will discuss, the Neoclassical style was already widely employed in museum and gallery design. As Stephanie Heraeus illustrates, there was significant transnational dialogue about gallery and museum design across Europe at this time.²⁵⁷ As detailed later, both Leo von Klenze (1784–1864), architect of the Glyptothek in Munich, and Waagen were sufficiently well known and respected in Britain to be called as witnesses at a number of Government Select Committee enquiries into art-related matters during the 1830s.²⁵⁸ As Lucy

²⁵⁴ There were even those, such as Pugin, who saw the classical style itself as immoral. Watkin in *Morality and Architecture*, 17, comments on Pugin: “Disliking Classical architecture for a variety of emotional, associational and aesthetic reasons and noticing that its adoption in this country coincided with the Reformation, he came to regard it as a consequence of the Reformation; and since the Reformation was morally reprehensible, so must be its architecture.”

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Stuart Eagles, *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁵⁶ Duncan, *Civilising Rituals*, 10.

²⁵⁷ Stephanie Heraeus, “Top Lighting from Paris in 1750: The Picture Gallery at Kassel and Its Significance for the Emergence of the Modern Museum of Art”, in Andrea Meyer, Bénédicte Savoy (eds.), *The Museum is Open, Towards a Transnational History of Museums 1750-1940* (De Gruyter, 1994), 62. Heraeus uses the example of the *Galerie à la Lanterne* in the Palais Royal, which, as early as 1750, had an upper clerestory system of top lighting that became a benchmark for gallery design.

²⁵⁸ As previously mentioned, these Select Committees were: the Select Committee on the Arts and their Connection with Manufactures (1835-36); the Select Committee on Fine Arts (1841), and the Royal Commission on the Fine Arts (1841-1865).

Hartley outlines, the patronage of Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786-1868), and Frederick William III of Prussia (1770-1840) had, by the 1820s, placed München, Berlin and Düsseldorf as the leading art centres of Europe.²⁵⁹



Figure 2.4 Recent photograph of the Königliches Museum (Altes Museum), Berlin. Architect Karl Frederick Schinkel. Constructed between 1816 and 1828. Credit: public domain.

²⁵⁹ Ludwig I of Bavaria (1786-1868) was King from 1825 to 1848. Frederick William III of Prussia (1770-1840) was King from 1797 to 1840. See Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 22.

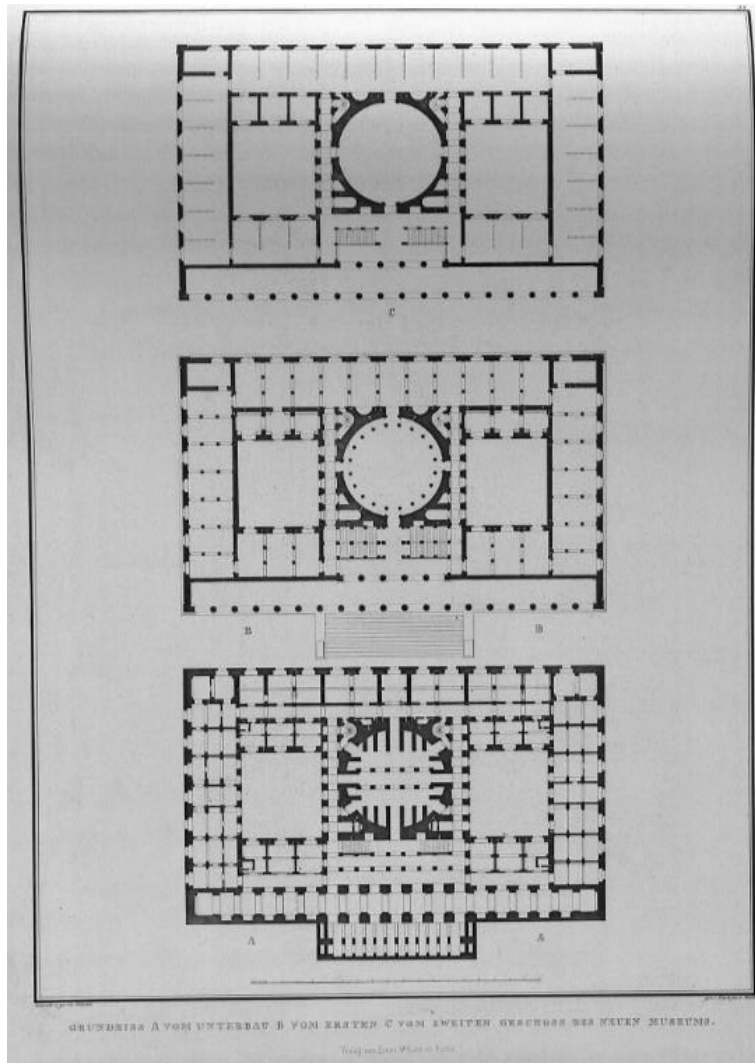


Figure 2.5 Floor plans for the Königlich Museum.

Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe: enthaltend Theils Werke welche ausgeführt sind, Theils Gegenstände, deren Ausführung beabsichtigt wurde, (Collection of Architectural Designs: containing partly works that have been built, and partly projects that are intended to be built), 104.

Smithsonian Libraries <https://archive.org/details/Sammlungarchite00Schi/page/n103/mode/2up>
Accessed 08/11/24.

The Königlich Museum, in Berlin, later known as the Altes Museum, was commissioned by King Friedrich Wilhelm III as the first public art museum in Prussia, housing the art collection of the Prussian Royal family.²⁶⁰ Well-known at the time from press and journal coverage, the museum was designed in a Neoclassical style by Karl Frederick Schinkel (1781-1841), in collaboration with his close friend and biographer, Waagen.²⁶¹ Schinkel published his own plans and perspectives

²⁶⁰ Altes Museum: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. "About Us." www.smb.museum/en/about-us/history.html accessed 26/10/2024.

²⁶¹ Waagen worked closely with Schinkel throughout his life and produced his biography, "Karl Friedrich Schinkel als Mensch und als Künstler," *Berliner Kalender*, 1844, 305-428.

extensively, in the *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* (Collection of Architectural Designs). This compendium contained detailed architectural plans, elevations, and perspective drawings of Schinkel's building projects. It was issued as a series of publications starting in 1819.²⁶² The plans for the Museum were published as early as 1822, although it was not completed until 1828.²⁶³ There are similarities with the RMI building both in the external architecture and the floor plan (Figs. 2.5 and 2.6 – for RMI floor plan see Figs. 2.19 and 2.20).²⁶⁴ The two-storey RMI is built to a rectangular plan on a raised plinth with a roof hidden from the view of the street by a dentilled cornice and parapet. The facade is dominated by the central projecting portico with its six Ionic columns. Set back behind the parapet is an attic with small windows that forms a lantern above the entrance hall.²⁶⁵ Both structures are raised on a pedestal, with the entrance portico approached by steps. Both feature a colonnade of giant Ionic order columns, which create the illusion of a single storey rather than the actual double-storey construction. Also common to the designs is a square central attic, which in Barry's design forms the lantern to the entrance hall. Both have plain corner pilasters and a continuous plain, dentilled entablature. The end walls of Schinkel's design, with their stone courses, are adapted in Barry's building to form slightly projecting pavilions. The fact that Barry's design was for a building on a far more restricted site and on a much smaller scale than Schinkel's museum would have necessitated modifications to the design. However, I would also propose that the RMI building was deliberately designed on a more domestic scale

²⁶² Karl Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* (Ernst & Korn, 1958) <https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/sammlungarchite00schi> accessed 21/02/2026.

²⁶³ Steven Moyano, "Quality vs. History: Schinkel's Altes Museum and Prussian Arts Policy", *The Art Bulletin*, Dec 1990, Vol. 72, No. 4, 585-608, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3045763> accessed 07/07/2024. Schinkel was a state official appointed in 1810 to the Oberbaudeputation (Prussian Board of Works), responsible for architectural aesthetics throughout Prussia. Alongside his direct royal commissions, such as the Berlin Neue Wache (1816-18) and Schauspielhaus (1818-21), this additional role made Schinkel the most influential architect in Prussia.

²⁶⁴ <https://www.smb.museum/en/about-us/history/> accessed 26/10/2024.

²⁶⁵ Historic England, "City Art Gallery (1282980)", *National Heritage List for England*, accessed 02/03/2024.

to serve the needs of a democratic community of Manchester's middle classes as part of the philosophical approach reflected in *Bildung*. Peter Betthausen describes how Schinkel devoted his art to “ennobling all human conditions by perfecting man morally and through aesthetic education and in this way enabling him to humanise his relationships.”²⁶⁶

Steven Moyano has examined the original 1823 building proposal for the Königliches Museum. This describes how the building aims to provide points of aesthetic emphasis to enhance the visitor experience. The majestic exterior and dramatic rotunda were intended to set the scene and create an atmosphere of anticipation before reaching the galleries. Functional requirements were secondary to this aesthetic impact. The collection and building were envisaged as one aesthetic unity with “absolute aesthetic standards” and a goal of *Anschaulichkeit*, which Moyano translates as an “immediate visual transparency.”²⁶⁷ “The construction of a building achieving this quality would be at once evident to the eye... he [Schinkel] also asserted that *Anschaulichkeit* in architecture could disseminate cultivation (*Bildung*) to the viewer and associates structural clarity specifically with Classical Greek architecture.”²⁶⁸ Schinkel’s view that his use of classically derived architecture for the Königliches Museum combined the functional with the spiritually uplifting was explained years later in an article in *The Builder*:

...two essential elements, the historical and the poetical. I examined further how far the practical consideration of the subject ought to prevail, to render the appearance of a building accordant with its purpose, and how far, on the other

²⁶⁶ Peter Betthausen “Frederick Schinkel: A Universal Man”, in Michael Snodin (ed), *Karl Frederick Schinkel: A Universal Man* (Yale University Press, 1991, published in association with the V & A), 1.

²⁶⁷ Moyano, “Quality vs. History”, 585, discussion of Waagen’s building proposal of 7 January 1823.

²⁶⁸ Moyano, “Quality vs. History”, 591.

hand, the influence of ancient monuments ought to co-operate with artistic feeling to give the building the character of a work of art.²⁶⁹

Barry used the motto *Nihil Pulchrum Nisi Utile* (nothing is beautiful unless it is useful) to identify his anonymous entry for the RMI architecture competition. This concept of functional beauty was one he shared with Schinkel and seems to combine German intellectual ideas with the commercial utility of a more pragmatic Manchester.

Prior to the building of Schinkel's Königliches Museum, almost all public museums, such as the Louvre or the Uffizi, had been converted from existing buildings.²⁷⁰

Given the array of possible building styles demonstrated in public buildings across Europe during this period, why did both Klenze and Schinkel choose to model their museums on the Greek temple? Theodore Ziolkowski claims that "the notion of the temple of art to designate a display of painting had, by 1823, become a commonplace in German cultural thought."²⁷¹ The theme recurs in various writings of the period, reflecting the romantic view that art itself is equivalent to religion.

Ziolkowski cites, as one of many examples, Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder's *Effusions from the Heart of an Art-loving Monk (Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders)*, 1797. In a chapter rather extraordinarily titled "How and in what manner one ought to contemplate the works of the great artists of the earth and use them for the welfare of one's soul", Wackenroder declares:

Picture galleries are regarded as annual fairs, where the new wares are judged, praised, or disdained; and they ought to be temples, where in still and silent humility and in heart stirring solitude, one admires the great artists as the loftiest

²⁶⁹ "Schinkel on Art Education – notes found among his papers, and published by Dr G. F. Waagen, on one of the anniversaries of his birthday", *Morning Post*, Monday 10 September, 1849, 3, originally from *The Builder* No 244, 8 September, 1849 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk>, accessed 03/05/2024.

²⁷⁰ Theodore Ziolkowski, "Schinkel's Museum: The Romantic Temple of Art", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, December 1987, Vol. 131, No. 4, (American Philosophical Society), 372, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/987137> accessed 23/09/2024.

²⁷¹ Ziolkowski, "Schinkel's Museum: The Romantic Temple of Art", 373.

among mortals and basks through long, undisturbed contemplation of the works in the solar radiance of the most delightful thoughts and sensations.²⁷²

The design and decoration of German museum buildings was influenced by contemporary ideas about the nature and purpose of art, and its educational and spiritual role in society. As previously discussed, James Sheehan identifies these influential new museums and galleries closely with the philosophy of *Bildung*.²⁷³ This belief in the power of art to cultivate the best qualities in humanity was also promoted, as previously mentioned, in Schiller's *Über Die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* (*On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*), first published in 1795. According to Schiller, the sensory experience of beauty was particularly beneficial to personal development and a unique kind of knowledge. Schiller's long philosophical poem "Die Künstler" (The Artists), of 1789, has been used to illustrate his belief in this philosophy.²⁷⁴ Schiller was so admired in Manchester at this time that in 1859 a group of largely German Mancunians, prominent among whom was Frederick Engels, founded the Schiller Anstadt, dedicated to the performance, discussion and promotion of his work.²⁷⁵ It supported a regular programme of lectures, music recitals and choral singing, with Richard Strauss even making his first Manchester appearance in the club's concert hall.²⁷⁶

²⁷² W. H. Wackenroder, *Dichtung/Schriften/Briefe*, Gerda Heinrich (ed.) (Hanser, 1984), 201. Translation cited in Ziolkowski, "Schinkel's Museum: The Romantic Temple of Art", 373.

²⁷³ Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World*.

²⁷⁴ *The Artists*, translated by Marianna Wertz, The Schiller Institute.

(https://archive.schillerinstitute.com/transl/trans_schil_1poems.html#the_artist accessed 05/09/2024).

²⁷⁵ The Schiller Anstadt was co-founded by Friedrich Engels in connection with the centenary of Friedrich Schiller's birth, in November 1859. *International Workingmen's Association 1866, Manchester Schiller Institute Circular*, first published as a leaflet in March 1866 and republished in *Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels Collected Works* (Lawrence and Wishart, 1975) Volume 20, 402. See also W. O. Henderson and W. H. Chaloner, "Friedrich Engels in Manchester", *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, XCVIII (1956-7), 13-29 and Williams, *Making of Manchester Jewry*, 169 & 260. Established in 1860, by 1866 the Schiller Institute had 300 members, a library of 4,000 volumes and a reading room with fifty-five newspapers and periodicals.

²⁷⁶ Panikos Panayi, *German Immigrants in Britain during the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (Oxford Berg, 1995), 188. (<https://academic.oup.com/ahr/article-abstract/103/1/181/60253> accessed 07/11/2024).



Figure 2.6 Recent photograph of the RMI, approach from Albert Square.
Photograph: public domain.

The architectural and technical developments in British industrial cities were also of interest in the German states. Schinkel visited Britain in 1826, as part of a European tour on behalf of the Prussian state. He surveyed the factories, bridges, warehouses and museums that were under construction.²⁷⁷ Prussian technologist Peter Beuth (1791-1853) accompanied Schinkel on his trip.²⁷⁸ A drawing from Schinkel's travel diary, dated 17 July 1826, shows factory buildings in the Manchester suburb of Ancoats. His diaries describe his impressions, and particularly his interest in English industrial architecture. Visiting Manchester during this early period of the city's transformation, when much of the new construction was largely driven by functional

²⁷⁷ Schinkel, *The English Journey*, 4.

²⁷⁸ Mark Crinson, *Shock City, Image and Architecture in Industrial Manchester* (Yale University Press, 2022), 11. Peter Christian Wilhelm Beuth (1791-1853) studied law and public administration at the University of Halle. See William Otto Henderson, "Peter Beuth and the Rise of Prussian Industry, 1810-1845", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1955, 222-231. JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2590990>. Beuth played a leading role in the development of Prussian industry through the introduction of modern machinery and the promotion of technical education. He visited England in 1823 and 1826 specifically to evaluate Britain's technical achievements.

concerns, Schinkel described Manchester's "huge masses of buildings put up by mere foremen without architecture and all in red brick."²⁷⁹

Writers such as Michael Hebbert have characterised the initial development of Manchester's public spaces as a general free-for-all leading to urban chaos, which eventually evolved into a civic order driven by apolitical forces later in the century.²⁸⁰ The dreadful, overcrowded slum areas and regular public health crises in Manchester during this period are well documented and have probably served to bolster this perception of an undeveloped and unstructured society.²⁸¹ Contemporary evidence, however, contradicts this and supports the argument that it was the industrial bourgeoisie who, from the very start, produced a kind of civic order. Mark Crinson's recent study analyses how the emerging industrial middle classes reshaped the architecture and spaces of Manchester as their city's identity and civic pride developed. Although he does not mention the RMI, he argues that civic buildings of the period, such as the original Neoclassical town hall and the many palazzo-style warehouses which sprang up in the city centre, came to serve an additional symbolic purpose. The architecture was part of setting a scene, making a visual statement that a greater spiritual and cultural aim lay alongside the pursuit of commerce.²⁸² In Munich, Ludwig I had famously transformed the city with a series of Neoclassical buildings, the museums situated on Königsplatz, the Pinakothek art galleries and others that eventually created the city's *Kunstareal* (Art Quarter). The

²⁷⁹ Schinkel, *The English Journey*, 4. If Schinkel met with any Manchester residents or had interactions with factory architects or owners, this was not recorded in his diaries. He made no comment on the plans for the RMI building.

²⁸⁰ Crinson quotes Michael Hebbert, "The Art of Street Architecture: The Case of Manchester", in Charles C Bohl and Jean-Francois Lejeune (eds.) *Sitte, Hegemann and the Metropolis*, Taylor & Francis e-books, 2009, 239. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203866016>.

²⁸¹ See James Phillips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (Ridgeway, 1832) or more famously Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, first published in Leipzig, 1845; the English edition (authorised by Engels) was published in America in 1887 and England in 1892 (Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892).

²⁸² Crinson, *Shock City*, 51.

RMI building, with its carefully planned visual and symbolic architectural impact, could be seen as representing the early stages of the conscious shaping of Manchester's new public spaces.

Further evidence of this interest in the development of Manchester as a particular kind of civic space can be seen in an early proposal for town planning. In 1836, prominent Manchester engineer and inventor William Fairbairn (1789-1874) published a pamphlet entitled *Observations on Improvements of the Town of Manchester Particularly as Regards the Importance of Blending in those Improvements, the Chaste and the Beautiful with the Ornamental and Useful*.²⁸³ His plan aimed to enhance the civic potential of the space by restructuring not only the buildings but the layout of the streets, particularly in the area of Piccadilly, leading to Mosley Street and George Street, close to the RMI. His stated aim echoes that of the RMI founders twelve years previously in seeking to “render Manchester famous not only for its manufactures, but also for that architectural good taste which bespeaks a knowledge of the sublime and the beautiful.”²⁸⁴ Crinson identifies a spate of classical-style architecture in the City from the mid-1830s, led by Richard Lane (1795–1880), “Manchester’s ubiquitous Greek Revivalist” who was the first president of Manchester’s Architectural Society, founded in 1837.²⁸⁵ As Clare Hartell identifies,

²⁸³ William Fairbairn, *Observations and Improvements of the Town of Manchester, particularly as regards the importance of blending in those improvements, the chaste and beautiful with the ornamental and useful* (Robert Robinson, 1836). Fairbairn was also a significant promoter of the visual arts and collector of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. John Rylands Research Institute and Library, Special Collections; R151594.

²⁸⁴ Fairbairn, *Observations*, 16. The terminology interestingly echoes that of Immanuel Kant’s *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (*Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*) of 1764, which was first translated into English in 1799. <https://www.cambridge.org/gb/universitypress/subjects/philosophy/philosophy-texts/kant-observations-feeling-beautiful-and-sublime-and-other-writings> accessed 11/11/2024.

²⁸⁵ Crinson, *Shock City*, 55. Benjamin Love, *Manchester As It Is: Or Notices Of The Institutions, Manufactures, Commerce, Railways, Etc. Of The Metropolis Of Manufactures* (Love and Barton, 1839) includes 17 engravings of large public or institutional buildings in or around Manchester erected after 1800, the majority of which are in a Greek Revival style and 8 of which were designed by Lane. https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/Manchester_as_it_is_by_B_Love/0hMHAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&qbpv=1 accessed 16/3/2024.

in St Peter's Square, visible at the time from the RMI, would have been another bold classical statement of a building, St Peter's Church, designed by architect James Wyatt (1746-1813) and opened in 1794.²⁸⁶ The part of Fairbairn's plan for the Piccadilly area which was successfully completed, by Lane, included remodelling the Royal Infirmary building in a classical style with the addition of a portico, colonnades and dome. Also proposed but never executed was an imposing new circular, colonnaded Cotton Exchange building. This was to be placed on the corner of Mosley Street, at the opposite end of which the RMI building already stood. Alongside the infirmary were planned several other classical-style buildings, and warehouses with classical detailing.²⁸⁷ Had Fairbairn's scheme been fully implemented, the RMI building would have been part of a district which included a substantial collection of classically inspired buildings, set in a series of large open public spaces punctuated by statuary and fountains.

From Mosley Street, it is possible to imagine how the arriving patron, dodging the horse-drawn omnibuses, street vendors, waggon, carriages and crowds, would have approached the original RMI nearly 200 years ago (Fig. 2.6). Alexander Alberro sees the establishment of nineteenth-century museums and collections as creating a public space for discourse and a "form of self-imagining" by the bourgeoisie.²⁸⁸ What better setting could reinforce one's "self-imagining", or indeed create a stage on which to seek *Bildung*, as an active participant in a cultured and educated civic society, than that of a classical temple? To achieve *Bildung*, the

²⁸⁶ Built between 1788 and 1794, this building was demolished. Clare Hartwell and Terry Wyke, *Making Manchester: Aspects of the History of Architecture in the City and Region Since 1800: Essays in Honour of John H.G. Archer* (Cheshire Antiquarian Society 2007), 19. <https://archive.org/details/makingmanchester0000unse/page/160/mode/2up> accessed 18/10/24.

²⁸⁷ Plan showing the proposed improvements in Manchester from Fairbairn's *Observations*.

²⁸⁸ Alexander Alberro & Blake Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (MIT Press, 2009), 3.

experience could not be routine or mundane. This use of classical temple architecture, with origins in a distant golden era of humanity, creates the impression that to enter is to seek a spiritual realm, an otherworldly, liminal experience. Colin Trodd and Paul Barlow outline views common to contemporary writers such as Charles Kingsley and William Hazlitt in presenting the gallery as a place of enchantment and fantasy.²⁸⁹ A contemporary watercolour of the RMI entrance hall, by J W Hance (active 1830-1842), seems to capture this idea, with its dramatic lighting effects and mysterious atmosphere (Fig. 2.7).



Figure 2.7 J. W. Hance, *RMI Entrance Hall*, 1838. Watercolour, bodycolour, gum arabic and pencil on paper, 32 x 44.5cm. Manchester City Galleries, im: 22801.

²⁸⁹ Trodd and Barlow (eds.), *Governing Cultures*, 18.



Figure 2.8 Photograph of the Glyptothek Museum in Munich.
 Architect Leo von Klenze. Built between 1816 and 1830.
 Credit: Public Domain.

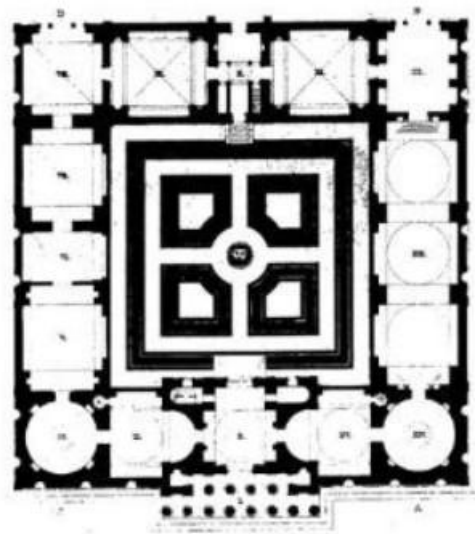


Figure 2.9 The Glyptothek Museum floor plan.
 Architect Leo von Klenze. Built between 1816 and 1830.
 Source: <http://www.glyptoteket.com/> accessed 10/01/2026.

The similarities between the front elevations of the RMI building and the Glyptothek in Munich, designed by Klenze and constructed between 1816 and 1830, are evident (Fig. 2.8). The Glyptothek was also part of a wider scheme of civic development, sited in a public square, flanked by several other Neoclassical buildings, known as the Königsplatz. The RMI and Glyptothek both feature an Ionic portico, flanked by wings articulated with rectangular windows. In the case of the Glyptothek, these "windows" are blind and form niches for sculpture. The internal layout of the buildings also relies only minimally on illumination from the exterior walls. Instead, internal spaces and skylights are employed (Fig. 2.9). Prior to wartime destruction, the Glyptothek was richly decorated inside, with different wings having decorative motifs appropriate to the objects that they contained (Fig. 2.10). There were also frescos above the cornices in some of the rooms. This employment of pattern motifs on every surface reflects the adoption of Greco-Roman styles and can also be seen in the foyer of the RMI (Fig. 2.11). The building itself becomes more than a container for the artwork; it is an artwork in its own right and a crucial part of the visitors' overall experience.



Figure 2.10 Photograph of the interior of the Munich Glyptothek in 1900.
Creator unknown. Scan from: Reinhard Bauer: *Maxvorstadt - zwischen Münchens Altstadt und Schwabing* (Bavarica-Verlag 1995). Public domain.

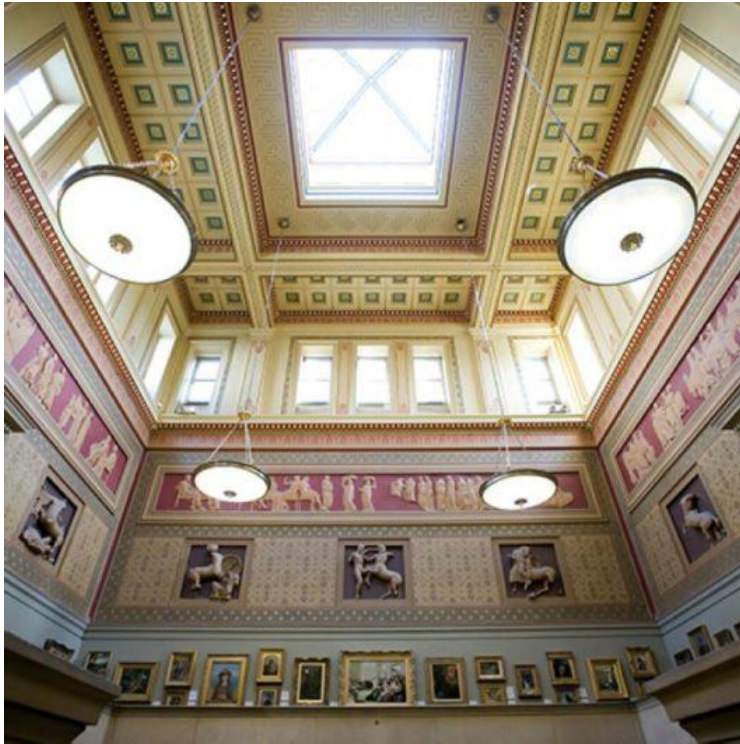


Figure 2.11 Entrance foyer of Manchester Art Gallery (previously the RMI), 2020.
Lantern light and clerestory windows of central atrium.
Photograph credit: writer's own.

Schinkel's concept of the gallery architecture, interior design and artwork as an integrated whole, with aesthetic unity, required the architect's close involvement in every aspect of the building. This was also clearly the case in the creation of the RMI building. The relationship between Barry and the organising committee was close, as Marcus Wiffen details, with more than 100 letters of correspondence between them. The RMI Committee consulted Barry regularly about the interior until 1837 and had him advise further on lighting the entrance hall and portico in January 1845. Barry's last attendance at an actual meeting of the Building Committee was recorded as 3 November 1832, when he "explained his opinion regarding plastering of the hall."²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Marcus Wiffen, "The architecture of Sir Charles Barry in Manchester and neighbourhood" in *Art & Architecture in Victorian Manchester*, John H G Archer (ed), (Manchester University Press, 1985), 46-64.

In line with the classical aesthetic, as it was generally perceived at the time, Neoclassical buildings were constructed in a pure light or white stone.²⁹¹ This maximised the effects of shadow and emphasised structure, symmetry and form. The original Glyptothek was constructed entirely using white marble. In the case of the RMI, a carboniferous sandstone was employed.²⁹² The importance given to the choice of stone used at Manchester is illustrated by the description in a *Manchester Guardian* article of 21 February 1829, which details the difficult process of acquiring the required stone from a series of different local quarries.²⁹³ However, while the buildings in Prussia and Bavaria retained their pristine purity, it must have been recognised that this would never be the case in Manchester. Within a few years, all the buildings in the Victorian industrial towns became starkly soot-blackened by the profusion of coal-burning factories and homes. Indeed, many of the historic buildings in the northern mill towns of England remained in this state well into the late twentieth century. Photographs of the RMI building taken in the decades following its construction show stonework coated with soot. While undeniably striking, this blackened façade would have created a very different visual impression on the patrons and the passing general public than was originally intended (Figs. 2.12 and 2.13).

²⁹¹ Archaeological findings had already been used to challenge this idea and to prove that Greek buildings were actually largely polychrome. In 1834, Gottfried Semper published a pamphlet outlining this theory, entitled *Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architectur und Plastik bei den Alten* (Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity) <https://www.scribd.com/document/494793394/Preliminary-remarks-on-polychrome-architecture-and-sculpture-in-Antiquity-1-8> accessed 18/10/25.

²⁹² <https://www.magnetmanchester.org/historypart1/> accessed 07/08/2020.

²⁹³ "Manchester Royal Institution", *The Manchester Guardian*, February 21, 1829, 5.



Figure 2.12 Photograph of the RMI Building, G. Grundy, 1861.
Manchester Central Library GB127, M59060.

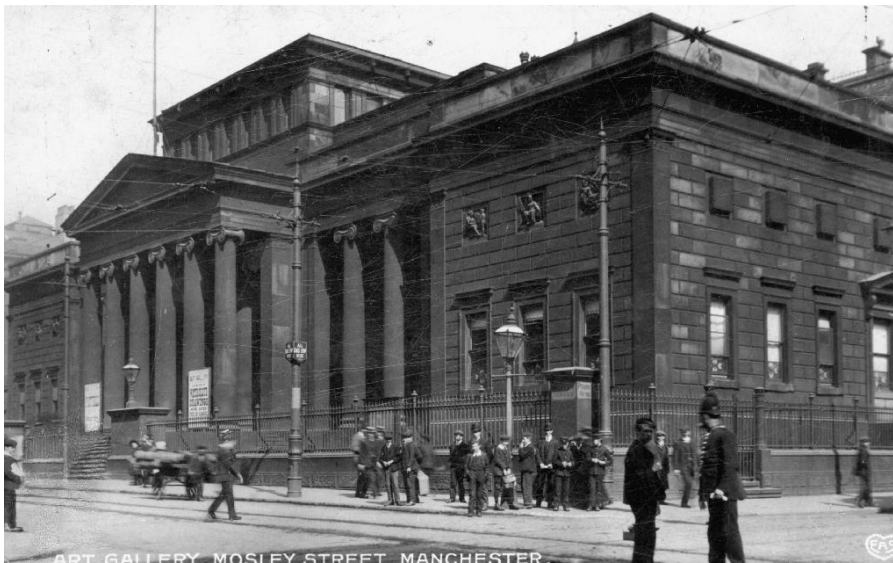


Figure 2.13 Photograph of the RMI Building, 1910.
Creator unknown. MCL GB127, M58926.

The site for the RMI, while deliberately chosen for its prominent and prestigious location, was also very conveniently situated for many of its patrons. In the very centre of town, it was just a few streets from the major hubs of trade such as the Royal Exchange, the Corn Exchange, offices, mills and warehouses. It was common during the early part of the century, as the addresses of the first RMI Council reveal,

for people to live within walking distance of their place of work. The Cross Street Unitarian Chapel and the Mosley Street Chapel, major social and political forces of the time, patronised by foreign nationals and many of the RMI's Nonconformist members, were also situated close by. Cross Street Chapel is still on its original site.²⁹⁴ Accessed directly from a busy street, the original design also included space for carriages to conveniently drop off their occupants. As Sheehan identifies, the museum built by Schinkel in Berlin was also built on a site which, placed as it was alongside other key buildings such as the palace, the cathedral and the arsenal, "asserted art's centrality, indeed suggested its claim to equal status with dynasty, church, and army, those three fundamental pillars of the Prussian state."²⁹⁵ The RMI was, as we shall discuss later, also a building designed for the convenience of its users. Perhaps this accounts for noticeable similarities between the RMI architecture and that of another building established for and patronised by the art loving public, the Berlin concert hall, or *Königliches Schauspielhaus*, designed by Schinkel between 1818 and 1821 (Fig. 2.14). With a similar Ionic portico, flanked by wings on a rusticated basement, this building features an additional upper portico, rather than a lantern roof. Barry's original plans for the RMI also included sculptural ornamentation on the pediment of his building, which was later abandoned due to cost.²⁹⁶

²⁹⁴ The original building was destroyed during WWII, and there have been two subsequent rebuilds on the same site. For full history see <https://cross-street-chapel.org.uk/a-brief-history-of-cross-street-chapel/> accessed 19/10/25.

²⁹⁵ Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World*, 73.

²⁹⁶ Barry proposed more sculptural decoration once the building was underway: a crowning group of sculptures and a pediment, to be designed by Richard Westmacott. However, this was thought to be too costly. A later design proposal, by Hennings, also suggested a frieze. See Wyke and Cocks and Cocks, *Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 95.



Figure 2.14 Photograph of the Königlich-Schauspielhaus, now Konzerthaus, Berlin. Architect Karl Frederick Schinkel built from 1818 to 1821. Photograph: creator unknown, public domain.

Sheehan identifies both the Glyptothek and the Königlich-Museum, alongside libraries, theatres, opera houses and concert halls such as the Königlich-Schauspielhaus, as being among the earliest German *Bildungsbauten*. These were buildings designed to make culture accessible to at least part of the general population, providing a shared cultural experience while simultaneously encouraging private, individualised and subjective experiences. Sheehan describes German museums of this period as "...the material theatre of human activity..., museums were supposed to be settings for the enactment of *Bildung's* twin aspirations: to celebrate and nourish the community, and to edify and improve the individual."²⁹⁷ I would suggest that this dual drive can also clearly be seen in the founding documents of the RMI and in the wider development of the civic and cultural spaces of nineteenth-century Manchester.

²⁹⁷ Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World*, 81.

High up on the corner pavilions of the RMI, unnoticed by most passersby at street level, are clues to the building's intended function. Placed in the spaces where first-floor windows would have been, directly above the ground-floor windows, are a series of small, rectangular high-relief panels. These continue the regular rhythm of the windows and columns horizontally across the street frontage. Six in total, three on each wing of the building, these are the work of sculptor John Hennings, Junior.²⁹⁸ They depict female figures, who, fittingly for the original "Royal Manchester Institute of Literature, Science and the Arts", personify painting, architecture, sculpture, wisdom, mathematics and astronomy. These were thought by the Organising Committee at the time to "evinced great freedom and chasteness of design" and "give considerable additional effect to the general architectural character of the building."²⁹⁹ The theme of education and self-improvement is stressed. All the compositions except *Wisdom* include a generic female figure in Greco-Roman dress who appears to be teaching the second character, a cherub-like boy (Fig. 2.16). In each relief, to balance the composition, the boy's body is enlarged to match the height of the seated woman. The rectangular format of these panels could be a reference to the sculptural metopes seen on ancient Greek temples. This would link with the low-relief casts situated in the RMI entrance hall, which I will discuss later.

²⁹⁸ John Henning Junior was the son of the sculptor John Henning Snr (1771-1851), who was a self-taught Scottish modeller, known for his miniature copies of the Parthenon frieze. John Henning Jnr collaborated with his father on many projects, including work for the Athenaeum Club in Pall Mall and the classical reliefs on Decimus Burton's triple screen at Hyde Park Corner. See "John Henning Jnr" in *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/person.php?id=msib7_1218120060 accessed 18/10/2025.

²⁹⁹ "Manchester Royal Institution Annual Meeting", *The Manchester Guardian*, March 25, 1837.



Figure 2.15 Photograph showing sculptured relief panels on the front of the RML building.
Photo Credit: Victorian Web. <https://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/architecture/barry/3.html>
accessed 09/06/2023.



Figure 2.16 John Henning Junior, carved panel depicting “Art”.
Front elevation of the RMI.

Photo Credit: Victorian Web. <https://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/architecture/barry/3.html> accessed 09/06/2023.



Figure 2.17 John Henning Junior, carved panel depicting “Sculpture”.
Front elevation of the RMI.

Photo Credit: Victorian Web <https://www.victorianweb.org/victorian/art/architecture/barry/3.html> accessed 09/06/2023.

The RMI Interior

The building’s entrance portico, supported by a giant order of six Doric columns, marks a dramatic transition from the bustle of the street into a new realm. From the

steps, the building has a significant presence, towering above the visitor. The steps themselves, however, are not the oversized monumental blocks employed in some civic buildings. This is a staircase of human proportions, designed on the scale of its users. The entrance is not a grand archway or row of wide doors, but a single doorway, which, despite its moulded architrave and cornice on consoles, is quite domestic in feel. Scurrying inside, amid the umbrella furling and shaking of coats, we enter an atrium that, as early photographs show, has survived remarkably unchanged since the building opened in 1835. The physical relief of the inviting space is magnified by its comfortable scale and warm colour scheme of dark reds, ochre and gold, in stark contrast to the monochrome beige-grey of the world outside (Fig. 2.18). One can imagine the citizens of Manchester finding a similar welcome 190 years ago. The RMI was a physical and mental sanctuary from the dreary, dark and grimy streets where the cobbles clattered with the iron-soled clogs of legions of cotton mill workers and horse-drawn omnibuses and carriages rattled by. This creation of a special, out-of-the-ordinary encounter creates a bridge from everyday life to new possibilities of experience and spiritual growth.

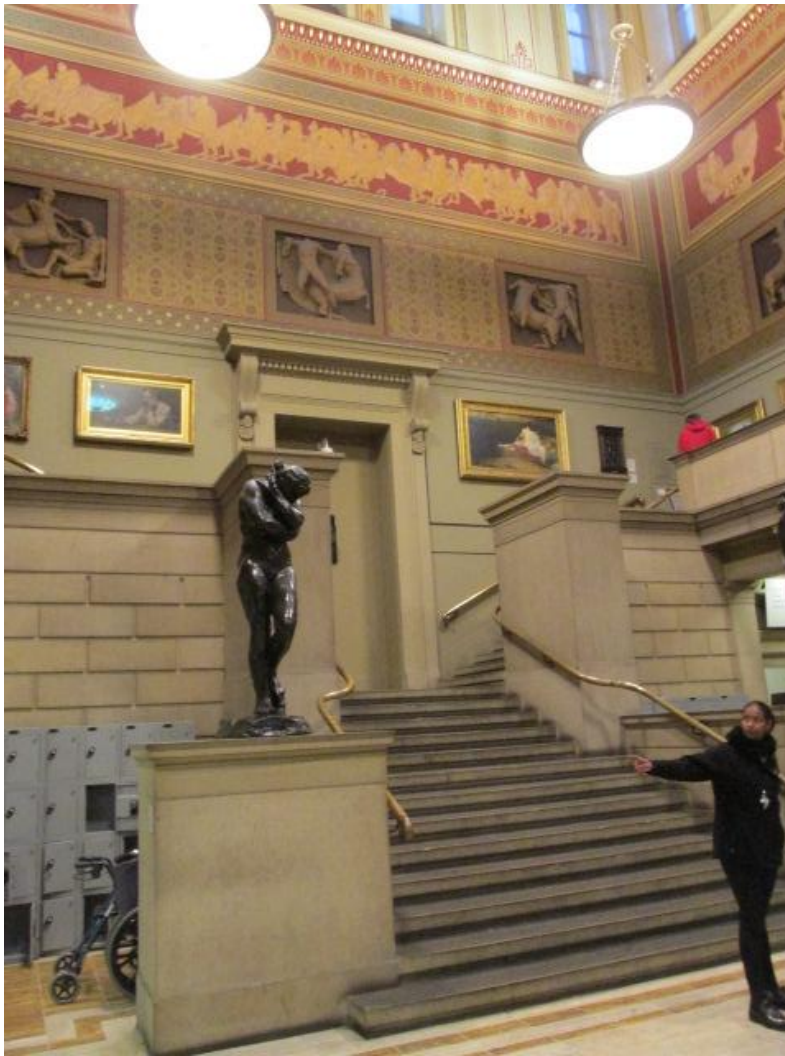


Figure 2.18 Entrance atrium of the RMI (Manchester Art Gallery), 2019.
Blind alcove on the far wall once led to the lecture theatre. Photograph: writer's own.



Figure 2.19 Entrance atrium of the RMI (Manchester Art Gallery), 2019. View from the staircase towards the exit. Photograph: writer's own.

The square entrance atrium is tailored to the presence of people. Designed as a top-lit sculpture court, the lantern has a skylight and clerestory allowing natural daylight to supplement the gas lighting that was originally installed. The visitor enters an open space which functions as a transitional area for greeting and meeting others. This was once also a waiting area for those attending lectures. The balcony that runs around the entirety of the space, providing an additional space for the display of

artwork and also enabling opportunities for social viewing and being viewed.³⁰⁰

Directly opposite the main entrance, a stone imperial staircase originally led to a door, now a blind alcove, providing direct access to the lecture theatre. The ground floor has a balustraded gallery on fluted Doric columns; these columns, however, unlike those of the exterior, are small in scale, decorative rather than imposing. The idea for an atrium with balcony, fronting a gallery with Neoclassical architectural features, had already been implemented, albeit on a much grander scale and open to the outdoors, by Schinkel, in his initial design for the Königliches Museum. This part of the building was later destroyed, but sketches of the design show similarities in the overall feel of the space, in the use of pillars, ceiling coffering and inlaid relief panels (Fig. 2.20). Schinkel's design also reveals, with its inclusion of figures, an anticipation and awareness of the way in which people would move through and interact with the space, which is very much reflected in the RMI design.³⁰¹

³⁰⁰ While a Foucauldian interpretation might see this potential for surveillance as a means of ensuring the decorum of the entering crowds, there is no inference of this motive in the records of the Institute.

³⁰¹ Moyano, "Quality vs. History", 585-608.

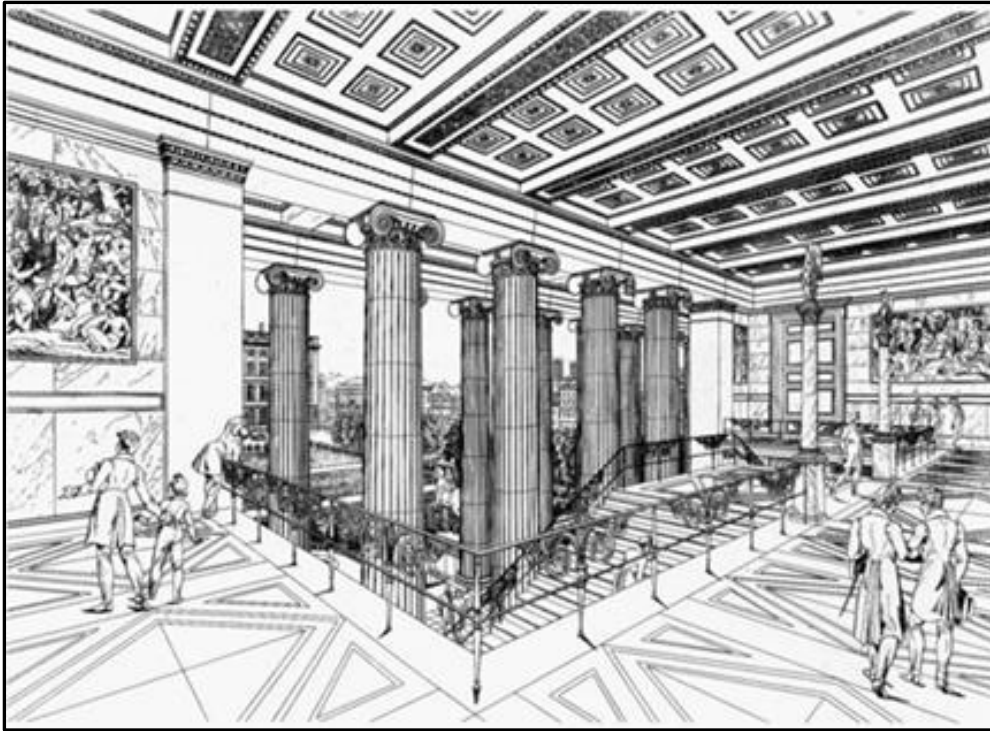


Figure 2.20 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, perspective view of the staircase, Königlich Museum. Plate 43 of 'Altes Museum' from *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*, 1822–1830. Lithograph on paper, 63 x 48cm. View of the main staircase gallery. National Galleries of Scotland, accession number: P 3043.43.

As early images show, the atrium design also incorporated a number of free-standing, classically inspired sculptures, in addition to the single figure that still remains on the staircase. These have long-since disappeared, but it seems likely that they were in fact casts from classical sculptures.³⁰² The initial proposal for the founding of the RMI assumed that “the formation of a collection of casts from the most celebrated pieces of sculpture would doubtless be felt to be an object highly deserving of attention.”³⁰³ The RMI Minutes of 19 February 1834 record that a marble statue by Francis Chantrey of Dr John Dalton was to be displayed in the entrance hall of the institution.³⁰⁴ This would seem to indicate that the sculptures which greeted visitors and members were not exclusively depicting remote classical

³⁰² Holly Johnson, *Unearthing the Mysteries of Manchester Art Gallery's lost sculptures*, blog, <https://manchesterartgallery.org/unearthing-the-mysteries/> accessed 20/08/2024.

³⁰³ *Proposal for Establishing in Manchester an Institution for the Fine Arts*, MCL M6/1/1/1.

³⁰⁴ RMI Minutes of 19 February 1834, MCL, M6/1/1/1. See also Wyke, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 32-33.

figures, as we might expect from the setting, but also included respected contemporaries. Dr John Dalton (1766-1844) was a Manchester-based chemist, and a researcher into optics. He was one of the first to formally identify colour blindness. The RMI members were celebrating the achievements of a local pioneer in the study of subjective visual experience, in an institution designed to promote displays of visual imagery.³⁰⁵ We will encounter Dalton again in Chapter 5 as the subject of one of Ford Madox Brown's town hall frescos, some 50 years later.³⁰⁶

In Manchester during this period, art, science and culture more generally were evidently viewed as something to be integrated with and complimentary to manufacturing and machines. One need only look at the learned societies and newly developing academic institutions to see that the boundaries of academic disciplines in the mid-nineteenth century were not as they are today. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the close relationship between chemistry and textile manufacturing, Manchester was at the forefront in promoting and recognising the importance of science to industry. As John R. Davis extensively outlines, Germany led Europe in the professionalisation of the discipline, with the educational reforms of Wilhelm von Humboldt giving a "fundamental commitment to research, free enquiry and, in chemistry, laboratory teaching."³⁰⁷ British scientists were drawn to German research centres as there were no equivalent British facilities. Among these was Lyon Playfair (1818-1898), who, having studied at Justus von Liebig's chemical laboratory in Giessen, became manager of a Lancashire calico works. In 1843, Playfair was

³⁰⁵ The sculpture still exists and is now on display in Manchester Town Hall. Wyke, Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester, 32. <https://www.magnetmanchester.org/historyofthegallery3> accessed 20/08/2024.

³⁰⁶ Dalton was also President of the Literary and Philosophical Institution from 1817 until his death in 1844. See William C Henry, *Memoirs of the Life and Scientific Researches of John Dalton* (Cavendish Society, 1854), <https://archive.org/details/memoirsoflifesci00henruoft/page/xiv/mode/2up> accessed 1/09/2020.

³⁰⁷ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 296.

appointed Professor of Chemistry, running his own laboratory from the basement of the RMI. This was at a time when University College and King's College were the only British universities offering laboratory teaching.³⁰⁸

Science also had a particular role in embodying both cultural and intellectual aims. For Manchester, which led the country in developments in chemistry linked to the dying industry, scientific advances represented civic pride as well as academic achievement. As a pamphlet produced by the *Manchester Exchange Herald* in 1823 illustrates, close links with science were also identified as necessary for the development of visual sensitivity and the undefined, yet highly desirable, personal characteristic of “taste”. “When the manufacturers of worsted, linsey-woolsey, fustian check, and lastly, cottons, brought labourers to the looms, still Taste remained estranged, and only began to pay short and shy visits when Industry opened her first partnership account with Science.”³⁰⁹ Science was also a neutral ground, supposedly objective and largely free from political bias, fitted to the principles of the RMI.

³⁰⁸ <https://chem.ed.ac.uk/about-us/history/professors/lyon-playfair> accessed 24/07/2024. Playfair's German links and scientific prominence led him to be given the honorary role of Gentleman Usher to Prince Albert. The German Prince, as explored in Chapter 4 – “The Albert Memorial”, was a leading figure in the wider development of British public art.

³⁰⁹ “Manchester, with the Origin of an Institution”, pamphlet, first published in the *Manchester Exchange Herald*, Oct 7, 1823, MCL M6/1/79/1 (Ashton, 1823), 4. Worsted is type of high-quality wool yarn, fustian check refers to a fabric with a linen warp and woollen weft and linsey-woolsey is a type of coarse twill with a linen warp and a woollen weft. These are mentioned as examples of innovative new textiles.

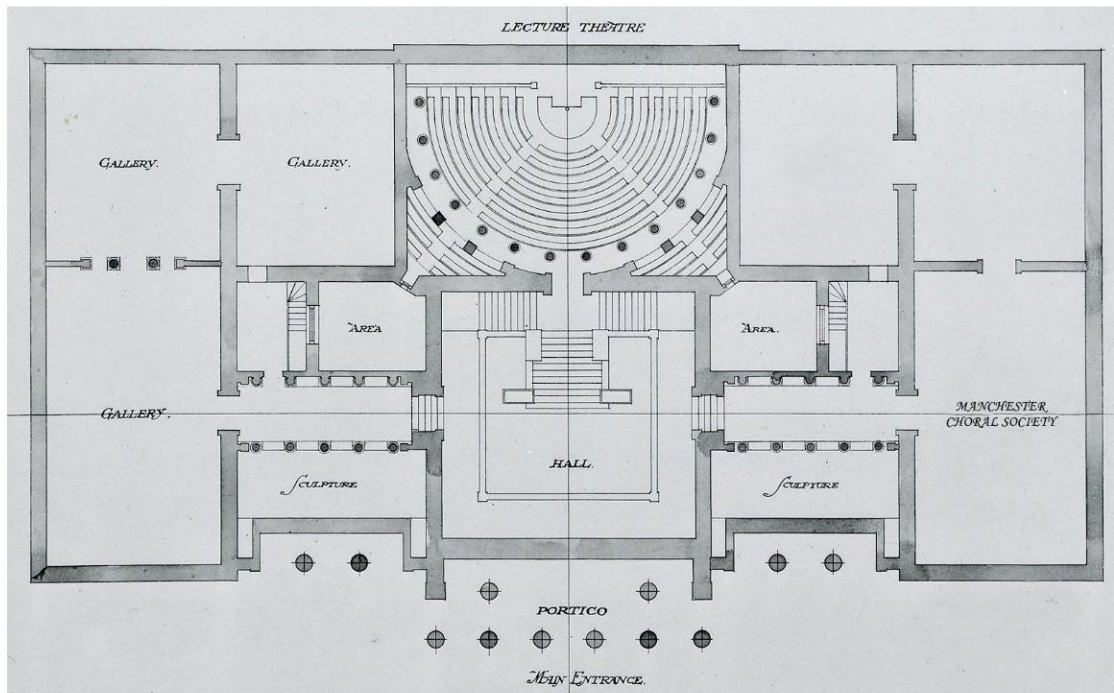


Figure 2.21 Charles Barry, plan of the first floor of the RMI.

The plan shows what are now galleries 3 to 11, along with the lecture theatre, which is now Gallery 7.

Credit: Manchester City Galleries. <https://www.magnetmanchester.org/historyofthegallery3> accessed 05/03/2026

As the floor plan illustrates (Figs. 2.21 and 2.22), the RMI building aimed to accommodate both the personal and public spheres, providing its regular visitors with a home away from home. In 1823 a visiting reporter from *The Manchester Guardian* described how ground floor accommodations directly accessible from the entrance hall included areas for the convenience of patrons, such as the porter's room, ladies' cloaking rooms, a ladies' retiring room, rooms for gentlemen's hats and cloaks and "several other good rooms..."³¹⁰ Reflecting the drive to provide opportunities for the individual to enhance their own knowledge and cultural experience, as well as contributing to civic society, this was an institution focused on the individual, on the community and on the family, with many family memberships recorded.

³¹⁰ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September 1823, 3.

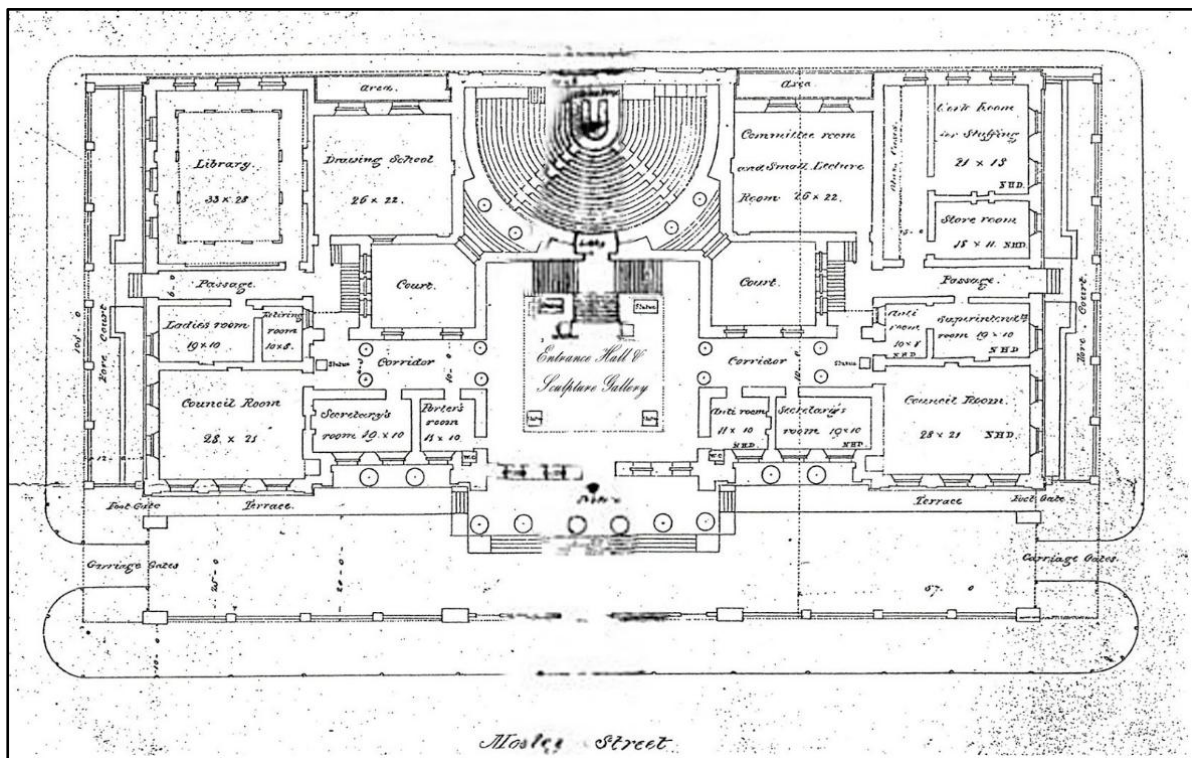


Figure 2.22 Charles Barry, ground floor plan of the RMI

Credit: Manchester City Galleries <https://www.magnetmanchester.org/historyofthegallery3> accessed 05/03/2026

Artists themselves, despite being the initial instigators of the RMI project, had no strategic or operational involvement in its running and no representation on the RMI Council. They did, however, have a physical presence, as the original floor plan shows, in the form of a “drawing room” or studio on the ground floor. The floor plan of the upper floor shows two galleries, one on each side of the central atrium, dedicated to sculpture (Fig. 2.21). There was considerable German precedent for this. The Glyptothek in Munich was designed specifically to house King Ludwig I’s collection of Greek and Roman sculptures. While the RMI building was being constructed, the Institute operated from the cellars of the Portico Library, where, it is recorded, a set of thirteen casts of antique sculpture, donated by local collector

Jonathan Hatfield (1793–1840), were stored for artists to study.³¹¹ RMI minutes of 1830 record further casts on display. “There were Hatfield’s casts, Bury’s casts, Gibson’s casts of the town halls’ iconic capitals, all dominated by Westmacott’s casts of the Elgin marbles.”³¹²

The RMI Governing Council, as we have seen, aimed primarily to engage an audience from its own social class and across a broad range of ideologies. From the start, manufacturers also played a significant role in the organisation of the RMI, which grew over time. The Committee established at the founding meeting was made up of 29% manufacturers. By 1835 the Governing Council was made up of 49% manufacturers.³¹³ The initial Committee of “Gentlemen” passed a Resolution “that the diffusion of a taste for the Fine Arts, in this populous and opulent district, by establishing a collection of the best Models that can be obtained, in Painting and Sculpture, and by opening a channel through which the works of meritorious Artists may be brought before the public; and the encouragement of Literary and Scientific pursuits, by facilitating the delivery of popular Courses of Public Lectures—are objects highly desirable and important.”³¹⁴ The Institution was originally planned to contain three exhibition rooms, a lecture theatre with adjoining teaching laboratory, a library and reading room and two rooms in which antiquarian objects and botanical specimens could be exhibited.³¹⁵

³¹¹ The RMI Governing Council Minutes for 13 November 1826, vol 1, 188, record the casts as repaired and lists them as: Apollo, Apollino, Venus, Nymph with Cupid playing on a lyre, etc. Jonathan Hatfield presented to the Royal Institution casts from sculpture, which cost £2,000, William E.A. Axon (ed). *The annals of Manchester: A chronological record from the earliest times to the end of 1885* (John Heywood, 1886) <https://archive.org/stream/annalsofmanchest00axon#page/418/mode/2up> accessed 22/06/2024, 209.

³¹² According to the RMI Governing Council Minutes, vol 1, 22 January 1830, 282, the casts of the “Elgin Marbles” had been presented to the RMI by King George in 1830.

³¹³ See Governing Council Minute Books, 1835–48, MCL, M6/1/1/1.

³¹⁴ This group published a pamphlet, a copy of which is in the Royal Manchester Institution Council Minute Book, August 6, 1823. MCL, M6/1/1/1.

³¹⁵ RMI Minutes, 1823–35, 68. One of the scientists to work in the teaching laboratory was the industrial chemist Frederick Grace Calvert. Grace Calvert was noted for his work on the industrial manufacture of carbolic acid or phenol, which was used in

The lecture theatre was certainly of ambitious proportions, recorded as being “...semi-circular and divided into pit and gallery, of which the former contains accommodation for 448, and the latter for 224 persons, a total of 672.”³¹⁶ For the years 1835-1859, syllabi for the lecture series have survived.³¹⁷ As Bud’s careful analysis of these A5 printed pamphlets reveals, during these 24 years some 130 courses of lectures, about five per year, were provided. Each course was four to six lectures. Over this period, it is perhaps not surprising that, given the substantial commercial and scientific interest in the town on the subject, 24 of the 130-lecture series were on topics linked to Chemistry. Art History was another popular area, with fourteen lecture series. A further nineteen series covered topics related to Physiology. Other subjects which recurred periodically were Natural History, Music, Literature, Astronomy, Geology and Ethnology.³¹⁸

In the nineteenth century, considerable progress was made in the study of optics. The discoveries of early physics led to an understanding of how light interacts with the eye to construct sight. This was reflected in the writing of, among others, Goethe, who famously wrote that “the eye may be said to owe its existence to light.”³¹⁹ Goethe’s highly influential *Theory of Colours*, which highlighted the idea of sight as a subjective construct, was published in 1810 and in English translation by Sir Charles Eastlake in 1840.³²⁰ This was a period before electric light and there was some concern about employing gas lighting due to the risk of fire and the effects of gas

the textile industry for dyeing. As one of the honorary professors of the Institution, Grace Calvert was also expected to lecture to the membership at least four times a season.

³¹⁶ *Manchester Guardian*, 27 September, 1823, 3.

³¹⁷ *Lecture Syllabuses and General Circulars*, MCL, M6/1/70-71.

³¹⁸ Bud, “The Royal Manchester Institution”, 125.

³¹⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, translated from the German with notes by Charles Locke Eastlake, originally published in 1840 by John Murray, reprinted by MIT Press in 1970, lii <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50572/50572-h/50572-h.htm> Introduction, xxxix.

³²⁰ Goethe, *Theory of Colours*.

and soot, blackening picture surfaces.³²¹ The RMI building was designed to maximize natural daylight. Historically, picture galleries, attached to private residences or palaces, were often long, narrow spaces which looked out onto a garden or park, with windows running the length of one side of the room. The remaining three walls could then be used for the display of artwork.³²² Andrew McClellan describes how new technologies, in the form of iron framing and glass, with which the builders of industrial Manchester would have been very familiar, enabled the construction of skylights to illuminate rooms.³²³ Invisible from the street, the RMI has a series of glass roofs in addition to the central entrance atrium with its clerestory. These provide natural daylight for the upper floor, where the gallery spaces are situated. Early designs included plans for a system of advanced roof lighting called “top side-lighting” in the picture gallery, but lantern windows were eventually decided upon.³²⁴ With the RMI programme of events taking place until late in the evening, effective artificial lighting was essential. While London’s National Gallery was initially indifferent to the lack of access to collections by anyone not free to attend during daylight hours, RMI events and access were scheduled for the convenience of the working patrons. As records of payments to the installers of gas lighting in the basement show, the RMI Council had no reservations about installing the latest artificial lighting in 1838. The National Gallery did not employ any artificial lighting until the end of the nineteenth century.³²⁵ By 1845, the RMI exhibitions were

³²¹ This concern is evidenced in discussions around artificial lighting for the National Gallery. See Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*, 142.

³²² Heraeus, “Top Lighting from Paris”, 73.

³²³ Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 60.

³²⁴ A detailed model of the proposed building was produced by George Scutt in 1825, now preserved in the Manchester Art Gallery. This illustrates modifications made to the original design. There were initial discussions about substituting a dome for the lantern light in the entrance hall, but instead, the walls were lowered to accommodate a hipped roof. On the model, a system of advanced roof lighting, “top side-lighting” is shown in the picture gallery. This was not included in the eventual building.

³²⁵ Waterfield, *The People's Galleries*, 142.

opening to the general public every evening for the last four weeks of the run, at a charge of twopence. The average attendance between seven and nine o'clock was recorded as over 1,000 people.³²⁶ The National Gallery finally extended its summer opening hours in 1885 but did not choose to open on Sundays until 1896.³²⁷

Overhead lighting was a well-publicised and much-admired feature of Klenze's Pinakothek in Munich, completed in 1836. Employing skylights enabled greater flexibility in gallery display, as all four walls could now be used, and, as Heraeus identifies, concern for good illumination also potentially implied "greater thoughtfulness and respect for the works themselves."³²⁸ The requirement for adequate light inferred a particular way of viewing, implying that the images would be closely examined and subjected to detailed analysis. Overhead lighting also meant that the arrangement of the building façade, and the inner layout of the rooms on the upper floor, need not be determined by the internal need for light. While the ground floor of the RMI has windows which articulate the layout of the rooms within, the glass roofs allowed these to be replaced with decorative panels on the first floor, giving the impression that the building is just one substantial floor rather than two.

³²⁶ Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 15.

³²⁷ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 215.

³²⁸ Heraeus, "Top Lighting from Paris", 73.



Figure 2.23 Photograph of ceiling panels in the entrance atrium of the RMI, 2019.
Photograph: writer's own.

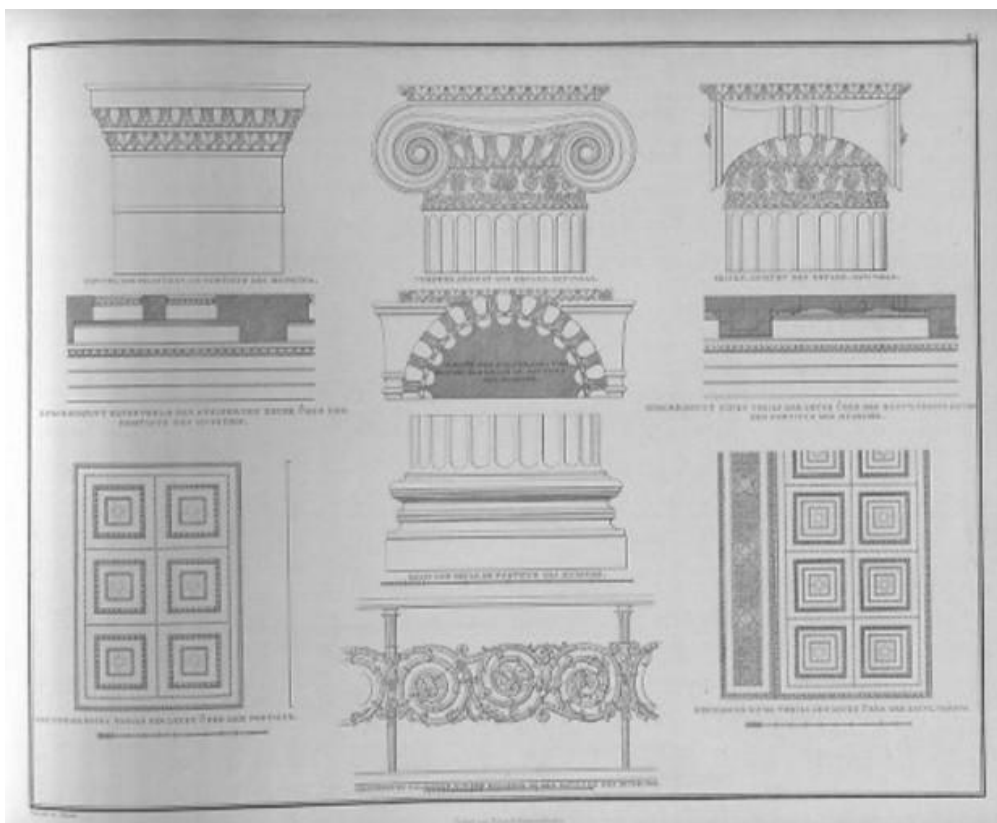


Figure 2.24 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, decorative elements from the Königliches Museum Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe, 118. Lithograph on paper, 63 x 48cm.
<https://archive.org/details/Sammlungarchite00Schi/page/n117/mode/2up> accessed 17/10/2025.



Figure 2.25 Photograph of wall panels in entrance atrium of the RMI, 2019.
Photograph writer's own.

The entrance atrium has a decorative scheme that in every aspect adopts and repurposes classical design features, from the rows of pillars and rusticated stone on the ground floor to the coffered ceiling. In this respect, there are significant parallels with the original decorative scheme of the Munich Glyptothek (Fig. 2.11) and decorative elements from the Königliches Museum illustrated in Schinkel's designs (Fig. 2.24). On the ground floor, staircase and balcony areas, the walls are articulated only by the simple, clean lines of the architectural features. In contrast, the upper walls and ceiling are covered with decorative panels, frequently framed by contrasting pattern designs. The lantern stands on a pediment with egg and dart decoration, and the various patterns painted on the wall surfaces are derived from classical motifs such as the palmette and the fret. These designs were rediscovered in the surviving examples of Roman interiors at sites such as Pompeii

and Herculaneum, first excavated over a century before.³²⁹ In these ancient rooms, the whole wall surface and ceiling were often covered with various decorative panels, including painted scenes and elements of stucco low relief. In the late eighteenth century, a stop in Southern Italy to view the excavations became part of the “Grand Tour”, and the discoveries at the sites were widely publicised. Several decades later, there was a proliferation of publications focusing specifically on patterns produced in different cultural and historical contexts, such as Owen Jones’s *Grammar of Ornament* (1856).³³⁰ However, it is apparent from the extensive use of classical motifs in the RMI atrium that knowledge and confident appropriation of classical ornamentation existed long before it became the focus for published study. As outlined in Chapter 2, “Manchester School of Art”, the appropriate and effective use of pattern motifs was crucial to the commercial success of Manchester’s textile manufacturers. It is clear in this instance that the classical decorative and architectural elements represent a powerful symbol of the aspirational, spiritual and educational intent of the Institution.

Early German promoters of the study of classical art saw it as fundamental to an understanding of the development of art and culture in general and not limited, as in Britain, largely to the study of literature and the acquisition of Latin and Greek language. From the mid-eighteenth century, the writing of German art historian Winckelmann, as discussed previously, influenced not only the study of European painting and sculpture but also of philosophy and literature. Creating a popular taste

³²⁹ Many years later, the palmette was to be a focus for art historical debate about stylistic development and direct and indirect reference to nature as a design source.

³³⁰ *The Grammar of Ornament*, by Owen Jones, Francis Bedford, John Burley Waring, John Obadiah Westwood, Matthew Digby Wyatt (Day and Son, 1856) <https://archive.org/details/grammarornament00Jones> accessed 05/07/2026.

for classical art with his 1750 *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, (Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks), and *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, 1764, (History of Ancient Art).³³¹ In Greek art, the study of the human body predominates, and this concern with the physical refinement of the body, as complementary to the development of the mind, was also seen in aspects of German culture. Jonathan Westaway explored the introduction of German developments in mountaineering and gymnastics to Northern England during this period. He identified that nineteenth-century proponents of gymnastics in Germany such as Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839) had stressed the importance of developing a balance between the mind and the body, “turning for inspiration to models from Greek Antiquity.”³³² In the nineteenth century, as Ingomar Weiler outlines, this spurred a growing interest in both physical and intellectual self-improvement.³³³

The Neoclassical style of the RMI interior design might also have reinforced, in the mind of its contemporary visitors, the idea that the building was to be approached more as a domestic setting than as an institutional one. During the early nineteenth century, this style was often used in the domestic interiors of new urban middle classes across Europe, and particularly in the German States, including Austria. The style that came to be known as *Biedermeier* referred not just to interior design; it was also linked to the concept of *Bildung*. The social and economic changes during this

³³¹ Winckelmann was the first to distinguish between Ancient Greek and Roman art, and define periods within Greek art, tracing a trajectory from growth to maturity and then imitation or decadence that continues to have influence to the present day. He particularly valued the idealised natural forms seen in Greek art.

³³² Westaway, “The German Community in Manchester”, 571-604.

https://clou.uclan.ac.uk/1133/1/westaway_german_community_manchester_middle-class_culture_mountaineering_britain.pdf accessed 07/11/2024.

³³³ Ingomar Weiler, “The Living Legacy: Classical Sport and Nineteenth-Century Middle Class Commentators of the German-Speaking Nations,” in *Reformers, Sport, Modernizers: Middle-Class Revolutionaries*, ed. J. A. Mangan, vol. 4 of *The European Sports History Review* (Frank Cass, 2002), 9-34.

period also created a new kind of audience for the arts and a particular mood and set of trends which stressed the importance of family values, home and community.³³⁴

Woodson-Boulton identifies early nineteenth-century public institutions as “a new kind of domesticated public space”, reflecting “ideas about the middle-class home as refuge...”³³⁵

The dominant colours in evidence in the villas of the well-publicised archaeological sites of Herculaneum and Pompeii were, like those used in the entrance hall of the RMI, largely earth colours; a brick red often features with accents of ochre, yellow and green.³³⁶ Despite the prevailing belief in the purity of the monochrome classical aesthetic, archaeological findings had already been used to argue the case that both the interiors and exteriors of Greek buildings were originally largely polychrome. This idea was promoted by leading Dresden architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), who came to London as a political refugee in the 1840s. Semper published a pamphlet in 1834 outlining how colour would have been used, based on his observations.

Entitled *Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architektur und Plastik bei den Alten* (Preliminary Remarks on Polychrome Architecture and Sculpture in Antiquity).

Semper's initial work included diagrams that illustrated not only polychrome decorative friezes but also boldly coloured architectural features.³³⁷ The pigments seen in classical interiors are known as “earth” colours because they were originally derived from naturally occurring earth and clay. These are some of the earliest

³³⁴ See Ilsa Barea, *Vienna: Legend and Reality* (Pimlico, 1966, republished 1992), 111-188.

³³⁵ Amy Woodson- Boulton “The City Art Museum Movement and the Social Role of Art”, *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, Dino Franco Felluga (ed) https://branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=amy-woodson-boulton-the-city-art-museum-movement-and-the-social-role-of-art accessed 06/07/2024.

³³⁶ The ruins at Pompeii were first discovered late in the 16th century by the architect Domenico Fontana. Herculaneum was discovered in 1709, and systematic excavation began there in 1738. Work began at Pompeii in 1748. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Pompeii/History-of-excavations#> accessed 10/09/2020.

³³⁷ Semper's work on aesthetics led him to be employed by Henry Cole to design displays at the Great Exhibition, and he later became a professor at the new School of Design in South Kensington. See Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper - Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven, 1996).

colours used by mankind; however, evidence from Pompeii reveals that a wide range of colours were available to artists working there, indicating that this was a positive choice of colour scheme rather than an imposed restriction. The selection of colours for the atrium decoration is similar to those discovered in contemporary archaeological investigations. Semper attempted to reconstruct classical decorative schemes (Fig. 2.26).

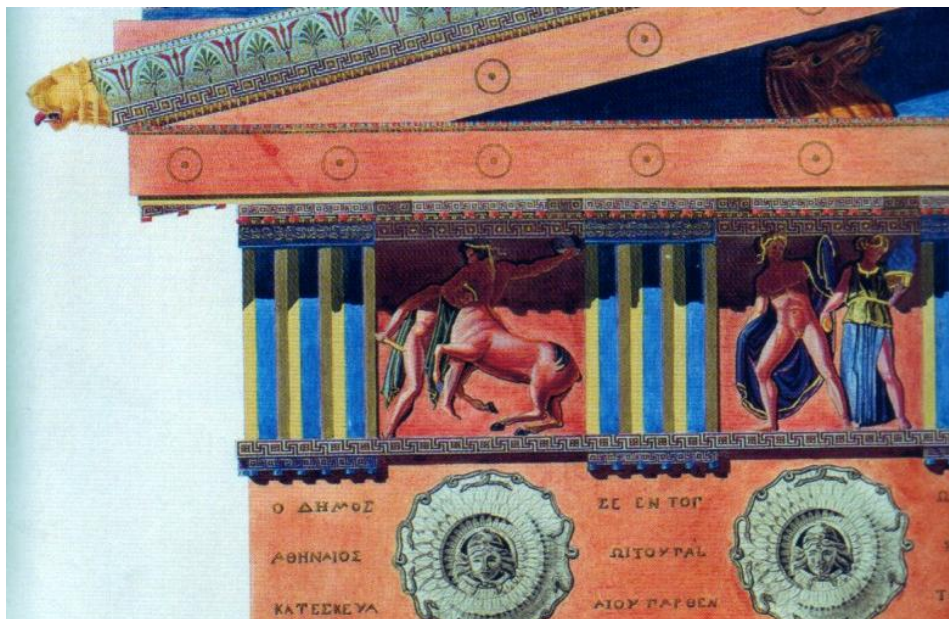


Figure 2.26 Gottfried Semper, detail from the Parthenon frieze, watercolour, 1836.
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f9/Semper_Parthenon_1.jpg?20070217225635
 Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

While it may seem obvious to select colours that were true to the source of the decorative scheme, there was also a great deal of dialogue in this period about the appropriate wall colours for the display of artwork. Barry's specification for the entrance atrium, dated 24 April 1832, quoted by Marcus Whiffen, gives initial colour as "very light green bronze... relieved by picking out the enriched mouldings and stars in the coffers or panels white, in imitation of silver." Barry adds: "The ceiling [is] to be painted a warm Stone colour, two shades deeper than the walls with the

exception of the central panel, which I think may with good effect be of clear ultramarine blue of a very light tone and slightly relieved by small fleecy clouds.”³³⁸ In the event much of the ceiling was to be glazed, along with the clerestory panels, revealing actual, rather than painted, clouds.

General interest in vision and the early science of optics had generated investigations into the structure of the eye, the actual process of vision, and the effects of external factors on its function. The choice of colours to be employed on interior walls, particularly those on which paintings were to be displayed, was also influenced by a new emphasis on the subjective nature of perception that was being explored in philosophical thinking.³³⁹ Jonathan Crary discusses cultural transfer from Germany during the nineteenth century, engaging directly with the history of perception.³⁴⁰ Key to his argument, and one further advanced in relation to gallery display by Klonk, is that a “modern” understanding of perception developed in the first half of the nineteenth century with the work of theorists, many of them German, such as Goethe, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and others, building on the work of Kant.³⁴¹ Klonk sees science, in this period, as a “determining and legitimising discourse for museum practice.”³⁴² While there is no record of a direct link between any particular theoretical framework and the choice of wall and ceiling colours for the building and its exhibition spaces, these colours were chosen in a context in which the writings of German theorists, and the models provided by German galleries, as

³³⁸ Marcus Whiffen, “The architecture of Sir Charles Barry in Manchester and Neighbourhood” in John H G Archer (ed) *Art and Architecture in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester University Press, 1985), 57.

³³⁹ General reference to display practice in public art exhibitions in terms of prevailing theoretical ideas of visual perception during this historical period has been made by a number of writers, including Brandon Taylor, *Art for the Nation* (Manchester University Press, 1999) and Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum*.

³⁴⁰ Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (MIT Press, 1990).

³⁴¹ Schopenhauer stresses the importance of the intellectual nature of perception; the senses furnish the raw material by which the intellect produces the world as representation. See <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/> accessed 19/10/25.

³⁴² Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*, 12.

previously discussed, were widely known and followed. Significant here is Goethe's seminal 1810 treatise, *Theory of Colours*. The sections on "physiological colours" and "pathological colours," with their implication that the functions of the individual eye and mind actually generate our experience of "colour", proved the most influential on subsequent research.³⁴³

Klonk discusses how studies exploring the psychological effects of colour influenced the selection of wall colours in nineteenth-century German galleries and also, towards the latter part of the century, in the National Gallery in London. The fact that many of those instrumental in the formation of early public galleries were also practising artists or, as in Manchester, textile manufacturers, gave them a particular interest in research into optics and visual perception. For example, as previously mentioned, Sir Charles Eastlake, Director of the National Gallery from 1855, a painter, art historian and writer by profession, published a personally translated version of Goethe's *Theory of Colours*, in 1840.³⁴⁴ It was generally understood that the colour of the wall on which a painting was displayed, or the colours of the images displayed around it, would affect the viewer's perception of the colours in the image itself. We do not know the initial colour of the RMI gallery spaces on the upper floor, but according to Barry's specification, the original atrium employed a green/grey, alongside its complementary, a maroon red. These were colours widely used in continental galleries.³⁴⁵ Goethe saw green as a neutral colour which would harmonise with any other colour and, again referring to the psychological impact of colour, he wrote of its restful influence on the mind. "The eye experiences a distinctly

³⁴³ Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, Part I: Physiological Colours, 2-40, Pathological Colours, appendix, 45-56.

³⁴⁴ Goethe, *Theory of Colours*. See also Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 28.

³⁴⁵ Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*, 53.

grateful impression from this colour... hence for rooms to live in constantly the green is most generally selected."³⁴⁶



Figure 2.27 Charles Barry, design for the entrance hall of the RMI, c.1825. Pencil; watercolour and ink (brown), 28.4 x 41.1 cm. Credit: Manchester Art Gallery, im: 105652.

The incorporation of the donated antique casts as an integral part of the atrium design was planned from the start, as Barry's 1825 watercolour clearly shows (Fig. 2.27). Both the low relief wall friezes and the larger series of single reliefs are casts taken from the Parthenon sculptures known as the "Elgin Marbles", which have been displayed in the British Museum since 1816.³⁴⁷ The low relief friezes which run the length of each wall, high above the visitors, are cast from the frieze which once ran around all four sides of the Parthenon inside the colonnade.³⁴⁸ The composition of

³⁴⁶ Goethe, *Theory of Colours*, section 802, 316.

³⁴⁷ Made between 447BC and 432BC the sculptures were produced for the Temple of Athena (the Parthenon) on the Acropolis in Athens. From 1801 to 1812, agents of Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin, removed about half the surviving sculptures and had them transported by sea to Britain <https://www.britishmuseum.org/about-us/british-museum-story/contested-objects-collection/parthenon-sculptures> accessed 27/08/2024.

³⁴⁸ Brian Cook, *The Elgin Marbles* (British Museum Publications Ltd, 1984).

the cast figures has been rearranged in parts, with casts taken from disconnected fragments of stone placed as if part of a continuous frieze. This would seem to indicate an overriding concern for the balance of the decorative scheme and a harmonious aesthetic effect, unimpeded by desire to remain true to the original.³⁴⁹ What appear to be sculpted friezes are also visible in the surviving drawing by Schinkel of the entrance atrium of the Königliches Museum, Berlin (Fig. 2.20).³⁵⁰ Stucco friezes also formed a key aspect of the original decorative scheme employed by Klenze at the Glyptothek in München.

The larger individual casts were created by prominent sculptor and RA Richard Westmacott (1775-1856) and donated to the RMI by their patron King George IV in 1830.³⁵¹ These are casts of sculptures taken from the metopes which would once have alternated with triglyphs forming the base of the roof of the Parthenon.³⁵² All the metopes from the Parthenon have a theme of struggle or battle. These survivals from the south side of the temple depict a conflict between Centaurs and Lapiths.³⁵³ One interpretation of this theme sees it as an opposition between higher intellectual and moral tendencies and baser instincts, between order and chaos and between civilization and barbarism.³⁵⁴ The RMI organisers, committed as they were to the promotion of scientific and cultural knowledge, self-improvement and civic duty, may

³⁴⁹ The scene, according to some interpretations and unusually for the time, depicts, rather than deities, the actual people of Athens, shown as an ideal community taking part in a ceremonial parade or religious procession. It could be argued that the symbolism of civic participation by all members of the society in a democratic communal activity, albeit that this was of course not actually the case in Greece, was not lost on the Governing Council setting up a society for the sharing of knowledge and promotion of the arts and sciences across the city and wider region. Although the RMI strove to be apolitical as an organisation, several Manchester politicians, also prominent in the promotion of the visual arts, were active campaigners for the extension of the British voting franchise during the mid-nineteenth century.

³⁵⁰ Königliches Museum, Berlin. *View to the staircase. Drawing by the architect of the museum*, Karl Friedrich Schinkel. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Altes_Museum_Treppe_Schinkel.jpg Public domain.

³⁵¹ The Exhibition of the Royal Manchester Institution. *Modern artists*. Printed by Leech and Cheetham, Manchester, Volume 8, 1832 https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofroya00roya_1/page/n3 accessed 19/09/2020.

³⁵² https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1816-0610-2 accessed 30/5/2020.

³⁵³ Katherine Schwab, "Celebrations of Victory: The Metopes of the Parthenon", in Jenifer Neils (ed.), *The Parthenon: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

³⁵⁴ John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Classical Period a handbook* (Thames and Hudson, 1985).

have found resonance in this theme. The original metopes were sculpted in high relief to make them more clearly visible on the exterior of the temple, high above the viewer. At the RMI, the metope casts, projecting in parts in three dimensions from the walls, were placed below the casts of the friezes. The broken and truncated bodies seem quite incongruous to contemporary eyes. Each cast is framed in a box which perhaps represents the original metope. The casts have been coated in what seems like quite a thick layer of beige paint. Despite this additional layer, in some areas the lines of surplus plaster at the joints of the various casting blocks can still clearly be seen (Fig. 2.31). It is surprising that these were not removed during the usual finishing as part of the highly skilled process of casting, given the prestige of both their donor and their creator. With all reference to their original function and material removed, these casts are repurposed. They are no longer museum artefacts, but part of a symbolic, classically inspired piece of interior design.



Figure 2.28 Marble relief, c438–432 BC, central scene from Parthenon's east frieze. Attributed to Phidias. British Museum, object reference number: 1816,0610.19. Photo credit: British Museum.



Figure 2.29 Casts of the Parthenon's frieze used as part of the RMI decorative scheme. Photograph writer's own.



Figure 2.30 Parthenon metope south XXVII, Centaur and Lapith. Marble relief, c438–432 BC, British Museum, object reference number: 1816,0610.11. Photo credit: British Museum.



Figure 2.31 Cast of Parthenon metope, RMI entrance atrium.
The joints of the casting blocks can still be seen. Photograph writer's own.

It may initially seem strange that, in the heart of radical non-conformism, a group of largely self-made men (they were all men) should choose to adopt and obviously relish such a cornucopia of classical references. The less generous, and the London press of the time would certainly have been among these, might attribute this to a feeling of inferiority, a desire to bolster a lack of education or lack of confidence in judgement with the inherited weight of classical scholarship. However, the recent publication by Edith Hall and Henry Stead challenges the idea that the wider population and the lower classes were excluded from knowledge of the classical world. Hall and Stead explore the appropriation of classical symbolism and the influence of cynicism and parrhesia, the speaking of truth to power, by radical groups and particularly militant sections of the working classes such as miners.³⁵⁵ They make specific reference to its use by radicals in Manchester at the time of the 1817 Peterloo Massacre.³⁵⁶ There were no greater experts on historical pattern designs

³⁵⁵ Edith Hall and Henry Stead, *A People's History of Classics, Class and Greco-Roman Antiquity in Britain and Ireland 1689 to 1939* (Routledge, 2020). In particular, the requirement to learn Greek and Latin in order to receive an education in Classics in Britain's public schools is used as evidence for the exclusivity of access to this knowledge.

³⁵⁶ Hall and Stead, *A People's History of Classics*, 374. Three of the most important Chartist intellectuals: Ernest Jones, Bronterre O'Brien and Thomas Cooper were expert classicists, whether trained or self-taught. The democrats of the 1790s, especially Tom Paine and John Thelwall, were immersed in and inspired by ancient philosophy and history read in translation.

than the pattern designers supplying the weavers and calico printers of Manchester. Hall and Stead illustrate the way in which commercial popularity and demand for objects and interiors with classical references led to designers working in fields such as pottery, textiles and furniture design educating themselves in the visual elements of classical style. Designers also creatively appropriated these elements to create new meanings.

Since draughtsmanship, painted decoration and modelling were trades often learned by apprentices from poor backgrounds, the visual understanding of some of the most important ancient sites, such as Pompeii and the Athenian Acropolis, was often provided by originally working-class men like John Henning Jr, whose sculptures at the RMI we have examined. As Hall and Stead discuss, some working-class artists were inspired by ancient themes to create new artworks which explicitly comment on the relationship between Classics and class, by portraying labourers as classical heroes or reinventing the Parthenon frieze.³⁵⁷ The printing industry and the pattern designs integral to printing production were viewed as significant enough to warrant the attention of a Government Select Committee in 1855.³⁵⁸ Pattern, now seen perhaps as of only minor significance in terms of art history, actually became, in this period, a focus for debates around the methodology of the new discipline and how an understanding of the stylistic development of art was to be devised. The development of styles of ornamentation in different historical periods and cultures was seen as a key to the evolution of art. It was hoped that a systematic study of this

The radicals around the time of Peterloo, for whom free thought on religion was inseparable from agitation for social, political and economic reform, used Classics in diverse and creative ways to enliven their journalism, inform arguments at the trials, and explore religious questions.

³⁵⁷ Hall and Stead, *A People's History of Classics*, 191.

³⁵⁸ This was the House of Commons Select Committee on Printing. See *Report from the Select Committee on Printing Together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index* (House of Commons, 1855). <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001757514> accessed 20/09/2020.

development would lead to the establishment of underlying aesthetic principles. The Parthenon sculptures had attracted significant public interest since their first display at the British Museum in 1817. Hall claims that they "furnished perhaps the most familiar visual images in Britain... Elgin permitted artists such as Benjamin Haydon and John Henning to study and copy the marbles, resulting in designs imitating the Parthenon sculptures being widely sold across Europe."³⁵⁹ Haydon, as we shall explore further in the later chapter on Manchester School of Art, was fascinated by the "Elgin Marbles", and believed that they provided evidence that ancient Greek artists had studied anatomy.³⁶⁰

Exhibitions at the RMI

What can we learn about the aims and underlying purpose of the RMI from the curatorial approach and display methods adopted in its galleries of art? As Cleveland states, the architects were instructed to create a design which included "exhibition rooms for paintings, sculpture etc., with dome light, room for artists and students, reading room and library...a lecture theatre with gallery, capable of holding 600 to 800 persons."³⁶¹ The RMI aimed to promote high culture, of which visual art formed an important part, to a predominantly middle-class audience by offering a programme of educational lectures and demonstrations, and by exhibiting both historic and contemporary art. From its founding, the RMI ran a programme of several profit-making exhibitions each year and, as such, it provided a new art market for the town as well as a significant forum for visual spectacle. While the RMI

³⁵⁹ The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, in association with the British Museum, published a 249-page book containing detailed drawings of the sculptures in 1833. The British Museum, *Elgin And Phigaleian Marbles* (William Clowes, 1833). <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=nyp.33433071577625&seq=7> accessed 25/10/2025. The John Henning mentioned was father of the sculptor who produced the exterior carved panels for the RMI. John Henning senior produced many skilful miniature replicas of the marbles, two of which, at the time of writing, are on display on the atrium balcony of the modern-day Manchester Art Gallery.

³⁶⁰ Paul O'Keefe, *A Genius for Failure: The Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (The Bodley Head, 2009), 73.

³⁶¹ Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 9.

was primarily focused on providing services for its members, its exhibitions were open, for a fee, to the general public.³⁶² The initial promoters of the Institution claimed that "...in the exhibition of works of art, in the systematic collections of natural productions, and in regular courses of popular lectures, the most effectual means would be provided for cultivating and gratifying liberal and rational tastes."³⁶³

As the RMI was an early venue for the public display of artwork, the exhibition organisers had to decide how each body of work was to be arranged on the available wall space. The commercial exhibitions were open for submissions, and catalogues reveal that exhibitions such as the *Modern Artists* of 1832 were displayed at random, without reference to genre or media.³⁶⁴ Other exhibitions staged, such as those of Old Masters, aimed to allow work held in private collections to reach a wider audience. Historically, across Europe, displays of art in the private residences of the wealthy and aristocratic were arranged in a way that invited comparison between paintings of different eras and places of origin. This arrangement, described as a connoisseurial or gentlemanly hang, allowed the host and his guests (usually male) to demonstrate appropriate levels of discernment and cultural awareness. As Duncan describes:

Men of taste and breeding, whatever their nationality, were expected to have learned key critical terms and concepts that distinguished particular artistic virtues of the most popular masters. ...in the course of the eighteenth century it became the fashion to hang collections, including royal collections in a way that highlighted the formal qualities of the various masters - that is, in a way that displayed one's knowledge of current critical fashions.³⁶⁵

³⁶² The initial entry charge of sixpence would have been prohibitive to some sections of society.

³⁶³ *Proposal for Establishing in Manchester an Institution for the Fine Arts*, 12.

³⁶⁴ Catalogue for *The Exhibition of the Royal Manchester Institution. Modern artists*, Volume 8 (Leech and Cheetham, 1832). https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofroya00roya_1/page/n3 accessed 19/09/2020.

³⁶⁵ Carol Duncan, "From the Princely Gallery to the Public Art Museum: The Louvre Museum and the National Gallery, London" in Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago (eds.) *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum* (Routledge, 2004) 250-274, 252.

Fig. 2.32, shows an eighteenth-century painting by Zoffany (1733–1810), that illustrates gentlemen connoisseurs engaged in the appreciation of just such a hang. The group in the centre focus attention on the *Venus of Urbino* by Titian. Those with appropriate knowledge would be aware that this fifteenth-century Venetian work revived a tradition of images of the female nude from classical Greek art. As such, the connoisseurial approach ensures placement of the Greek sculpture of the *Medici Aphrodite* as a point of critical reference.³⁶⁶



Figure 2.32 Johan Zoffany, *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*, 1772–1778.
 Painting of the north-east section of the Tribuna room in the Uffizi in Florence, Italy.
 Oil on canvas, 123 cm × 155 cm.
 Photo credit: Royal Collection RCIN 406983.

³⁶⁶ This is actually a Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, derived from the Aphrodite of Knidos by Praxiteles.
<https://museum.classics.cam.ac.uk/collections/casts/medici-aphrodite> accessed 07/06/2025.



Figure 2.33 Johan Zoffany, *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*, detail. Detail showing Titian's *Venus of Urbino* juxtaposed with the classical Greek sculpture known as the Medici Aphrodite. Photo credit: Royal Collection RCIN 406983.

A number of those individuals involved in the organising committee of the RMI had their own private collections of artwork, which would likely have been displayed using a connoisseurial hang. However, as displays of art moved into the public sphere, it was no longer possible to rely on the specialist knowledge of an elite group of viewers as the key to engaging with the work. Different demands were created by the need to provide education about the artwork in a way that would be accessible to a new and much broader audience. Suzanne Marchand's discussion of the early German art collections, which were looked to as models for British galleries, centres on the interface between early academia and museums.³⁶⁷ She outlines the philosophical debates in nineteenth-century Germany, which were also to play out along similar lines among British critics and in British art institutions. Marchand characterises the development of Prussia's national museums as a struggle between

³⁶⁷ Suzanne Marchand, "The quarrel of the ancients and moderns in the German museums" in Susan A. Crane (ed.), *Museums and Memory* (Stanford University Press, 2000), 179-200.

text-based and object-based claims to knowledge: humanism and philology against new disciplines such as art history, ethnology and archaeology. The debate about how these museums could achieve the world-class status which they sought was, as she defines it, the “quarrel of the ancients and moderns.”³⁶⁸ Alexis Joachimides extends this discussion, focusing on a notorious 1891 debate about the development of the Berlin art museums. Here, the conflict was between the university academics with their art history training and the museum professionals, with their “amateur-connoisseur” approaches.³⁶⁹ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill highlights the way in which early art galleries such as the RMI, evolved as an apparatus with two totally contradictory functions: “that of the elite temple of the arts, and that of the utilitarian instrument for democratic education.”³⁷⁰ As Douglas Crimp discusses, this debate was exemplified in the 1820s, in the earnest debate over the appropriate name for what was to become Berlin's Königlich Museum. During the planning of this model national museum, there were calls for it to be referred to as a “monument”, a “treasury”, a “studio” or an “academy”, with all the various pedagogic and symbolic implications that these different terms imply.³⁷¹

Conflicting theories about the origin and development of ornamental pattern motifs, so crucial to the commercial success of Manchester's textile industry, could also have contributed to polarised views about the way in which artwork should be displayed in the newly evolving exhibitionary contexts. Semper had argued that the origins of architecture and architectural ornamentation could be understood via an

³⁶⁸ Susan Marchand, “The quarrel of the ancients and moderns”, 180. Marchand sees influential figures such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and Winckelmann as representing a “double commitment – to scholarly historicism and to Greek superiority.”

³⁶⁹ Alexis Joachimides, “The museum's discourse on art: the formation of curatorial art history in turn-of-the-century Berlin”, in *Museums and Memory*, Susan A. Crane (ed.) (Stanford University Press, 2000), 218.

³⁷⁰ Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Initiatives in Museum Education* (University of Leicester, 1989), 63.

³⁷¹ Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (MIT Press, 1998), 294.

anthropological approach, taking the first settlements of early man as a starting point.³⁷² He later claimed that the limitations and possibilities faced by craft workers or artists in manipulating materials and in employing particular techniques were the overriding influence on the development of ornamental styles. According to Semper, this led to the spontaneous development of similar motifs in unrelated locations.³⁷³ At the end of the century, German art historian Alois Riegl was to put forward an alternative proposition. In *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament), 1893, he argued that it was possible to construct a continuous global history of stylistic development.

Where an educational outcome was envisaged, a didactic historiographical scheme was the method of display that came chiefly to be employed in galleries. The promotion of this chronological system of curation across Britain has been attributed to Waagen, in his pioneering directorship of the Königsmuseum, in his published work and in the evidence that he gave, as previously discussed, to several Parliamentary Select Committees.³⁷⁴ As Avery-Quash and Sheldon outline, this systematic chronological and geographical display strategy was attempted by Waagen's close associate, Sir Charles Eastlake, at the National Gallery from 1853.³⁷⁵ However, given the analysis of Waagen's written proposal for the organisation of the Königsmuseum collection that Moyano provides, it would appear

³⁷² Semper's theories were published in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings (Die vier Elemente der Baukunst) in 1851*. Trans. Harry F. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann (Cambridge, 1989). In Dresden, Semper designed the Opera House, constructed between 1838 and 1841 and the Neoclassical Semper Gallery or Semper Building, constructed from 1847 to 1854.

³⁷³ Gottfried Semper, *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts; or, Practical Aesthetics*. Trans. Harry F. Mallgrave (Santa Monica, 2004). Semper argued, albeit in a rather self-contradictory way, that certain motifs developed spontaneously in unrelated locations and different cultural contexts among workers engaged in particular processes with particular materials.

³⁷⁴ The Select Committee on the Arts and their Connection with Manufactures (1835/6) and the Select Committee on Fine Arts (1841).

³⁷⁵ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 168/9.

that subsequent commentaries have rather oversimplified Waagen's view of the educational purpose of a gallery and his interpretation of the function of a chronological hang. While Waagen, and indeed Schinkel, who worked closely with him on the proposal for the Berlin collection, did indeed aim to include examples of all the great masters and schools, Moyano is clear that "historical completeness per se was not valued..." Waagen "discounted a predominantly historical arrangement..." instead, "aesthetic quality was the key to the museum's purpose."³⁷⁶ This use of a chronological hang only where expedient was further illustrated by the fact that works considered by Waagen to be of less than excellent quality were to be displayed in a separate series of rooms. A focus on the unique power of the individual artist was also illustrated by the fact that Waagen and Schinkel identified Raphael as the greatest artist and recommended that his work be given priority in future acquisitions."³⁷⁷

A purely chronological hang involved displaying paintings as a single didactic line of visual argument and required a systematic ordering of the hang under visual criteria based on historical classification. As Whitehead has identified, writers in the 1850s noted links between the study of works of art and the scientific study of natural phenomena, as in early museums of natural history.³⁷⁸ Prince Albert, who had close links with both Sir Charles Eastlake and Waagen, promoted an historical and scientific approach to public collections to increase their educational value. He saw art not just as decoration, but the "purest expression" of a civilisation's mental and religious state. In his speech at the opening of the MAT Exhibition in 1857, Albert

³⁷⁶ Moyano, "Quality vs. History", 599.

³⁷⁷ Moyano, "Quality vs. History", 599.

³⁷⁸ Whitehead, *The Public Art Museum*, 17.

declared that “historical and chronological review given at one glance cannot fail to impress us with a just appreciation of the peculiar characteristics of the different periods and countries the work of which are exhibited to us, and of the influence which they have exercised upon each other.”³⁷⁹ Prince Albert’s influential role in the display strategy at the 1857 MAT exhibition, which was probably the first example of a large-scale chronological hang in England, will be discussed in Chapter 4 – “The Albert Memorial”. As the catalogues show, the works displayed as the “Ancient Masters” section of that exhibition were representative of schools of art across three centuries, ending at 1700.³⁸⁰ Germany’s leading art historian, Franz Kugler, a strong adherent of this systematic approach, wrote the 1872 *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, one of the first attempts at a comprehensive chronological survey of “world” art, fundamental to the establishment of the discipline of Art History.³⁸¹ Duncan and Wallach traced the development of the chronological display method, which they identify as the “Universal Survey Museum.”³⁸²

We know that the exhibition organisers at the RMI deliberately chose not to employ a chronological hang. Rather than attempting to trace the development of art as a social and historical phenomenon, the display of works at the RMI seems to have been more about providing aesthetic experience and the opportunity to encounter the creative products of the individual mind. Lengthy coverage of RMI exhibitions in the local press, such as *The Manchester Herald* and *The Manchester Guardian*,

³⁷⁹ This quotation is from the speech delivered by Prince Albert on May 5, 1857, at the opening of the Exhibition of Art Treasures of the United Kingdom in Manchester. Albert, Prince Consort, *The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*, digital book, 181. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/61205/61205-h/61205-h.htm> accessed 05/10/2025.

³⁸⁰ RMI Council Member Sigismund Stern was also a key organiser of the MAT Exhibition.

³⁸¹ Franz Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Ebner & Seubert, 1848), <https://archive.org/details/handbuchderkunst00kugl>.

³⁸² Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, “The Universal Survey Museum”, *Art History*, Volume 3, Issue 4, 23 December 1980, 448–469.

focused public attention on individual artists. Klonk discusses how German figures such as the Prussian Minister of Culture, Humbolt, and writers such as Schiller promoted the “Romantic idea that individuals are both morally and metaphysically distinctive, and that a central function of art is to provide a vehicle for the expression of individuality...”³⁸³ Humbolt had a significant role in the planning of Schinkel's Königliches Museum, an important reference point for the RMI's founders. Its display strategy promoted the appreciation of diverse styles and historical periods. As Klonk describes, “instead of fixed ideals, what was now valued was the expression of distinctiveness and individuality, be it in individual artists, periods or countries.”³⁸⁴ Importance was placed on knowledge about the character of the individual producers of the work and other artists that they were trained by or linked to.³⁸⁵

The earliest exhibitions at the RMI included "Oil Paintings by Living British Artists", followed in autumn 1827 by an exhibition of watercolour drawings. In 1831, an exhibition of “British and Foreign Old Masters” was staged in the top-lit galleries of the first floor. The annual exhibitions of historic work were generally sourced from private collections, which meant that their content was dependent on the range of items being offered for loan.³⁸⁶ German art historian Johann David Passavant (1787-1861), visiting Manchester in 1836, revealed a focus on the power of emotive subject matter when he wrote: “I spent several days with my relations in the neighbourhood of Manchester, a city which, in respect of art, offers but little attraction. I was so fortunate, however, as exactly to fall in with a collection of paintings then exhibiting in

³⁸³ Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*, 39.

³⁸⁴ Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*, 41.

³⁸⁵ This focus on the artist as an individual is also echoed in the frequency with which biographical details are included in exhibition catalogues of the period, such as those produced for the MAT exhibition.

³⁸⁶ Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 13.

the Royal Manchester Institution, many of which were of great interest.” He specifically mentions “Giorgione, *Cupid, stung by a Bee*” and “Murillo, *The kneeling figure of St. Francis Xavier, inflamed with heavenly fire*... A splendid figure, full of noble inspiration. His up-cast look, glowing with the finest feelings, is especially striking, and such as is only to be found in the noblest specimens of Spanish physiognomy.”³⁸⁷

Submissions for the RMI’s annual open contemporary exhibitions, where works were for sale, were invited via national publications such as the *Art Union*.³⁸⁸ Catalogues from some of the early RMI exhibitions have survived. These included only basic information: the title of the work and the name of the artist. Works were listed by room and numbered.³⁸⁹ While no visual records of the display strategy employed for these exhibitions remain, the *Art Union* recorded that the “Annual Exhibition of Works of Modern Artists” of 1846 contained 844 works, which must have filled the galleries from floor to ceiling. As the *Art Union* explained, “it may be well to add that the delay in opening the rooms beyond the time first announced was caused by the unusual number of pictures sent for exhibition, which determined the Council, even to their inconvenience, to make use of every available space in their power; notwithstanding which, to their great regret, upwards of 100 pictures were of necessity sent back.”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Johann David Passavant, *Tour of a German artist in England with notices of private galleries, and remarks on the state of art* (Saunders and Otley, 1836), 20.

https://archive.org/details/gri_33125003599418/page/n29/mode/2up?q=Royal+Manchester+Institution accessed 16/11/2024.

³⁸⁸ *The Art-Union*, February 1, 1845, Vol 7, there is a call for nationwide submissions to the RMI exhibition on the front page <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101082376789&seq=43>

³⁸⁹ For example, the catalogue for *The Exhibition of the Royal Manchester Institution, Modern artists* (Leech and Cheetham, 1832). https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofroya00roya_1/page/n3 accessed 19/09/2020.

³⁹⁰ *Art Union* September 1, 1846, Vol 8, 261.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uva.x001968196&seq=307&q1=+Manchester&view=1up>.

One surviving six-pence copy of the catalogue for the 1832 exhibition of “Modern” (contemporary) artists, which lists some 210 artists and a total of 534 works, is particularly revealing as the margins contain the scribbled notes of its user.³⁹¹ These brief fragments give an interesting insight into the visual focus and aesthetic priorities of the viewer, perhaps intent on selecting an image for purchase. In common with reviews of the exhibitions in the local press, the subject matter dominates the response, with style and technique largely only referenced in terms of their contribution to the meaningful rendering of the subject. The writer confidently annotates the catalogue to record his judgement of the works that he deems “beautiful”. The aesthetic appeal and convincing, empathetic portrayal of the subject matter seem to hold the greatest significance. For example, Catalogue number 279, W Geike’s *Reading the News* is referred to as having “a great deal of character.”³⁹² There are very occasional confident judgements made about the medium, such as the comment on “very fine watercolours, as are most of the pictures in this room”, but no mention of technique.³⁹³ It is the subjective, emotional state of the protagonists that draws the most frequent response. Several comments mention facial expression; for example, catalogue number 391, *Twelfth Night* by H. Travis is annotated with “the face of Maria very pretty and all full of humour.”³⁹⁴ Also commented on in this 1832 catalogue is *Amy Robsart* by W. McCall. This image references Sir Walter Scott’s Romantic novel *Kenilworth*.³⁹⁵ Here, a telling note

³⁹¹ The catalogue for *The Exhibition of the Royal Manchester Institution, Modern artists*, (Leech and Cheetham, 1832). https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofroya00roya_1/page/n3, accessed 19/09/2020. This catalogue also listed donations made to the Royal Institution, which in that year included several classical sculptures and the casts of the Elgin marbles, later to be displayed, as previously discussed, in the entrance atrium.

³⁹² *The Exhibition of the Royal Manchester Institution, Modern artists*, Catalogue number 11. Walter Geikie RSA (1795 –1837) was based in Edinburgh, known for painting and etching local scenes and figures. <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/artists/walter-geikie>.

³⁹³ *Modern Artists, 1832*, catalogue number 9.

³⁹⁴ Likewise, *Modern Artists, 1832*, catalogue number 321, “The Italian Letter Carrier” by Hollins, the viewer has noted: “The faces - delightful.”

³⁹⁵ *Kenilworth* by Sir Walter Scott is a historical romance, one of the Waverley novels, published in 1821. Set in 1575, it tells the story of events leading up to the murder of Robert Dudley’s wife, Amy Robsart and Dudley’s relationship with Queen Elizabeth I.

implies interest in the portrayal of the psychological state of the protagonist. The Amy Robsart figure is found to be unconvincingly playing the part of a character “like the portrait of an actress, not a historical figure.”

Woodson-Boulton discusses the approach to viewing art evident during this period as a particular, if short-lived, aesthetic ideology “that understood painting as able to communicate ideas directly to all audiences (even the uneducated).”³⁹⁶ This idea that art was “readable” relied on treating paintings as transparent “windows” onto their subjects, emphasising subject over style or technique.³⁹⁷ This would seem to link with Moyano’s discussions of Schinkel’s *Anschaulichkeit*, or “immediate visual transparency”. Schinkel proposed that *Bildung* could be conveyed when the artist’s skill was sufficient to negate the actual medium used, leaving the viewer to focus without distraction on the meaning and message of the work. Moyano sees giving precedence to the aesthetic rather than developmental or stylistic qualities of artwork as driving the choice to move away from the initially proposed systematic historical organisation in the case of the Königliches Museum collections.³⁹⁸ The placing of artworks into a framework of relationships, geographical, historical or stylistic, was seen as undermining the sense of uniqueness and wonder in the presence of each work of art. Woodson-Boulton claims that the RMI display policy demonstrated its commitment to “art as experience of subject matter rather than art history or even the evolution of particular art movements within British art.”³⁹⁹ This is a telling observation, as “art as experience” strongly links to the philosophy of *Bildung*, in

³⁹⁶ Amy Woodson-Boulton, “Temples of Art in Cities of Industry: Municipal Art Museums in Birmingham, Liverpool, and Manchester, c. 1870–1914”, PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2003.

³⁹⁷ Woodson-Boulton, “Temples of Art”, chapter 6.

³⁹⁸ Moyano, “Quality vs. History”, 585.

³⁹⁹ Woodson-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty*, 106.

which one's character and sensibilities are developed through exposure to challenging and life-enhancing experiences. As if in illustration of this very point, our 1832 exhibition-goer marked their catalogue entry for William Etty's *The Storm* with a dramatic hash symbol and added "an awful picture, the effect of agonising fear strongly marked on the female figure." "Awful" is used here with its original meaning of "filled with awe" or "inspiring people with awe."⁴⁰⁰ This 1829 image, representing the epitome of Romanticism in its response to nature, human experience and imaginative personal vision, was purchased from this exhibition by the RMI Committee. It remains in the Manchester Art Gallery collection.⁴⁰¹ From its launch, the RMI had begun amassing a permanent collection of paintings, both donated and purchased. The first exhibition, in 1827, yielded sufficient profit to buy the first painting for the permanent collection: *Othello, or the Moor of Venice*, by James Northcote.⁴⁰² However, it was not until 1845 that this collection was on permanent display, in Gallery 8, open to the public on three days a week, when there was no other exhibition on view.⁴⁰³

⁴⁰⁰ Bryan A. Garner, *Garner's Modern English Usage* (5 ed.) This image illustrates Psalm 22 of the Old Testament *For he commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof; they mount up to the heavens, they go down again to the depths, their soul is melted because of trouble. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.*

⁴⁰¹ <https://collections.manchesterartgallery.org/collections/narrative/21585ba4-84d2-38db-944b-2a359f62357a/> accessed 09/03/2024. The painting was transferred from the RMI when it was incorporated in 1882.

⁴⁰² This portrait shows the young black American Shakespearean actor Ira Aldridge, in the character Othello. It has been suggested that the purchase was prompted by Manchester's central role in the anti-slavery movement. The racist commentaries of London-based theatre critics increasingly prevented Aldridge from performing in London, although he toured provincial theatres, including Manchester, Sheffield, Halifax, Newcastle, Liverpool, Hull, Sunderland and Belfast, to great acclaim. <http://revealinghistories.org.uk/what-evidence-is-there-of-a-black-presence-in-britain-and-north-west-england/objects/othello-the-moor-of-venice.html> accessed 27/8/2024.

⁴⁰³ Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*, 16.



Figure 2.34 RMI gallery with display cases, 1895.
Credit: Manchester Art Gallery, M58922.

To return to the starting point of this chapter, we might perhaps wonder about the outcome of Sigismund Stern's collaboration with Gustav Waagen. The initiative was successful in recruiting artists from Europe to exhibit at the RMI, with German artists making a significant contribution.⁴⁰⁴ The *Art Journal* proclaimed it "the best exhibition ever held within its walls."⁴⁰⁵ As the exhibition catalogue shows, the 1860 "Exhibition of Foreign Artists" included 156 modern German works including Romantic landscapes by well know Düsseldorf based artists Oswald (1827-1905) and Andreas (1815-1910) Achenbach. Belgian and French artists were also represented.⁴⁰⁶

The Art Journal expressed sentiments about the exhibition that Manchester's radical promoters of free trade would have applauded:

Any one (sic) who has visited the Lancashire exhibitions cannot but be aware how greatly those exhibitions are indebted to the foreign pictures for their excellence and attractiveness ... and the English artist will find his best

⁴⁰⁴ Edward Morris, "Provincial Internationalism: Contemporary Foreign Art in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool and Manchester" article from the *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 1998 (Liverpool, 1998), 84. <https://www.hslc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/147-5-Morris.pdf> accessed 9/11/2024.

⁴⁰⁵ The *Art Journal*, 1860, 305 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t5q87xz76&seq=373>

⁴⁰⁶ *Exhibition Catalogues, 1844-1872, 1860 "Exhibition of Foreign Artists"*, MCL, M6/1/67. The exhibition included contemporary French works by J. A. D. Ingres, Eugene Delacroix, J. L. E. Meissonier, Edouard Frere, J. L. Gerome, Thomas Couture, Rosa Bonheur, Constant Troyon and N. V. Diaz. Prominent Nazarene artist Wilhelm von Schadow was the first Director of The Düsseldorf School of Painting.

protection in his own increased industry and study, and not in the exclusion of foreign pictures.⁴⁰⁷

The exhibition itself was deemed a huge success and repeated in the following year. However, the transport, packing and insurance costs, as archive records show, were unsustainably high and the Institution was reluctantly forced to abandon its ambitious international programme.

RMI Becomes Manchester Art Gallery

In the 1870s and 1880s, inspired in part by the ideas of Ruskin, there was greater interest, as previously discussed, in using art as a vehicle for social reform in Manchester. This movement saw the founding of the Horsfall Art Gallery (1877), and the Ancoats Recreation Society (1880), with the stated aim of promoting access to art, with its perceived moral and spiritual benefits, to the lower classes. The names of a core group of prominent Manchester citizens recur across the organising committees of these initiatives, with many involved simultaneously in a range of projects. In 1879, architect Thomas Worthington (1826-1909) wrote to the Council of the RMI, proposing that the Institution should become “the future permanent Art Gallery of Manchester.”⁴⁰⁸ In this letter, Worthington suggested that significant changes be made to the internal layout of the building. He thought it desirable to create a series of seven interlinked galleries on the top floor, “so that, when there is a crowd of visitors, they may enter on one side, pass through the whole of the rooms and make their exits on the opposite side, without retracing their steps.”⁴⁰⁹ This control of movement also potentially suggests greater control over the way in which

⁴⁰⁷ *The Art Journal*, 1860, 306 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t5q87xz76&seq=375>

⁴⁰⁸ *Letter from Thomas Worthington to Council of the Royal Manchester Institution*, 2 December 1879, in RMI Transfer Documents, MCL M183/3.

⁴⁰⁹ *Letter from Thomas Worthington to Council of the Royal Manchester Institution*, 2 December 1879, in RMI Transfer Documents, MCL M183/3.

the visitor would experience the artwork. In 1880, members proposed that they “transfer the entire property as a public gift to the City of Manchester and to the custody of the Corporation [the City Council].”⁴¹⁰ The RMI handed over their building and their collection to the Manchester Corporation in 1882. This was on the condition that the city would spend £4,000 on artwork annually for the next 20 years and allow Institution members to make up one third of the Art Gallery Committee. The gallery also continued the Institution’s programme of autumn selling exhibitions when it reopened as an organisation funded and run by the City Council, with remodelled galleries in 1883.⁴¹¹

In 1898 the Manchester Art Gallery Committee reported that they had “...rearranged the pictures forming the Permanent Collection in Galleries 1 to 5, with regard, for the first time, to chronological order, so far as such arrangement was compatible with the satisfactory exhibition of the individual pictures.”⁴¹² This perhaps implies that the approach had evolved from the promotion of the aesthetic and spiritual aspects of visual experience to a more directly educational and scholarly aim. The evolution of the RMI as an institution for the public viewing of visual art is also illustrative of the gradual increase in state involvement and control over wide-ranging aspects of the civic and social sphere as the nineteenth century progressed. This may also have led to a reduction of the influence and agency of the private individual and the resident German population in driving civic initiatives. While public access to art and the philanthropic approach to working-class education gradually became more

⁴¹⁰ List of signatories in agreement between the RMI and the City of Manchester, November 16, 1881. Appendix to Special Meeting of the Governors, Dec 2 1881, RMI, General Meetings of Governors, MCLA, M183/11.

⁴¹¹ *Letter from Thos. Worthington, George Falkner, W. A. Turner, C. J. Pooley to Chairman and Council of the Royal Manchester Institution*, 1 March 1880, printed copy in RMI Transfer Documents, MCL M183/11. The Manchester City Art Gallery, as it was then known, was opened by Lord Carlingford, on August 31, 1883. Axon, (ed.) *The annals of Manchester*, 396.

⁴¹² Report of the City Art Gallery Committee 1898, MCL M9/76/3/1.2.

widely institutionalised, conflicts were still evident about the approaches to be employed. These potentially conflicting demands for art as education and art as spiritual experience continue to create tension for gallery curators to the present day. The Manchester Art Gallery continues to explore the potential of art to enhance the life of the individual and to value its cohesive role in Manchester's culturally diverse civic society. At the time of writing, its website states, with distant echoes of *Bildung*, "today, with the privilege of hindsight, we reflect on the power of art to change us, empower us and spark creative joy. Working with the city's diverse, global population, we can reimagine what 'art for all' could be for the next 200 years of Manchester Art Gallery, as we collect, engage and care together, for the future."⁴¹³

⁴¹³ <https://manchesterartgallery.org/200-years-of-manchester-art-gallery/> accessed 20/7/2024.

Chapter 3 - Manchester School of Design, 1837 to 1852

The extensive hearings of the 1835/36 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures in England and the resulting establishment of the government-run “Normal School of Design” in London are generally viewed as the first government intervention in British art education.⁴¹⁴ What is less frequently recognised is the wider context of this government involvement, and the significant role played by individuals linked to Manchester and Germany in the ensuing developments. This chapter will focus on the role of the Manchester School of Design in the period between the establishment of the Normal School of Design in London in 1837 and the eventual transfer of control from the Board of Trade to the Directorship of Henry Cole at the Department of Practical Art in 1852. During this initial fifteen-year period, the first twenty-one state-funded regional schools of art were founded.⁴¹⁵

I shall argue that the pervasive engagement with *Bildung* and the influence of German educational models, both generally in Manchester at this time and specifically among the members of the organising committee for the Manchester School of Design, significantly shaped the model for the Manchester curriculum. It is my premise that, in providing an opposition and alternative to the curriculum proposed by London, Manchester played a significant, and insufficiently recognised, role in influencing the philosophy of Henry Cole's later "South Kensington System" of

⁴¹⁴ Quentin Bell, *The Schools of Design* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), Stuart Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education* (Lutterworth Press, 1970) and Richard Carline, *Draw They Must: History of the Teaching and Examination of Art* (Hodder & Stoughton Educational, 1975).

⁴¹⁵ Government-funded schools were established between 1842 and 1847 in Manchester, Spitalfields, York, Nottingham, Sheffield, Coventry, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow, Norwich, Stoke, Paisley, Leeds, Hanley/Stoke, Macclesfield, Belfast, Stourbridge, Worcester, St. Martin's (London) and Waterford. A complete list of all the schools founded by 1884, with their dates of establishment, was published by John C.L. Sparkes in *Schools of Art: their origin, history, work and influence*, published for the Executive Council of the International Health Exhibition, and for the Council of the Society of Arts (W. Clowes and Sons, 1884), Appendix C, 136.

<https://archive.org/details/SchoolsOfArtTheirOriginHistoryWorkAndInfluence/page/n145/mode/2up> accessed 09/06/2020.

state-funded art education and ultimately the development of the first national curriculum for art. The main source of evidence of the relationship between the Manchester school and the governing London school is found in the minutes of the meetings of the Council of the Government School.⁴¹⁶ Another significant reason for the influence of Manchester on the art curriculum eventually adopted may well have been the close relationship of some of its civic leaders with Henry Cole, which will be outlined later.

The majority of the twenty-one government-funded schools of art initially founded were completely new institutions. Acknowledging their importance to manufacturing, Manchester and Birmingham were the first schools to be funded.⁴¹⁷ Manchester was unusual in already having a design school in existence, with a curriculum and staffing established in response to the needs of the community. The significance of the Manchester school was also reinforced by the fact that its existing President, industrial chemist and leading calico manufacturer James Thomson (1779–1850), was present as a guest at one of the early Council meetings of the London School on February 9, 1842. Thomson was well-connected, with close family links to, among others, the then Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel. His position was such that he felt able to challenge the annual sum of £150 on offer as a government subsidy for the institution.⁴¹⁸ The School was granted £250 “upon the assurance that the Committee of the Manchester School of Design will continue to superintend the School, and that

⁴¹⁶ *The Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design: December 1836 to April 1844*, (W. Clowes and Sons, 1849), 1. <https://archive.org/details/MinutesOfTheSchoolOfDesign18361837> accessed 06/04/2023.

⁴¹⁷ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 115.

⁴¹⁸ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 115. “The Council took into consideration the question of establishing a School of Design at Manchester; and Mr. Thomson, one of the Members of the Council, being present, and being likewise the President of an existing School of Design at Manchester, represented to the Council that the sum of £150 per annum, proposed by the Council as the expense of maintaining a School of Design, would not be sufficient for Manchester, considering the expense of procuring proper accommodation (that which they now have gratuitously being about to be withdrawn, unless adequate rent be paid for it), and that £200 per annum is given to their present Master, who is well fitted for his office, and may require an increase of remuneration.”

the instruction given shall be in conformity with the wishes of the Council.”⁴¹⁹ It quickly became apparent, as I will discuss, that the Manchester School had no wish to be dictated to, and polarised views of London-based and Manchester-based art educators brought into the public forum debates about the purpose and value of art and design education that have been repeatedly revisited over subsequent decades.

This chapter builds on and further develops ideas premised in a 1979 thesis by Peter Cunningham. Cunningham examined the remaining archive records from the early schools of design in Manchester, Birmingham, and Leeds, tracing their history and that of the individuals involved in their inception.⁴²⁰ In the Manchester context, he particularly explored the influence of the practical art education provided by the Manchester Mechanics Institution, founded in 1824. This is beyond the scope of this chapter, but may be of interest in a wider context.⁴²¹ Cunningham claimed that the Manchester School was initially promoted by a fine-arts-focused cultural elite and, despite particular links to the calico printing industry, had limited support from manufacturers. My research findings, as will be discussed, suggest that it was actually a combination of commercial interests and broader educational and philanthropic goals, as expressed in the German concept of *Bildung*, within the cosmopolitan Manchester community, that primarily influenced the provision of the School.

It is worth noting that the usage of terms such as “art”, “design” and “applied art” in the period under discussion did not always carry the meaning we would currently

⁴¹⁹ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 120.

⁴²⁰ Cunningham, *The formation of the schools of design, 1830-1850, with special reference to Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds*. Unpublished PhD thesis, 1979, University of Leeds.

⁴²¹ Cunningham, *The formation of the schools of design*, 135-138.

assume. The term “art” referred as much to technical ability and applied skills as to individual creativity. As Cunningham identifies, “design”, like art, could mean both the drawing and the planning of elements of form, line, colour and proportion. A “School of Design” could be interpreted simply as a Drawing School, or as a school teaching the skills of planning ornament and pattern-making.⁴²² In this period, “applied art”, also referred to as “ornamental art” or “industrial art”, covered a wide range of both functional and purely decorative, handmade and industrially produced products. “Art-Manufactures”, a term no longer in use, referred to the production of decorative objects that were highly ornamented.

The cause of this shift from private to politically driven, state-funded education has been variously accounted for. This is worth briefly exploring as it gives insight into the potential motivations of those involved. *The Schools of Art*, a seminal piece of research using wide-ranging primary sources, written in 1963 by Quentin Bell, remains influential.⁴²³ Bell saw the initiative as largely economically driven. He quotes selected passages from the evidence given to the 1835/36 Select Committee to promote the idea that the inadequacy of British designers had resulted in a trade slump, particularly in the textiles industry, in the 1830s. This Bell largely attributes to Britain’s inability to compete with countries such as Germany and France, where industry and design were better supported and art in general more highly valued. Under this interpretation, the Government action was seen as a response to the failure of the newly industrialised capitalist system to devise its own pedagogy.⁴²⁴ Stuart Macdonald is also strongly of this view, stating that “national art education

⁴²² Cunningham, “A note on Terms”, *The formation of the schools of design*, introduction.

⁴²³ Bell, *The Schools of Design*. First published in 1963, this volume was of sufficient continued interest to be republished in 2004.

⁴²⁴ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 248.

was authorised by the British Parliament... as an economic necessity, and certainly would not have been considered at this time if it had not been so regarded.”⁴²⁵

Mervyn Romans calls for a revisionist approach to this widely accepted economic theory, which he claims offers at best only a partial explanation.⁴²⁶ Researching trade statistics for the period, he concludes that the textile industries were in fact flourishing and dominant industries in the early and mid-nineteenth century.⁴²⁷ The massive expansion of many northern English towns during the early nineteenth century, largely in response to the burgeoning textiles industry, would seem to substantiate this. Romans explores the initiative as a response to the contemporary discourse on public morality, the promotion of “taste” and the benefits of exposure to art for the social and civic development of the general populace.⁴²⁸

Malcolm Quinn extends this argument to encompass wider social and political movements and challenges to the existing power structures. He points out that a core group of those on the Select Committee were “philosophic radicals” and Benthamites, “using political economic theories that linked the promotion of public enlightenment and national prosperity, to criticisms of the professions and institutions of art.”⁴²⁹ According to Quinn, “this experiment depended on risking the models of professionalism in art that existed at that time.”⁴³⁰ The particular model of professionalism under attack was that of the Royal Academy, the dominant force in

⁴²⁵ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 60. See also Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 45–6.

⁴²⁶ Mervyn Romans, *Living in the Past: Some Revisionist Thoughts on the Historiography of Art and Design Education*, 20 October 2004 <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2004.00406.x> accessed 08/02/2025.

⁴²⁷ Romans, *Living in the Past*, 272.

⁴²⁸ In support of his assertions, Romans sought to establish the motivations of those involved by examining the political makeup of the Select Committee. See “An Analysis of the Political Complexion of the 1835/6 Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures.” *International Journal of Art and Design Education* 26 (2007), 215–224.

⁴²⁹ Malcolm Quinn, “The Political Economic Necessity of the Art School 1835–52”. *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 2011, 30: 62–70, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1476-8070.2011.01660.x> accessed 02/01/2025.

⁴³⁰ Quinn, “The Political Economic Necessity of the Art School”, 63.

the London art scene, under the Presidency of Martin Archer Shee (1769–1850).⁴³¹ It would have been clear to Academicians that the setting up of the Schools of Design explored a new public pedagogy, potentially threatening their near monopoly on the teaching and marketing of British fine art.⁴³² Among the many witnesses called to give evidence to the meetings in 1835/6 of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacturers, opposing factions were revealed. On one side were the representatives of the Royal Academy who sought to uphold the status quo, and on the other were the campaigners for new approaches to art education, galvanised particularly by artist Benjamin Robert Haydon RA (1786-1846).⁴³³

The significant British interest, during this period, in the pioneering education systems developing in German states such as Prussia has been underrepresented in previous accounts. German universities provided highly influential models for newly founded British and European institutions of higher education. I would argue that, given the significant impact of German models on many other areas of British civic development, the very presence of innovative German schools of design may have been a driving force in the establishment of comparable institutions in England. At the start of the nineteenth century, fine art training was dominated by the Royal Academy in London. Founded by George III in 1768, its early members included engravers, coach decorators and architects. After 1800, it had gradually become what some regarded as an exclusive and protectionist Fine Art club for sculptors and

⁴³¹ Shee was President from 1830 to 1850.

⁴³² For a broader discussion of this issue, see Quinn, "The Political Economic Necessity of the Art School", 5–52.

⁴³³ Benjamin Haydon was a conflicted figure, whose tempestuous personality and chequered professional history were recorded in his diaries and journals that were later published. See: Tom Taylor, (ed.) *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, from his Autobiography and Journals* (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 3 volumes, 1853). Haydon's diaries were also republished in the 1960s. See Willard Bissel Pope (ed.), *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon* (Harvard University Press, 5 volumes, 1960-3).

painters, with royal patronage.⁴³⁴ Moore discusses how the institution had faced increasing difficulties in balancing its role as a preserver of culture with its function as a commercial organisation.⁴³⁵ Avery-Quash and Sheldon state that “every aspect of its provision was regarded as dysfunctional: its governance was lacklustre; its schools were thought to be badly run; its exhibitions were seen as biased; and the content of its famous annual show passé.”⁴³⁶ From the beginning, the academy’s teaching philosophy, as explained by Sir Joshua Reynolds, its first President between 1768 and 1792, was very clear: “...those who have talents will find methods for themselves.”⁴³⁷ This gave little scope for the actual teaching of technical or theoretical skills within the Royal Academy School. The human body was the main subject studied; however, this did not necessarily mean living models. Students copied “from the flat” and later graduated to imitating parts of the body, such as eyes or feet, from masters like Raphael. This approach became a source of ridicule in *Punch Magazine* (Fig. 3.1).⁴³⁸ Casts of Greco-Roman sculptures were widely copied, and proportions of the figure had to be memorised.⁴³⁹

⁴³⁴ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 62.

⁴³⁵ Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys*, 13.

⁴³⁶ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 98.

⁴³⁷ <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/joshua-reynolds-pra> accessed 16/08/2019.

⁴³⁸ *Punch*, 6 April 1889, 165.

⁴³⁹ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 13.



Figure 3.1 "Friendly Advice" by George DuMaurier, *Punch*, 6 April 1889, 165.
Text and formatting by George. P. Ladlow.

"I say – you have improved that Foot in the last few Weeks. I should go on drawing the Human Foot, and nothing else, if I were you, Brown! –anyhow for another Two or Three Years or so." "Oh–thanks awfully – and then?"
Photograph Credit: Victorianweb.org and Internet Archive.

Art academies such as those in France promoted the painting of "Istoria" or religious and historical subjects and followed Renaissance ideas of beauty: grace, youth and symmetry based on the classical style. The artist was to deduce, without directly copying, an idealised, perfect form from nature. This was closely linked to the study of ancient art, as the model in which this idealised form seemed most closely achieved. The Royal Academy's dismissive views on industrial design can be summed up by Reynolds's statement that "if the higher arts of design [i.e. Fine Art] flourish, these inferior ends [development of taste in manufactured products] will be answered of course."⁴⁴⁰ Reynolds established a curriculum at the Royal Academy school that involved the study of Renaissance Italian masters and classical art. In his

⁴⁴⁰ Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art* (Cassell, 1888), 47-52. The *Discourses on Art* were first delivered as a series of lectures between 1769 and 1790.

view, "invention, strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory. Nothing can come of nothing."⁴⁴¹ In 1775, Nathaniel Hone satirised this approach as plagiarism with a portrait of Reynolds entitled *The Conjurer* (Fig. 3.2).⁴⁴²



Figure 3.2 Nathaniel Hone the Elder, *The Conjurer*, 1775.
Oil on canvas, 145 cm x 173 cm.
Photo credit: National Gallery of Ireland, NGI.1790.

Clearly underlying some of the evidence presented to the Select Committee was the concern, as voiced, for example, in the evidence presented to the Committee by Shee, for the preservation of the status of the artist as thinker, engaged in intellectual activity rather than a craftsman.⁴⁴³ "The moment you make art a trade you destroy it. ...I have no respect for the opinions of political economists...the principle of art and

⁴⁴¹ Reynolds, *Seven Discourses*, Discourse no. 2, delivered on December 11, 1769; vol. 1, 28.

⁴⁴² Reynolds argued that painters should seek to idealise nature rather than copy it, setting out what would become known as the "grand manner" of painting. Reynolds positioned paintings of epic, historic scenes as the highest genre of art.

⁴⁴³ Artists had to maintain what Joshua Reynolds in 1770 referred to as "intellectual dignity", with the academicians keen to promote any activity that would clearly separate them from the "mere mechanic". *A Discourse Delivered to the Students of the Royal Academy on the Distribution of the Prizes*, December 14, 1770, by the President, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2176/2176-h/2176-h.htm> accessed 03/04/2025.

the principle of commerce are in direct opposition the one to the other.”⁴⁴⁴ The sculpture of Sir Joshua Reynolds in the Annenberg Courtyard of Burlington House, by Alfred Drury, 1931 and Reynold’s self-portraits such as that of 1780, now in the Royal Academy collection, vividly promote the image of artist as intellectual rather than manual labourer (Fig. 3.3). In the prevailing view of the RA, the proposed Schools of Design, if necessary at all, should only focus on teaching aspects of design which were judged to be directly applicable to manufacturing.



Figure 3.3 Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Self Portrait*, 1780.
Oil on panel, 127 x 101cm.
Credit: Royal Academy of Arts, object number 03/1394.

⁴⁴⁴ *Reports from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, 15 July 1846, 162, para 1974
<https://archive.org/details/1835SelectCommittees> accessed 22/08/2023.

A key figure in the drive to establish schools of art across England was artist Benjamin Robert Haydon (1786-1846). He had cultural motivations rooted in a belief in the spiritual and humanist qualities of art and argued for a fine art-based education for all.⁴⁴⁵ A history and portrait painter by trade, he had received his training at the RA and was initially a disciple of Joshua Reynolds.⁴⁴⁶ He had been actively promoting the establishment of schools of design to remedy what he perceived as the inadequacies of the teaching at the RA School. The Parliamentary Motion of 14 July 1835, which set events underway, had been proposed at Haydon's behest by his close associate William Ewart (1798–1869), MP for Liverpool. Ewart's biography also reveals close links with a number of Manchester's civic leaders, such as William and Elizabeth Gaskell.⁴⁴⁷ Ewart's motion requested that a Select Committee be established to "inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Fine Arts, and of the Principles of Design among the people - especially among the manufacturing population of the country; and also, to inquire into the constitution of the Royal Academy, and the effects produced by it."⁴⁴⁸ The motion was supported by a number of Members, several of whom represented constituencies in the North of England and at least two of whom played a prominent role in the civic life of Manchester. Lord Francis Egerton, 1st Earl of Ellesmere (1800-1857), Member of Parliament for South Lancashire from 1835 to 1846, was a prominent supporter of the arts and active on the Council of the Manchester School of Design. Sir Robert Peel, twice Prime Minister in the 1830s and 1840s, was also a supporter of Haydon's efforts. Born in North West England, he had additional insight into manufacturing as

⁴⁴⁵ Taylor, (ed.) *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon*.

⁴⁴⁶ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 60-71. According to his diaries, Haydon had been influenced to become a History Painter when he first read Reynolds's *Discourses* at the age of 17. Haydon also studied under the Swiss/German RA Professor, known in England as Henry Fuseli (1741–1825).

⁴⁴⁷ Hugh Chisholm, (ed.) "Ewart, William". *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Vol. 10 (11th ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 40.

⁴⁴⁸ *Hansard*, Arts—Royal Academy HC Deb, 14 July 1835, vol 29, cc553-62 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1835/jul/14/arts-royal-academy> accessed 22/08/2023.

his family owned one of the largest textile mills in Lancashire. Supporters also included northern MPs such as Richard Potter (1778–1842), MP for Wigan, and John Bowring (1792–1854), MP for Bolton.⁴⁴⁹

The curriculum that Haydon proposed was based on fine art approaches such as life drawing, which he believed would also inevitably lead to improvements in the quality of industrial design. Haydon's system of teaching was based on anatomy, and he also had a huge regard for classical art. However, rather than following the Royal Academy practice of copying directly from antique sculpture, Haydon argued that classical sculptors must have undertaken anatomical study. At an early age, his interest was inspired by the anatomical illustrations of German Bernard Siegfried Albinus (1697–1770), and he made his own dissections to observe actual structures.⁴⁵⁰ These drawings were used to teach his pupils and also as the basis for his lectures in the 1830s. Haydon was also a follower of Goethe, with whom he corresponded, and he had a friendship with German art historian Karl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785–1843).⁴⁵¹ Haydon toured the country promoting the study of anatomy, giving lectures, making influential contacts and publishing articles. Haydon's call for new approaches to art education found a particularly receptive audience in Manchester. Since Haydon placed himself in public opposition to the strong and

⁴⁴⁹ *Hansard*, HC Deb 14 July 1835 vol 29 cc553–62.

⁴⁵⁰ Bernhard Siegfried Albinus, *Tabulae sceleti et musculorum corporis humani* (H. Woodfall, 1749)

https://archive.org/details/ldpd_11384808_000/page/n13/mode/2up, accessed 25/10/2025. Chisholm, (ed.) "Haydon, Benjamin Robert". *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 13 (11th ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 111–112. Also discussed in Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 66. Haydon also produced observational drawings during public dissections by Sir Charles Bell (1774–1842), a Scottish surgeon, anatomist, neurologist and philosophical theologian. In publications such as *The hand; its mechanism and vital endowments, as evincing design*, first published in 1832, Bell used his comparative anatomical studies to support theories of an overarching design underlying the universe.

https://archive.org/details/handitsmechanism00bell_1/page/n15/mode/2up (J. Murray, 1852 edition), accessed 25/10/2025.

⁴⁵¹ A letter from Goethe to Haydon dated 16 February 1819 is translated in John Gage, *Goethe on Art* (Scholar Press, 1980), 92. Haydon notes "had a beautiful letter from Rumohr" in his diary entry for March 30, 1842, Pope (ed.), *Dairies of Benjamin Haydon*, 139. <https://archive.org/details/diaryofbenjaminr0005unse/page/454/mode/2up?q=potter> accessed 24/08/2023. Rumohr's most influential work was *Italienische Forschungen*, 1827. As discussed in Chapter 4, this publication was important to the development of Art History as a discipline due to its critical evaluation of historical documents.

entrenched London arts hierarchy, it is perhaps unsurprising that many of those MPs who eventually supported him were radicals with provincial seats.⁴⁵² His diaries record several visits to Manchester, and starting 22 May 1837, as lecture syllabuses from the RMI reveal, he delivered a series of six lectures “On Painting.” The focus of these lectures illustrates Haydon’s interests and priorities. The third lecture in the series, delivered on May 29 1837, was entitled “Science helps when nature fails.”⁴⁵³ I can only speculate about the content of this lecture. However, this topic would certainly have resonated with the innovative Manchester manufacturers attending this lecture at the RMI, which had a large science laboratory in the basement. In the fourth and fifth lectures of the series, Haydon spoke about the individual elements of art that make up a visual composition. This, as I will discuss, foreshadowed content that would later become part of the curriculum taught at Manchester School of Art.⁴⁵⁴ Haydon delivered subsequent weekly lecture series at the RMI, with his “Six Lectures on the History of Art and Design”, commencing on 14 December 1840. This series included two presentations on the “Life and Adventures of the Elgin Marbles.”⁴⁵⁵ This would have been of particular relevance to the RMI audience, who, as discussed in the previous chapter, would have walked through an entrance hall containing casts of the marbles on their way to the lecture theatre.

In September 1837, Haydon addressed a large gathering in Manchester, directly appealing for the establishment of a Manchester School of Design. His subsequent

⁴⁵² Taylor, (ed.) *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon*. Haydon’s diaries reveal that he believed both his career and livelihood to have been marred by the animosity from the Royal Academicians that his actions generated.

⁴⁵³ RMI Lecture Syllabuses and General Circulars, Manchester Central Library Archives, M6/1/70-71.

⁴⁵⁴ The topics for the fourth lecture in the series were listed in three sections as “Composition – Principles”, “Colour, Form, Light and Shadow”, and “Perspective and Foreshortening.” The Fifth lecture was devoted entirely to the topic of “Colour”.

⁴⁵⁵ RMI Lecture Syllabuses and General Circulars, Manchester Central Library Archives, M6/1/70-71. The six lectures were entitled “Definition of the Art of Painting”, “Greece - Progress to Perfection”, “Decay of Greek Art”, “Revival of Art (Italian School)”, “The Elgin Marbles” and “Life and Adventures of the Elgin Marbles”.

article, published in *The Manchester Guardian*, also laid out a proposed curriculum. “In a nation so celebrated for common sense as the English – in a town so distinguished for diligence and capital as Manchester - what plausible pretext can be urged against that which has given superiority to our neighbours [a school of design].”⁴⁵⁶ Haydon’s accounts continuously stress the links between the promotion and encouragement of “high art” (fine art) and the proposed Schools of Design. He envisaged that the Schools of Design would ultimately subsume the role of the RA in teaching and promoting art across England.⁴⁵⁷

1835 & 1836 Select Committee on Arts & Manufactures

When the Select Committee on Arts & Manufactures met throughout July, August and September 1835 and again from February to August 1836, its enquiries were to focus on three main areas:

The state of Art in this country and in other countries, as manifested in their different manufactures;

The best means of extending among the People, especially the Manufacturing Classes, a knowledge of and a taste for Art;

The state of the higher branches of Art, and the best mode of advancing them.⁴⁵⁸

The 555-page Report and Minutes of Evidence provides a detailed account of the responses of the many witnesses who were called to appear before the Committee. Among these were architects, company owners and craftsmen from a range of trades for example: John Jobson Smith, managing an iron foundry; Thomas Field

⁴⁵⁶ *The Manchester Guardian*; September 13, 1837, 3.

⁴⁵⁷ Cunningham, *The formation of the Schools of Design*, 44.

⁴⁵⁸ Reports from the Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures, 2, “The Committee began its labours by dividing the subject of inquiry into the following parts...”

Gibson, silk manufacturer; Charles Harriott Smith, sculptor of architectural ornaments; George Foggo, worker in bronze and silver; John Henning, a sculptor of relief work and James Crabb, “designer, for ornamenting rooms in various styles.”⁴⁵⁹ Also giving evidence were several Royal Academicians. The report provides insight into the views and opinions of those directly impacted by the effects of industrialisation on traditional art and design, and particularly the questions this raised about the role of “art” within manufacturing. The evidence presented to the Select Committee, and subsequent debates, also highlighted fundamental questions about the function and status of what we would now refer to as “fine” and “applied” art.

The calico printing and silk weaving trades, both with major centres in and around Manchester, were dependent on effective designs for the sale of their products. It was claimed by some that the silk industry in particular was unable to compete with rival European, particularly French, markets and that many successful British designs were in fact pirated from the French. Silk manufacturers giving evidence before the committee, however, seemed to see little benefit to be gained from schools of design focusing purely on creating patterns, and instead highlighted trading disadvantages and changes in fashion as the cause of the perceived economic decline.⁴⁶⁰ Lack of copyright protection was also cited as a disadvantage for British manufacturers.⁴⁶¹ The extent to which MPs on the Select Committee were

⁴⁵⁹ *Reports from the Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures*, John Jobson Smith, 9; Thomas Field Gibson, 27; Charles Harriott Smith, 43; George Foggo, 46; John Henning, 58; James Crabb, 70.

⁴⁶⁰ Cunningham, *The Formation of the Schools of Design*, 83. The protective trade barriers that France had erected were also considered to work in her favour. For many witnesses, the solution to the problems of the silk industry was seen to lie in trade policy rather than in design schools. B. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British historical statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 20. Export statistics available for the silk trade over the years 1825-31 showed an increase of 300%. This compares with a growth of 77.74% in total domestic exports over the same period, suggesting that silk was actually an area of particular growth.

⁴⁶¹ *Reports from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, evidence given by George Foggo, worker in bronze and silver, questions 685 to 698, 47-48 <https://archive.org/details/1835SelectCommittees/page/n49/mode/2up>

using commercial justifications to substantiate their claims for funding from a government which had proved itself reluctant to support expenditure on any aspect of the arts is difficult to assess. However, industry witnesses certainly did little to bolster this particular line of argument.

Throughout the Committee hearings and in other contemporary commentary, French designs were cited as the greatest competition to the British output. Despite this, the only foreign witnesses called before the Committee were German. Macdonald attributes this to the fact that influential members of the Board of Trade, led by the President Charles Edward Poulett Thomson, MP for Manchester, were already set on using German models for the school, rather than the widely recognised alternative of a French-style academy.⁴⁶² It is perhaps significant that the first witness to be called, and extensively examined over sessions held on three separate days, was Dr Gustav Waagen, Director of the Königlich Museum in Berlin from 1832.⁴⁶³ As discussed by Waterfield, Waagen was a well-regarded and highly influential figure among British private collectors and the art establishment.⁴⁶⁴ Waagen's evidence could almost have been scripted in its promotion of an aspirational *Bildung* approach to art education. He criticised French-style academies for producing standardised students without individuality. The idea was that great artists would train students not just to become fine artists but also designers and craftsmen. As Waagen said in the Committee hearing:

⁴⁶² Charles Edward Poulett Thomson, Baron Sydenham (1799-1841), later Lord Sydenham, MP for Manchester, see Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 68. See also Paul A. C. Sproll, *Studies in Art Education*, Winter, 1994, Vol. 35, No. 2, 105-113, (National Art Education Association), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1320824> accessed 14/07/2023.

⁴⁶³ *Reports from the Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures*. Examination of Dr Gustav Friedrich Waagen on 27 and 31 July 1835, and 3 August 1835, questions 1-98, 1-9 <https://archive.org/details/1835SelectCommittees/page/n5/mode/2up> accessed 25/10/2025.

⁴⁶⁴ Waterfield and Illies, "Waagen in England", 47-59.

As in Dutch gardens, the different kinds of tree were clipped to the same forms, so it was in the case of the academies with the different talents of pupils. Would not anyone feel greater pleasure in the free growth of the trees in the forest? ⁴⁶⁵

In former times the artists were more workmen and the workmen were more artists, as in the time of Raphael, and it is very desirable to restore this happy connexion (sic).⁴⁶⁶

A year later, on 13 August, prominent German architect and gallery designer Leo (Baron) Von Klenze was also called to give evidence to the Committee. He explained that the teaching of drawing and design was integral to general education in Bavaria.⁴⁶⁷

The Education of Taste

As the evidence given to the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures illustrates, discussions about art education in this period frequently allude to the idea of developing or improving public “taste”. In some contexts, the process of an individual acquiring “taste”, or what was sometimes referred to as “culture” implies a concept with strong similarities to that of *Bildung*. Moore identifies the historic importance of “taste”, defined as a discriminatory ability restricted to those with access to particular forms of social training. In this context, “taste” was used as a differentiator of social class, as it was traditionally limited to aristocratic, landowning classes. As industrialisation led to the development of a wider consumer class in the nineteenth century, the need for access to training in “taste” also broadened.⁴⁶⁸ Contemporary commentators also distinguished between the subjective tastes of those from different social strata. Edmund Potter, from his standpoint as owner of an extensive

⁴⁶⁵ Dr Gustav Waagen, *Reports from the Select Committees on Arts and Manufactures*, question 95, 4.

⁴⁶⁶ Dr Gustav Waagen, *Reports from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, question 80, 3.

⁴⁶⁷ “Questions answered by Baron von Klenze”, *Reports from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, 193.

⁴⁶⁸ Moore, *High Culture and Tall Chimneys*, 65.

calico manufacturing mill, claimed that the working and middle classes “require it quiet, modest, and useful, and any deviation for the sake of novelty, which calls in the aid of the brighter and less permanent colour, quickly checks itself. The sober careful classes of society cling to an inoffensive taste.”⁴⁶⁹ Producers of Manchester's printed fabrics were clearly sophisticated in their understanding of which designs were appropriate for different markets in what was already an extensive international trade.

During this period of increasing public engagement with art, there was also a belief in the social benefits and in the moral value of aesthetic education for the general population. The “taste” of the general population, it was believed, could be refined by the provision of access to museums, libraries and art-based publications.

Fundamental to the ideas of Kant, in his influential *Critique of Judgement*, is the premise that, while visual “taste” is a subjectively produced phenomenon, the aesthetic vision and taste of an individual can be developed through education. Taste is also considered something which is subject to change, as education enables the individual's critical faculties to increase and develop.⁴⁷⁰

George Jackson (1816-1876), manager of a decorating business and an ornament manufacturer, was a founding Council Member of the Manchester School of Design and later its Honorary Secretary. He had long campaigned for the establishment of a design school and gave a series of promotional lectures that provide some insight into the debates surrounding art education at this time. In 1844, Jackson lectured at

⁴⁶⁹ Edmund Potter, *Calico Printing as an Art Manufacture*, A Lecture Read before the Society of Arts, April 22 (John Chapman, 1852), 50-51. Published in Philip Sykas, P. (ed.) *Pathways in the Nineteenth-Century British Textile Industry* (Routledge, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429274213>

⁴⁷⁰ Immanuel Kant, *Critik der Urtheilskraft* (ben Lagarde und Friederich, 1790).

the RMI on the theme of improving public taste. He highlighted the importance of “rightly directed taste” in both national and commercial terms and how, in his view, this could be developed through tuition. Interestingly, he also argued that the growth of taste had been restricted by the neglect of art in favour of science during the Industrial Revolution and by the artificial distinction made in England between fine and applied art. “The industrial Arts must be the means not only of educating the public taste, but of teaching the elements of Art to those who would soar to its highest end.”⁴⁷¹ In the context of art education, this would mean that no distinction should be made between those training for a fine art pathway and those destined for the applied arts. In art galleries, it also followed, according to Jackson, that fine art should be exhibited alongside “objects of utility.”⁴⁷² Jackson also argued that art, particularly that produced in response to Nature, represented visual perfection and could have a powerful moral effect on the viewer. The education of taste could be democratic and even morally virtuous. “Appeal to the sense of the beautiful in nature, ... awaken that preference for what is good instead of bad, and you extend the sway of intellectual morality over a wide domain.”⁴⁷³ He promoted direct observation from Nature as a source of design ideas rather than copying historic examples. “Nature was their teacher, why not ours?”⁴⁷⁴

The claim for the status of art as a positive moral influence was also strongly expressed in the philosophies of German writers such as Schiller, influenced by Plato, who considered beauty not only to be an aesthetic experience but also as

⁴⁷¹ George Jackson, *Two essays on a school of design for the Useful Arts, Delivered at the Mechanics Institute* (Manchester, 1838), 17, in *Tracts on the Arts etc.* Manchester School of Design papers, MCL 751 243 Kul.

⁴⁷² George Jackson, “On the means of improving public taste”, a paper read at a *conversazione* held at the Royal Institution, Monday, November 25th; and repeated, by request, at a public meeting at the Athenaeum, Saturday, November 30th. (Manchester School of Design, Cave and Sever, 1844), 7 <https://archive.org/details/RoyalInst1844> accessed 26/10/2025.

⁴⁷³ Jackson, *Two essays on a school of design*, 9.

⁴⁷⁴ Jackson, *Two essays on a school of design*, 8.

morally uplifting. As mentioned previously, the significant interest in Schiller as a symbol of German culture among the German community in Manchester was evidenced by the founding of the Schiller Institute in 1859. If beauty were of significance beyond mere aesthetic pleasure, the ability to recognise beauty, or to have good “taste,” had even greater importance, as did the drive for it to be acquired (or *gebildet*). This gave literature and art an important role within society. In this connection between ethics and aesthetics, the equating of the development of “good taste” with moral improvement was not taken as a purely abstract philosophy. Manufacturers Edmund Potter and James Bull, in the years following the 1851 Great Exhibition, blamed public taste and consumer demand, rather than deficits in the skills of British designers, for the low quality of some British designs and implied, with reference to their calico printing trade, that good fabric design would have moral benefits for the whole population.⁴⁷⁵

If taste was to be taught—and taught to artisans who were then to create aesthetically pleasing and commercially successful designs—it was necessary to convey an understanding of exactly which components, and in what combination, produced a pleasing aesthetic effect on the eye and positively engaged the mind. In seeking to determine whether beauty is merely subjective or capable of formulation as an objective theory, art was frequently linked with science. For example, in 1849, architectural historian James Fergusson (1808–1886) devised the concepts of “eumorphics”, the beauty of form and proportion independent of representation and “euchromics”, the beauty of colour harmony.⁴⁷⁶ Approaching aesthetics as a science

⁴⁷⁵ Cunningham, *The formation of the Schools of Design*, 117.

⁴⁷⁶ James Fergusson, *An Historical Enquiry into the True Principles of Beauty in Art* (Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1849), 109 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.32044033895384&seq=133&q1=eumorphics> accessed 26/10/2025.

in which elements could be defined, the focus gradually turned away from content, as examples of the critical analysis of artwork in catalogues and newspapers from the mid-nineteenth century illustrate. There is a move away from descriptions of subject matter towards the formal analysis of visual elements, as seen in Haydon's 1837 RMI lecture series, discussed earlier. There could be few more effective vehicles for this exploration of colour, proportion, symmetry, line and form than the creation of the semi-abstracted pattern designs used in textile manufacturing. Interestingly, perhaps the first attempt to create a comprehensive scientific colour theory for the visual arts was published in 1839 by Michel Eugène Chevreul (1786-1889), who was director of the dye works at the Gobelins tapestry manufacturers in Paris.⁴⁷⁷

In its final report, the Select Committee proposed a parliamentary vote on the foundation of a "Normal School of Design" that would offer "not mere theoretical instruction only, but the direct practical application of the Arts to Manufactures."⁴⁷⁸ The development of provincial schools was to be led by the London-based Normal School, and their establishment was to be assisted by government grants.⁴⁷⁹ A Council of interested parties was created to organise this, under the auspices of the Board of Trade. In setting up the London School of Design, there was great difficulty reaching an agreement about the curriculum to be taught to students. Things may have been more straightforward if the curriculum had been just for the London

⁴⁷⁷ Michel Eugène Chevreul, *De la loi du contraste simultané des couleurs et de l'assortiment des objets colorés*. – first published 1839, translated into English by Charles Martel as *The principles of harmony and contrast of colours* (Longman, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1854). <https://dn760106.eu.archive.org/0/items/ThePrinciplesOfHarmonyAndContrast/ThePrinciplesOfHarmonyAndContrast.pdf>. accessed 26/10/2025.

⁴⁷⁸ *Report from the 1836 Session of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, v, 147. <https://archive.org/details/1835SelectCommittees/page/n147/mode/2up?>

⁴⁷⁹ It was also thought desirable that museums and galleries accessible to the general public should be formed, and that sculpture and paintings should be commissioned for public buildings. *Report from the 1836 Session of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, v, 147.

School; however, this was to be a curriculum rolled out across the country, to be taught identically to students in areas as disparate as Birmingham, Paisley and Sheffield. Ironically, it has been suggested that certain of those who chose to be involved, notably Sir Francis Chantrey (1781–1841), were actually determined to ensure the failure of the project.⁴⁸⁰ Indeed, of the eight men on the newly formed Council of the Government School of Design, four were Royal Academicians: Charles Cockerell (1788-1863); Sir Charles Eastlake, Sir Augustus Wall Callcott (1779-1844) and Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841).⁴⁸¹ There were no representatives from the manufacturing sector. The Council, although always dominated by RAs, underwent constant changes in membership and, as records show, meetings were poorly attended. By June 1840, Eastlake had resigned, and RAs David Wilkie (1785-1841) and William Etty (1787-1849) had joined.⁴⁸² For Eastlake in particular, there may have been a conflict between personal and professional roles. As Avery-Quash and Sheldon identify, Eastlake was an establishment figure and an RA, however, he also had a long association with Haydon, since their childhood in Devon, and had been tutored by him on first arrival in London.⁴⁸³

At the first Council Meeting on 19 December 1836, Charles Poulett Thomson, President of the Board of Trade, explained, rather vaguely, “the necessity for establishing a School of Design for Ornamental Art, in consequence of the present low condition of art in this country.”⁴⁸⁴ The initial purpose of the first Normal School,

⁴⁸⁰ On this see Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 70.

⁴⁸¹ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 1.

Sir Charles Eastlake became the first Director of the National Gallery in 1855.

⁴⁸² Eastlake resigned in February 1840, *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, Retirement of Mr Eastlake, 63. <https://archive.org/details/MinutesOfTheSchoolOfDesign18361837/page/n499/mode/2up> accessed 14/08/2023.

⁴⁸³ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 4.

⁴⁸⁴ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 1.

apart from the desire that it should serve industry, was not clearly defined.

Committee debates centred on whether or not the schools should offer academy-style Fine Art training for artisans. For the majority of Council members, design for industry represented the lowest branch of art. Initially, students at the new art school were not even permitted to undertake design projects, focusing only on ornament as it could be applied to industry. The Board of Trade, as the Minutes of the Council Meetings clearly show, was initially unable to reach any consensus over the actual curriculum or the organisation of the new Schools of Design. John Papworth's initial curriculum of drawing, industrial design and modelling alongside "the study of the history of taste and theoretical knowledge of style" lasted less than a year.⁴⁸⁵

Everything changed with the arrival in 1837, for the Committee's consideration, of a pamphlet in the form of a letter to Lord Meadowbank, jointly written by painters Charles Heath Wilson (1809-1882) and William Dyce (1806-1864).⁴⁸⁶ This laid out a proposal for the curriculum to be taught at the Trustees Academy of Art in Edinburgh, where Dyce had recently been appointed as a Master. Its contents were very similar to the recommendations given in the evidence to the Select Committee on Design and Manufactures, which had just been published.⁴⁸⁷ The authors indicate that students should be directed to study "nature itself" and be encouraged to understand "the necessity of thinking for themselves." In addition, the study of historical ornament was to be key.

By thus conducting the studies of the pupils with a reference to the history of decorative art, it is hoped that a more definite current would be given to their ideas... namely, to imbue the pupils' minds with the sentiment and principles which are embodied in the productions of the best days of art; to enable them with judgement to adapt the inventions of ancient artists to the circumstances

⁴⁸⁵ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 1.

⁴⁸⁶ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, September 4 1837, 17.

The Right Honourable Alexander Maconochie, Lord Meadowbank of Garvock and Pittliver (1777-1861), was a Scottish advocate, judge, landowner and politician.

⁴⁸⁷ The nature of the contribution made by each of the co-authors is subject to dispute – Dyce later claimed complete authorship. See Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 80.

of our own times; and to teach them in their turn to become inventors and designers in the same good taste.⁴⁸⁸

Following the enthusiastic reception of Dyce's proposal, it was Charles Eastlake who suggested Dyce's initial appointment at the Normal School, where he held the post of Superintendent of the School from July 1837 to 1843.⁴⁸⁹ In 1837, at the instigation of Eastlake, Dyce was sent to Europe to compile a report on the art curriculum offered in France and the German-speaking states, particularly in Prussia and Bavaria.⁴⁹⁰ Avery-Quash outlines Eastlake's "intense engagement with the intellectual Europeans."⁴⁹¹ The group of German artists known as the Nazarenes, Prussian diplomat Karl Bunsen (1791-1860) and philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer were among Eastlake's extensive German connections. These also included Waagen, regarded by Eastlake and his wife as "...one of our most esteemed and attached friends."⁴⁹² Eastlake, as already discussed, also made the first English translation of Goethe's influential *Theory of Colours*, published in 1840.⁴⁹³

It is evident that Dyce himself adhered to an arguably German-influenced philosophy that the function of art was to be morally and spiritually uplifting, long before this fact-finding visit to Europe. He had initially studied at the RA but rejected the teaching methods in favour of a move to Rome in 1825, where he came under the influence of the Nazarenes. These German artists lived together in the Franciscan monastery of

⁴⁸⁸ William Dyce & Charles H. Wilson, "Letter to Lord Meadowbank, and the Honourable Committee of the Board of Trustees for the Encouragement of Arts and Manufactures, on the Best Means of Ameliorating the Arts and Manufactures of Scotland in Point of Taste" (Thomas Constable, 1836), 37. <https://archive.org/details/b30559108>

⁴⁸⁹ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 40, IV. —"Mr. Dyce's memorandum of the terms of his engagement was read and agreed to."

⁴⁹⁰ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, Minutes of July 7 1837, 11.

⁴⁹¹ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 10-12, outlines Eastlake's own extensive travels in Europe and residence in Rome between 1816 and 1830, which had a huge impact on his later career.

⁴⁹² Susanna Avery-Quash, "The Travel Notebooks of Sir Charles Eastlake: Volume II." *The Volume of the Walpole Society* 73 (2011): 1–332. Quoted on 99, Appendix I. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41830876> accessed 03/03/2026.

⁴⁹³ <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/50572/50572-h/50572-h.htm> Lady Elizabeth Eastlake, "Memoir of Sir Charles Eastlake" in *Sir Charles Locke Eastlake, Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts* (John Murray, 1870), chapter V, Dresden-Correggio, 125.

Sant' Isidoro, modelling their collaborative working practice on that of medieval guilds and rejecting Classical and Renaissance models for moral and religious reasons.⁴⁹⁴

Pevsner notes the influence of the Nazarenes' approach to art teaching, which he describes as a "new conception of a friendly and intimate relation between teacher and pupil."⁴⁹⁵ Ann Steed records that Dyce and Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869), a founding member of the Nazarene group, remained close acquaintances after meeting in Rome.⁴⁹⁶

Both France and Germany had a long history of state involvement in arts and manufacturing, with well-established design schools such as the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers (Conservatory of Arts and Crafts) in Paris and the Kunstgewerbeschule (Art Trade School) in Berlin. The German states also provided models of cities like Munich under Ludwig I, where extensive programs of public art, such as mural schemes, aimed to inspire pride in the nation state.⁴⁹⁷ The fact that Germany was looked to by the English Board of Trade as a model illustrates Germany's dominance in technical education at the time. An additional contemporary influence was the translation by Sarah Austin (1793-1867) of Victor Cousin's *Report on the State of Public Education in Prussia*, published in 1834.⁴⁹⁸ British reformers generally admired the Prussian state-based system, which avoided the religious influence then seen in the British system. The German approach to design

⁴⁹⁴ Victoria Irvine, *The development of the use of models in Scottish art, c.1800-1900, with special reference to painting and the Trustees' Academy, Edinburgh*. PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2015 <http://theses.gla.ac.uk/6179/> accessed 08/02/2020. Irvine identifies Dyce's adoption of fresco painting, one of the traditional techniques revived by the Nazarenes, as evidence of their significant influence on him. The Nazarenes believed that the use of fresco enhanced the truth and spirituality of their work.

⁴⁹⁵ Nikolaus Pevsner, *Academies of Art Past and Present* (Da Capo Press, 1973), 205.

⁴⁹⁶ Ann Steed, "William Dyce, his Training and the Formation of his Style" in Babington et al, *William Dyce and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision* (Aberdeen City Council, 2006), 16. Steed suggests that Dyce had already formed his ideas before his encounter with these German artists.

⁴⁹⁷ Keith Andrews, *The Nazarenes* (Clarendon Press 1964), 55-67.

⁴⁹⁸ Cousin, Victor, *Report on the state of public instruction in Prussia*, Sarah Austin (trans.) (E. Wilson, 1834). <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001055591> Sarah Austin was a prominent Unitarian, part of an influential intellectual and social group.

education, exemplified by the Kunstgewerbeschule, rather than linking design to the academic study of the human figure, considered craft processes and their commercial requirements.⁴⁹⁹ However, while the Prussian schools may have been seen as a model for imitation, the result was certainly not a straightforward transference of systems from one country to another. Much was lost or distorted in transit. Indeed, Dyce himself was frequently conflicted in his writings and in his practice, making an analysis of his contribution more complex. For example, he constantly declared life-drawing unnecessary for the designer, yet claimed credit when it was eventually introduced at the London School.⁵⁰⁰

The report that Dyce submitted to the Board of Trade in 1838 gave a very detailed account, in the most positive terms, of the art and design curriculum in the German-speaking states which he visited.⁵⁰¹ In Bavaria, he observed that primary schools provided optional classes for the outline drawing of geometric shapes, simple ornament and perspective. Students could then progress to one of thirty *Gewerbeschulen* (Vocational Schools), which, alongside practical skills in drawing, also offered French, history, geography, philosophy and chemistry. This approach viewed art as a skill that can be systematically taught in a scientific way. Practical instruction on methods of industrial production was also ensured by the "department for the practical study of industry", the *Werkstatt* (Trade School).

⁴⁹⁹ "South Kensington and the Science and Art Department", in *Survey of London*: Volume 38, South Kensington Museums Area, F H W Sheppard (ed.), (London, 1975), 74-96. British History Online <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38/pp74-96> accessed 22/09/2019.

⁵⁰⁰ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 62. "Mr Dyce having brought before the Council the subject of conditions of admission to the classes of the Human Figure, it was resolved that the orders of study pursued in the German schools, by which the drawing of the figure is made subsequent to the course in ornamental design, should be adopted." <https://archive.org/details/MinutesOfTheSchoolOfDesign18361837/page/n63/mode/2up?> accessed 25/09/2019.

⁵⁰¹ William Dyce, *Report made by Mr. Dyce, consequent to his Journey on an Inquiry into the State of Schools of Design in Prussia, Bavaria, and France*. (The House of Commons, 3 March 1840), 2. <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1840-019089> accessed 26/10/2025.

Dyce also recorded in some detail the curriculum offered by the two institutions training artisans in Prussia – the *Gewerb* (commercial) *Institut* and the *Bau* (construction) *Academie*, offering training in architectural design, both in Berlin. It was his finding that “in Prussia, the utmost efforts have been used by the government to cultivate public taste, and the great manufactories of Elberfeldt, Mulhausen and Berlin, are nearly all under the management of the well-instructed pupils of the *Gewerbe Institut*.”⁵⁰² He found in Prussia a system which did not have the same division between “fine” and “decorative” arts as that found in Britain. The wide course of liberal education offered by the German system provided the opportunity for *Bildung*. Students followed their own skills and interests, chose which subjects to study and were supported in realising their individual potential. As Dyce reported:

Under the general term “Fine Art” every species of decorative design is supposed to be included: no difference in principle being recognised between that kind of art which is applicable to manufacture and that which has for its object the poetical, the imaginative or the historical.⁵⁰³

Dyce’s assessment of the Bavarian and Prussian systems, with their promotion of access to a broad curriculum for all art students, had been glowing. We have also seen his interest in the practice of workshop learning, craftsmanship and the spirit of fellowship expounded by the German Nazarenes. We also know his dislike of the distant, standardised teaching methods employed at the Royal Academy. Given these factors, the didactic and formulaic teaching programme that he devised for the Normal School of Design, and attempted to impose on all other government-funded Schools of Design, including Manchester, comes as something of a surprise. It is

⁵⁰² Dyce, *Report made by Mr. Dyce*, 2. <https://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1840-019089> accessed 26/10/2025.

⁵⁰² Dyce, *Report made by Mr. Dyce*, 39.

⁵⁰³ Dyce, *Report made by Mr. Dyce*, 2.

difficult to assess the extent to which the Council, which controlled the school, modified or curtailed Dyce's plans. The proposed teaching scheme was, at least initially, based on the premise that training for the designer should be entirely different from that of a student of fine art. Dyce's own painting style was detailed, meticulous and based on observation. He clearly saw little connection between the artwork he produced himself and the skills required by his potential students at the School of Design. Dyce identified in his writing a new category of artist - the "industrial artist" whose status was somewhere in the middle, between that of an artisan and a fine artist.⁵⁰⁴ Students at the Schools of Design were to be taught a vocabulary of design derived from simple geometric patterns, the work of other pattern designers or manmade objects.⁵⁰⁵ At the request of the Committee, Dyce eventually started work on his *Elementary Outlines of Ornament*, to be copied by students as basic steps for training in drawing (Fig. 3.4).⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Dyce, *Report made by Mr. Dyce*, 39.

⁵⁰⁵ Board of Trade, Department of Science and Art, *The Introduction to the Drawing Book of the School of Design, Published in the Years 1842-3, Under the Direction of W. Dyce*. (Reprinted, Chapman & Hall, 1854) x-xi, xx, xxii.
https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/The_Introduction_to_the_Drawing_Book_of/D8qIY-dknr0C?hl=en&gbpv=0
 accessed 27/10/2025.

⁵⁰⁶ Dyce's Outlines were included in the *Drawing Book of the Government School of Design*, for example, pages 17 and 18.



Figure 3.4 William Dyce, plate 21 from 'Elementary Outlines of Ornament'.
Mounted teaching diagram from Dyce's Drawing Book (Chapman & Hall, 1842-1843).
Lithograph, ink on paper, mounted on card, 37.2 x 31cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum Collection, accession number 15661:9.

Known as “Dyce’s outlines”, first published in 1843 and again in 1853, these diagrams were used in the Schools of Design and later promoted for use in British primary schools, where, despite criticism of their uninspiring nature, they continued to be found until the 1870s.⁵⁰⁷ Tony Fothergill has collated a bibliography of drawing books, produced as study aids, which were published in Britain from the sixteenth century. This includes instruction manuals on painting, drawing, engraving, colour theory, perspective and anatomy for artists. The extensive listings, which currently run to over 1,000 pages, illustrate the general availability and popularity of this type of practical art manual.⁵⁰⁸

There was also widespread proliferation of writing specifically about ornament in both Britain and Europe from the mid-nineteenth century. The extent to which the formalisation of the study of ornament under the English national art education

⁵⁰⁷ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77344/elementary-outlines-of-ornament-print-dyce-william-ra/> accessed 05/04/2024.

⁵⁰⁸ Tony Fothergill, *The Drawing Book Project* <https://www.kenselman.com/drawingbookproject.htm> accessed 05/03/2026.

system directly influenced this development has yet to be fully explored. In 1865, while working as a teacher under Henry Cole's stewardship of the Government School of Design, Owen Jones produced a much more lavish primer, *The Grammar of Ornament: A Visual Reference of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts*.⁵⁰⁹ Such was the popularity of this design source book that it has been repeatedly reprinted and is still readily available today.⁵¹⁰ Later works, such as Alois Riegl's *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Problems of style: foundations for a history of ornament), 1893, and two encyclopaedic collections of ornament: Auguste Racinet's *L'Ornement polychrome* 1875–1888 and Auguste Dupont-Auberville's *L'Ornement des tissus*, 1877, placed an art historical focus on the stylistic development of ornament.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament, a Visual Reference of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts* (Day and Son, 1865).

⁵¹⁰ At the time of writing, a reprint of this book was for sale on Amazon, described as "the ideal reference book for anyone working in decorative design fields such as jewellery, fashion, interior design and textiles." Owen Jones, *Grammar of Ornament: A Visual Reference of Form and Colour in Architecture and the Decorative Arts - The Complete and Unabridged Full-Colour Edition* (Princeton University Press, 2016) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvc77mhw>.

⁵¹¹ Elena Chestnova, "Ornamental design is... a kind of practical science': Theories of ornament at the London School of Design and Department of Science and Art" *Journal of Art Historiography*, edition 11, December 2014. <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/11-dec14/> accessed 12/08/2022. Alois Riegl, *Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*, translated by Evelyn Kain, introduction by David Castriota (Princeton Legacy Library, 1992). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv7r40hw> accessed 16/05/2022. First published in German in 1893, Riegl produced what is widely recognised as the first comprehensive study of the history of ornament, "Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte". In this he argued for the continuous development of ornament from ancient Egyptian through Greek and Roman and up to early Islamic and Ottoman art. In the third chapter, "The Introduction of Vegetal Ornament and the Development of the Ornamental Tendril," Riegl argued that acanthus ornament was not derived from observation of the acanthus plant, as was traditionally believed, but was a design adapted from the Greco-Roman palmette motif. It was therefore "a product of pure artistic invention," and not directly derived from observation of a living plant.

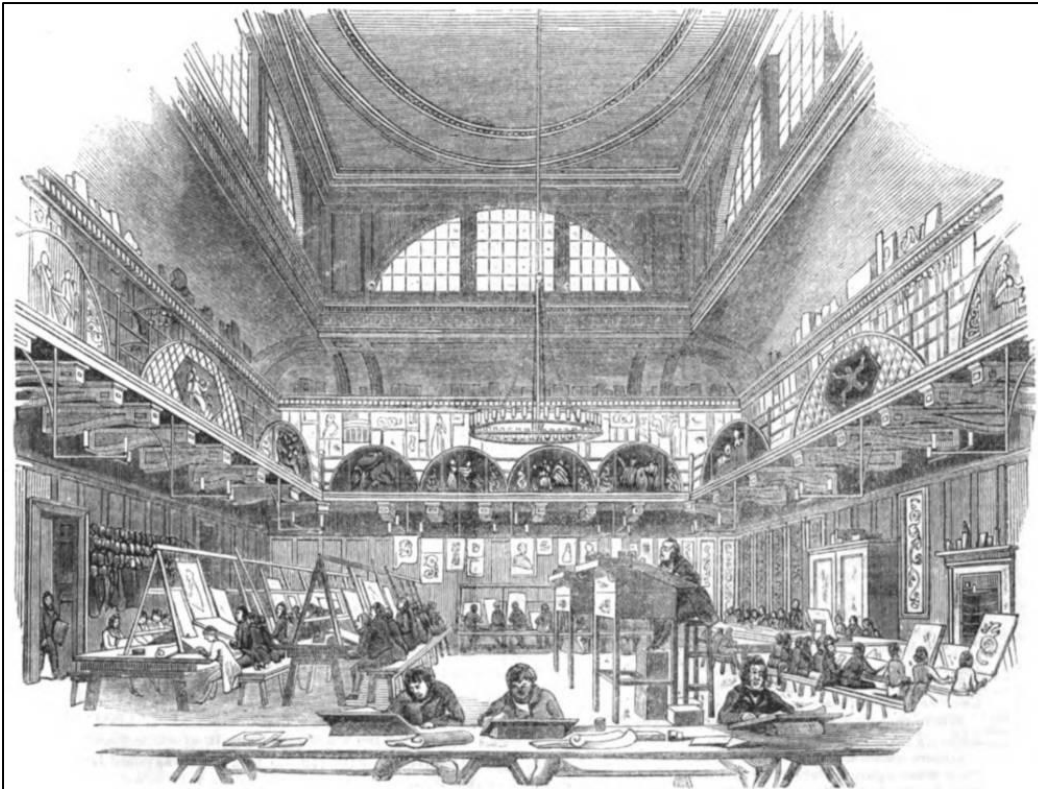


Figure 3.5 “The Government School of Design”, unattributed engraving.
Illustrated London News. 2 (1843): 375-76.
 Hathi Trust online version of a copy in the University of Chicago Library, accessed 14/6/21.

According to the Board of Trade Drawing Book, drawing at the Schools of Design was to be developed as a technical sequential process. The first step involved students copying combinations of lines and regular curves. Once this was mastered, they were to copy geometrical diagrams of Greek ornament, such as the fret and acanthus leaf. Steps three and four were to study ornamental shapes in two or three dimensions, working from drawings and casts.⁵¹² An engraving of the Government School of Design, published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1843, shows rows of students overseen by a distant teacher seated on a raised dais (Fig. 3.5). They all appear to be copying from images. In his drawing book, Dyce uses the lily as an example of the different approaches of artists and designers. Painters or sculptors

⁵¹² <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77344/elementary-outlines-of-ornament-print-dyce-william-ra/> accessed 07/05/2024.

would aim to make the image of the lily "more beautiful and more perfect " than any actual example from nature, whereas the designer (ornamentalist) would use it as the basis for a whole new form. According to Dyce, "it is no longer the form of a lily but of a cup, a vase, the bowl or a candlestick or any one of hundreds of articles commonly in use. The artist and ornamentalist are both imitators of nature but in different senses."⁵¹³ The purpose of copying a natural form was to analyse and imitate its underlying geometric structure.⁵¹⁴ Once this had been determined, new forms could be added to it. The didactic drawing book clearly conflicted with Dyce's previously stated beliefs and with the approaches of the German schools. It is perhaps telling that the Minutes of Committee Meetings record a number of occasions when Dyce is reminded to complete the drawing book series. His contribution never progressed beyond volume one.⁵¹⁵

The Founding of Manchester School of Design

The idea of a School of Design was not in itself new. At the start of the nineteenth century, a range of individual schools already existed across the country, and private tutoring was widespread. In Manchester, a "School of Art" had been running in the basement of the RMI since 1826. Indeed, as in other provincial cities, instruction in various levels of practical and critical art education, often linked to manufacturing, was already taking place in private drawing schools. Efforts to supply vocational training had also been made through the establishment of Mechanics Institutes offering "architectural, mechanical, perspective and ornamental drawing, figure

⁵¹³ Dyce, *Introduction to the drawing book of the school of design*, x.

⁵¹⁴ There was also increasing interest in mathematics related to industrial design in this period, this was linked to existing knowledge about the mathematical basis for Greek architecture.

⁵¹⁵ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 243. A Mr Wilson was given the responsibility of continuing the drawing book started by Dyce.

modelling and landscape.”⁵¹⁶ By 1837, similar institutes had also been established in centres such as Leeds, the Potteries, York and Manchester.⁵¹⁷ There was also access to critical visual analysis and examples of styles of design via the inexpensive texts produced by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK). Founded in 1826 by MP Henry Brougham (1778–1868), this organisation created illustrated publications that aimed to provide informative articles to people unable to obtain a formal education or who preferred self-education. Between 1832 and 1845, the organisation produced *The Penny Magazine*, a weekly publication which frequently featured engraved illustrations of works of art and design. Over 200,000 copies were sold in the first year.⁵¹⁸ General interest in ideas about art can be seen in the delivery of the public lectures, which, from the 1830s, were frequently held at venues such as the Athenaeum and the Mechanics' Institution.⁵¹⁹ The 1837 lecture series at the RMI by Benjamin Haydon, previously discussed, was paid for jointly by the Mechanics' Institution, the Athenaeum and the Royal Institution. George Wallis (1811–1891), then master of the Manchester School of Design, gave lectures at the RMI in 1846 and 1847, “On the reproductive principles of ornamental art” and “On the early education of the hand and eyes.” R. T. Hunt Esq. lectured in the same years “On physiology of vision in the arts” and A. G. Henderson gave a talk on “The philosophy of the fine arts.”⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁶ *Minutes of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, 1835-6*, I, appendix 3.

⁵¹⁷ The role of Mechanics Institutes in providing visual art education was discussed in the 1835/6 Select Committee of Arts and Manufactures, *Minutes of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures, 1835-6*, I, appendix 3.

⁵¹⁸ See Scott Bennett, “Revolutions in Thought: Serial Publication and the Mass Market for Reading”, *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings*, Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (eds.) (Leicester University Press, 1982), 225-57. <https://archive.org/details/ThePennyMagazineOfTheSocietyForTheDiffusionOfUsefulKnowledge/ThePennyMagazineOfTheSocietyForTheDiffusionOfUsefulKnowledge1832%2CLondon/> accessed 27/10/2025.

⁵¹⁹ The Manchester Athenaeum was founded in 1835 as a society “for the Advancement and Diffusion of Knowledge.” It was housed from 1837 in another building designed by Charles Barry, immediately adjacent to the RMI. The society’s rooms included a library, newsroom, lecture hall and coffee room, and later a billiard room and a gymnasium were added. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1270889?section=official-list-entry> accessed 07/04/2025.

⁵²⁰ RMI Lecture Committee Minutes, MCL GB127.M6.

Unlike the London School, the Manchester School of Design grew from an already established society with an interest in the fine arts.⁵²¹ As discussed in Chapter 2, the Royal Manchester Institution for the Promotion of Literature, Science and the Arts was established in an imposing purpose-built, classical style edifice in the prominent central location of Mosley Street in 1823. The previous chapter examined the role of Manchester's Royal Institution as an early forum for the public display of art and discussed how it was modelled on German institutions. Driven, at least in part, by Manchester's influential German population, this institution was founded to provide the middle-class industrialists and intellectuals of Manchester with opportunities for *Selbstbildung*. Alongside its lecture theatre, art gallery, laboratory and library was a school of art, already established and functioning successfully since 1826. A room specifically set aside for the "Drawing School", positioned beside the library, was part of Charles Barry's original 1823 plan (Fig. 2.22). The initial Manchester "School of Design", with its Managing Council and constitution, was founded independently of London under the auspices of the RMI, and took over the rooms in the basement of the building from October 1838.⁵²² We know little of the activities of the artists using the RMI building to house their school in the early years. However, we know more about the subsequent school. In 1842, Dyce, in his role as Superintendent of the Government School of Design, was instructed to visit and make an assessment of the Manchester School of Design, which had been established by James Thomson in 1839. He reported back to the Committee on January 17, 1843, that since the founding of the school, "some three or four years earlier", students had been engaged in studying "fragments of architectural ornament" and "the figure from the

⁵²¹ The first application for a central government grant via the Normal School of Design was made in 1840, although funding was not actually received until 1842, RMI Council Minutes, MCL GB127.M6.

⁵²² Cleveland, *The Royal Manchester Institution*. Hartwell, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Manchester*, 131.

antique, and from the living model.”⁵²³ It seems that the artists particularly aspired to emulate the aesthetics of classical art. RMI minutes of 1830 record that the RMI also had various casts of classical sculptures in its permanent collection.⁵²⁴

Several of the patrons and organising committee members of the RMI were also closely involved in establishing the School of Design. The RMI, as detailed in the previous chapter, had a particular approach to the arts and to the promotion of the fine arts for their moral and civilising effects. It aimed to encourage local art production by bringing together professional artists, amateurs and patrons of the arts and to provide, within one building, a permanent collection of art, annual exhibitions, lectures, and studio and study facilities. While the membership subscription of at least two guineas a year created an organisation exclusively for the middle and upper classes, exhibitions and lectures were open to the general public with the aim of raising the level of culture in the town as a whole. During the RMI Council Meeting held on 5 November 1823, it was claimed that “an alliance between Commerce and the Liberal Arts is at once natural and salutary.” The belief was that through the RMI, the wealth generated by the city “finds an object in those elegant productions of human genius and skill which minister to the luxury of the imagination.”⁵²⁵

As previously discussed, many of those promoting cultural and educational initiatives in Manchester at this time were linked to German families, had significant links to Germany and German ideas, had been educated in Germany or were close

⁵²³ Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design, 182.

⁵²⁴ “There were Hatfield’s casts, Bury’s casts, Gibson’s casts of the town hall’s iconic capitals, all dominated by Westmacott’s casts of the Elgin marbles.” RMI Minutes vol 1, 282, 22 January 1830, MCL GB127.M6.

⁵²⁵ RMI Council Minutes, 5 November 1823, MCL GB127.M6/116/1

associates of those with German education. An indication that even the students at the Manchester School of Art were aware of German literature is provided in the list of books chosen by students as "Prizes in Books for Diligence etc." as reported in Henry Cole's *Journal of Design and Manufactures* in 1849.⁵²⁶ These included "Humboldt's Cosmos", "Retz's Faust" and "Findolin".⁵²⁷ It is significant that details of this prizegiving at the Manchester School were included in this national publication. While the selection of books was derided for its lack of art and design content, Cole's detailed knowledge of the school's operations is indicative of his close interest in it. As I will explore later, the Manchester curriculum influenced the national curriculum for visual art, eventually established by Cole.

In many ways, the philosophy of the Manchester school followed Haydon's recommendations by promoting wider access to education in the principles of art and encouraging students to develop skills of observational drawing, including working from the live model.⁵²⁸ Haydon's series of lectures and meetings with prominent individuals in Manchester undoubtedly prompted and encouraged the foundation of the Manchester School. However, it cannot be assumed, as some have proposed, that Haydon was the only, or even the most influential, driver of the Manchester curriculum.⁵²⁹ Haydon's diaries for the period after the founding of the London School of Design mention his lectures in Manchester and criticise the governance of the London School, but provide no evidence of any direct involvement with the Manchester curriculum.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁶ Quoted in the *Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol. I, 1849, Institutions, 99.

⁵²⁷ The books referred to were: *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe* (*Kosmos – Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung*), a treatise on science and nature written by the German scientist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt; the edition of Goethe's *Faust* illustrated by Moritz Retzsch, German painter and engraver; and *Fridolin Schwertberger Bürgerleben und Familienchronik aus einer süddeutschen Stadt* by Carl Spindler.

⁵²⁸ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 45.

⁵²⁹ This is the approach taken by Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 8.

⁵³⁰ By this time, as his diaries illustrate, his attention had been drawn away by a self-destructive obsession with the Westminster fresco competition, his constant financial crises, the illness of his wife and the deaths in infancy of 5 of his 8 children.

An examination of the members of the original Council of the Manchester School of Design provides insight into the philosophies behind its creation and evidence to support the view that the curriculum was influenced by German thinking. Unlike the members of the Council overseeing the London School, who made their living as fine artists, the Manchester School of Design Council was dominated by non-artists, and where Members did have experience in practical art, it was in design for manufacturing.⁵³¹ Prominent German figures were among those supporting and promoting the school, particularly textile manufacturer Louis Schwabe (1798-1845), who was on the original Managing Council and later became Treasurer and then Vice President. He also served on the Council of the RMI and on the Council of the Manchester Association for the Patronage of the Fine Arts.⁵³² Charles Hulbert (1778-1857), a local cotton manufacturer and antiquarian, wrote in 1825 that few towns would be found to contain an equal number of enlightened individuals: "the whole population seems to be imbued with a general thirst for knowledge and improvement."⁵³³ Schwabe had come to Manchester from Dessau in 1817 and rose to become a leading silk manufacturer, inventing pioneering techniques of spinning artificial silk. He strongly believed in both the moral and commercial benefits of art education. He stated that his love of drawing and knowledge of art had not only contributed to his commercial success but, on his first arriving in Manchester as a youth, had kept him from "the temptations which too often beguile the young in large and populous towns."⁵³⁴ He supported the work of the Mechanics Institution and was an early advocate of the School of Art. An obituary in the *Art Union* in 1845

⁵³¹ *Objects, laws and regulations of the School of Design of Manchester*, 2.

⁵³² Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 93; *Manchester & Salford Advertiser*, 24 November, 1838 and 31 September, 1838; *Manchester Guardian*, 22 January, 1840, 16 January, 1841, 27 March, 1841, and 9 October, 1841. Schwabe's firm became famous for having manufactured material for Queen Victoria's wedding dress.

⁵³³ Quoted in Cunningham, *The formation of the Schools of Design*, C. Hulbert, *Musaeum Europaeum* (Shrewsbury, 1825), 113.

⁵³⁴ *Art Union, The Gentleman's Magazine: and historical review*, Vol. 79, 1 April 1845, 101.

described Schwabe as having "a high taste in art and was to some extent practically an artist, applying the knowledge he possessed to the purposes of manufacture, hence the great superiority and perfection of his designs, and showing in his own case, how necessary is a knowledge of the "Art of Design" to the higher branches of manufacture."⁵³⁵

Perhaps the most significant supporter of the school was James Thomson (1779-1850). He was Chair of the Committee during the time that the school became financed by the central government.⁵³⁶ Widely referred to in research literature as a "calico printer", Thomson was actually an industrial chemist who made huge contributions to the printing industry, particularly in developing chemical dyes. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1821, and his significance was recognised with three pages in the "Obituaries of eminent manufacturers" feature of the *Journal of Design and Manufacture*.⁵³⁷ Thomson had a number of links to Germany via his close friendship with Scottish poet Thomas Campbell (1777-1874). Campbell had met both Schlegel and Goethe and took an active role in the foundation of University College London, established in 1826 as London University, visiting Berlin to inquire into the German system of education.⁵³⁸ Thomson also employed German-trained chemists in his laboratory, among them Lyon Playfair (1818-1898) and would also have had connections with other German industrial chemists based in Manchester at this time, such as (Henry) Edward Schunck (1820-1903).⁵³⁹ Serving alongside

⁵³⁵ *Art Union*, 1 April 1845, 101.

⁵³⁶ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, 295.

⁵³⁷ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol IV, 1851, November 1950, 65-67.

⁵³⁸ Hugh Chisholm, (ed.) "Campbell, Thomas". *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 5 (11th ed.), (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 130.

⁵³⁹ Playfair spent 1839 to 1841 in Justus Liebig's laboratory at Giessen and translated Liebig's *Die organische Chemie in ihre Anwendung auf Agricultur und Physiologie* into English, University of Edinburgh, School of Chemistry website <https://chem.ed.ac.uk/about-us/history/professors/lyon-playfair> accessed 25/10/2025.

Thomson on the committee was Edmund Potter, also a "calico printer", who owned and managed what at the time was one of the most extensive printworks in the world (Fig. 3.6). He was also MP for Carlisle from 1861 to 1871.⁵⁴⁰ As a Unitarian, Potter worshipped at the Cross Street Chapel, just a couple of streets away from the Royal Institution.⁵⁴¹ There he would have worshipped alongside many of the Germans then prominent in Manchester society, led by William Gaskell as a minister from 1828–1884.⁵⁴²



Figure 3.6 Photograph of Edmund Potter's printing works at Dinting Vale, c1865. Potter was a leading promoter of the Manchester School of Design. Glossop Heritage Trust <https://glossopheritage.co.uk/ghtarchive/edmundpotter/> accessed 19/11/2025.

Also closely involved with the Manchester School of Design from the outset was James Heywood (1810-1872). From a Unitarian banking family, and MP for North Lancashire from 1847 to 1857, he was a barrister who had studied at Cambridge and

⁵⁴⁰ Potter was elected FRS for his contributions to calico printing. He was a subscriber to the Manchester Association for Patronage of the Fine Arts, and a promoter of the Art Treasures Exhibition, 1857. See Glossop Heritage website: *Edmund Potter (1802-1883), MP, FRS, Calico Printer and Philanthropist*, published October 31, 2023, <https://glossopheritage.co.uk/ghtarchive/edmundpotter/> accessed 10/04/2025.

⁵⁴¹ <https://cross-street-chapel.org.uk/a-brief-history-of-cross-street-chapel/> accessed 11/02/2025.

⁵⁴² The Cross Street Chapel still operates from the same site, although the original building was completely destroyed by wartime bombing.

was notable for his radical and liberal views. Alongside promoting art education, he campaigned for free libraries, museums and art galleries. Heywood also promoted university entrance for dissenters, campaigning for the reform of Oxford University along the lines of German universities. He also instigated and edited a number of translations of German texts, such as Dr Peter van Bohlen's *Introduction to the Book of Genesis*.⁵⁴³

The *Objects, Laws and Regulations of the Manchester School of Design* of 1844 show that it provided a general art education, including figure and flower drawing and classes in modelling, light and shade, and colour. There were also lectures on subjects such as sculpture, anatomy, zoology and botany, occasionally given by Haydon. Courses included ornamental drawing, pattern drawing specifically for calico printing, and drawing for civil engineering and architecture. Students drew plants from direct observation and visited the Zoological Gardens to draw the animals. Provision also included a small museum of casts, paintings, designs and mechanical inventions and a library which included books of engravings.⁵⁴⁴ The Manchester Council was clearly aware of developments in German technical education as they added to their collection reference books “the celebrated and costly volume on ornament, published by the Prussian Government for its Schools of Design.”⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴³ For Heywood's contributions on these topics in Parliament, see Hansard 1803–2005 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/people/mr-james-heywood/index.html> For references to his work as a translator, see M. G. Brock and Mark C. Curthoys (eds.) *Nineteenth-century Oxford*, Part 1, Chapter 10.

⁵⁴⁴ *Objects, Laws and Regulations of the School of Design, Manchester* (Charles Simms & Co. 1844), 6. Manchester School of Design, etc. MCL 707.0942 M2. <https://archive.org/details/1844Manchester> accessed 07/03/2026

⁵⁴⁵ *Objects, Laws and Regulations of the School of Design, Manchester*, 5.

The choice of the school's first Head could be considered a statement of intent. John Zephaniah Bell (1794–1883) was an aspiring history and portrait painter who had studied under Antoine-Jean Gros (1771–1835) in Paris and been assistant to Sir David Wilkie RA (1785-1841). As Wilkie was a close friend of Haydon, it is possible that Haydon helped him to secure the job. It was clear that the school was to cater for a wide range of students with the aim of offering a broad arts education. In addition to supporting the needs of artists and those working to improve skills in relation to their employment, there was also the idea that art education should be available to anyone seeking to generally better themselves. "Instruction to young persons of both sexes will be given in private and distinct day classes, in those branches of the art of Design which are the foundation of a correct and refined taste, and essential to a good education ..." "The course of study will be accommodated, as far as possible, to the wants and tastes of the pupils."⁵⁴⁶

Despite the strongly independent individuals who made up the Council of Manchester School of Design, the government subsidy offered to all the new art schools was enough to entice them to join the central government venture. However, this funding was conditional on delivering the curriculum dictated by the London School. The curriculum eventually devised by London and its implementation across other government-funded schools was met with strong resistance, particularly from Manchester, but also from other centres such as Birmingham.⁵⁴⁷ The London curriculum was restricted to content deemed applicable directly to manufacturing and aimed only at those intending employment in manufacturing trades. Fundamental

⁵⁴⁶ *Objects, Laws and Regulations of the School of Design, Manchester*, 4.

⁵⁴⁷ Mervyn Romans in the introduction to *Histories of Art & Design Education: Collected Essays* (Intellect Books, 2005) uses Birmingham as an example of the resistance of provincial schools to the centralised control by London.

disagreement was immediately apparent, even within the London Committee itself, about whether life drawing, from the live model, should be included in the curriculum. The significance of this was that drawing from life exemplified an approach taken in the training of painters and sculptors, and implied that the design students were being offered the same type of training as students of what we would now refer to as Fine Art. After all, the London Council argued, the nude figure could have relatively little practical application in the design of furniture, patterns for wallpaper, carpets, woven silk or printed calico. An examination of beautifully illustrated ornamental art compilations of the period, intended as source material for designers, such as John Charles Robinson's *The treasury of ornamental art: illustrations of objects of art and vertu*, quickly reveals that this was a spurious argument.⁵⁴⁸ Figures were quite frequently employed as ornamentation on ceramics, wood carvings, furniture and metalwork.

Changes required to the course of instruction offered at the Manchester School were outlined in a strongly worded letter to the Master of the School from William Dyce in January 1843:

It is termed a school of design, not a school of drawing. Nor is it a school for every kind of design, but for one kind only, viz., ornamental; to which accordingly all the exercises of the pupils, even from the commencement, must have a reference. The Council wish you, in the first place, distinctly to understand, that the acquisition of skill in drawing is only a preliminary step to the real business of the School, which is to teach the art of designing ornament, both in respect to its general principles and its specific application to manufacture; and in the second place, that the study of drawing must, in every instance, be conducted with reference to the use to which it is to be applied.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ John Charles Robinson, *The Treasury of Ornamental Art, Illustrations of Objects of Art and Vertù* (Marlborough House, 1858) <https://archive.org/details/treasuryoforname00robi> accessed 15/12/24.

⁵⁴⁹ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, January 31st, 1843, 189.

If students at the new provincial Schools of Design were not to be taught according to the curriculum of the existing Royal Academy, the proposed alternative was, as Dyce's letter implies, that they be given some kind of industrial training closely linked to manufacturing techniques. Exactly how this was to be delivered remained unclear.

Thomson and Potter were both adamantly against the vocational school insisted on by London. Reflecting retrospectively in a lecture to the Society of Arts in 1852, Potter stressed the limitations of the curriculum proposed by London as a practical training for designers. He argued that simple drawing skills were not enough to create marketable designs. Moreover, he saw a general exposure to works of art, rather than the impact of schools of design, as being the means by which the taste of the working classes had been improved.⁵⁵⁰ Both Thomson and Potter took an interest in the arts in general and thought that the influence of Fine Art and practice in freehand drawing was just what their artisan employees in the calico trade needed to improve their taste and skill. They were clearly not alone in these views. When Dyce urged the introduction of his London curriculum of pattern designing, geometric outlines, grids and drawing books in Manchester, his report records that the Manchester manufacturers were strongly opposed to his ideas. "A strong prejudice prevails against the introduction of pattern designing, and I was given to understand that any proposal to convert the School into a manufactory of patterns would be followed by the withdrawal of every member of the Committee connected with the printing trade."⁵⁵¹ It could also be argued that, while not consciously expressed, the *Bildung* approach to education favoured by Manchester also contributed to the

⁵⁵⁰ Potter, *Calico Printing as an Art Manufacture*, 55-6, 60-1.

⁵⁵¹ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, January 17, 1843, 182.

absolute rejection of the attempted standardisation and limited curriculum which the Committee of the Central London School attempted to impose. Rebekka Horlacher identified how, in recent years, *Bildung* has been employed as a counter-ideology in efforts to resist the imposition of empirical doctrines and external accountability in education.⁵⁵²

The clear drawing of a line in the curriculum sand can be seen in the Minutes of the Committee Meeting of the London Normal School, signed by Sir Charles Eastlake on July 7, 1837, in which "it was resolved that drawing from the human figure shall not be taught to the students."⁵⁵³ This denial of access, across all schools, including Manchester, to an aspect of the curriculum that many viewed as fundamental to the education of the visual artist, was also symptomatic of the avoidance of training that might lead to students at the Schools of Design becoming fine artists. This could be interpreted as a philosophical stance, or a parochial attempt by the RAs to ensure that the new schools would not compete with the RA or produce students who were rival artists. John Papworth, the first Director of the Normal School in London, believed that students should not be allowed to study the figure, or indeed study any examples of fine art, in case the "young men [no women were admitted to the London school initially] might be tempted to leave the intended object to pursue that which is more accredited and honoured."⁵⁵⁴

The Manchester Committee insisted on offering a single curriculum that was relevant to all who wanted to study art. A bitter dispute ensued. Bell's extensive chronology of

⁵⁵² Rebekka Horlacher "What is Bildung? Or: Why Pädagogik Cannot get away from the Concept of Bildung" in Pauli Siljander, Ari Kivelä and Ari Sutinen, *Theories of Bildung and growth: connections and controversies between continental educational thinking and American pragmatism* (Sense Publishers, 2012), 135-148.

⁵⁵³ *Minutes of the Council of the Government School of Design*, December 1836 to April 1844, Volume 1 (W. Clowes and Sons, 1849) <https://archive.org/details/MinutesOfTheSchoolOfDesign18361837> accessed 06/04/2023.

⁵⁵⁴ *Reports from the Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures*, 93.

appointments, resignations, student protests and operational chaos provides a useful insight into the political and personal tensions surrounding the new Schools of Design. He describes "scandal, confusion, and disaster; they were at first distracted by feuds, encumbered by debts and convulsed by mutinies."⁵⁵⁵ It is clear that the Committees responsible for the Manchester and London schools held fundamentally different, and fiercely contested, views about the purpose of a School of Design and the kind of education that it should provide. Bell goes as far as to state that "Manchester [School of Art] was a theatre of war in which rival systems contended for mastery."⁵⁵⁶

“Naturphilosophie”

The promotion, by Jackson and others connected with the Manchester School, of Nature as a source for design ideas points to a further key difference in the approaches of London and Manchester. Dyce's drawing book relied on copying geometric shapes and historic designs, promoting the modification of already existing designs rather than the development of new ideas. The Manchester School of Design, by contrast, aimed to equip students with the technical skills, particularly those of drawing from direct observation, which would enable them to devise their own designs, using their observations of natural and other forms as inspiration. The Victorian era saw a huge growth in the collecting of natural specimens and general interest across different social classes in a variety of pastimes connected with natural history. It is interesting to note that the perceived benefits of providing the working classes with access to Nature, such as preventing social unrest and promoting individual wellbeing, were very similar to those frequently used to justify

⁵⁵⁵ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 99.

⁵⁵⁶ Bell, *The Schools of Design*, 100.

creating opportunities for public access to art. The Manchester Royal Botanical Gardens, visited by the students from the School of Design, were a hugely popular attraction, opened at Old Trafford under the direction of the Manchester Botanical and Horticultural Society in 1831. During the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, for example, as the *Art Treasures Examiner* described, one particular group of 300 local factory workers from the German-owned printing company of Messrs Schunk, Souchay and Co. combined their visit to the exhibition with a trip to the neighbouring botanical gardens. "The gardens were first visited and after examining the beauties of the place and discussing the merits of the carnations and the picotees, which many of them seemed able to do, the remainder of the day was spent at the exhibition."⁵⁵⁷ These visitors demonstrated the ability to make detailed visual observations and aesthetic judgements about plants, particularly variations in carnation and picotee flowers. The cultivation of these plants was a favoured hobby at the time.⁵⁵⁸ The widespread fascination with natural form was also evidenced in the craze for collecting and growing ferns in terrariums, known as pteridomania.⁵⁵⁹

The extension of interest in botanical study into literature and visual art is also seen in the phenomenon of floriography: the use of flowers to communicate coded messages. There were many popular flower dictionaries in circulation, and regular discussions of flower code were seen in the popular press.⁵⁶⁰ Jane Austen and Emily Dickinson, who were both interested in horticulture, used flowers symbolically in their

⁵⁵⁷ Account in William James Linton and Others, *The Art Treasures Examiner - A Pictorial, Critical, And Historical Record of the Art Treasures Exhibition, At Manchester, In 1857* (Alexander Ireland & Co, 1857), 204.

⁵⁵⁸ Account in Linton, *The Art Treasures Examiner*, 204.

⁵⁵⁹ A craze started by British botanist Nathaniel Bagshaw Ward in 1829. <https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/92094/9-victorian-hobbies-seem-weird-today> accessed 23/03/2022.

⁵⁶⁰ For example, Robert Tyas, *The sentiment of flowers; or, Language of flora* (R. Tyas, 1841). <https://archive.org/details/sentimentflower00tyas> and John Henry Ingram, *Flora symbolica; or, The language and sentiment of flowers* (F. W. Warne and co, 1869) <https://archive.org/details/florasymbolicaor00ingr>.

writing. This is also evident in the work of painters such as the Pre-Raphaelites. For example, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* of 1866 unusually includes poppies and foxgloves, which, according to dictionaries of the time, would suggest forgetfulness and insincerity. "Art Botany" became crucial to the curriculum of the Schools of Design. What Barbara Whitney Keyser identifies as "indirect imitation of nature" was first seen in the ornamental designs and patterns of the nineteenth century. The patterns printed on fabrics and woven into silk or brocade used non-naturalistic colours and stylised shapes that were often loosely based on natural forms.⁵⁶¹ The highest ideal of beauty, which had traditionally been seen by educators in the visual arts as the human form, was being challenged by the stylised plant form. Organic forms were to play a crucial role in significant art movements in England and across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. William Morris' Arts and Crafts Movement, Art Nouveau in France and Jugendstil in Vienna also sought to break down traditional boundaries between fine and applied art.

German thinkers such as Goethe, Schiller and geographer/naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), brother of Wilhelm, were concerned by the effects of increasing specialisation, encouraged by the growth of university education that focused research in distinct disciplines. This, they believed, together with new empirical methods of data collection, was creating knowledge without the synthesis and development that could be provided by human input or human values. They tried to find ways in which the subjective world of the inner self could be united with the

⁵⁶¹ Barbara Whitney Keyser, "Ornament as an idea: Indirect Imitation of Nature in the Design Reform Movement", *Journal of Design History*, Vol 11, No 2, 127-144.

objective scientific approach to the world of nature, in which rational scientific investigation could also be informed by human emotion and imagination. It was their belief that subjective human attributes such as intuition and feeling could also make a valuable contribution to scientific enquiry.

Current in this period was the idea that the living world is moving towards greater and greater perfection, a concept known as orthogenesis, which was argued for by figures such as German/Swiss biologist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) and philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803). This led to the promotion of comparative observational study of nature, including the human body, searching for an understanding of the "design" underlying natural forms. These supposed underlying laws of Nature, considered to be the creations of God, were perceived by some as representing eternal principles of beauty, or "transcendental anatomy". The idea that stylised plant forms could represent the highest ideals of beauty was premised on the notion that their underlying structures presented a balance of aesthetic principles of unity and variety, and that producing ornament through indirect imitation of nature followed principles different from those of subject painting. Natural forms also presented new aesthetic qualities to replace the Classical subject matter, which was becoming less meaningful.⁵⁶² Goethe, Herder and Schiller had all called for art based on indirect imitation of nature. Goethe was one of the founders of "morphology", the study of form in nature. The notion of the "ideal type" underlying the variety of natural forms was first exemplified in his *Versuch die Metamorphose der Pflanzen zu erklären* (Metamorphosis of Plants) in 1790. His concept of the

⁵⁶² Hugh Barr Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science* (Modern Humanities Research Association, 1970), 306-10.

archetypal plant (*Urpflanze*), generated from the leaf (*Blatt*), came to be interpreted as the common plan for all plants.⁵⁶³ In April 1838, publisher John Murray (1808–1892) lectured at the RMI on “Physiology of Plants – Laws and Phenomena of Vegetation.”⁵⁶⁴ He had previously published a 298-page pamphlet on the same topic. His engagement with German thinking is demonstrated as he dismisses the ideas of Goethe, who “wildly imagined that a flower was a compound of metamorphosed leaves.”⁵⁶⁵ The division between adherents of Classical art and the human figure as the exemplary model of beauty, and those who looked to the observation of nature's forms and colours for inspiration, was played out across the nineteenth century and ultimately led to a move away from subject-based art.

The idea that patterns on fabric, which were largely derived from natural forms, could be considered as “art” was put forward by Edmund Potter in his description of the design, colour and manufacture of the French fabrics on view at the 1851 Great Exhibition. “They had all the scope required for art; and they **were** works of art.”⁵⁶⁶ In adapting theories of beauty to the design of ornament, the status of the designer was also raised. Textile manufacturers such as Edmund Potter kept their own archives of design resources, with samples of their fabrics mounted in books, forming collections which emphasise abstracted shapes and flat colours (Fig. 3.7). Calico printing and the associated trades, such as chemical dye manufacturing, were huge industries in the Manchester area throughout the nineteenth century. Calico itself was a cheap,

⁵⁶³ Goethe, “Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style”, 1789, in Gage J., (ed & tr), *Goethe on Art* (University of California Press, 1980), 22.

⁵⁶⁴ RMI Lecture Syllabuses and General Circulars, Manchester Central Library Archives, M6/1/70-71

⁵⁶⁵ John Murray *Physiology of Plants – Laws and Phenomena of Vegetation* (John Murray, 1833), 137.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89101308492&seq=9> John Murray was the third of that name to continue the publishing business. He published Charles Eastlake's first English translation of Goethe's *Theory of Colours* (1840), works by Jane Austen, Arthur Conan Doyle, Lord Byron and Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), among many others.

⁵⁶⁶ Potter, *Calico Printing as an Art Manufacture*, 57.

functional cotton fabric, and the quality and desirability of the printed design were absolutely key to the commercial value of a particular piece of cloth. As such, this product represented the crucial impact of art and design on the success of manufacturing. Following the 1840 Select Committee on Copyright of Designs, copyright was extended to pattern designs. This implied that the intellectual involvement of the designer had a worth beyond the commercial value of the goods produced and amounted to a raising of the status of “ornamental art”. It was estimated that around 500 pattern designers lived in and around Manchester in the 1840s, often paid in a way that indicated a status above machine operators, by pattern rather than by the hour. One manufacturer claimed that pattern makers could produce around 20 patterns a week, which would have meant an astonishing 520,000 patterns a year being produced in the Manchester area.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁷ *Report from the Select Committee on Copyright of Designs, together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, 6 April 1840, evidence given by Daniel Lee, Principal of Wright and Lee, Manchester-based merchants selling printed fabric, largely calico, 252, 274-285 and 287 https://archive.org/details/reportfromselect0002gre_a_t6m8 accessed 27/10/2025.

improvement. The teaching encouraged personal development and self-realisation, reflecting the philosophy of *Bildung*. In 1843, the Manchester school's first Head, John Zephaniah Bell, resigned. His resignation was prompted by the continued insistence of the inspector from the London School, Dyce, that the course offered be more limited and more directly relevant to manufacturing.⁵⁶⁸ Dyce himself resigned from the London School shortly thereafter.

With the resignation of Dyce and the appointment between 1843 and 1847 of historicist Charles Heath Wilson (1809-1882) as Director at the London School, the national art curriculum took an extreme turn in favour of classicism. Once again, conflict with Manchester was inevitable. Wilson favoured teaching through the exact copying of historic, mainly classical Roman, Greek or Renaissance ornament. He sent tracers to Pompeii to copy Roman wall decorations and filled the department with casts for students to copy.⁵⁶⁹ Ludwig Grüner (1801-1882), who also worked closely with Prince Albert (see Chapter 5 – “Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos”), was tasked with producing a costly series of volumes illustrating ornament: *A book of Ornamental Design for the Purposes of Decoration and Manufacture*.⁵⁷⁰ This was denigrated by Henry Cole as containing “copies of existing copies of Roman copies of Greek originals and badly drawn at that.”⁵⁷¹ In the 1840s, as we have discussed, the imitation of Classical and Renaissance art was an accepted practice in art education, promoted by the upper classes and the Royal

⁵⁶⁸ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 88. Bell, however, could resign with some confidence that his skills were recognised in London, as he had just won £200 in the national competition to design murals for the new Houses of Parliament.

⁵⁶⁹ *Report from the Select Committee on the School of Design; together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence, appendix, and index* (House of Commons Papers, 1849), Paper Number: 576, Volume: XVIII, 149. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.uniessexlib.idm.oclc.org/parlipapers/docview/t70.d75.1849-025826> See also Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 89.

⁵⁷⁰ Wilhelm Heinrich Ludwig Grüner, German artist, engraver and art historian, who, as discussed further in Chapter 5 – “Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos”, worked for Prince Albert from 1841 to 1855.

⁵⁷¹ Cole’s quotation from Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 91.

Academy. The Classical Revival style in architecture, popular at the time, involved copying the structures of Roman or Greek buildings, sometimes referring to derivatives or Renaissance examples. There was also a fashion for ornamenting interiors with elements such as framed medallions, decorative panels, swags and ribbons, modelled on the interiors of the newly excavated Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. Thus, the curriculum of elementary drawing followed by copying from classical ornament was useful at least to London's interior designers, if not so relevant for the calico pattern designers of Manchester or the steelmakers of Sheffield.

The commitment to a curriculum that consisted of copying Classical and Renaissance ornament was hardly surprising, given the membership of the London Council up to 1845. Among those who were Council Members at this point were Sir Richard Westmacott RA (1775–1856), a Neoclassical sculptor trained by Antonio Canova, Charles Cockerell RA (1788–1863), a Neoclassical architect and archaeologist, and George Richmond (1809-1896), a traditional painter in watercolour. Their complete lack of understanding about industrial design was attacked by the *Journal of Design*, which found “it would be cruelty indeed to place these artists in the midst of Alderman Copeland's Pottery at Stoke, or Messrs Thomson's Print-works at Clitheroe, or the Coalbrookdale Iron-works... they would think china was not pottery, and would hardly know whether metals were to be carved or chased!”⁵⁷²

⁵⁷² *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, March-August 1849, Volume 1, 26.

Meanwhile, in Manchester, George Wallis FSA (1811–1891) had taken over from Bell as Headmaster. Despite being trained at the London School under Dyce, Wallis took a more liberal approach. He established design seminars and, while he acknowledged the usefulness of studying historic design, he stressed originality based on the study of nature. It appears that the school was popular, with students engaged in experimentation with various media and encouraged to develop their own style. In what was perhaps the first visual art course with recognisable similarities to the courses delivered today, Wallis's curriculum included group criticism, original design projects, study of historic designs with origins in nature, drawing plants from life and comparative anatomical study of animals and the human figure.⁵⁷³ Travel writer Samuel Sidney, in his account of Manchester as one of the places he had visited on his rail journeys, commented:

In two years from the time of Mr. Wallis taking the charge, the funds of the school were flourishing; the interest taken in it by the public was great, and nearly half the Institution was occupied by the pupils, while the applications for admission were more numerous than could be accommodated. Under this management the public, who care little for abstract art, were taught the close connexion between the instruction of the School of Design and their private pursuits.⁵⁷⁴

Wallis was committed to elevating applied art to the status of fine art, and in 1845, six years before London's Great Exhibition, he organised an Industrial Art Exhibition at the RMI. Work produced in a wide range of media, including ceramics, wood, leather and papier-mâché, was exhibited. Wallis also lectured on the principles of decorative art, illustrating his lectures, in what was an innovatory practice at this

⁵⁷³ For Wallis's curriculum see: *Draft of a Plan of Instruction in Art and Science Furnished by Mr George Wallis to Mr. Shaw Lefevre, June, 1847*. Chart Of Classes, Section A General Instruction. Reprinted in Sparkes, *Schools of Art: their origin, history, work and influence*, 139 <https://archive.org/details/SchoolsOfArtTheirOriginHistoryWorkAndInfluence/page/n139/mode/2up> accessed 06/09/2020.

⁵⁷⁴ Samuel Sidney, *Rides on Railways* (London, 1851), "Manchester" section, no page numbers. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/13271/13271-h/13271-h.htm> accessed 09/07/2022. Samuel Sidney was the pseudonym of Samuel Solomon (1813–1883), an English writer on a wide variety of topics, including agriculture, railways and emigration to Australia. He was also Assistant Commissioner of the Great Exhibition and Assistant Secretary of the Crystal Palace Company. See Ernest Clarke, *Sidney, Samuel* in Sidney Lee (ed.) *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 52 (Smith, Elder & Co. 1897), 239–240.

time, with drawings on the blackboard. Lord Clarendon, then President of the Board of Trade, requested that Wallis draw up a “Plan of Instruction in Art and Science” as applied to industrial art. It was this scheme, produced by the Director of the Manchester School of Design, which came to be adopted as the basis for industrial art education in Britain in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁷⁵ As Macdonald identifies, “Wallis always praised originality and fitness for purpose.”⁵⁷⁶ Where a student wanted to repeat an existing design, Wallis would encourage them to at least challenge themselves by working on a different scale. This prioritising of invention represented a very different approach to that of the traditional academies.

The curriculum outlined by Wallis features general instruction in form, colour, light and shade and modelling, followed by principles of geometry, anatomy, perspective and design.⁵⁷⁷ According to Wallis’ plan, students would also receive specific instruction in:

- History of Art and Ornamental Design, in particular illustrated by examples of every period, an analysis of the spirit of each age and notices of the leading characteristics of the great Masters and their works. These might be periodically delivered not only to students but to subscribers and friends of the Schools...
- Botany—as far as concerns the essential elements of plants, with illustrations by the Professor of Design of the reproductive principles by which a Flower or Plant is converted into an Ornament
- Chemistry as applied to the arts—to vary according to local need—which in the case of Manchester was “colours, dyeing, printing, etc.”

These classes were to be tailored to the needs of local manufacturers, and additional staff with relevant industrial expertise were to be employed.⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ Sparkes, *Schools of Art*, 45.

⁵⁷⁶ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 91.

⁵⁷⁷ *Draft of a Plan of Instruction in Art and Science Furnished by Mr George Wallis*, Chart of Classes, Section A General Instruction, in Sparkes, *Schools of Art*, 139.

⁵⁷⁸ *Draft of a Plan of Instruction in Art and Science Furnished by Mr George Wallis*, Chart of Classes, Section A General Instruction, in Sparkes, *Schools of Art*, 139.

Wallis resigned from the Directorship of the Manchester School of Design in 1846, when changes to his education programme were predictably once again enforced from London. However, he and his ideas were to become part of the establishment just over a decade later when he was appointed by Sir Henry Cole as Senior Keeper of the art collection at the South Kensington Museum. During the 30 years that he held the post, he was instrumental in establishing the system of circulating works of art around art schools across the country, wrote in leading art periodicals, and lectured widely.

The disputes, resignations and protests at the Schools of Design were widely covered in the press, implying a level of public engagement, potentially an interest in pedagogy and social and political concerns about the rights of working people and the role of institutions. Publications such as the *Art Union*, with its establishment links, tended to support the London School, and papers with a wider demographic, such as *The Builder*, supported the right of access to a wider curriculum for students, who, after all, paid fees. The events even inspired satire with cartoons in publications such as *Punch*. Haydon himself, writing under the pseudonym *Alpha*, sent a series of letters to the *Times of London*, decrying the approach of the London School and claiming that it was just a "tool to cramp the English citizen in his thirst for knowledge."⁵⁷⁹

Following the resignation of Wallis, the London Board of Trade decided to make its own appointment at Manchester, over the heads of the Manchester Committee. After a series of unsuccessful Directors, roles dropped, and the previously thriving school

⁵⁷⁹ Alpha, "School of Design", *Times of London*, 13 May and 30 May 1845.

went bankrupt.⁵⁸⁰ The London School was in no position to lead further curriculum developments, as it was also in chaos, having again been reorganised. In an attempt to address its failings, three Headmasters were jointly employed to share the lead role. In November 1846, a Special Committee of the Council of the Government School of Design was appointed to consider and report upon its management. It heard evidence that “elementary instruction was all that a student could obtain at the school at Somerset House, which as a School of Design was “an utter and complete failure,” for “instead of any attempt being made to teach the principles of any style of ornament, the only principle acted upon is that of continual copying.”⁵⁸¹

At this point, Henry Cole becomes increasingly visible in the debates surrounding the Schools of Design. Cole is frequently portrayed as an administrator and an effective, driven civil servant. He was initially employed in the public record office and played a key role in the introduction of the Penny Post. It is also significant that he had a close association with a number of influential British radicals, such as philosopher and social economist John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and Thomas Love Peacock (1785–1866). He also had a number of associates in Manchester and was invited by Manchester-based political activist and manufacturer Richard Cobden to become secretary of the Anti-Corn Law League.⁵⁸² Cole's autobiography records him staying in Manchester with Cobden while rallying supporters for his campaign to introduce the national postage system.⁵⁸³ Cole also sought support from Manchester when trying to overcome initial government opposition to the site and cost of the proposed

⁵⁸⁰ “Institutions”, *The Journal of Design and Manufactures and Manufactures*, Vol. I (1849), 59-69.

⁵⁸¹ Sparkes, *Schools of Art*, 45.

⁵⁸² Cole, *Fifty years of public work*, 58, <https://archive.org/details/fiftyyearsofpubl01cole>.

⁵⁸³ Cole, *Fifty years of public work*, 53.

1851 Great Exhibition, meeting with Salis Schwabe.⁵⁸⁴ Cole was a member of the Society of Arts from 1846, becoming Chairman in 1850. There exists correspondence, sadly now mostly indecipherable, between Cole at the Society of Arts and the Committee of the RMI dating from 1849, some of which appears to refer to loans of paintings.⁵⁸⁵

There is evidence of Cole's interest in applying art to design and manufacturing from an early stage. From 1847, Cole ran his own art manufacturing company under the pseudonym of Felix Summerly, attempting to unite fine and applied art by inviting established fine artists and RAs to create designs for his products. In this enterprise, he built associations with manufacturers in the North of England, particularly through his production of a china tea service, which was manufactured for many years by Minton of Stoke-on-Trent. The teacup became a standard Minton design.⁵⁸⁶ All three of the artists employed as joint Headmasters of the London Design School in 1847, Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), John Rogers Herbert (1810-1890), and Henry James Townsend (1810-1890), designed for *Felix Summerly's Art Manufactures*.⁵⁸⁷ Cole also found an additional way of engaging with manufacturers, designers and artists, as well as the general public, via his *Journal of Design and Manufactures*.⁵⁸⁸ The six volumes of *The Journal*, published between 1849 and 1852, were edited by Richard Redgrave and Henry Cole, with the stated aim of the "promotion and protection" of "Ornamental Design" and improving the standards of design in British

⁵⁸⁴ Cole, *Fifty years of public work*, 165.

⁵⁸⁵ MCL M6/1/57/1.

⁵⁸⁶ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8089/henry-cole-tea-service-teapot-cole-henry-sir/> accessed 13/09/2025.

"The separate parts of the tea service designed by Cole himself remained in production for some years. The cup was given the factory code of FS (for Felix Summerly) and continued to be made into the 20th century, often decorated with patterns."

⁵⁸⁷ See Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 136-140. Cole was also largely responsible for instigating the political and financial success that was the 1851 Great Exhibition, the profits from which were used to purchase land in which the South Kensington Museum (later to become the V & A) was established, with Cole as its first Director.

⁵⁸⁸ <https://search.library.wisc.edu/digital/AOWGW6VJWFWES48O> accessed 16/08/2020.

industry and middle-class taste. Cole's role as a civil servant precluded him from publicly sharing his ideas on aesthetics or art theory, however, his views were often anonymously published in *The Journal*. It became a vehicle through which to attack the failing management of the schools and set out his vision of reform in design. The opening address, for example, states that by educating both the manufacturers and the general public, "in a few years, good art will be recognised to be as characteristic a feature of British manufactures as the excellence of their make already is... the moral influence of ornamental art extends to millions."⁵⁸⁹ While emphasising the commercial benefits of good design, Cole also referred to its potential benefits to the individual. "And surely that stale proverb of a thousand years' standing, that art softens rough natures, need hardly be quoted in proof of its moral benefits."⁵⁹⁰

Each volume of *The Journal* includes actual samples of fabrics and wallpapers, with critical commentary. The preface states the intention to represent most of the principal producers of decorative design. By including these commercially produced designs, it was their hope that "the value of opinions may be tested in the very presence of the objects criticised. It is like a judgment pronounced upon evidence in open court."⁵⁹¹ The fact that this journal was in active dialogue and correspondence with Manchester's manufacturers is evidenced by the fact that they were requested to send samples of what they considered to be their best designs to *The Journal* for review (Fig. 3.9). "Of the patterns of S. Schwabe and Co. we have received one lot of about thirty-five, and a second lot which we reserve: the first shew (sic) more attempt at originality than most of the others which we have before us but we think

⁵⁸⁹ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol. 1, March 1849, page not numbered - opening address.

⁵⁹⁰ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol. 1, March 1849, page not numbered - opening address.

⁵⁹¹ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol. 1, March 1849, page not numbered - opening address.

them rather violent: the second lot, which is far more satisfactory we keep for future comment, and they are creditable to manufacturers who deservedly stand in the very first rank as British printers" (Fig. 3.8).⁵⁹²



Figure 3.8 Muslin sample printed by Salis Swabe & Co. from *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Volume 1, 1847, 119. Textile exhibited by Salis Swabe & Co at the Manchester Exposition of British Manufacture, 1849.

⁵⁹² "Review of patterns: woven fabrics", *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol I, March 1849, 77.

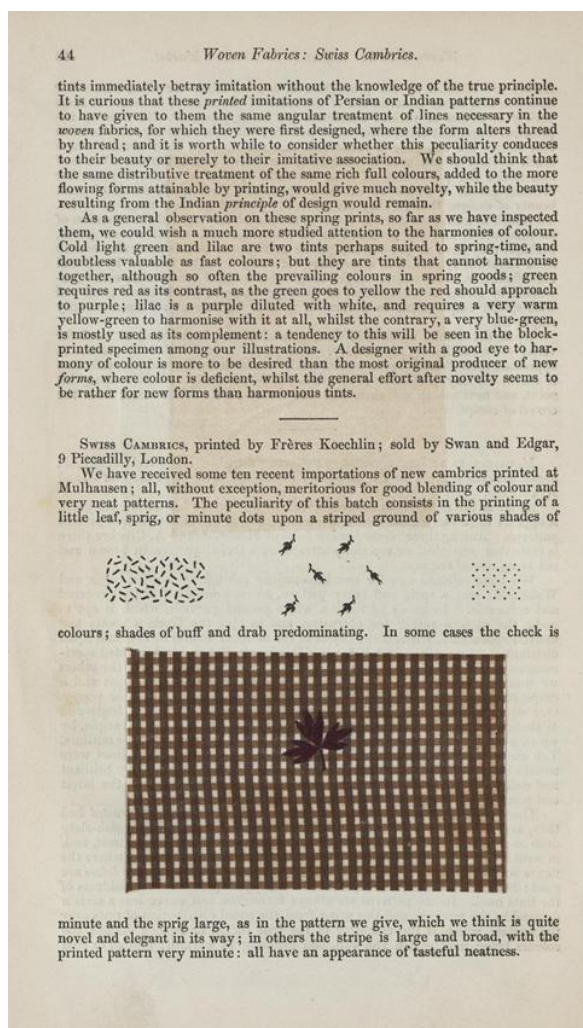


Figure 3.9 Sample of Swiss Cambric from *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*. Volume 1, 1847, 44.

The publication also included reviews of books, including German publications such as *Conversationslexicon Für Bildende Künste* (translated as the "Encyclopaedia of the Plastic Arts"), from which translated extracts are included.⁵⁹³ *The Journal* also featured news from institutions such as the Royal Society of Arts, transcripts of lectures and "original papers" on a range of themes including copyright, the importance of botanical study to design, and drawing for children.⁵⁹⁴ Among these

⁵⁹³ The publication eventually extended to seven volumes. *Conversations-Lexicon für Bildende Kunst* (O. Wigand, 1846).

⁵⁹⁴ Richard Redgrave, "Original papers: Importance of the study of botany to the ornamentalist", *The Journal of Design and Manufactures* Vol 1, 1849, 147-151.

papers are a series of lectures by William Dyce on ornamental art, with an editorial which begins: "I have read Mr. Dyce's lectures with great interest but I do not find in them any codification of the laws or principles of art..."⁵⁹⁵ This comment in itself implies an accepted belief that such a thing was desirable and possible. *The Journal* also quotes and refers favourably to the content of lectures given by Mr G Wallis.⁵⁹⁶ A lengthy essay entitled *The Four Primary Sensations of the Mind: The Sublime, The Beautiful, The Low or Ridiculous and the Painful* by sculptor John Bell (1811–1895) was published over a series of volumes. This exploration of aesthetics, visual subjectivity and emotion has clear, although unacknowledged, links to the work of Kant. Gottfried Semper's *On the Study of Polychromy* is also quoted at length.⁵⁹⁷ Semper's work on aesthetics and theories about the use of colour on classical buildings became known in the UK in the 1840s. After he became a political refugee in London, he was first employed by Cole to design displays at the Great Exhibition and, as discussed later, became a teacher of metalwork at Cole's Department of Practical Art.

In 1849, after much campaigning by Cole and then MP for Manchester, Thomas Milner Gibson (1806 –1884), among others, a Select Committee was established to enquire into the operation of the Schools of Design.⁵⁹⁸ The mass of confused and contradictory evidence drawn from interviews with artists, manufacturers, teachers, and administrators was drawn up into reports by Gibson, who chaired the Committee. In addition to the official Parliamentary Reports, the findings were

⁵⁹⁵ This editorial is signed only as "J", referred to as "one of the most enlightened dilettanti of his time", Vol I, "Correspondence", 168.

⁵⁹⁶ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, lecture given at Manchester Church Teachers Institute, 3 March. Vol II, 63.

⁵⁹⁷ *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol VI, 1852, 112-113.

⁵⁹⁸ Thomas Milner Gibson was a Member of Parliament for Manchester from 1841 to 1857. See Hugh Chisholm, (ed.) "Gibson, Thomas Milner", *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. 11 (11th ed.) (Cambridge University Press, 1911), 944.

published by Cole in *The Journal* in 1850. Milner Gibson's final report found that "a stronger instance of mismanagement arising from overweening conceit and ignorance has never been proved."⁵⁹⁹ The findings led initially to the transfer of control from the Board of Trade and the restructuring of the school's administration. In place of a Council of 24 men, many of whom never attended Council meetings, the School was to be managed by a Director, a Secretary and a committee of three who were responsible for designing the curriculum. Just two years later, Cole was appointed as the Director of the Schools.⁶⁰⁰

Contemporary commentators recognised the leading role of Manchester figures in the campaign to remove the Schools of Design from Board of Trade control. For instance, Samuel Sidney, writing in 1851, conveyed the widespread feeling that the provincial schools would have fared better without interference from London. He claimed that it was the strength of feeling from Manchester that led to the overthrow of the original Board of Trade Committee.

While matters were proceeding so satisfactorily, the Somerset House authorities... proceeded to earn their salaries by giving instructions which could not be carried out without destroying all the good that had been done. The Manchester Committee and Mr. Wallis protested against this *red tapish* interference [an early reference to "red tape" as a symbol of an unnecessarily complex bureaucracy]. It was persisted in; Mr. Wallis resigned, to the great regret of his pupils and manufacturing friends in the managing council... Out of evil comes good. The case of Manchester enabled Mr. Milner Gibson, M.P. for Manchester, to get his Committee and overhaul the Schools of Design throughout the kingdom.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁹ Full report was printed in *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol II, 1850, "Institutions: Mr T.M. Gibson's Report on the School of Design", 73-85.

⁶⁰⁰ *Select Committee and other reports on the School of Design and on foreign schools of design: with proceedings, minutes of evidence, appendices and indices, 1840-49* (Reprinted by Irish University Press, 1970), <https://archive.org/details/selectcommitteeo0003unse/page/n11/mode/2up> accessed 01/03/2025. *The Report from the Select Committee on the State and Management of the School of Design, with Appendix, 1847*, 247- 342.

⁶⁰¹ Sidney, *Rides on Railways*, "Manchester" section, no page numbers.

As the Select Committee on the School of Design undertook its London-based enquiries, in Manchester, the Council of the School had already overseen its revival. The new Head, from 1849, was James Astbury Hammersley (1818–1867), a fine artist who specialised in watercolour landscapes. While there was criticism from London that Hammersley's specialism was inappropriate for the leader of a school of design, he had also worked as a designer for Wedgwood and received the backing of Manchester's manufacturers. Hammersley believed that all students should be taught with the aim of reaching the highest artistic achievements. In an article published in the *London Pioneer*, he argued for the application of fine art to commercial design.⁶⁰² By 1850, the *Journal of Design and Manufactures* reported that the number of students had risen from the 1847 low of 90 to 352. An analysis of these students' occupations revealed that the largest groups were schoolboys, schoolgirls, governesses and "artists". Only 62 of 352 students intended to work in calico or silk designing. It was argued that the teaching of artistic principles without reference to industrial application would help to improve the public taste.⁶⁰³

Henry Cole was promoted from his role as Director of the Schools, and appointed as the first General Superintendent of the Department of Practical Art in 1852. As head of this new Government office, he was responsible for the national administration of art education. Four years later, this became the Department of Science and Art, based at South Kensington Museum (later renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum), where he remained until his retirement in 1873.⁶⁰⁴ One of Cole's first

⁶⁰² Leslie Stephen and Lee Sidney (eds.) "Hammersley, James Astbury", *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 24 (Smith, Elder & Co., 1890). See also: Anon [J. A. Hammersley] "The Commercial Value of the Arts of Design", *London Pioneer*, 4 June 1846, I, 6, 94-95. Article republished in Clive Edwards (ed) *Nineteenth-Century Design, Theories and Discourses*, Routledge, 2021.

⁶⁰³ Reported in *The Journal of Design and Manufactures*, Vol III, 1850, 122.

⁶⁰⁴ Cole, *Fifty years of public work*.

actions was to undertake an extensive tour of German states, studying teaching methods and purchasing items for the new museum. The mission statement for the new Department mentions Meissen porcelain as a model for British manufacturers.⁶⁰⁵ Cole saw his mission as “devis[ing] the means by which the department may promote all the several interests involved in the improvement of public taste. The interest of the public, as a consumer and judge – the interest of the manufacturer, as the capitalist and producer – and the interests of the artisan, as the actual workman.”⁶⁰⁶ During his 21-year tenure, Cole oversaw the increase from 20 provincial schools teaching some 5,000 students to, as *The Builder* reported, almost 150 schools with over 30,000 students. South Kensington curricula and certificates in drawing were in use at 4,700 elementary schools with 768,661 pupils. In addition, the first national applied-art museum, now the V & A, was established, with a touring collection.⁶⁰⁷ Macdonald claims, “a national system of art education was set up with such thoroughness and rigidity that it truly merited the name ‘cast iron’”, so much associated with Cole and his London base was this new curriculum that it was known as the “South Kensington System”. Richard Redgrave, who had collaborated with Cole on the *Journal of Design and Manufactures* and taught as Master of Botany at the London School since 1847, was made responsible for the structuring and implementation of the system.⁶⁰⁸ This was a highly structured syllabus, divided into twenty-three stages, which was also widely adopted in other English-speaking

⁶⁰⁵ Henry Cole, *Introductory addresses on the Science and Art Department and the South Kensington Museum. No. 1 The functions of the Science and Art Department*, 1857, <https://archive.org/details/FunctionsOfTheScienceAndArtDepartment>

⁶⁰⁶ Cole, “An Introductory Lecture on the Facilities Afforded by the Department of Practical Art, to all Classes of the Community for Obtaining Education in Art”, 24 November 1852 (Chapman & Hall, 1853), 13.

⁶⁰⁷ *The Builder*, 29 April 1882, 505–7.

⁶⁰⁸ *Select Committee and other reports on the School of Design and on foreign schools of design: with proceedings, minutes of evidence, appendices and indices, 1840-49* (Reprinted by Irish University Press, 1970).

<https://archive.org/details/selectcommitteeo0003unse/page/n11/mode/2up> *The Report from the Select Committee on the State and Management of the School of Design, with Appendix, 1847*, 247–342. Richard Redgrave’s proposed course of study can be found on page 310. See also Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 157.

countries, such as America, and in the then British Colonies, such as India. It was still in use in some areas until the 1930s.⁶⁰⁹

Colleagues employed by Cole in the Department included notable figures such as the German architect, designer and art theorist Gottfried Semper, who, as previously mentioned, was appointed by Cole as Professor of Metalwork, Pottery and Furniture. Semper's "Special Technical Classes", which fostered the implementation of German practical art education pedagogy in England, were judged to be so significant to the School that they occupied all the classrooms on the second floor of Marlborough House.⁶¹⁰ Semper's teaching plan included activities such as studio critiques that are still employed in art schools today. Alongside Semper were architect Owen Jones (1809–1874) and artist and art historian Ralph Wornum (1812–1877), with George Wallis, once Director of the Manchester School, appointed by Cole as Keeper of the South Kensington Museum.

The overthrow of the original Board of Trade Council was undoubtedly supported, and perhaps precipitated, by the consistent and forceful opposition of Cole's Manchester allies. Cole's reform of the curriculum of the Schools of Design, under a single state-run Department of Government, was influenced by individuals who had been involved with the Manchester School of Design and by ideas which had originally emanated from Germany.⁶¹¹ The many stages of the curriculum may have been viewed as prescriptive, but the actual curriculum offered was broad, and students could select the most appropriate pathway for their individual needs.

⁶⁰⁹ Christopher Frayling, *The Royal College of Art, One Hundred and Fifty Years of Art and Design* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), 41.

⁶¹⁰ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 169.

⁶¹¹ Macdonald, *The History and Philosophy of Art Education*, 226.

Reflecting the philosophy of *Bildung*, it was open to all, including those wanting to develop "taste" for its own sake rather than as an aid to employment. Ari Kivelä outlines German theories of education as two polarised concepts: *Erziehung* and *Bildung*.⁶¹² While these concepts are specific to the German language and have no direct English equivalent, they do perhaps describe the two very different pedagogic approaches initially seen in London and Manchester. *Bildung*, as exemplified in Manchester, could be approximated as a self-driven, creative activity of individual mental growth and self-improvement. In contrast, *Erziehung* describes the imposed pedagogical action of "education" as an external process acting on the individual, setting normative standards and values. This arguably reflects the approach of the London-based model.⁶¹³

Over the past century, the debates about the appropriate way to deliver art and design education have been repeatedly rerun. Paul Sproll claims "there is evidence that a type of art education that served commercial and vocational interests of Britain in the 1970s and 1980s marked a re-emergence of attitudes traceable to a British parliamentary debate and the establishment in 1835 of a Select Committee on Arts and Manufactures."⁶¹⁴ I have explored how the influence of German models and ideas was particularly evident in the pedagogic approaches of one of the first state-funded design schools in Manchester. The observation of natural form as inspiration, and the systematic study of abstract ornament, rather than the longstanding

⁶¹² Ari Kivelä, "From Immanuel Kant to Johann Gottlieb Fichte – Concepts of Education and German Idealism", in Pauli Siljander, Ari Kivelä & Ari Sutinen (eds.) *Theories of Bildung and growth: connections and controversies between continental educational thinking and American pragmatism* (Sense publications, 2012), 59-87.

⁶¹³ Jürgen Oelkers, "Influence and development: Two basic paradigms of education", *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, (Springer 1994), 13: 91. Oelkers additionally describes "Erziehung" as having an ethical dimension as "moral communication."

⁶¹⁴ There was a notable shift back towards the separation of technical from conceptual skills in the restructuring of further education colleges following the National Advisory Council on Art Education (NACAE) reports, also known as the "Coldstream Report" in 1960. See Paul A. C. Sproll, "Matters of Taste and Matters of Commerce: British Government Intervention in Art Education in 1835." *Studies in Art Education*, vol. 35, no. 2, 1994, 105–13. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1320824> accessed 11/02/2025.

academic ideal of the human figure, marked the beginning of the move away from subject-based art. The wider influence of individuals at the Manchester School who promoted the teaching of fine art alongside design, such as George Wallis and George Jackson, is yet to be fully explored. Wallis's educational approach combined a desire for original design with analysis of visual phenomena and knowledge of new media and process. His early foundational course covering the basics of material characteristics, and the elements of art: line, form, tone, composition and colour had the same fundamental principles as the Art and Design curriculum delivered in schools in Britain today.

Chapter 4 – Manchester’s Albert Memorial

A Google search for “Albert Memorial” will immediately find the soaring 176-foot-high Gothic-style pavilion with the resplendent gilded sculpture of the Prince Consort seated at its centre, which has stood in London’s Kensington Gardens since 1872. This sparkling concoction, funded by Parliamentary grants and public subscription, was commissioned by Queen Victoria and designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811–1878). Constructed in luminous marble and granite, encrusted with enamel and glittering with Murano glass mosaic, its extensive sculptural iconography speaks of Britain’s imperial strength and the virtues and aspirations of its people. However, this was not the only shrine-like “Albert Memorial” erected in tribute following the sudden early death of Queen Victoria’s Consort at the age of 42, in December 1861. Two hundred miles away from Kensington, another imposing canopied monument stands in the centre of the extensive town square created to house it (Fig. 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Photograph of the Albert Memorial, Manchester, 2019.
 Thomas Worthington (1826-1909), architect.
 Matthew Noble (1818-1876), sculptor.
 Photograph: public domain.

Prince Albert and the Manchester Man

Remarkably similar in construction to the London memorial, this far more personal and intriguing Manchester edifice was unveiled in 1863, some seven years earlier than the Kensington version. As we look more closely, this stone shrine will reveal the deeper untold story of the relationship between the leading citizens of mid-nineteenth-century Manchester and a man from the German state of Saxe-Coburg,

who in many ways personified their values and promoted their interests.⁶¹⁵ I shall argue that the view of the Teutonic Prince Consort seen from these cobbled streets was, in some respects, unique, like the monument itself. Funded by individual and company subscriptions, this edifice represented the gratitude of a people who, as we shall explore, had an acute understanding of Albert's contribution to the development of cultural aspects of British society and particularly valued his promotion of the visual arts and arts education. As Manchester's Mayor Thomas Goadsby clearly believed:

There is no place within her Majesty's Dominions more strongly called upon than Manchester publicly to testify to the memory of the late Prince Consort. The constant interest and anxiety manifested by his Late Royal Highness to promote everything calculated to add to the prosperity and happiness of the people of this city will never be forgotten...⁶¹⁶

In just a couple of decades, following his marriage to Queen Victoria in 1840, as a number of writers have documented, Prince Albert made a profound impact on British society and culture. However, this was not universally recognised during his lifetime. As Chris Brooks writes, on his death, "the sorrow was sincere, but tinged with self-reproach, for the sympathy that seemed to unite the country at Albert's death had often been withheld in his lifetime."⁶¹⁷ Charles Kingsley reiterated this sentiment, speaking at one of the many memorial services, "for the truth is, and I think all true Britons feel it this day, that we were not altogether fair to the Prince."⁶¹⁸ The Prince's German nationality, in particular, was not always well received across the country. Particularly early in his marriage, there was much press criticism and

⁶¹⁵ As previously outlined, reference to "Germanic" or "German" at this period refers to the various German-speaking states that shared a common linguistic, cultural and legal tradition. The unification of Germany as a Prussian-dominated nation-state officially occurred on 18 January, 1871.

⁶¹⁶ Contemporary press cutting, not identified, probably *Manchester Guardian*, in the *Minute Book of the Memorial Committee*, Chetham's Library Archive, A7.7.

⁶¹⁷ Chris Brooks (ed.) *The Albert Memorial* (Yale University Press, 2000), 8.

⁶¹⁸ Quoted in Joanna Richardson, *Victoria & Albert* (Littlehampton Book Services Ltd, 1977), 228.

satire in London-based magazines like *Punch*. As Stewart outlines, Albert always retained a very distinct German identity. He spoke to Victoria and their children only in German; he maintained German customs and ways of behaviour, and his last, well-publicised, words from his deathbed were in German.⁶¹⁹ As Prince Consort, many of his trusted advisors were German nationals. As Richardson details, his “art advisor” Ludwig Grüner (1801-1882), who had accompanied him on his early tour of Italy, followed him to England. His early tutor and later librarian was Ernst Becker (1826–1888), and his Private Secretary, Carl Ruland (1834–1907), compiled Albert’s extensive study of Raphael. As William Vaughan states, “his marriage to Victoria in 1840 brought to England, in his own person, an influential figure educated in the full German Romantic tradition... he had received a careful and thorough education that had impressed on him, together with the virtues of public duty and constitutional monarchy, a sense of Teutonic tradition.”⁶²⁰

The national and London-based projects of the Prince have received wide acknowledgement, beginning with the exhaustively detailed five-volume *Life of the Prince Consort*, believed largely to have been written by Victoria herself, with co-writer Theodore Martin, first published in 1877.⁶²¹ However, Albert’s specific connections to the city of Manchester, as symbolised by the memorial, have been insufficiently recognised. There is clear evidence that the leaders of Manchester’s civic life related to the Prince as far more than a distant Consort to their sovereign. This empathy may have been encouraged in part by the Prince’s stance on a number of contemporary political and social issues, which mirrored that of many

⁶¹⁹ Jules Stewart, *Albert, A Life* (IB Taurus, 2011), 105.

⁶²⁰ Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*, 12.

⁶²¹ Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort*.

active Manchester-based campaigners. Indeed, for some biographers, Albert's most significant contribution to British society came through his public support for various humanitarian causes. His first public speech, in June 1840, was given to the Society for the Abolition of Slavery. He took an active interest in the reform of child labour, broadly supported free trade over the Corn Law interest, and supported the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes. Among the German expatriates living in Manchester at this time, working for his family's textile company, was Friedrich Engels.⁶²² The family firm, Ermen & Engels, was among the subscribers to the Prince Consort Memorial Fund.

While he may have received a mixed reception in London and other areas of the United Kingdom, Albert had long been esteemed and valued in Manchester. Mayor Goadsby's letter to the General Committee of the Prince Albert Memorial Fund was reported in the *Manchester Guardian* of 4 February 1862 and gives some insight into how the Prince was viewed from Manchester:

There is no place within Her Majesty's dominions more strongly called upon than Manchester to testify to the memory of the late Prince Consort. The constant interest and anxiety manifested by His Late Royal Highness to promote everything calculated to add to the prosperity and happiness of the people of this city will never be forgotten.⁶²³

The leading citizens of Manchester particularly valued the Prince for his promotion of the arts as a means of cultural and social self-improvement for all social groups. The *Manchester Times* praised his "full knowledge of archaeological and aesthetical, or high art, and all these things were brought, by him to a practical use for the lower

⁶²² Engels wrote *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845) while living in Manchester.

⁶²³ "Manchester Memorial of Prince Albert: A Marble Statue Given by The Mayor", *The Manchester Guardian*, February 4, 1862; 3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Guardian and The Observer.

classes.”⁶²⁴ The widely held belief in the power of art and beauty to improve humanity was undoubtedly influential in driving the development of public art in Manchester’s emerging civic forum and conceivably also in promoting its socially inclusive aims. As Avery-Quash and Sheldon describe, the arrival of the Prince had marked a distinct change at the Court, replacing the excesses of the Regency with “...the serious-minded Court of the newly-wed Queen, where German promotion of the arts and teaching of art students was lauded.”⁶²⁵

In contrast to the suspicion and xenophobia demonstrated by some other sections of British society, the ideas and approaches that stemmed specifically from Albert’s German upbringing were enthusiastically received in Manchester. As Jonathan Westaway identifies, the middle-class Mancunians “...aspired to emulate the high levels of German cultural capital as they understood it: they read, debated, struggled with and cherished German ideas, language and literature. They adopted and adapted German institutional models.”⁶²⁶ This positive reception was undoubtedly influenced by the German industrialists and political exiles who were attracted to Manchester and the industrial areas of Lancashire in the mid-nineteenth century. Drawn by the textile industry and the liberal views that embraced freedom of religious practice, these merchants, manufacturers, scientists, musicians and tradesmen from the German-speaking states had a significant impact on the cultural and intellectual life of the city. They also connected Manchester into the mainstream of European ideas and to the network of influential expatriates and “foreigners”, such as the Prince. It will be seen that Albert’s German voice resonated, often in the

⁶²⁴ *Manchester Times*, 11 January, 1862, 4.

⁶²⁵ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 45.

⁶²⁶ Westaway, “The German Community in Manchester”, 7.

native tongue that he routinely spoke, more forcefully and with greater impact among the cosmopolitan, self-reliant and self-motivated middle classes of Manchester than it did in cities such as Birmingham or London.⁶²⁷ The fact that Manchester's civic leaders, particularly their cultural leaders, included a highly influential cohort of German expatriates can only have made his influence stronger and his reception warmer. In stark contrast to the satirical sneering about the Prince's Teutonic habits and outlook in London magazines such as *Punch*, the Manchester Press showed high regard for the Prince. "Athenaeum", a writer for *The Manchester Daily Examiner & Times* on Monday, 30 December 1861, praises him using metaphors which, given Albert's extensive involvement in the arts, appropriately reference sculptural techniques:

In thinking of what was most characteristic and individual about the late Prince Consort, we feel in the same difficulty as one who would point out the characteristic features of a beautiful face and head, where every part is perfect, and all the parts are in equilibrium. That which perhaps characterised Prince Albert mentally was his singular power in acquiring knowledge; he was truly "wax to receive and marble to retain" impressions. His knowledge of personality was very great; of portrait, of biography, of family history, and of all the illustrations of such studies, engravings, memoirs, ballads, and the small scraps of literature, he was amazingly fond...⁶²⁸

This tribute also evidences a deep knowledge of the character of the Prince that implies a significant personal connection. The respect and admiration illustrated seem to have been widely reflected across the Manchester community. Not long after his first arrival in Britain, Manchester chose to honour the young Prince Consort by creating a club for young German businessmen, which drew both German and

⁶²⁷ Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, 105.

⁶²⁸ *The Manchester Daily Examiner & Times*, Monday 30 December 1861, 3.
<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0003157/18611230/022/0003>.

British members.⁶²⁹ The club was initially proposed by several heads of German families, and two of its three founding trustees were also to be active, some 20 years later, as members of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee.⁶³⁰ Established in 1843, the Albert Club (*Anstalt*), like the already flourishing RMI and the Athenaeum, combined social and cultural activities, providing a library, a newsroom, dining rooms and committee rooms. Friedrich Engels was a committee member throughout the 1860s when Germans made up approximately half of the 120 members.⁶³¹ According to Su Coates, the members of the Albert *Anstalt* resolved to “maintain the intellectual qualities that are distinctive of their German nationality” and “reciprocate the advantages they derive from the truly cosmopolitan hospitality of England by furnishing the English themselves and others more direct means of becoming acquainted with the literature, the art and the science in German.”⁶³² As Westaway identifies, in Manchester during this period, the German concept of “*Verein*” was reflected in the creation of public spaces in which culture and recreation were seen as entirely compatible, and where both social activities and self-improvement could thrive.⁶³³

Albert’s influence on the development of publicly accessible visual art in Manchester was seen in the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857. This groundbreaking exhibition of art and photography remains one of the largest art exhibitions ever held in Britain. It was visited, at a time when the entire population of England and Wales

⁶²⁹ J. F. T. “The Albert Club”, *The Manchester Guardian*; Manchester, 6 Feb 1888, 5.

⁶³⁰ J. F. T. “The Albert Club”, *The Manchester Guardian*; Manchester, 6 Feb 1888, 5.

⁶³¹ W. O. Henderson, *The Life of Friedrich Engels* (Routledge, 1976) Vol. 1, 229.

⁶³² Coates, “Manchester’s German Gentlemen”, 22.

⁶³³ Westaway, “The German Community in Manchester”, 21.

was some 16 million, by over 1,300,000 people.⁶³⁴ The Prince was canvassed for support early in the exhibition planning, and his involvement was crucial to its scale and success. Here, the connection through German background again seems strong, as *Manchester Examiner and Times* reporter Thomas Morris highlighted, many of the civic leaders on the Manchester Art Treasures organising committee had links with Germany.⁶³⁵ Indeed, a survey of artworks held in private collections across the UK, published in 1837 as *Treasures of Art in Great Britain* by Gustav Waagen, the Director of the Royal Gallery in Berlin, prompted the staging of the exhibition.⁶³⁶

The works exhibited were largely drawn from those included in Waagen's volumes, and the evidence of payments and meetings confirms that they were assembled with his collaboration and advice.⁶³⁷ Waagen had also worked closely with the Prince on other projects and had been invited to act as a Juror for the Great Exhibition of 1851.⁶³⁸ A deputation from the Exhibition Executive Committee, including Frankfurt-born owner of a Manchester textile manufacturing company, Sigismund Stern (1807–1885), called on the Prince in London on 2 July 1856 to ask him to endorse the project. Albert's support was to be of particular value in persuading some rather

⁶³⁴ *Exhibition of art treasures of the United Kingdom held at Manchester in 1857: report of the Executive Committee, Manchester, 1857*. Getty Research Institute, <https://archive.org/details/exhibitionofartt00artt> accessed 23/06/2023. The precise number of displayed items in each section of the exhibition is detailed on page 23.

⁶³⁵ Morris's publication, *An historical, descriptive, and biographical handbook to the exhibition*, 8, lists around 30 men involved in the initial planning and funding. The list includes German nationals: James Hertz, James Reiss, Leopold Reiss, Charles Souchay and Segismund (sic) Stern.

⁶³⁶ William James Linton and Others, *The Art Treasures Examiner - A Pictorial, Critical, And Historical Record of the Art Treasures Exhibition, At Manchester, In 1857* (Alexander Ireland & Co, 1857), 204. "Several of the influential merchants and manufacturers of Manchester... forcibly struck, above all, with the important claims and uses of the fine arts, and calling to mind the remark made by Dr Waagen in his valuable work, that the art-treasures in the United Kingdom were of a character, in amount and interest, to surpass those contained in the collections upon the continent, bethought themselves of the grand idea of bringing the elite of these works into view under one roof, for the edification of their fellow men."

⁶³⁷ Linton and Others, *The Art-Treasures Examiner*, 1.

⁶³⁸ Waagen recalls this in the introduction to his *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, Vol 1, preface iv.

reluctant owners of works of art to loan them to the exhibition.⁶³⁹ Albert wrote immediately to Lord Ellesmere, Chair of the Committee, a letter intended for publication, voicing his strong support for the project. This letter also provides evidence of the Prince's influence on the members of the Committee, which led to a new approach in English exhibitionary practice. Albert suggested that:

National usefulness might, however, be found in the educational direction which may be given to the whole scheme. No country invests a larger amount of capital in works of Art of all kinds than England; and in none almost is so little done for Art-education! (sic) If the collection you propose to form were made to illustrate the history of Art in a chronological and systematic arrangement, it would speak powerfully to the public mind, and enable, in a practical way, the most uneducated eye to gather the lessons which ages of thought and scientific research have attempted to abstract.⁶⁴⁰

The Prince clearly identifies and promotes the idea of providing the uneducated public with an opportunity to learn about the historical development of painting through a chronological display. As discussed in Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institute”, this pedagogical rationale is echoed throughout the exhibition's *Executive Report*, with frequent references to learning as an aim.⁶⁴¹

Prince Albert and Queen Victoria were also the lenders of the largest number of art objects to the exhibition, something which in itself encouraged other owners to make loans. Albert's suggested educational display strategy was adopted and, in what seems to have been the first time in a large-scale British public exhibition, individual paintings were presented chronologically and by school, to illustrate broader ideas of

⁶³⁹ Recorded in the *Manchester Daily Examiner & Times*, Friday 4 July 1856, 3. This party included Mayor Thomas Fairbairn, Messrs Stern, Entwistle and Heron and Mr J.C Deane, the General Commissioner. Chair of the Committee, Lord Ellesmere, was unable to be present due to illness.

⁶⁴⁰ The content of the letter was reprinted in full on pages 16, 17 and 18 of the *MAT Executive Report*. See also commentary in Winslow Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste* (Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1967), 149. The letter was also reprinted in *The Observer* of 14 July, 1856 as “Manchester Art Exhibition: Letter from Prince Albert”.

⁶⁴¹ *MAT Executive Report*, 48.

stylistic development. This method was endorsed, and probably influenced, by Waagen, who had employed a chronological, developmental approach to the curation of displays at the Royal Gallery in Berlin. He had also promoted this approach in his 1853 article, “Thoughts on the new building to be erected for the National Gallery of England, and on the Arrangement, Preservation and Enlargement of the Collection”, published in *The Art Journal* in 1853.⁶⁴² We have seen Waagen’s involvement with exhibition planning at the Manchester Royal Institution in a previous chapter. Of the six active members of the MAT Executive Committee, evidence of correspondence, starting immediately after the closing of the MAT exhibition, quoted in Chapter 2 - “The Royal Manchester Institute”, seems to indicate that Sigismund Stern had a particularly close connection to Waagen.⁶⁴³ Stern was later to reappear as a member of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee.

Albert travelled to Manchester to open the MAT exhibition on 3 May 1856, and spent several days visiting the City and neighbouring Salford. The 1857 painting by Louis Haghe (1806-1885) gives some idea of the scale and significance of the event (Fig. 4.2).

⁶⁴² Waagen, “Thoughts on the New Building to be Erected for the National Gallery of England and on the Arrangement, Preservation and Enlargement of the Collection”, *Art Journal*, 1 April 1853, 101-125.

⁶⁴³ As detailed in Chapter 2 – “The Royal Manchester Institution”, there was frequent written correspondence between Waagen and Stern over several years from August 1857. In his letter of 18 August 1857, Stern tells Waagen that “we frequently think of you with sincere regards”, MCL M6/1/57/1.

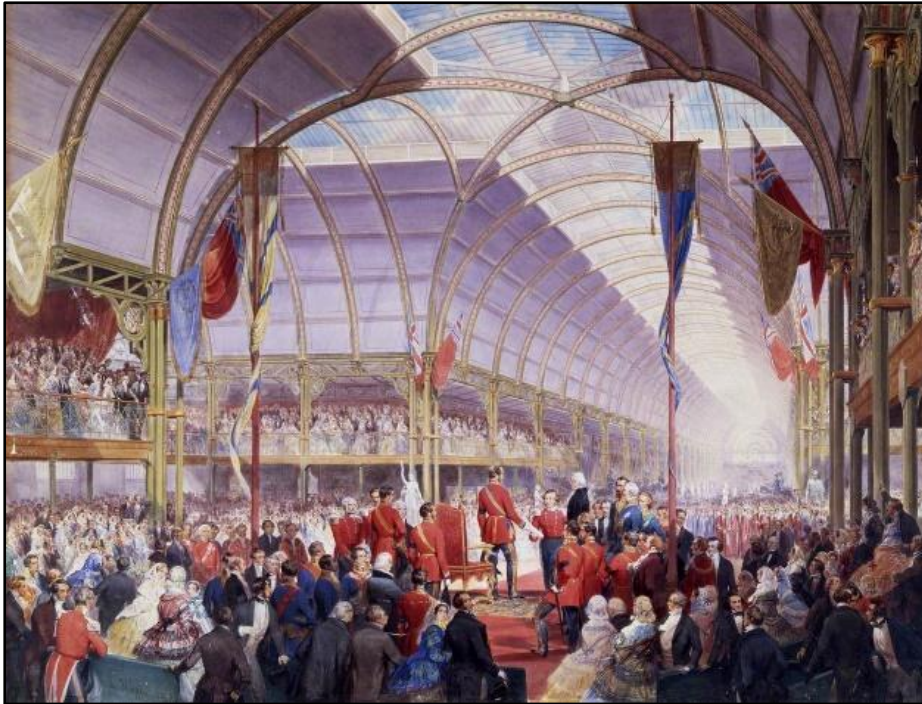


Figure 4.2 Louis Haghe, *Sir Thomas Fairbairn Handing Over the Address to the Prince Consort in the Art Treasures Exhibition at Manchester in May 1857*.

Pencil, watercolour & gouache on paper, 118.3 x 145 cm.

Photo credit: Manchester Art Gallery, irn: 106533

Press coverage records that his progress through the city was greeted with much excitement. “The cheering, the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, the banners and other decorations, the crowds on roofs and balconies, and the immense wooden platforms...formed an offering of hearty welcome such as has seldom been surpassed.”⁶⁴⁴ Albert’s inauguration speech referred to the wider benefits of the exhibition. “I trust that the beneficial effects upon the progress of art and taste in our country, which we may confidently look to, may be a lasting memorial of your vast enterprise.”⁶⁴⁵ The sentiments of Mr Gladstone, the Mayor of Salford, recorded in the *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser* on 28 December 1861,

⁶⁴⁴ “A Great Day for Manchester: The Prince’s Progress Through Manchester...” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics and Literature*, 3 May 1856, 245.

⁶⁴⁵ “Inauguration of the Exhibition of Art Treasures at Manchester”, *The Observer*, 11 May, 1857. The speech begins “You have done well not to aim at a mere accumulation of works of art and objects of interest, but to give to your collection, by a scientific and historical arrangement, an educational character – thus not losing the opportunity of teaching the mind, as well as gratifying the senses.”

speak of the Prince's personal involvement with various other local initiatives and imply a genuine personal respect and gratitude. "It was not necessary to say much about the encouragement he had given to the arts. They all knew what his late Royal Highness had done in furtherance of the Art Treasures Exhibition."⁶⁴⁶ *The Lancaster Guardian* recorded that Albert, the Queen and several other members of the Royal family visited the MAT exhibition again on 30 June 1857, staying locally at Worsley Hall, home of Lord Ellesmere (1800 –1857), Chair of the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition Committee, for several days (Fig. 4.3).⁶⁴⁷ Worsley Hall had been host to the royal party on more than one occasion prior to this.⁶⁴⁸ Ellesmere, known as Lord Francis Leveson-Gower until 1833, was a conservative MP who had common interests with the Prince, being himself the publisher of one of the earliest translations of Goethe's *Faust* alongside other lyrics and poems, and an avid art collector.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁶ "Proposed Monument to Prince Albert in Peel Park", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 28 December 1861. "According to general wish which had been expressed, the Mayor of Salford convened a meeting, which was held yesterday (Friday) morning, in the Mayor's parlour, to consider the desirability of raising a memorial to the late Prince Consort, in Peel Park." "His Royal Highness also took especial [sic] interest in the Free Library which they had established, and in the Free Reading Room which they had thrown open to the public, considering it an example worthy of imitation throughout the world."

⁶⁴⁷ *Lancaster Guardian*, Saturday 13 June 1857.

⁶⁴⁸ "Her Majesty's Progress from Scotland: Worsley and its attractions", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 11 October 1851, 3.

⁶⁴⁹ *Morning Post*, 5 December 1823, 2.



Figure 4.3 Unattributed engraving, "The Queen and Prince Albert visit the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition"
Unattributed engraving, *Illustrated London News*, July 11 1857, 33.

By the time of his death, Albert was beginning to receive recognition from the press and public for his various social and cultural works, and Victoria, at least, believed that he had vastly improved the position of the British monarchy. She wrote to their uncle Leopold, "For what has not my beloved and perfect Albert done? Raised monarchy to the highest pinnacle of respect and rendered it popular beyond what it ever was in this country."⁶⁵⁰ A saddened public, realising the significance of their loss, subscribed to Albert memorials and many new "Albert" pubs, schools, hospitals and roads appeared. Stewart identifies that "after the Prince's death there arose a

⁶⁵⁰ Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, 170.

cult of Albert that saw a proliferation of testimonials even greater in number than any erected to Wellington and Nelson.”⁶⁵¹

Memorials to Albert Across Britain

The government directed that there should be a formal state commemoration of the Prince. The Lord Mayor of London wrote to the mayors of urban boroughs across the country, requesting their support in gathering subscriptions towards the erection of a national memorial in London.⁶⁵² However, a number of local populations, like that of Manchester, decided instead to erect their own memorials. According to my research, based partially on English Heritage records, Manchester was among 23 British towns, cities and institutions that funded their own statues as public memorials to the Prince, in the years following his death.⁶⁵³ A brief discussion of these other sculptural memorials is worthwhile, as it highlights the qualities of the Manchester monument, which was unique, apart from London, in terms of its personal meaning, complex iconography and creativity of design. In this account, I have used Terry Wyke’s definition of “public” as meaning accessible to the general public or visible from the public highway.⁶⁵⁴ Under these criteria, works such as William Theed’s 1867 memorial sculpture of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, in the Royal Mausoleum at Frogmore, and the bronze cast of Albert in the grounds of Balmoral, also by Theed, 1867, have been excluded. There were civic memorials in other forms, which are not included in this discussion. For example, what is thought to be the first memorial erected, in 1862, was in Swanage. This was in the form of an

⁶⁵¹ Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, 214.

⁶⁵² A copy of the letter was published in the *Pembroke Herald and Advertiser*, 14 February 1862.

⁶⁵³ <https://historicengland.org.uk/sitesearch?searchType=site&search=Albert+memorials>, accessed 03/06/2022. I am grateful to Dr Gavin Grindon for suggesting that the memorial be studied in the context of other memorials and for sharing a general list of various memorials to Albert from his own wider research on British monuments. This provided an initial starting point for my own, more specific, research.

⁶⁵⁴ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, IX.

obelisk.⁶⁵⁵ For my complete list of public memorials in Britain featuring sculptural portraits of Albert, Prince Consort, see Appendix 1.

It is notable that the smaller nations of the United Kingdom elected to provide their own memorials. A bronze equestrian statue by John Steell (1804–1891) was erected in Edinburgh (Fig. 4.5), and Dublin funded a standing bronze figure by John Henry Foley (1818 -1874).⁶⁵⁶ In the absence of an acknowledged Welsh capital at this time, Tenby stepped forward and commissioned a standing marble statue of the Prince in Field Marshal's uniform.⁶⁵⁷ Guernsey also installed a standing bronze figure by Joseph Durham (1814-1877) on a granite plinth overlooking the harbour at St Peter Port (Fig. 4.4).



Figure 4.4 Joseph Durham, bronze statue of Prince Albert.
Bronze on a granite pedestal, 1863.
Overlooking the Albert Pier and the harbour, St Peter Port, Guernsey.
The base is inscribed, "J. DURHAM SC 1863 LONDON."
Photo credit: www.victorianweb.org

⁶⁵⁵ *Swanage News*: "Albert Memorial gets planning permission to be re-erected in Prince Albert Gardens", 4 October 2020

⁶⁵⁶ A bronze equestrian statue designed by David Bryce and sculpted by John Steele stands in Charlotte Square Gardens, Edinburgh. In 1887, a copy of the Edinburgh bronze was installed in Windsor Great Park, Epsom. A statue sculpted by John Foley was erected beside Merrion Square, Dublin. This was repositioned to a less prominent site in Leinster Lawn in 1921. <https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/50100239/leinster-house-merrion-square-dublin-2-dublin> accessed 08/11/2025.

⁶⁵⁷ www.pembrokeshirehistoricalsociety.co.uk/the-wales-memorial-to-prince-albert-in-tenby/ accessed 16/06/2022.

Illustrating the widespread naming of public amenities after Victoria and Albert, or Albert alone, Guernsey's Albert Pier bounds the Victoria and Albert Yacht Marina. This statue, with Albert wearing the Order of the Garter, is an additional cast of Durham's statue of Prince Albert, which now stands on an ornate granite pedestal behind the Royal Albert Hall in London.⁶⁵⁸

Commemorative equestrian statues of the Prince, riding his horse "Nimrod", in military uniform, were commissioned from Thomas Thornycroft (1815–1885) for the expanding industrial cities of Halifax, Liverpool and Wolverhampton.⁶⁵⁹ Peter Funnell has argued that representing Albert in military uniform was a way of negotiating his problematic constitutional position. The uniform conferred authority, as the highest rank in the British army, but only as an epitome of service to the sovereign, who was head of the army.⁶⁶⁰ On the northeast coast, Kingston Upon Hull commissioned a standing marble portrait. At the port of Grimsby, a standing bronze portrait was installed in 1878. Albert had travelled to the city to lay the foundation stone of the Royal Dock in 1849, and an excerpt from his speech on that occasion is inscribed on the plinth.

⁶⁵⁸ This memorial was initially erected in the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society at Kensington in 1863 and was moved to a site near the Royal Albert Hall in 1890. "The Memorial to the Exhibition of 1851", *Survey of London*: Vol. 38, South Kensington Museums Area, F. H. W. Sheppard (ed) (London, 1975), <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol38> accessed 08/112025.

⁶⁵⁹ Although the Prince Consort is principally remembered for his involvement in the cultural and industrial life of Britain, he also took an active interest in measures designed to reform the Army. One of his numerous honorary titles was that of Field Marshal. See Hermione Hobhouse, *Prince Albert: his life and work* (Hamish Hamilton, 1983), 43 and 66.

⁶⁶⁰ Peter Funnell, "Iconography of Prince Albert" in Brooks (ed) *The Albert Memorial*, 113.

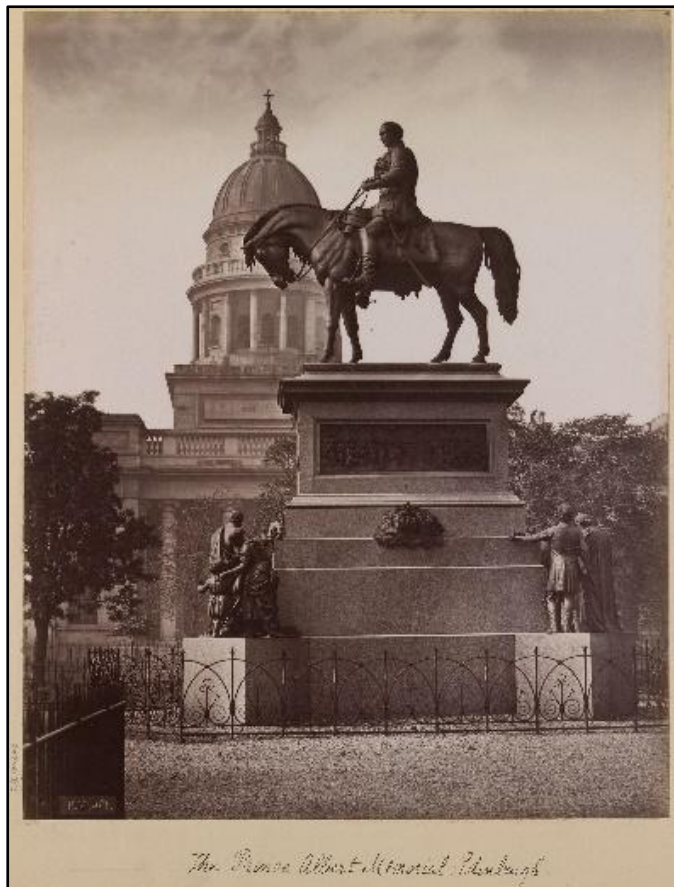


Figure 4.5 Sir John Steell, bronze equestrian memorial statue, Edinburgh.
Bronze on stone plinth, completed 1866.
Nineteenth-century albumen print, 24.4 x 19.3cm, Robert Murray (1822-1893), RCIN 2620083.



Figure 4.6 Baron Carlo Marochetti, Albert memorial, bronze on stone plinth, Aberdeen. Completed 1863. Colour photograph © Bill Harrison, originally posted on the *Geograph* website, made available for reuse on the Creative Commons licence - Attribution-ShareAlike 2.0 Generic (CC BY-SA 2.0).

A quarter of all the memorial sculptures were installed in Scottish towns. Glasgow commemorated the Prince with a bronze equestrian statue, and the City of Aberdeen financed a seated bronze statue, both by Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805-1867). The Aberdeen bronze uniquely shows the Prince draped in the robe of the Order of the Thistle, the highest Honour of Scotland (Fig. 4.6).⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶¹ www.visitabdn.com/listing/albert-the-prince-consort-statue accessed 05/11/2022.

In addition to towns and cities, several institutions also raised commemorative statues in publicly accessible settings. In 1863, “The Albert Middle Class College in Suffolk”, now known as Framlingham College, was founded with a curriculum of “Scientific and Practical Instruction for the Middle Classes” thought to be a fitting tribute to the Prince.⁶⁶² Sir Thomas Lucas commissioned and funded a standing bronze figure of Albert in Elizabethan costume by Joseph Durham, R.A., which stands on a granite pedestal in front of the main entrance.⁶⁶³ John Gibbs’s statue of Prince Albert, also in Elizabethan costume, carrying a scroll, on a huge hexagonal ashlar column, was funded by public subscription and installed in Albert Park at Abingdon on Thames, Oxfordshire.

The Cambridge University tribute, originally made for the Fitzwilliam Museum and subsequently relocated in the foyer of Wolfson College, is a marble sculpture by J.H. Foley, R.A. Unsurprisingly, it portrays the Prince in his robes as Chancellor of the University.⁶⁶⁴ Exeter, home to another seat of learning, erected a memorial featuring a life-size standing marble figure of Albert, also in the robes of Chancellor. This figure was an adjunct to the Devon and Exeter Albert Memorial Institution, the City’s main tribute to the Prince, now known as the RAMM.⁶⁶⁵ Uniquely among the monuments, the Exeter statue is contained in an aedicule, positioned on the wall of the half-landing of the museum’s main staircase. It is placed under a Gothic arch with supporting polychrome pillars of Devonian coral limestone.⁶⁶⁶

⁶⁶² Elizabeth Darby and Nicola Smith, *The Cult of the Prince Consort* (Yale University Press, 1983), 87.

⁶⁶³ <https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1030357?section=official-list-entry> accessed 05/11/2022

⁶⁶⁴ Originally situated in front of the Fitzwilliam Museum, the monument was relocated to the village of Madingley, Cambridgeshire, positioned in front of the entrance to Madingley Hall in 1956. It is currently located at Wolfson College, Cambridge. www.historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1331148?section=official-list-entry accessed 05/11/22.

⁶⁶⁵ This institution was to house a museum and art gallery, a free public library, a school of art and a mechanical institute. www.rammuseum.org.uk/about/history accessed 05/11/2022.

⁶⁶⁶ This memorial statue was not commissioned in the accustomed way. The Exeter-born sculptor, Edward Bowring Stephens, agreed to execute the work free of charge. Only the cost of the stone was met by the committee that had raised funds to build the museum in which it stands. www.exetermemories.co.uk/em/people/stephens.php accessed 06/11/2022.

The Birmingham memorial is a particularly interesting case. John Henry Foley's statue showing Prince Albert dressed in the robes of the Order of the Garter was originally intended to be an outdoor memorial.⁶⁶⁷ Like the Manchester memorial, as Benedict Read identifies, it was to be placed beneath a "Gothic canopy" designed by John Henry Chamberlain (1831–1883).⁶⁶⁸ As a suitable exterior site could not be found, the finished statue was placed in the Corporation Art Gallery, and the canopy idea was eventually abandoned.⁶⁶⁹ Chamberlain's design for the canopy is now lost, but the wider influence of the Manchester canopy design was later visible in the forty-foot-high Gothic canopy on his monument to prominent nineteenth-century social reformer George Dawson (1821–1876). The monument was erected in Birmingham in 1881, but has since been demolished.⁶⁷⁰ As the Minutes of the Manchester Prince Consort Memorial Committee Meetings reveal, representatives of the Dublin Memorial Committee wrote to the Manchester Committee, requesting a sketch of the design, as they were considering a similar monument.⁶⁷¹ While the eventual Dublin design shows that this was not pursued, the request does illustrate the extent to which the Manchester plans were commonly known and appreciated. As Darby and Smith identify, canopied monuments remained popular throughout the rest of the century.⁶⁷²

In London, the lengthy process of commissioning and designing the Kensington Memorial meant that it took over ten years to complete. It was opened in July 1872

⁶⁶⁷ John Henry Foley also designed the monuments in Cambridge and Dublin.

⁶⁶⁸ Benedict Read, *Victorian Sculpture* (Yale University Press, 1982), 153.

https://archive.org/details/isbn_0300025068/page/156/mode/2up

⁶⁶⁹ Darby and Smith, *The Cult of the Prince Consort*, 75. This was a room in the Central Free Library, Ratcliff Square. Unveiled on 27 April 1868, it proved a popular exhibit and was considered partly responsible for a record year of museum attendance. It now stands on the half-landing of the main stairs of Birmingham's Council House.

⁶⁷⁰ Read, *Victorian Sculpture*, 153.

⁶⁷¹ *The Prince Consort Memorial Fund Manchester Minute Book, Report of the Sub-committee*, 5 Feb 1862, Chetham's Library, A7.7. "Read – A letter from the Dublin Prince Consort Memorial Committee requesting a sketch of the proposed memorial."

⁶⁷² Darby and Smith, *The Cult of the Prince Consort*, 57.

by Queen Victoria; however, it was 1876 before the monument was finally completed with the addition of the gilded statue of Albert. The Manchester Memorial had been in place since 1869 (Fig. 4.7). The central feature of the London design, with the portrait figure placed inside a shrine-like canopy, is very similar to that of Manchester, if considerably larger in scale and more lavish in the use of materials. Parts of the underlying iconography also follow a very similar scheme, with the important exception of the focus on the specific personal interests and activities of the Prince, which, as we will discuss later, is visible in the Manchester monument. The London monument, with its focus on Albert's role in the 1851 Great Exhibition, is dominated by themes of national pride, imperial achievement and world trade (Fig. 4.6).⁶⁷³

⁶⁷³ The figure of Albert is shown holding a copy of the exhibition catalogue and several of the sculptural groups contain visual references to items which were exhibited. See Brooks (ed), *The Albert Memorial*, for full discussion.



Figure 4.7 Sir George Gilbert Scott, the Albert Memorial, Hyde Park, London, 1880.
 Albumen print, A.D. White, Cornell University Library Accession Number: 15/5/3090.00988
 Statue of Albert by John Henry Foley.

The Kensington “National Memorial” is not the only public memorial to Albert in London. To the west of Holborn Circus in central London, there is an equestrian statue of the Prince by Charles Bacon (1821–1886). Completed in 1874, this was the City of London's official monument. The bronze statue features the Prince Consort wearing a Field Marshal's uniform, raising his hat. The iconography is nationalistic and imperial, with the plinth displaying plaques of Britannia and bronze figures representing commerce and peace. Interestingly, given that the Great Exhibition of 1851 is also the overarching theme of the National Memorial, a further memorial in

tribute to his instigation of the exhibition, featuring a standing statue of the Prince, was erected in South Kensington in 1863.⁶⁷⁴ The installation of this statue was somewhat ironic, given Albert's appalled response to initial proposals for an equivalent monument during his lifetime.

I can say with perfect absence of humbug, that I would rather not be made the prominent feature of such a monument, as it would both disturb my quiet rides in Rotten Row to see my own face staring at me, and if (as is very likely) it became an artistic monstrosity, like most of our monuments, it would upset my equanimity to be permanently ridiculed and laughed at in effigy.⁶⁷⁵

Populations across the country had their own particular reasons for installing memorials. Several of the towns had received personal visits by the Prince (Salford, Grimsby, Aberdeen, Birmingham, Perth, Glasgow and Edinburgh). His presence was of greater significance as he was often alone, only rarely accompanied by Victoria, who was understandably indisposed for significant periods due to her nine pregnancies. Publications such as the *Illustrated London News* provided almost daily reports with engraved illustrations of Albert's tours of the country. Arrivals at Perth and Edinburgh, for example, are illustrated with cheering crowds and triumphal arches.⁶⁷⁶ The fact that a relatively large proportion of monuments are in Scottish towns and cities might also be accounted for by the family's presence at the newly built Balmoral residence each summer.⁶⁷⁷ Some commissioners, such as Cambridge, had longstanding links to the Prince, and others (Dublin, Edinburgh, St. Peter Port, Manchester, Birmingham) may have felt it appropriate to make a

⁶⁷⁴ Originally planned to include a representation of Britannia, Durham's 1858 commission for the Memorial to the Great Exhibition of 1851 instead included a statue of Albert, following his death. This statue by Durham was, as previously discussed, replicated for the monument in St Peter Port, Guernsey. Sheppard (ed), "The Memorial to the Exhibition of 1851".

⁶⁷⁵ Prince Albert to Lord Granville, 3 November 1853, quoted in Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, vol 2, 537.

⁶⁷⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 17 September 1842, 9 and 24 September 1842, 11.

⁶⁷⁷ The Balmoral Estate was purchased in 1852 by Prince Albert for Queen Victoria, who admired the beauty of the Scottish Highlands. The original fifteenth-century castle was too small, so a new building was constructed nearby. Prince Albert was involved in the design of the building, which was completed in 1856.

www.scottishtours.co.uk/blog/royal-family-connections-with-scotland/ accessed 07/08/2022.

statement about their political autonomy. Public sculpture also presented civic leaders with an opportunity to enhance their local urban spaces and to advertise the positive cultural environment of their city. Indeed, Darby refers to the building of the Manchester monument as an attempt by Manchester's civic leaders to "raise its cultural status."⁶⁷⁸ The monuments to Albert produced for other civic centres are generally quite standard in type, with some evidently copies of others.⁶⁷⁹ As Wyke identifies, "larger-than-life portrait statues usually surmounting stone pedestals inscribed with details of the individual commemorated, represent one of the most identifiable forms of public sculpture."⁶⁸⁰ As I will explore in detail later, the level of personal iconography and symbolism shown in the Manchester memorial is not seen elsewhere, even in the much larger London monument.

Manchester had not previously been among the civic forerunners in erecting commemorative statues, which perhaps makes the tribute to Albert even more significant. What is thought to be the City's first free-standing public sculpture, by Sir Francis Chantrey (1781-1841), memorialised the celebrated Manchester scientist John Dalton (1766-1844). This marble statue initially stood in the interior entrance vestibule of Charles Barry's Royal Manchester Institution.⁶⁸¹ It was funded by public subscription and dates from 1838. Terry Wyke's exhaustive compilation of *The Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester* identifies the major commercial and industrial cities of northern and central Britain as the "heartland of British public sculpture."⁶⁸² The majority of these cities were prospering and expanding their civic

⁶⁷⁸ Darby and Smith, *The Cult of the Prince Consort*, 41.

⁶⁷⁹ Thomas Thornycroft (1815–1885) produced identical monuments for the cities of Halifax, Liverpool and Wolverhampton.

⁶⁸⁰ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, x.

⁶⁸¹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 32.

⁶⁸² Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, xi. Greater Manchester comprises 10 unitary authorities and covers some of the largest cities and towns in north-west England. During the mid-nineteenth century, this area would have been known as south-east Lancashire, parts of Cheshire, north-west Derbyshire and the West Riding of Yorkshire.

institutions and urban spaces during the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, installing public monuments for a variety of ideological, aesthetic, social and political reasons. Wyke claims that in some instances, these public monuments were strong statements of political allegiance. For example, Wyke argues, the placing of the statues of three living Liberal politicians: William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898), John Bright (1811-1889) and Charles Pelham Villiers (1802-1898), in Manchester Town Hall between 1877 and 1879, was “a political act, declaring that their new municipal palace was but a Gothic extension of the city’s other great public building, the Free Trade Hall.”⁶⁸³ As Wyke identifies, the sudden death of Sir Robert Peel in 1850 and the subsequent wave of public commemoration were decisive in the history of public statuary in Manchester and the wider region. With his many connections to Manchester, the memorial to Peel was the first of Manchester’s outdoor statues to be funded by public subscription, marking the beginning of a more favourable attitude to this kind of memorial from the 1850s. This was the first of a number of monuments to be installed in Manchester’s Piccadilly Gardens, which could be seen as a precursor for the civic space that Albert Square was eventually to become.⁶⁸⁴ Manchester’s neighbouring borough of Salford, with which it pursued an amicable rivalry, had been one of the first towns to open a public park. “Peel Park”, which opened in 1846, subsequently became home to one of the first groups of public statues erected in Britain.⁶⁸⁵ Here stand two more marble statues sculpted by Matthew Noble. The statue of Queen Victoria was installed to commemorate her visit to the town in 1851,

⁶⁸³ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, x. These marble statues were all the work of William Theed and depict the figures in contemporary dress.

⁶⁸⁴ Piccadilly Gardens was later to house Matthew Noble’s *Wellington Monument* (1853), followed by William Theed’s bronze copy of Chantrey’s *John Dalton* and his bronze version of Chantrey’s *James Watt* (1857). Edward Onslow Ford’s imposing seated figure of an elderly Queen Victoria was the final statue to be installed. Nearby towns of Salford and Bury also raised memorial statues to Peel. www.victorianweb.org/sculpture/marshall/7.html accessed 10/11/2022.

⁶⁸⁵ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, preface by Edward Morris, v.

and the later Prince Albert memorial sculpture, funded by local donations, was erected in 1864.⁶⁸⁶

As Darby discusses, the very presence of these sculpted representations of the Prince and the general increase in the number of public statues from the 1830s relates to the Romantic theme of heroic leadership. Promulgated particularly by Thomas Carlyle, this encouraged the belief that art, by producing a portrait of an eminent person, could fulfil the educational role of inspiring and positively influencing the viewer.⁶⁸⁷ Writers such as Paul Zanker have proposed that Ernst Rietschel's (1819–1847) bronze monument featuring statues of Goethe and Schiller (*Goethe-Schiller-Denkmal*), erected in front of the theatre in Weimar in 1857, was the beginning of a "cult of the monument." Zanker suggests that statues placed on pedestals allowed the populace to "gaze up at them from the drudgery and confusion of everyday life", and "encouraged the belief that there is something higher than the daily routine."⁶⁸⁸ The idea that artwork could encourage and elevate, as we have seen, was also held by the Prince, who promoted access to artwork as a means of both intellectual and spiritual education. Mayor Goadsby's address to the first public meeting discussing the provision of a monument to the Prince seems directly to refer to the Albert Memorial as having this potential:

...he ventured to think that those who at some future day should pass the monument raised to the memory of Prince Albert would, in their mind, reverently take off their hat to the man who, throughout his life, and in his public addresses, had shown that he was intent, not upon what was ephemeral or popular for the

⁶⁸⁶ <https://manchesterhistory.net/manchester/outside/SALFORD/victoriaalbert.html> accessed 2/9/2022.

⁶⁸⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, & the Heroic in History* (James Fraser, 1841). This work is based on six lectures delivered by Carlyle in 1840. Discussed in Darby and Smith, *The Cult of the Prince Consort*, 59.

⁶⁸⁸ Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity*. Alan Shapiro (trans.) (University of California Press, 1996), 3.

day but upon that only which was for the lasting good of the people amongst whom he lived, and their posterity.⁶⁸⁹

Perhaps encouraged by the same ideas, the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition in 1857 included one of the first large-scale public exhibitions of portraits, with over 350 paintings in its British Portrait Gallery, curated by scholar and historian Peter Cunningham (1816-1869). Quoting from *The Manchester Guardian*, echoing a similar sentiment, the handbook for this section of the exhibition ends:

Lingering on these last links of the glorious past, of which we are the inheritors, we feel proud to think that there were giants in our fathers' time also; and that whether we test their generation in arts or arms, in science or in letters, it can boast as great a treasure of memorable names as any period that has gone before.⁶⁹⁰

It is perhaps not coincidental that, as previously mentioned, the very first painting purchased in 1827 for the permanent collection of the RMI was a portrait by James Northcote (1746–1831) of well-known black Shakespearian actor Ira Aldridge, an image entitled *Othello, The Moor of Venice*.⁶⁹¹ After his death, the Prince Consort joined the pantheon of national heroes. Memorials incorporating his image were intended, as the *Birmingham Journal* stated, to remind people of “his bright example and noble qualities”, and to “stimulate them and others in their own paths of duty.”⁶⁹² For this didactic function to be effective, memorials needed to be accessible, this was perhaps an additional reason for the increasing popularity of public statuary.

⁶⁸⁹ The speech was reported in *The Manchester Times* of 11 January, 1862, 2.

<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/search/results/1861-01-11?NewspaperTitle=Manchester%2BDaily%2BExaminer%2B%2526%2BTimes&IssuelId=BL%2F0003157%2F18610111%2F&County=Lancashire%2C%20England>.

⁶⁹⁰ See *A Handbook of the British Portrait Gallery in the Art Treasures Exhibition: being a reprint of critical notices originally published in "The Manchester Guardian"* (Bradbury and Evans, 1857). The statement ends with a section of a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 72 “Forms of great men, all remind us; We may make our lives sublime; And, departing, leave behind us; Footsteps on the sands of time.” <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=gri.ark:/13960/t8fq0sd2q&seq=53>.

⁶⁹¹ The American Ira Aldridge (1807–1867) was the first black actor to play a Shakespearean role in Britain. He was 17 when he made his debut as Othello at the Royalty Theatre in London's East End in May 1825.

<https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/ira-alldridge-shakespeares-black-othello/> accessed 25/07/2021.

⁶⁹² *Birmingham Journal*, 26 January, 1862, 6.

It was in this wider context that, in Manchester, a committee of influential civic leaders, chaired by Mayor Thomas Goadsby, established a fund to provide an appropriate memorial to the Prince. As the *Manchester Times*, 11 January 1862, recorded, “the Mayor thanked his fellow-citizens for their numerous attendance, in reply to his call for aid in realising funds to raise an enduring remembrance of a most excellent man, and certainly the wisest prince the people of this country had known for more than a few generations.”⁶⁹³ The names of those 61 individuals initially involved with the “Prince Consort Memorial Fund Committee” as recorded in the Minute Book were a roll call of the great and good of Manchester. The Mayor, the Lord Bishop and the local MP, Algernon Edgerton (1825-1891), head the register.⁶⁹⁴ The list also includes the names of nine individuals of German origin, including Sigismund Stern (1807–1885), whom we met in Chapter 1 in his role on the Council of the RMI. Stern had also been a key promoter of the 1857 MAT exhibition.⁶⁹⁵ Another German member was John Leisler (1805-1880), a merchant and commission agent who was one of the first three trustees of the Albert Club.⁶⁹⁶ Carl (Charles) Souchay (1799-1872), a leading calico printer and cotton merchant, Adolphe Schwabe (1821-1901), calico printer and mill owner, and Ernest Reuss (1832-1882), a textile merchant of German/Jewish extraction, also formed part of the committee.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹³ *Manchester Times*, 11 January, 1862.

⁶⁹⁴ *The Prince Consort Memorial Fund Manchester Minute Book*, 5 Feb 1862, Chetham's Library, A7.7.

⁶⁹⁵ Axon, *The annals of Manchester*, 418.

⁶⁹⁶ Coates, “Manchester's German Gentlemen”, 23.

⁶⁹⁷ The Gaskell Society Website <https://gaskellsociety.co.uk/meet-the-neighbours/> (accessed 26/03/2026.) Reuss was also, like many Unitarians, a philanthropist. “He was Vice President of the Deaf and Dumb school as well as being Chairman of the house stewards at that establishment. He was also actively involved in many charitable institutions such as Manchester Royal Infirmary, Cheadle Royal Hospital and Asylum, the Rusholme Public Hall and Library, the Manchester and Salford Sanitary Association and the Ragged School”, *Manchester Courier*, November 4th 1865, 4.

The memorial was funded largely by public subscription, with an additional grant of £500 from the City Council in 1866.⁶⁹⁸ The Memorial Committee appealed in the local press for suggestions for a memorial, and the Minutes of the Committee Meeting 13 February 1862 record that letters were laid on the committee room table containing some nineteen different suggestions. These included a memorial library, a museum of art and science and the purchase of the botanical gardens as a public park.⁶⁹⁹ While discussions and debates continued in the local press, Mayor Goadsby attempted to influence proceedings by offering £500 if the memorial was to be a statue, and £100 if it was to be something else.⁷⁰⁰ Wyke points out that arguments about the appropriateness of providing practical memorials rather than installing a public statue were common throughout this period.⁷⁰¹ It is significant in itself that the Manchester Memorial Committee was eventually to decide that a piece of public statuary was the most appropriate memorial to the Prince.⁷⁰²

In the end, Goadsby personally commissioned and paid for the statue of Albert, which was to be provided on condition that the public subscription be used to pay for “a suitable receptacle to contain or cover the statue.”⁷⁰³ The project generated much support from individual subscribers. A number of local companies also contributed, among them firms such as Ermen and Engels, Wolff, Hasche & Co and Schnuck, Souchay & Co, with German connections.⁷⁰⁴ German supporters of the project also included the previously mentioned *Liedertafel*, a German-language choral society

⁶⁹⁸ *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1859, 10. See *Minute Book of the Albert Memorial Committee*, Chetham's Library, A7.7. <https://library.chethams.com/collections/101-treasures-of-chethams/albert-memorial/> accessed 24/5/2022, Chetham's Library, A7.7.

⁶⁹⁹ *Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee*, entry for 13 February 1862, Chetham's Library, A7.7. Also recorded in *The Manchester Guardian* of September 18, 1862; 3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

⁷⁰⁰ “Manchester Memorial of Prince Albert: A Marble Statue Given by the Mayor”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 4 Feb, 1862, 3.

⁷⁰¹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, xi.

⁷⁰² “Manchester Memorial of Prince Albert”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 17 Jan, 1862, 3.

⁷⁰³ *The Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1859, 10.

⁷⁰⁴ *The Prince Consort Memorial Fund Manchester Minute Book, List of Subscribers*, Chetham's Library, A7.7.

established in Manchester in the 1840s.⁷⁰⁵ The Committee minutes record that the society sent a cheque for £52.19 (over £7,000 today), which was the proceeds of a fundraising concert.⁷⁰⁶ The Bricklayers' Protection Society contributed 50,000 bricks for the construction of the monument.⁷⁰⁷ When these bricks were used up on the foundations alone, a further public subscription was launched in 1865. The total cost of the project was some £6,249, equivalent to around £800,000 today.⁷⁰⁸ The design of the monument was not specified by the Committee, other than that it should enhance the sculpture and protect it from “the rain and the damp, dirty condition of the atmosphere.”⁷⁰⁹

Statue by Matthew Noble

While the London memorial was to be a “national memorial”, symbolising the constitutional role of the Prince and the greatness of the nation that he led, the Manchester memorial demonstrates a unique and personal response to the life of the Prince as an individual. The members of the Memorial Committee clearly felt a close connection and a debt to the Prince, as did those invited to design and produce the memorial. This was not the first sculpture of Albert that Matthew Noble (1818-1876) had created for Manchester. Such was Noble’s respect for Albert that just five years earlier, in 1857, he had donated a marble bust of Albert to be exhibited in the Town Hall, as a tribute following the 1857 Art Treasures

⁷⁰⁵ For a 1844 Manchester *Liedertafel* Society concert programme see <https://kulturpool.at/en/objects/9b75ccbd-0df0-4006-bed5-9de30e2f5c3e> accessed 05/04/2026.

⁷⁰⁶ *The Prince Consort Memorial Fund Manchester Minute Book*, Minutes of meeting held on 13 February 1862.

⁷⁰⁷ “The Manchester Albert Memorial”, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 July, 1863.

⁷⁰⁸ The total cost is stated in the “Report Presented to the Committee on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Memorial”, 23 January 1867, included in the Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee, Chetham’s Library. Conversion to today’s value <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1861?amount=6249> accessed 03/08/2022.

⁷⁰⁹ Manchester Central Library Archives, M145/1/2/55, letter from Thomas Worthington to William McClure.

Exhibition.⁷¹⁰ He was also commissioned to produce memorial statues of the Prince for Salford, Leeds and Mumbai.⁷¹¹



Figure 4.8 Matthew Noble, statue of Prince Albert, Albert Memorial, Manchester, 1862. Marble sculpture on a granite, marble and sandstone plinth. Photograph; Public Domain.

⁷¹⁰ Proceedings of Manchester City Council, 5 January 1859, 32-3.

⁷¹¹ *The Builder*, Vol. 17, 26 February 1859, "Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951", University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011.
https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/reference.php?id=msib5_1246882622 accessed 07 Jul 2026.



Figure 4.9 Artist unknown, *Prince Albert wearing the Robes of the Garter*.
 Aquatint with stipple and etching, 49 by 32 cm sheet of paper.
 Credit: Royal Collection RCIN 605854.

While a significant number of painted portraits, prints and reproductions had been produced during Albert's lifetime, as Brooks points out, almost all the sculptural pieces are busts, often in classicising drapery.⁷¹² The full-length, marble, standing figure of the Prince in the memorial, carved larger than life-size (to 1.25 scale), is depicted wearing the robes of the Order of the Garter and holding the Citation (Fig. 4.7). The Garter was in the personal gift of the sovereign, so this depiction is symbolic of his allegiance to the Crown. The ancient Order also carries chivalric connotations, conferring rank and dignity to its holder. Albert is depicted standing

⁷¹² Brooks (ed) *The Albert Memorial*, 47.

with one leg forward, forever frozen in active engagement with the world. Portraying Albert in ceremonial robes also avoided one of the perennial problems of nineteenth-century portrait sculpture. While individuals were sometimes depicted in contemporary dress rather than classical attire, it was felt by some that the tailcoat was inelegant and unsuited to sculpture. As Darby points out, figures sporting modern dress were thought to “perpetuate the whimsical and the ephemeral fashions of the day” rather than being a timeless representation of the intellectual achievements of the person commemorated.⁷¹³ State robes were also thought to represent the “full, manly and well-proportioned figure of the Prince.”⁷¹⁴ There do seem to be fewer depictions of Albert in his garter robes than, for instance, in his military uniform. Other images of the Prince wearing these robes, however, portray them as a considerably more elaborate costume, with more extensive frills and ruffles, and a large plumed hat, always carried, not worn, but not included in this sculpture (Fig. 4.8). Judicious editing of the costume detail creates a more statesman-like figure and may also have been necessitated by the practicalities of the medium.

Thomas Worthington’s Canopy

In 1862, Thomas Worthington (1826-1909), the Manchester-based architect, was invited to prepare designs for a ‘receptacle’ in which to house or display the statue.⁷¹⁵ Worthington was born into a family of cotton merchants in nearby Salford, and he was widely involved in Manchester’s social and civic life. As a Unitarian, he

⁷¹³ *The Civil Engineer and Architect’s Journal*, March 1840, 85.

⁷¹⁴ *Times*, 6 August 1864, 6.

⁷¹⁵ John Archer, “Worthington family (per. 1849–1963), architects”, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2007, accessed 26/03/2026, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-65161>.

attended Cross Street Chapel, where William Gaskell was minister. He set up his own practice in Manchester in 1849, served as president of the Manchester Society of Architects in 1875, and as vice-president of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) from 1885 to 1889.⁷¹⁶ He was also president of the Royal Manchester Institution and a member of several of Manchester's learned societies, including the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society, Manchester Statistical Society and the Portico Library.⁷¹⁷

Worthington's connections to Prince Albert began early in his career, when at eighteen his design for a Gothic-style chancel church received an award from the Royal Society of Arts, then under the Chairmanship of the Prince.⁷¹⁸ Worthington also submitted an unsuccessful but well-regarded design for the 1851 Great Exhibition building and was appointed Secretary to the local commission for the exhibition. All proposed monuments to the late Prince were reviewed by Victoria. The *Leeds Mercury* of 18 September 1862 commented that, after having approved the construction of the Manchester memorial, "her Majesty was also gratified to learn that the design was by a gentleman (Mr. Worthington) to whom the Prince Consort had presented the Iris medal for architectural design."

Worthington travelled extensively in northern Europe, studying Gothic architecture, and also visited northern Italy to study Renaissance architecture. He was a prodigious designer of public buildings, churches, hospitals, public baths and low-cost housing for the working classes. According to Archer, he also had a "flair for

⁷¹⁶ Archer, "Worthington Family (*per.* 1849-1963)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁷¹⁷ Obituary - *Manchester Guardian*, 10 November 1909, 14.

⁷¹⁸ Known for his Gothic-style buildings, Worthington had made a study of Gothic architecture during his extensive travels in Northern Europe and Italy <https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/architects/thomas-worthington> accessed 19/05/2022.

English Gothic.”⁷¹⁹ In the year following his work on the Albert Memorial, he designed a number of Unitarian churches and mausoleums in a Gothic style, for example, Brookfield Unitarian Church in Gorton, Manchester (1871) and The Peacock Mausoleum in the cemetery of this church, completed in 1875.⁷²⁰



Figure 4.10 Thomas Worthington, canopy of the Albert Memorial, Manchester, rear view. Photograph: writer's own.

⁷¹⁹ Archer, "Worthington family (per. 1849–1963)".

⁷²⁰ A complete list of Thomas Worthington's commissions, with contemporary commentaries, can be found at <https://manchestervictorianarchitects.org.uk/index.php/architects/thomas-worthington>.



Figure 4.11 Thomas Worthington and others, gable and pinnacles of the Albert Memorial.
Photograph: writer's own.

Carved mostly from sandstone, with some columns of granite, polished to resemble marble, the structure surrounding the statue forms a shrine-like canopy or *ciborium* of the type often seen in Medieval-style church interiors, above an altar (Figs. 4.9 and 4.10). Worthington originally submitted two designs, the Gothic-style canopy and an alternative “based on that well-tried Athenian classic, the Tower of the Winds.”⁷²¹ The committee selected the design that represented the contemporary taste for Romantic Gothic. While the Prince had often shown a preference for the classical style, as demonstrated in his design for the new royal residence of Osborne House,

⁷²¹ Anthony J Pass, *Thomas Worthington. Victorian Architecture and Social Purpose* (Manchester City Art Galleries, 1988), 89.

completed in 1851, it is clear that he also approved of the Gothic. George Gilbert Scott was at pains to provide evidence of this and to justify his own choice of a Gothic style for the London Memorial. In *The Builder*, Gilbert Scott cites the Prince's fulsome approval of three of his draft designs for various projects, which were Gothic in style. Of these, the Gothic chapel added to the classical-style Wellington College was the only one actually completed.⁷²² Victoria clearly also saw the Gothic style as appropriate for the project, as the *Leeds Mercury* reported, on reviewing the designs for the project, she "spent some time in examining the details, and expressed very great satisfaction with the design, saying furthermore that she thought nothing of the kind more beautiful or more appropriate could be suggested."⁷²³

⁷²² *The Builder*, vol 23, 1863, 276.

⁷²³ *Leeds Mercury*, 18 September 1862, 3.

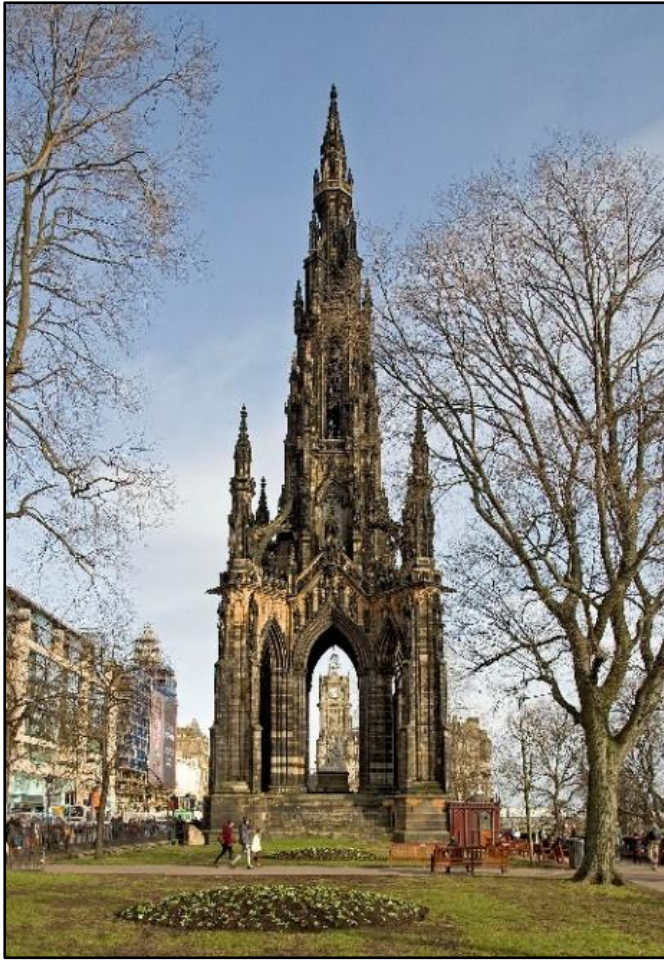


Figure 4.12 George Meikle Kemp, *The Scott Monument*, Edinburgh, 1846.
Photograph: public domain.

Design Sources for the Monument

The similarities between the London and Manchester memorials, with their unusual Gothic canopy designs, have already been discussed by a number of writers.⁷²⁴ While Gilbert Scott always claimed that his London design was uniquely his invention, what can be proved is that an engraving of Worthington's design proposal for the Manchester monument had been published in the prominent architecture journal *The Builder* as early as 1862, long before Gilbert Scott's final design was

⁷²⁴ See Smith, "Imitation and Invention in Two Albert Memorials", 232 and 234 to 237.

unveiled (Fig. 4.16).⁷²⁵ Worthington's design was admired for its novelty, and the Bishop of Manchester suggested that Worthington's drawing be engraved and published to establish the authorship of the idea. A canopied memorial had not actually been the first choice for the national London Memorial; plans for the erection of a giant obelisk were progressed to quite a late stage before finally being abandoned in April 1862, when appropriate stone could not be sourced.⁷²⁶

⁷²⁵ *The Builder*, 8 November 1862, 806 https://archive.org/details/qri_33125006202002/page/804/mode/2up? John J. Parkinson-Bailey, "Confidence and Civic Pride", in *Manchester: an Architectural History* (Manchester University Press, 2000), 103–4, records how, writing in his *Recollections*, Gilbert Scott suggested that his design for the London memorial was original.

⁷²⁶ The debates surrounding the initial planning stages for the London memorial are discussed extensively by G. Alex Bremner, "The 'Great Obelisk' and Other Schemes: The Origins and Limits of Nationalist Sentiment in the Making of the Albert Memorial", *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 31(3), 2009, 225–249. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/08905490903182063> accessed 24/06/2022. Also discussed by James Virtue in the *Art Journal*, Vol 1, London, 1862, 61.

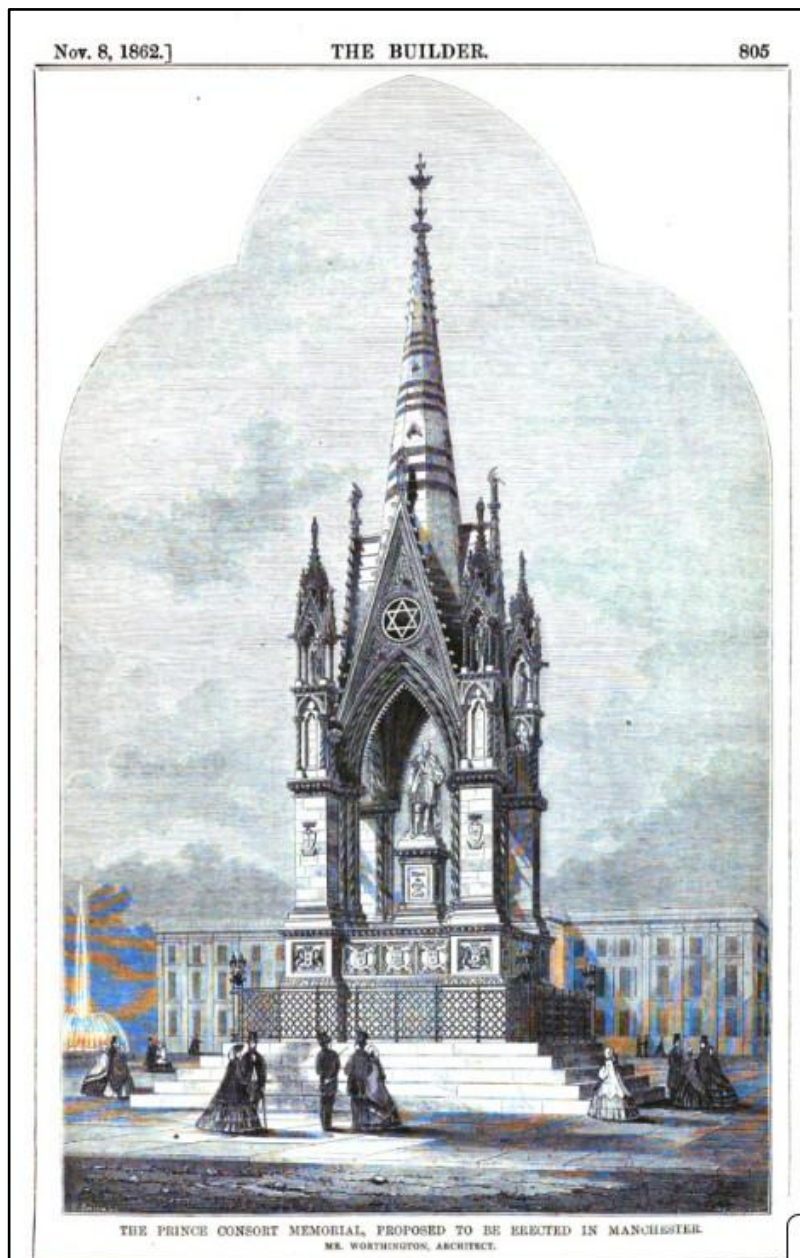


Figure 4.13 Engraving of Worthington's design for the Manchester monument published in *The Builder*, 8 November, 1862.

Public domain: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015013771442&seq=817>.

A common source for both monuments could be the Walter Scott Monument, an earlier Gothic Revivalist design for a canopy-covered statue that towers over the western end of Princes Street Gardens, in central Edinburgh. According to Michael J. Lewis, it was Romantic literature of the type produced by Sir Walter Scott in the early nineteenth century that encouraged the push for a style of architecture to be created using nationally inspired forms.⁷²⁷ It seems fitting that Scott was ultimately commemorated with his own Gothic-style monument in Edinburgh. Designed by George Meikle Kemp (1841-1844), this monument (Fig. 4.15) was completed in 1844.⁷²⁸ There is a reference in the Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee to a "Working Man" having proposed that "Manchester should erect a monument in the same style as the Scott Monument in Edinburgh."⁷²⁹ *The Manchester Daily Examiner and Times* quotes one Joseph Heron, the Town Clerk, saying that he thought it might be arranged to have a marble statue enclosed in a proper temple, erected somewhere in the city, "like the monument to the poet Burns, enclosed on Carlton Hill, Edinburgh."⁷³⁰ There is no evidence that Worthington mentioned the Edinburgh monument; however, an article in *The Builder* makes reference to it as a source of inspiration for the London Monument. The article goes on to discuss how the monument is to be based on the Eleanor Crosses, another symbol of devotion to a royal spouse (Fig. 4.17).⁷³¹ This series of twelve tall, decorative stone monuments topped with crosses, and placed in public squares, was

⁷²⁷ Developing in the 1830s through the theories of architects such as A. W. N. Pugin and the writings of influential organisations such as the Cambridge Camden Society and the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture. For an account of this development, see: Michael J. Lewis, *The Gothic Revival* (Thames and Hudson, 2002).

⁷²⁸ Sir Walter Scott contributed to the Gothic revival in literature and architecture of the nineteenth century. Between 1814 and 1820, he wrote a series of romantic novels, including *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*.

⁷²⁹ *The Prince Consort Memorial Fund Manchester Minute Book, Report of the Sub-committee*, 5 Feb 1862, Chetham's Library, A7.7.

⁷³⁰ *Manchester Daily Examiner & Times*, 7 January, 1862.

⁷³¹ Quoted in *The Builder*, "Designs for the National Albert Memorial", April 4 1863, 233.
https://archive.org/details/gri_33125006201996/page/n479/mode/2up?

instigated by King Edward I between 1291 and 1295, in memory of his beloved wife Eleanor of Castile.⁷³²

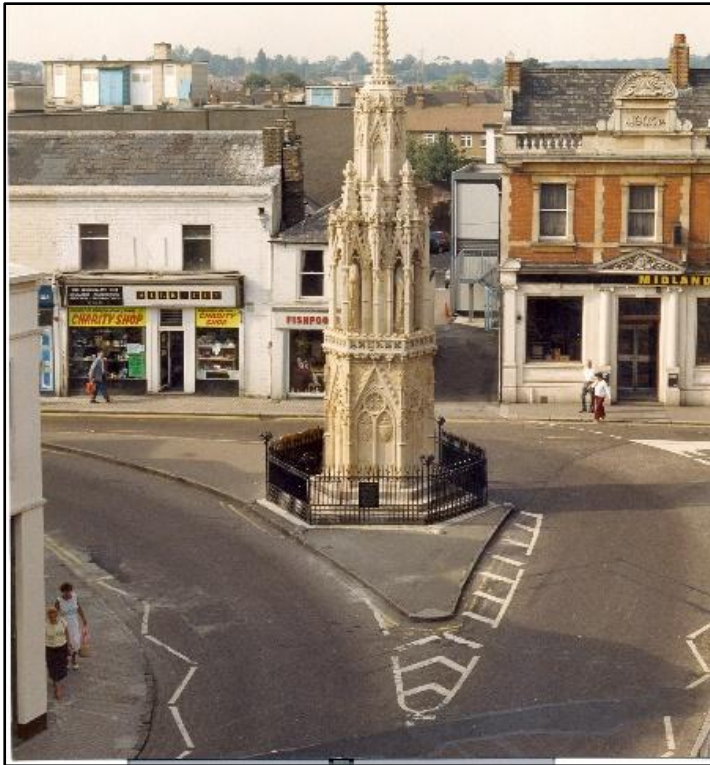


Figure 4.14 Eleanor Cross at Waltham.
Hertfordshire Archives & Local Studies.
Photograph: public domain.

There may also be a German precursor to the unusual spire-like Manchester monument. Karl Friedrich Schinkel had produced the *Nationaldenkmal für die Befreiungskriege* (Monument to the Liberation), a canopied Gothic-style monument in cast iron, which was erected in the Kreuzberg in Berlin in 1821. An engraving of this monument was published in his *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* in 1823

⁷³² While on a royal progress, Eleanor died in the East Midlands in November 1290. The crosses, erected in the East of England, marked the nightly resting-places along the route taken as her body was transported to Westminster Abbey. The best-known cross was erected in Charing, then a little village near Westminster and now named after the cross, Charing Cross. A Victorian replica of the cross still stands outside Charing Cross railway station. <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/eleanor-cross-geddington/history/#group-section-Design-and-Purpose-JKgZq7q1o3> accessed 08/11/2025.

(Fig. 4.18).⁷³³ Publishing these collections of architectural drafts enabled Schinkel to share his work and his ideas widely, including in Britain. This monument resembles the spire top of an earlier project by Schinkel, a national memorial church with the working title *Nationaldom*, designed in summer 1814, but never realised.⁷³⁴

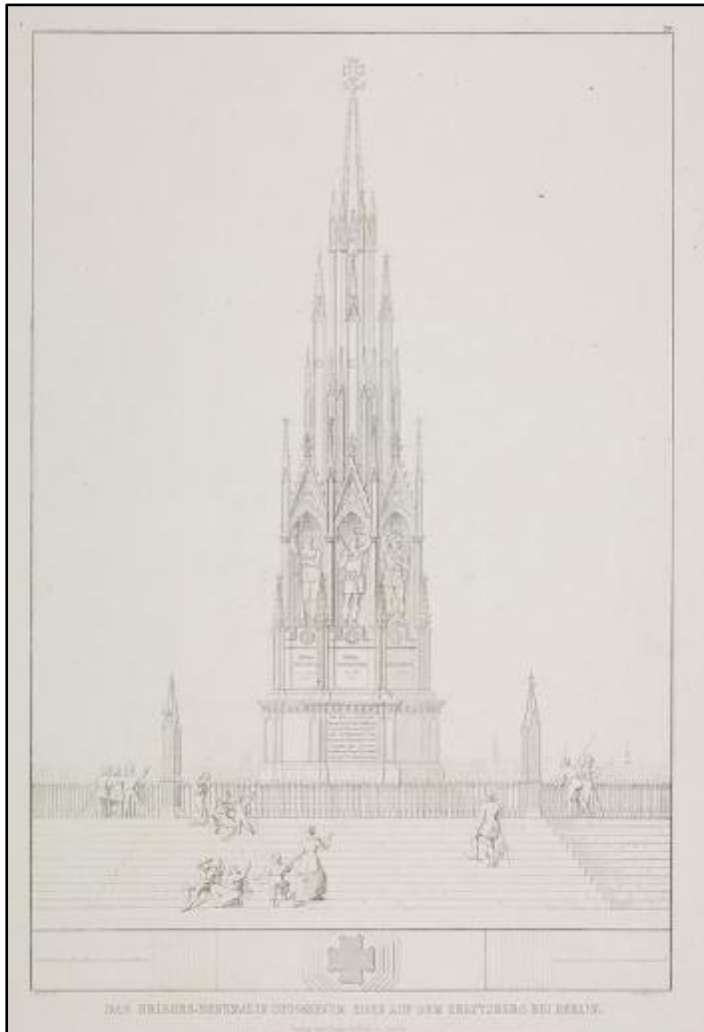


Figure 4.15 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, perspective view of the Kreuzberg Monument. Plate 22 of *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe*. Creative Commons National Galleries.

There are distinct similarities in the pointed gables, the steepness of the spire and the floriated decoration that is prominent in the silhouette of both monuments. Here,

⁷³³ Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Sammlung Architektonischer Entwürfe* (Wittich 1823), etching showing a perspective view of the Kreuzberg, or Prussian National Monument, plate 22 of issue 3. From: *Schinkel, collection of architectural drawings*, book 3, (Ernst & Korn, 1858).

⁷³⁴ https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Prussian_National_Monument_for_the_Liberation_Wars#cite_note-Nungesser_1987_22-11 accessed 09/08/2022.

Schinkel's stated aim was to use a Gothic style from Germany's medieval past to create a nationalistic architectural statement. In Britain, from the mid-nineteenth century, there was also a growing pressure to move away from the classical references commonly seen in civic buildings and to develop a national style of architecture which drew, rather than from the temples of ancient Greece, from the medieval past of Western Europe, particularly Britain and Germany. During the 1860s, widespread press coverage of this "Battle of the Styles" illustrated the growing significance of public art and architecture. As Bremner recalls:

Architects, MPs, educators, and members of the general public all weighed into the question of whether Gothic or classical architecture was best suited to represent the ideals and aspirations of modern British society. Here claim and counter-claim were made in defence of one or other style. For some, a "developed" thirteenth-century Gothic would be at once "indigenous" and progressive, while, for others, only the classical language could signify the dignity and heritage associated with civic order and authority.⁷³⁵

Brooks discusses the British revival of the Gothic style as part of a wider international movement and particularly associated with Germany. For example, German politician and publisher of works on art and architecture Auguste Reichensperger (1808–1895) had proposed that a Gothic revival be encouraged through the re-establishment of *Bauhütten* (building lodges or guilds). These were modelled on workshops originally seen during the building of the great European cathedrals in the medieval period, which functioned as both schools and construction sites where architects and craftsmen would work and learn together.⁷³⁶ Given this

⁷³⁵ Bremner, "The 'Great Obelisk' and Other Schemes", 225-249.

⁷³⁶ In the context of German reunification, Reichensperger saw the strong regional identity of the lodges as a vital cultural counter to the centralising ambitions of Prussia, see Brooks (ed), *The Albert Memorial*, 426.

context, the choice of a Gothic style for the canopy of the Manchester monument was far from an apolitical or purely aesthetic decision.

Stewart recalls how, in 1848, perhaps following in the footsteps of Ruskin, whom he greatly admired, Worthington went on an eight-month study tour to France, Italy and Switzerland. Notes and sketches that still exist from the trip prove his first-hand knowledge of the Italian Gothic and Renaissance architecture, which inspired his later work. Part of the structure of the memorial derived, as Worthington recalled, from a tiny sketch he had made of the chapel of Sta Maria della Spina in Pisa.

Worthington commented, "...the richness and beauty of its detail induced me to make a study of it, parts of which in later years found their way into the Albert Memorial in Albert Square."⁷³⁷ Stewart suggests that Worthington's high regard for this particular chapel may also have been influenced by the writings of Ruskin.

Nicola C. Smith also refers to Ruskin, who, discussing "the classic principle of columnar support" in "the niche of pure Italian Gothic", remarked that as a detached pinnacle, "it occurs in its most exquisite form at Pisa, in the Spina Chapel."⁷³⁸ There is a daguerreotype produced in 1846 and possibly attributed to Ruskin, of the east face of Sta Maria della Spina (Fig. 4.12).⁷³⁹ When compared with the image of the Albert Memorial in Fig 4.10, similarities of design, such as the pinnacles containing statuary and the triangular gables with the large central feature and three small decorative elements, can clearly be seen.

⁷³⁷ Worthington quoted in Cecil Stewart, *The Stones of Manchester* (Edward Arnold, 1956), 82.

⁷³⁸ Nicola C. Smith, "Imitation and Invention in Two Albert Memorials", *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 123, No. 937 (Burlington Magazine Publications Ltd, April 1981), 232 and 234-237.

⁷³⁹ Hartwell, *Pevsner Architectural Guides: Manchester*, 144.

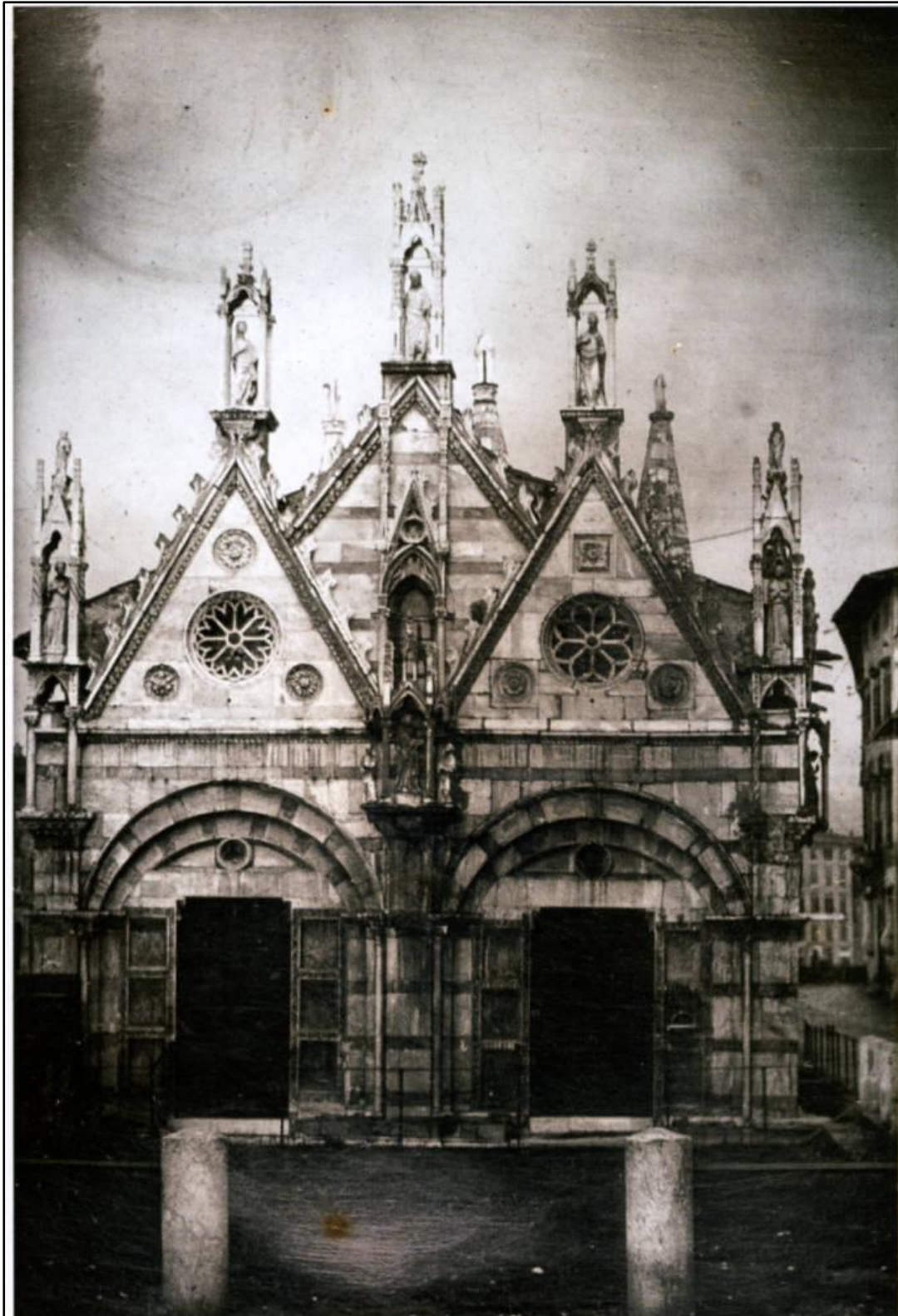


Figure 4.16 John Ruskin? Daguerreotype, West Façade, Santa Maria della Spina, Pisa.
c.1846, Ruskin Foundation, Ruskin Library, Lancaster University
Published in Cecil Stewart, *The Stones of Manchester*, 82.



Figure 4.17 Architectural drawing from the Thomas Worthington Archive, niche detail
Manchester Metropolitan University, Archive Collection, not indexed.
Photograph: writer's own.

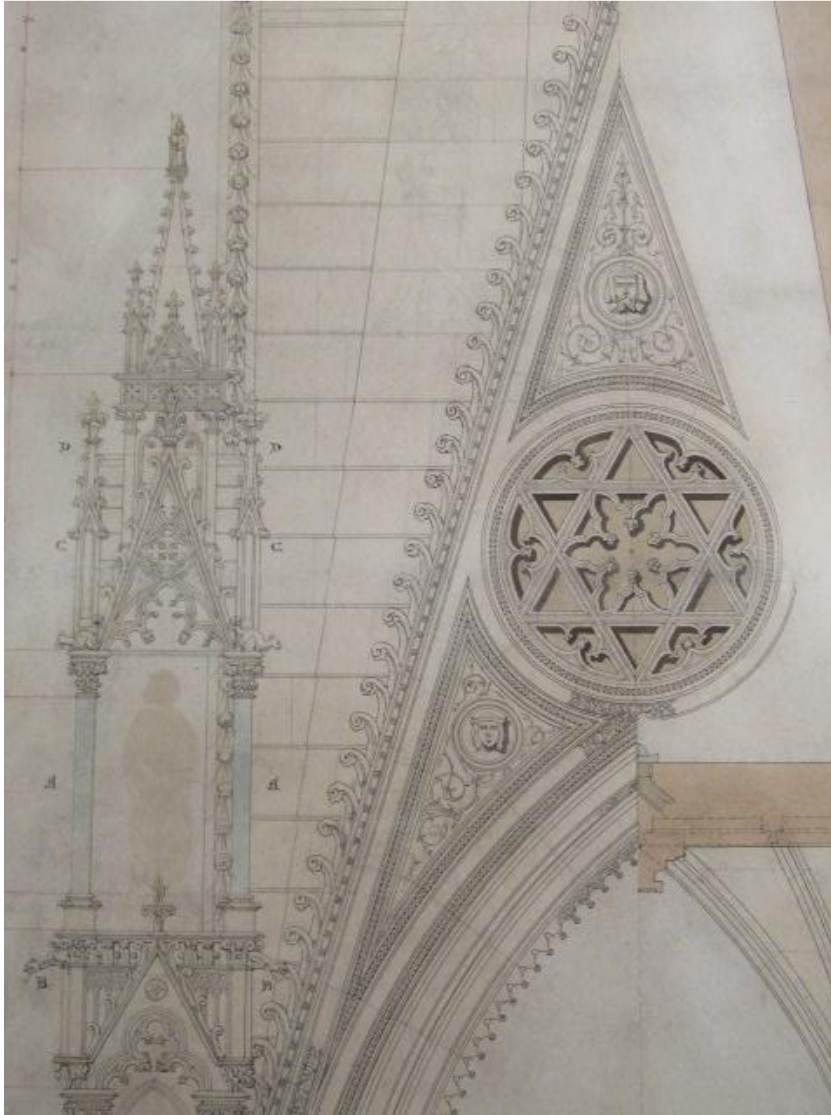


Figure 4.18 Architectural drawing from the Thomas Worthington Archive, pinnacle and gable detail. Manchester Metropolitan University, Archive Collection, not indexed. Photograph: writer's own.

It is noticeable that, as Nicola Smith has observed, some of the details seen in the Albert Memorial are precisely those which Ruskin most admired.⁷⁴⁰ The upper section of the monument is covered in ornately carved details, largely based on stylised natural forms, typical of Gothic architecture (Fig. 4.11). This type of foliated decoration was something which had been specifically recommended by Ruskin.⁷⁴¹

⁷⁴⁰ Smith, "Imitation and Invention in Two Albert Memorials", 235.

⁷⁴¹ Stewart, *The Stones of Manchester*, 81–84.

There is evidence that the amount of decorative carving was increased as the project progressed. Worthington discovered that it was much cheaper to carve the stonework before it was put in position, meaning that he could add “much more of this class of detail” than he had originally planned.⁷⁴² Also present are a number of tiny gargoyle-like sculptures, as found in Gothic church architecture. The architectural drawings clearly show that the stonemason was directed to complete some of the sections of the carving in advance, and leave other areas with as much rough stone as possible for later sculpting in situ. The monument requires a detailed study for the viewer to fully appreciate the symbolism of the many carved decorations. The decorative scheme also includes details which could not possibly be appreciated by the passing viewer, 70 feet below.

Ruskin also advocated both the exploitation of polychromatic building materials, as seen notably in the banding on the monument’s spire, and the stylistic adoption of the Medieval Gothic style of continental Europe, particularly associated with Germany, in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849).⁷⁴³ Ruskin endorsed the Gothic style of architecture as an inspiration for good and beautiful lives.⁷⁴⁴ He was also a teacher of art and championed public access to visual art as a means of self-improvement.⁷⁴⁵ Ruskin’s promotion of the educative value of the arts, as part of a comprehensive process fostering well-developed individuals who contribute positively to society, and of beauty in itself having the ability to improve humanity,

⁷⁴² Minutes of Prince Consort Memorial Committee MCL145/1/2/29. This included the addition of ogee arches to the base of the spire, the enrichment of the pinnacle and the enhancement of the motif at the centre of the main gable on each side.

⁷⁴³ Brooks (ed), *The Albert Memorial*, 422.

⁷⁴⁴ John Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic” from the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (Kelmescott Press, 1851-1853), vol 2, chapter 6.

⁷⁴⁵ Sara Atwood, “An Enormous Difference between Knowledge and Education: What Ruskin Can Teach Us” Valerie Purton (ed) *John Ruskin and Nineteenth-Century Education* (Anthem Press, 2018), 13-30.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1t8c98>.

could be understood as an interpretation of *Bildung*. There is no scope within this chapter to explore the impact of Ruskin on the revival of the Gothic style of architecture, or to discuss his complex relationship with Manchester, a City in which, as his 1857 lectures at the RMI reveal, he saw both the best and worst of modern industrialisation.⁷⁴⁶ The people of Manchester were among the first to respond to his ideas, founding the first Ruskin Society (alternatively known as the *Society of the Rose* at Ruskin's suggestion) in 1879.⁷⁴⁷ This society, and others founded later in the century, aimed to "promote knowledge and interest in Ruskin's work and ideas, and to make his writings more widely and readily accessible."⁷⁴⁸

The role of the monument in commemorating the Prince as an individual is emphasised at every level. The base is divided into two stages, the upper of which contains, on each side, five panels with the Prince's heraldic emblems. Care was taken to ensure the completeness and accuracy of these emblems, which include Albert's titles as Duke of Saxony and five others (Fig. 4.22). The complexity of heraldic detail, which reflects every aspect of the Prince's lineage, is unmatched in any other memorial, including London.⁷⁴⁹ Keen to ensure accuracy, Worthington obtained information on the armorials from the Queen's Librarian at Windsor.⁷⁵⁰ Heraldic devices indicative of Albert's German ancestry are included on the London monument, but these are largely in the mosaic ceiling of the canopy, hidden from the passing viewer.

⁷⁴⁶ John Ruskin, "The Nature of Gothic" from the second volume of *The Stones of Venice* (Kelmescott Press, 1851-1853), vol 2, chapter 6.

⁷⁴⁷ <https://ruskinsociety.uk/history-of-the-society/> accessed 21/04/2025. This history of the Society was supplied and written by Stuart Eagles, author of *After Ruskin: The Social and Political Legacies of a Victorian Prophet, 1870-1920* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁷⁴⁸ Other branches were later founded in Glasgow, Aberdeen, London, Birkenhead, Sheffield, Liverpool and Birmingham. See <https://ruskinsociety.uk/history-of-the-society/> accessed 21/04/2025.

⁷⁴⁹ Margraviate of Meissen, Landgraviate of Thüringen, Duke of Cleves, Dukedom of Berg and Palatine of Saxony.

⁷⁵⁰ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 14. Also Pass, *Thomas Worthington. Victorian Architecture and Social Purpose*, 46.



Figure 4.19 Panels with heraldic emblems on the base of the pedestal.

The corners of the base support piers are emblazoned with shields. These show alternately the arms of England and Saxony quartered, and the arms of Saxony singly, surmounted by a coronet.

Photograph: writer's own.

The inclusion of this reference to medieval chivalry, heraldry being the traditional mark of nobility, could be considered old-fashioned in the 1860s, particularly in a city like Manchester, then at the forefront of progress. The actual heraldic emblems would probably not have been recognised by the general populace of Manchester; however, the wider reference to heraldry may well link to the Romantic interest in the Middle Ages and the revival of chivalric values. As Chris Brooks explores, the ideology of chivalry was intrinsic to the whole revival of Gothic taste.⁷⁵¹ Interestingly, Albert's speech at the inauguration of the MAT Exhibition made direct reference to a

⁷⁵¹ Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (Phaidon Press, 1999), chapters 6 and 7.

noble chivalric spirit that had led the “great and noble of the land” to follow the example of the Queen and support her efforts by lending artwork to the exhibition. In doing so, Albert claimed that they were “emulating thus, in works of peace, the chivalric spirit which animated their forefathers in the warlike times of old.”⁷⁵²

In addition to the panels of heraldic symbols, each corner of the base supports a pier emblazoned with a shield; these are alternately the arms of England and Saxony quartered and the arms of Saxony singly, surmounted by a coronet (Fig. 4.22). These shields are encircled by the mottoed garter, and below are the words *Treu und Fest* (faithful and strong), Albert’s family motto.⁷⁵³ The arms of Manchester and the arms of Saxony are also featured on the cap of the statue’s pedestal, symbolising the bond between them. The German arms of the Prince totally dominate the iconography, alongside the arms of Manchester, with the single repeat of the quartered arms of England and Saxony being the only reference on the monument to Britain as a whole. These dominant personal references, placed in a prominent position on the monument, reinforce its function as a personal memorial rather than one with a national or imperial message.

The lower section of the base bears inscriptions on all four faces. As the *Morning Post* of Wednesday 5 September 1866 recorded:

...the following inscriptions for the memorial were approved: - Facing Peter Street, "In grateful acknowledgment of public and private virtues." Towards the new Town Hall, "Albert, Prince of Saxe Gotha, Consort of her Majesty Queen Victoria." Towards Cross Street, "Erected by the inhabitants of

⁷⁵² *The Principal Speeches and Addresses of His Royal Highness*, 177.

⁷⁵³ *In Treue fest* (German for "steadfast in loyalty; firm in fidelity") was the motto of the Kingdom of Bavaria from 1805 to 1918.

Manchester." On the Deansgate side, "The statue was presented to his fellow-citizens by Thomas Goadsby, Mayor of Manchester, 1861-62."⁷⁵⁴

The pedestal supporting the statue consists of a red granite central block, with corner shafts of highly polished grey granite, and bears the simple, informal inscription "Albert" on the south side. The calligraphy itself was also determined by Worthington and his initial design, complete with scribbled instructions for creating a full-size template for the approval of the Memorial Committee, still exists (Fig. 4.23).⁷⁵⁵ The font used is unusual. It has a medieval or Gothic style and is clearly designed to be suitable for the stone carving process. It would also be easy for the viewer to decipher at a distance.

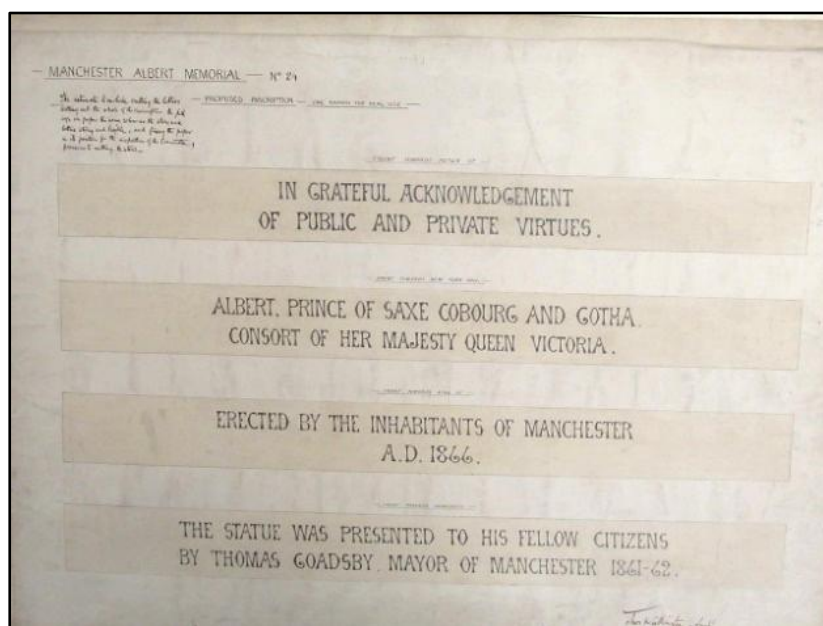


Figure 4.20 Lettering designs for the inscriptions on the Albert Memorial. Includes instructions (top left) for creating a full-scale version for the approval of the Memorial Committee. Thomas Worthington Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University. Folio not numbered. Photograph: writer's own.

⁷⁵⁴ *The Morning Post*, Wednesday 5 September, 1866.

⁷⁵⁵ Thomas Worthington Archive, Manchester Metropolitan University, among unindexed folios.

The Royal Collection holds a photograph of what is clearly a plaster maquette for an earlier version of the Manchester statue, positioned more conventionally, without the planned canopy, on a tall octagonal pedestal (Fig. 4.24). This version of the pedestal is inscribed with: “Albert the Great and Good” and also features an inscription of Prince Albert's own words, paraphrasing his speech at the opening of the Great Exhibition, reading: “the visitings of the almighty can be realised only by peace, love, and ready assistance not only between individuals, but between the nations of the earth.” The inscription eventually chosen provides the viewer with a far clearer understanding of the monument's purpose and its instigation by the people of Manchester.



Figure 4.21 After Matthew Noble, Statue for Manchester, c.1867. Albumen print, 26.3 x 15.6 cm, Royal Collection RCIN 2800255.

The Manchester Monument has predominantly secular iconography, with potential references to broadly Christian values in its choice of architectural style and in aspects such as the flèche, pointing heavenwards, in the manner of Gothic churches. The spire is topped not with a cross as might have been expected, and as we see on the London monument, but with an intricate piece of ironwork representing a coronet and incorporating, in true practical Manchester style, a lightning conductor. The only direct references to Christian iconography on the monument are the statues of four small trumpeting angels, positioned high above the viewer, on the four gables. Given that the City's civic leaders came from a range of religious backgrounds, including Jewish, Non-Conformist, Unitarian, and Catholic, this is perhaps unsurprising. During this period, society in general was becoming increasingly secularised.⁷⁵⁶

Sculptural Elements

On each gable, within canopied pinnacles on colonettes, small allegorical statuettes stand (Figs. 4.26 and 4.27). Draped in full-length robes, with shoulder-length hair and individualised, rather endearingly plain faces, these figures are uniformly referred to as female, but are quite androgynous in appearance (Figs. 4.26 and 4.27). Sculpted originally by local Manchester masons Thomas and Evan Williams, they underwent significant restoration in the 1970s, when it was found that two of them had lost their heads completely and one was shattered into eight pieces.⁷⁵⁷

Contemporary press coverage stated that these single figures between the highest shafts represented key areas of interest for the Prince: art, commerce, science and

⁷⁵⁶ According to Brooks (ed), *The Albert Memorial*, 210, the 1851 religious census showed that only 58% of the population of England and Wales were regular worshippers, and of those, only half attended the established churches.

⁷⁵⁷ Manchester City Planning Department, *Albert Memorial* – pamphlet produced following the restoration of the memorial 1977/8 (Revell & George Ltd, not dated).

agriculture.⁷⁵⁸ Immediately below each larger single figure the pinnacle contains four subordinate figures representing, as Terry Wyke identifies: (below Art), Music, Sculpture, Painting and Architecture; (below Science), Astronomy, Mechanics, Chemistry and Geometry; (below Agriculture), Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter; and (below Commerce), Europe, Asia, Africa and America.⁷⁵⁹ In this respect, the iconography is similar to the later London memorial, which, however, has the 1851 Great Exhibition as a central theme.⁷⁶⁰ While the main symbolic focus of the monument is Albert as an individual and his interests and achievements, these four fields of endeavour were also areas with which the people of Manchester had a strong affinity. These free-standing figures framed in niches are similar in concept, if not in realisation, to the relief figures that Schinkel designed for the *Nationaldenkmal für die Befreiungskriege* in Berlin. Schinkel's figures, however, are on a much larger scale, and the Berlin monument combines a Gothic framework and architectural forms with sculpted figures that have a more naturalistic, classically influenced style.

⁷⁵⁸ "Inauguration of The Albert Memorial", *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, January 24 1867, 1.

⁷⁵⁹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 11.

⁷⁶⁰ This may be, as Brooks discusses in *The Albert Memorial*, partially in response to its site, and partially as this fixes Albert to a period when his public reception in London was at its most favourable. The statue of Albert is holding a catalogue of the exhibition; national costumes feature in the sculptural groups, and various artefacts such as a steam hammer and an Indian shawl from the exhibition are replicated in marble.



Figure 4.22 Allegorical figures on the memorial's colonettes.
Photograph: writer's own.



Figure 4.23 Sculpted figures by Thomas and Evan Williams.
Lower section of the pinnacles with figurines positioned within niches.
Photograph: writer's own.



Figure 4.24 Sculpted figure by Thomas and Evan Williams
Lower section of the pinnacle. Prior to restoration.

The figures include symbolic objects that enable the viewer to decode their meaning. For example, the south-east niche is occupied by the figure of “Art”, who holds a scroll in her left hand and a pen in the other. Her arm rests on a piece of Medieval-style architecture, and there is a palette at her feet.⁷⁶¹ These figures are quite individualised and have none of the stylised classicism of the earlier allegorical carvings, discussed in Chapter 2, sited only 200 metres away on the façade of the RMI. As single figures, rather than the groups seen in the London monument, they are in keeping with the type of narrative allegorical sculptural decoration typically

⁷⁶¹ Many of these sculptures were restored or replaced during a restoration in the mid-1970s. See Manchester City Planning Department, *Albert Memorial*.

seen on the west fronts of medieval cathedrals. Being Gothic in style, they maintain a stylistic coherence across the monument as a whole. Their relatively small scale and the fact that they are subsidiary to the architectural framework also integrates them within the structure. The use of a lighter colour of stone than the rest of the monument does serve to increase their prominence. It would probably have been assumed at the time that the viewer would find the symbolic meaning of the figures easy to read. The allegory and symbolism of religious Medieval and Renaissance art were the focus of much study during this period. For example, Anna Jameson (1794–1860) published a lexicon of religious art in 1848.⁷⁶²

It will come as no surprise that “Art” is symbolically represented on the monument, together with the disciplines of painting, architecture, music and sculpture.⁷⁶³ As we have already discussed, Albert’s promotion of the visual arts, and particularly what we now refer to as applied art, was arguably his most well-publicised legacy. The Prince was also responsible for one of England’s early government-sponsored public art projects. Chairing a Royal Commission in 1842, “to take into consideration the Promotion of the Fine Arts of this Country, in connexion with the Rebuilding of the Houses of Parliament”, Albert recommended that the House of Lords be decorated with a series of large frescos.⁷⁶⁴ Artists and sculptors were recruited through an open competition which attracted huge interest, their decorative works adding grandeur to the buildings and bringing “multitudes” to admire them, fulfilling his “ambition of raising public tastes in art.”⁷⁶⁵ This represented a direct patronage of artists and an

⁷⁶² Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art* (Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), two volumes covering the legends of the angels, archangels, apostles, evangelists, doctors of the church, and St. Mary Magdalene (Volume 1), and legends of the patron saints, martyrs, hermits, and warrior saints (Volume 2). https://archive.org/details/gri_33125008091833.

⁷⁶³ “Inauguration of The Albert Memorial”, *The Manchester Guardian*, January 24 1867, 3.

⁷⁶⁴ Hansard, House of Commons Debates 29 April 1841, vol 57, cc1289-90 <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1841/apr/29/the-fine-arts> motion by Mr Hawes, accessed 01/03/2025.

⁷⁶⁵ Winslow Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste* (Chapman & Hall, 1968), 70.

example of early government intervention in the arts. It is an interesting reflection of the wider recognition of Albert's role in the promotion of the visual arts in particular, that S. C. Hall's "Art Union", "the most fervent and comprehensive defender of German art" during the 1830s and 40s, renamed the "Art Journal" in 1846, was dedicated to Prince Albert up until his death in 1861.⁷⁶⁶ Also, as I have previously discussed, the Prince played a key role in supporting and promoting the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857, possibly the largest art exhibition ever staged. The Bishop of Manchester summarised Albert's contribution to the arts in his commemorative sermon delivered days after the Prince's death found him to be "a zealous encourager" and "a refined and discriminating patron" who aimed to advance art for "the elevation and refinement of public taste, the improvement and attractiveness of our manufacturers, the extension of our commerce, the promotion on a secure and sound basis of reality and truth, of the material resources, wealth and happiness of the whole nation."⁷⁶⁷

The inclusion of "Commerce" among the four key themes on the memorial symbolises Albert's recognition of the importance of trade and industry to Britain's success as a nation. It is particularly relevant to the context of Manchester that the Prince actively promoted the benefits of close links between science, art and the manufacturing industry. In 1843, he became President of the Society of Arts, which had been founded in 1753 for the "Encouragement of Arts, Commerce and Manufactures". He also instigated the hugely successful 1851 Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, the profits from which were used to found museums

⁷⁶⁶ Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*, 56.

⁷⁶⁷ James Prince Dee, Bishop of Manchester, *A sermon preached in the cathedral and parish church of Manchester, Monday December 23, 1862* (Thomas Sowler & Sons, 1862), Chetham's Library, Main Collection - Shelfmark 4.C.4.131(18).

of art and science in South Kensington, an area that became known as "Albertopolis".⁷⁶⁸ Albert's interest in technology, such as the newly developed photography, and his keenness to tour industrial areas, visiting factories and construction sites, made him quite unusual among Britain's upper classes of the period. As A. N. Wilson states, "while Marxists and High Tories, Chartists and Aesthetes could unite in deploring factory chimneys, mills, coke-fumed canals and wagons of factory-made wares drawn over cobbled streets—there was one public figure who had actually journeyed around to visit them."⁷⁶⁹ In depicting commerce on the monument, with allegorical figures representing the four continents, there was also an acknowledgement of the much wider world context.⁷⁷⁰ The monument was not only of local, but of international relevance, as indeed was Manchester, represented as in the vanguard of commerce, manufacturing and perhaps, as the provision of the public monument would illustrate, of civilised values. The depiction of the continents as female figures had a long European tradition, from the Renaissance onwards, with artists visualising aspects of the world through allegorical figures derived from Greek, Roman and ancient Egyptian personifications.⁷⁷¹

The fact that industry, in terms both of manufacturing and the hard work of its people, and world trade, were fundamental to Manchester's success was also symbolised in Manchester's own coat of arms. In an early branding exercise, civic

⁷⁶⁸ *The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* was organised by Prince Albert, Henry Cole, Francis Henry, George Wallis, Charles Dyce and other members of the Royal Society for the *Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce* as a celebration of modern industrial technology and design. "Albertopolis" is now home to the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Natural History Museum, the Royal College of Music, and the Royal College of Art.

⁷⁶⁹ A. N. Wilson, *Prince Albert* (Harper Collins, 2019).

⁷⁷⁰ Australasia was not recognised as a continent at this time.

⁷⁷¹ The attributes of the allegories were standardised in the well-known 1593 *Iconologia* (often translated as *Moral Emblems*) by the Italian humanist Cesare Ripa (ca. 1555–1622) https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/alfc/hd_alfc.htm accessed 10/09/2022.

leaders in 1842 were tasked with devising a coat of arms for the newly designated City of Manchester (Fig. 4.28). Their choices clearly illustrate how they wished the outside world to see their city and its values and achievements. Included is a globe with seven bees to illustrate the way in which efficient and industrious worker “bees” of Manchester traded across seven seas.⁷⁷² On the shield, a ship in full sail is a reference to the city's growing trade and enterprise. “Concilio et Labore” was the motto chosen for the city. Loosely translated, this means “Wisdom and Effort”. It is derived from a phrase in Ecclesiasticus 37:16: “Let reason be the beginning of every work and let counsel go before every action.”⁷⁷³ This choice of words, implying as it does the significance of both learning, knowledge and reflection alongside active effort and engagement, could be seen as a reworking, in the Manchester context, of the German concept of *Bildung*. These attributes, as we have seen, were among those that the people of Manchester most valued in Albert. The Manchester coat of arms was used on council buildings, and variations and elements of it were widely seen on corporate and commercial buildings during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁷⁴ The Manchester coat of arms also appears on the pedestal of Albert's statue, alternating with his own.⁷⁷⁵

⁷⁷² The allegorical female figure representing “Manufacturing” in the London monument holds an hourglass and has a beehive beside her. This symbol of industriousness had already been widely adopted in Manchester.

⁷⁷³ <https://www.heraldry-wiki.com/wiki/Manchester> accessed 10/09/2022.

⁷⁷⁴ <https://confidentials.com/manchester/manchesters-coat-of-arms-explained> accessed 24/09/2022.

⁷⁷⁵ <https://www.visitmanchester.com/ideas-and-inspiration/blog/read/2020/03/the-story-behind-the-manchester-bee-and-why-its-used-everywhere-in-the-city-b1121> accessed 10/09/2022.



Figure 4.25 The City of Manchester's coat of arms, designed in 1842.
Creative Commons

Science, the third discipline represented on the monument, was another area of particular interest to both the people of Manchester and Albert. The areas of science selected for representation by the subsidiary figures - chemistry, astronomy, mechanics and mathematics - were particularly relevant to Manchester's manufacturing industry. Local figures, such as Prince Consort Memorial Committee member Thomas Fairbairn, had also been responsible for significant engineering innovations. The heavy metal collar and chain worn by the white heraldic antelope on the Manchester coat of arms is said to represent the engineering industries.⁷⁷⁶

Manchester-based chemists also made the city a forerunner in the development of synthetic dyestuffs for the textile industry. This was just one of a number of significant scientific developments led by a highly influential cohort of largely German scientists, such as Carl Friedrich Beyer (1813–1876), Carl Schorlemmer (1834–1892), Henry Edward Schuck (1820–1903) and Henry Roscoe (1833–1915), based at Manchester's Owens College during this period.⁷⁷⁷ Astrophysics developed as a

⁷⁷⁶ <https://confidentials.com/manchester/manchesters-coat-of-arms-explained> accessed 24/09/22.

⁷⁷⁷ <https://www.chemistry.manchester.ac.uk/about/history/> accessed 25/09/2022.

discipline at Owens College, and Manchester University remains a world leader in this area. Demonstrating his interest in education, in 1847, Albert became the first foreign national to hold the Chancellorship of the University of Cambridge. Following the models of his native country, he modernised the teaching system and syllabus. Against substantial opposition, the curriculum was broadened to include sciences and a “reformed, modernised scheme of studies”, very much along the lines of the teaching, emulating German models, which was already being received by Manchester students.⁷⁷⁸ When making the selection of science disciplines to be represented on the monument, there may have been some recognition, in the context of Manchester’s large cohort of Unitarians and Non-Conformists, of the ongoing controversy between religion and science. Geology and biology, for example, are not included as disciplines on the monument. Contemporary theories and new discoveries in these areas were presenting controversial challenges to the biblical account of creation.

As the Prince was a major landowner and known for his promotion of improved new farming methods, the inclusion of agriculture as the fourth aspect of the memorial is perhaps also unsurprising. His farming achievements were covered in the press, and *Punch* had caricatured him as “The British Farmer” in 1843.⁷⁷⁹ He also oversaw a significant increase in the revenue from the farming activities of the Duchy of Cornwall. The choice of agriculture to reflect the interests of the Prince, and the symbolic representation of the seasons in the supplementary figures, may seem

⁷⁷⁸ James, Robert Rhodes, *Albert Prince Consort* (Hamish Hamilton, 1983), 88. Albert brought about a “spectacular revival of Cambridge University from medieval slumber to a world eminence it has never surrendered.”

⁷⁷⁹ “Prince Albert has turned his attention to the promotion of agriculture; and if you have seen, as most probably you have, an account of the sale of Prince Albert’s stock, and the prices they fetched, I have not the slightest doubt you will give one cheer more to Prince Albert as a British Farmer.” Sir Robert Peel’s Speech at Tamworth, October 2, 1843. Illustration from *Punch*, Volume V, London, 1843.

initially to be a traditional and uncontroversial echoing of the romantic view of man at one with nature. Rural life and nature may not initially seem to have a particularly strong connection to the industrial hub of Manchester. However, if we consider agriculture as a form of production, involving physical and intellectual labour, we find reference to a much-debated political issue of the time. Particular concern about the working and living conditions of the labouring classes, or “operatives”, was shared by prominent Manchester figures and the Prince himself. Praise of the noble labourer was a regular theme in visual and literary works such as Ford Madox Brown’s painting *Work*, first exhibited at the RMI in 1865. Manchester was also, as detailed previously, at the heart of resistance to protectionism and a leader in promoting Corn Law reforms.

We have already seen that the monument was designed to represent the Prince Consort’s contribution to four key areas of endeavour, which were also closely connected to the lives and interests of the people of Manchester. However, as we explore further, we find an additional layer of narrative, largely hidden from all but the most inquisitive viewer. Towards the top of the monument, every gable has three triangular spandrels, and each of these contains a tiny sculpted portrait-head (Fig. 4.29). Individuality was a prominent theme in nineteenth-century German culture, and these portraits contrast with the generalised figurative allegories, more typical of British monuments, which are employed on the pinnacles. Gone are the generalised symbolic references in favour of life-like portraits of individuals. Klonk, among others, discusses the “romantic idea that individuals are both morally and metaphysically distinctive, and that a central function of art is to provide a vehicle for the expression

of individuality.”⁷⁸⁰ This idea was particularly promoted in Germany, as previously discussed, by influential Prussian Minister of Culture Wilhelm von Humboldt.

While none of the larger sculptural figures on the memorial are detailed in Worthington’s architectural drawings, several of these portrait heads are shown in situ as finished designs, indicating their inclusion at an early stage in the planning and perhaps also their significance. (Fig. 4.14). These “representatives of Art and Science” are depicted across the monument’s four sides: the west face features Inigo Jones, Michelangelo, and Beethoven; the north face shows Raphael, Tasso, and Dante; the south face has Wren, Goethe, and Schiller; and the east face portrays Milton, Shakespeare, and Mendelssohn.⁷⁸¹ This list of names would seem to imply a very different understanding of “Art and Science” from that which we have today. Unlike the full-length allegorical figures, these portraits do not appear to be classified, and their selection, as we shall explore, implies a personal insight into the life of the Prince.

⁷⁸⁰ Klonk, *Spaces of Experience*, 3.

⁷⁸¹ *Report presented to the Committee on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Memorial, January 23rd 1967*, copy pasted into the front of the Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee, Chetham’s Library Collection Mun.A.7.7a. See also Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, 14.

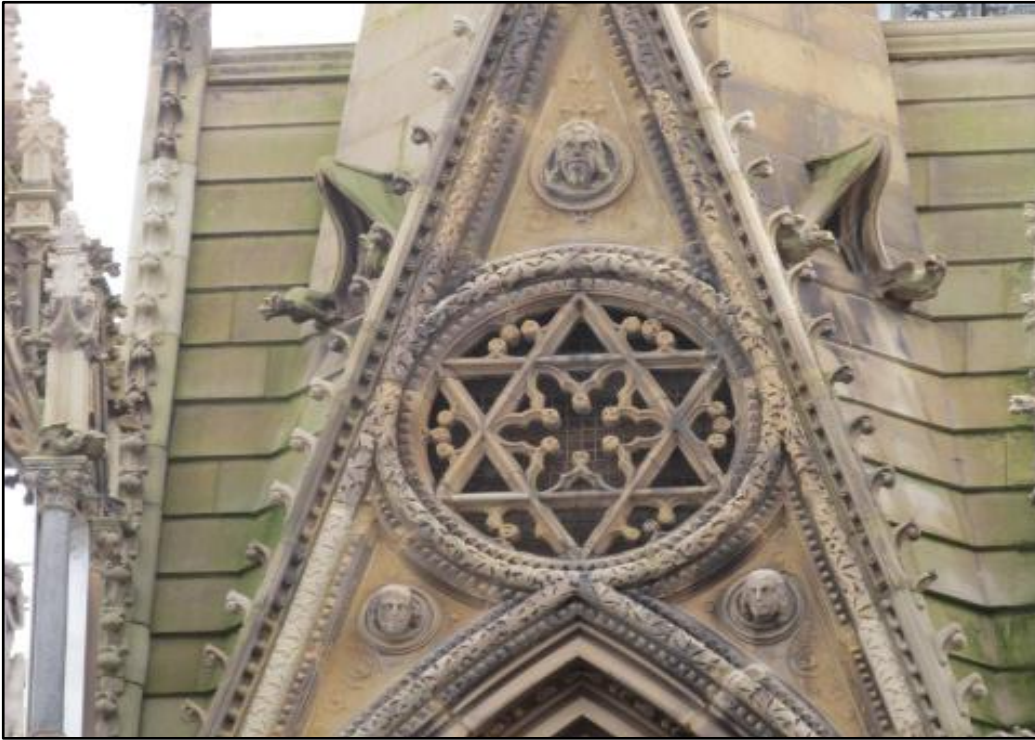


Figure 4.26 Albert Memorial medallions with sculpted portrait heads. These are featured on each of the four gables. Photograph: writer's own.

The portrait heads chosen for the Manchester memorial represent figures from Germany, Britain and Italy, spanning the centuries from the fifteenth to the then-contemporary. They reflect the concept of the arts and sciences prevalent at the time. This included creative writing, poetry, music, the visual arts of sculpture and painting and the creation of the lived environment, with two figures whose main achievements were in what we would now identify as the field of architecture. In Bavaria, King Ludwig I (reigned 1825-1848) had created a forerunner of this sculptural reunion of outstanding individuals from different historical periods. The *Ehrenhalle* (Hall of Fame) in the *Walhalla* near Regensburg, opened in 1842, was inspired by Valhalla, the hall of the slain heroes who, according to Norse mythology,

would join the god Odin.⁷⁸² While a significant proportion of kings and nobles make an appearance in Ludwig's selection, artists, scientists and writers are also included.

The choice of these individuals from such a vast range of possibilities was, it seems clear, driven by their particular connection to Albert. Their selection was determined by knowledge of the Prince as an individual and also reflected a particular ideology. While making significant contributions in the area for which posterity has remembered them, most of these figures, in a time before the new universities promoted segregated academic disciplines, were polymorphs. They were "Renaissance men", in some cases quite literally. Much like Albert himself, their lives represent a striving to become knowledgeable across many different fields, always learning and seeking self-betterment. Several writers also record examples of Albert's commitment and drive to gain knowledge across disciplines and capitalise on his life experiences.⁷⁸³ We cannot know the extent to which this was a conscious process; however, we do know that Albert's brother Ernest, with an identical upbringing, did not follow the same pathway. As the correspondence and diaries show, Ernest's "dissolute" lifestyle was of great concern to Albert.⁷⁸⁴ In one of Albert's letters to Ernest, he recommends that Ernest take note of the contents of a book that he has just finished reading. "I have been reading *Werther's Leiden* with Victoria. Many things in it remind me of the state of your soul. For the sake of my love for you I beg you to read this masterpiece by Goethe..."⁷⁸⁵ The book in

⁷⁸² Leo von Klenze designed the white marble temple based on the Parthenon in Athens. At the centre of the temple is the Hall of Fame, where the busts of famous Germans are placed. <https://www.european-traveler.com/germany/see-walhalla-the-german-hall-of-fame/> accessed 21/05/2022.

⁷⁸³ For example, Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste*, Steegman, *The Consort of Taste* and Robert Rhodes James, *Prince Albert: a biography* (Knopf, 1984).

⁷⁸⁴ Rhodes, *Albert Prince Consort*, 58.

⁷⁸⁵ Albert, Prince Consort, published in *The Prince Consort and his brother; two hundred new letters*, Hector Bolitho (ed) (Appleton-Century, 1934), 38.

question was Goethe's *Bildungsroman* - *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship).⁷⁸⁶

The individuals portrayed, or their creative legacy, also represent the power of the “arts” in whatever form, to challenge and develop the human mind and spirit in a variety of ways. It was the belief of both Albert and many of Manchester's leading figures that through engagement with the creative process, either as observer or participant, the individual is presented with an opportunity for spiritual growth and *Bildung*. A third of those featured on the monument are German. Two of these, Goethe and Schiller, writers of philosophical, literary and fictional works, were both read and appreciated by the Prince and widely known across Britain. The lives and early education of both Albert and his brother Ernest were heavily influenced by two individuals who had studied at Jena University, then the centre for the development of early Romanticism and German idealism and home at one time to both Goethe and Schiller contemporaneously.⁷⁸⁷ These were Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg, Saalfeld's doctor and adviser, Baron Christian Friedrich Stockmar (1787–1863) and a young philosophy graduate, Johann Christoph Florschütz (1794-1882).⁷⁸⁸ Winslow Ames outlines the Prince's extensive and liberal education, studying subjects such as natural sciences, modern languages and mathematics. Albert also spent 16 months studying in Bonn, where, as Ames points out, J.G. Fichte's son Immanuel was Professor of Philosophy, and August Wilhelm von Schlegel, brother of Friedrich,

⁷⁸⁶ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, 1796. As previously discussed, *Bildung* refers to the German tradition of self-development leading to both personal and cultural maturation. A *Bildungsroman* is a term used to refer to a novel in which the life of the main protagonist illustrates this process.

⁷⁸⁷ Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, details the aspects of Albert's early life which would seem to epitomise *Bildung*, providing Albert with the best opportunities to gain cultural capital.

⁷⁸⁸ Christian Friedrich Freiherr von Stockmar (1787–1863) was a German physician and statesman who had studied medicine at the universities of Würzburg, Erlangen and Jena. He was a close advisor and confidante of the Prince throughout his life. Johann Christoph Florschütz (1794-1882) studied philosophy and theology at Jena. See Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, Vol. 1.

was Professor of History.⁷⁸⁹ The Schiller Club (*Schiller Anstadt*), established in Manchester in 1859, was a popular promoter of German culture in the city.⁷⁹⁰ The founding of Manchester's Goethe Society, as previously discussed, followed in 1886.

The choice of two German composers, Mendelssohn and Beethoven, is also unsurprising given the level of German musical influence in Britain at this time and the Prince's intense personal interest in its promotion.⁷⁹¹ Sir Charles Halle, a German political refugee, was at the time resident in Manchester. He had founded the Hallé Orchestra, which initially had a programme dominated by German composers. Albert was himself a talented composer, as Stewart tells us, responsible for "nearly forty chorales, anthems, church hymns and other works."⁷⁹² He also believed in the moral and educational importance of music as a means of self-improvement.⁷⁹³ Martin claims that "music was to him not merely a delightful solace and recreation, but an art, in which the whole world of emotion and aspiration finds the most varied, and often the highest expression."⁷⁹⁴ He also identifies that the choice of musician for the memorial was based on good authority, as "of modern composers, Mendelssohn appears to have been his favourite."⁷⁹⁵ Victoria's journal of June 1842 records that Albert invited Mendelssohn to play at Buckingham Palace. Albert inscribed (in German) a libretto for the oratorio *Elijah* in 1847: "To the noble artist who, surrounded by the Baal-worship of false art, has been able, like a second

⁷⁸⁹ Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste*, 15. "We wonder how much influence certain well-known professors may have had upon Ernest and Albert during their sixteen months in Bonn. August Wilhelm von Schlegel became professor of history in 1818, and he was active in philological study and publication. Perhaps he or someone of his general mind was the source of Prince Albert's belief that History was the best instructor of princes."

⁷⁹⁰ <https://minerva.manchester.ac.uk/germans-in-manchester/exhibits/show/german-culture/schiller-anstalt> accessed 22/11/2022.

⁷⁹¹ Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, includes a "memorandum as to the Influence of HRH The Prince Consort upon Musical Taste in England", Appendix A, vol 1.

⁷⁹² Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, 73.

⁷⁹³ Jeffrey Richards, "The Musical Crowd in English Fiction (review)". *Music & Letters*, 2007, 88 (4): 688–689. [JSTOR 30162921](https://www.jstor.org/stable/30162921).

⁷⁹⁴ Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, 494.

⁷⁹⁵ Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, 487.

Elijah, through genius and study, to remain true to the service of true art."⁷⁹⁶ Both Mendelssohn and Beethoven were influenced by aspects of Romanticism and produced compositions inspired by Goethe. Mendelssohn met Goethe on several occasions and produced scores for several of his poems.⁷⁹⁷ Beethoven also set a number of Goethe's poems to music and created a score for choir and orchestra of Goethe's *Meeresstille und glückliche Fahrt (Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage)*, completed in 1815. Martin recalls that Albert was sufficiently engaged with the work of Beethoven to personally have sent the full score and parts of Beethoven's *Preis der Tonkunst* as a gift to the library of the Choral Union of Gotha in 1839, for use in performances.⁷⁹⁸

As mentioned, two of the individuals featured as portrait heads are best remembered for their work in the field that we now describe as architecture. Building design was also an abiding interest of the Prince. Most of his biographers outline Albert's involvement in the renovation of the Royal estate, and his extensive consultation with architects and interior designers during the planning of the new Royal residences at Osborne and Balmoral. Albert's interest extended to the social impact of buildings, and he was responsible for designing model workers' housing.⁷⁹⁹ Architect Christopher Wren, whose portrait features on the memorial, is perhaps best known for his design for St Paul's Cathedral. His office also had the responsibility of rebuilding some 52 London churches and other buildings following the Great Fire of London in 1666.⁸⁰⁰ He was also an astronomer, anatomist, mathematician, physicist

⁷⁹⁶ Peter Mercer-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 204. Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was played at the wedding of Victoria and Albert's daughter, Princess Victoria, The Princess Royal, to Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia in 1858.

⁷⁹⁷ Mercer-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn*, 41-42.

⁷⁹⁸ Martin, *The Life of His Royal Highness*, 486.

⁷⁹⁹ <https://thelondonphile.com/2012/05/02/prince-alberts-model-cottages/> accessed 28/10/2022.

⁸⁰⁰ <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1137979/sir-christopher-wren-mosaic-crowe-eyre/> accessed 23/08/2022.

and founding member of the Royal Society. Prince Albert was elected as a Royal Fellow and later President of the Royal Society.

Inigo Jones (1573 –1652), also featured on the monument, was one of the first to introduce the classical style of buildings as seen in ancient Rome and Renaissance Italy, to England.⁸⁰¹ As previously discussed, Albert had studied classics, toured Italy and spent time in Rome. He had a particular interest in the classical civilisation, which, to many in Europe at the time, represented the epitome of a cultured democratic state. Working initially in theatre set and stage design, at a time when the profession of “architect” did not exist, Jones later designed such influential projects as the Queen’s House palace in Greenwich, the Banqueting Hall of Whitehall Palace and the layout for Covent Garden in central London. It may also be more than coincidental that Worthington’s *Commonplace Book* contains his studies of works by both Jones and Wren.⁸⁰²

As Albert was closely engaged with the visual arts, both as a collector and as a keen amateur artist, painting and sketching Victoria, the presence of visual artists in the selection is not surprising. As part of his early education, Albert’s tutor, the young philosophy graduate from Jena, Johan Floschütz, took Albert and his brother on a tour of Europe’s capitals, including London.⁸⁰³ Albert later took an extended tour of Italian cities, visiting Rome, Florence, Milan and Genoa. Ames writes, “we wonder whether the young Prince, with Goethe’s *Italienische Reise* (1816-17) in hand, followed the great man’s footsteps all the way to Naples, as many a pious German

⁸⁰¹ See Vaughan Hart, (Yale University Press, 2011).

⁸⁰² Thomas Worthington, *Commonplace Book of Thomas Worthington, 1841-c.1843*, John Rylands Library. GB 133 ENG MS 1416.

⁸⁰³ Stewart, *Albert, A Life*, 90.

has done since."⁸⁰⁴ "Prince Albert's visual memory was stocked, by the time of his marriage, with images from the Italian Grand Tour, Flemish Baroque and Mannerist art, Gothic of various places and periods, German Rococo and the Neoclassical architecture of Schinkel, Gartner and von Klenze, in short everything from Rhenish Romanesque to the Nazarenes."⁸⁰⁵ Albert had a deep interest in the Renaissance, which culminated in the art-historical resource that he compiled, known as the Raphael Collection. Containing more than 5,000 items, this collection includes prints and photographic reproductions of almost every work regarded in the mid-nineteenth century as being by or after Raphael. The collection survives intact in a purpose-built cabinet in the Print Room at Windsor Castle. The Prince also commissioned and collected works of fine and decorative art that paid homage to Raphael and patronised contemporary artists such as William Dyce, who were strongly influenced by the Renaissance master.⁸⁰⁶ In attempting to create a monograph of an individual artist, Albert's ideas reflected the current German art historical trends and ideas about visual art as the product of the individual mind and personal subjective vision. His initiative was also clearly influenced by new approaches to the emerging discipline of art history, coming from Germany. In 1839, prominent German art historian Passavant had published a monograph on Raphael. A long review by Eastlake in the *Quarterly Review* of June 1840 had brought this to the attention of a British audience.⁸⁰⁷ As Avery-Quash and Meyer discuss, this study employed an objective, source-based and analytic approach, using archival documentation to establish provenance, and examining the materials and techniques employed. This

⁸⁰⁴ Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste*, 14.

⁸⁰⁵ Ames, *Prince Albert and Victorian Taste*, 16.

⁸⁰⁶ <https://albert.rct.uk/prince-albert-and-raphael> accessed 08/09/2022.

⁸⁰⁷ Johann David Passavant, *Rafael Von Urbino und Sein Vater Giovanni Santi: In Zwei Theilen mit vierzehn Abbildungen* (F. A. Brockhaus, 1839). Charles Lock Eastlake, review of J.D. Passavant, "Rafael von Urbino und sein Vater Giovanni Santi", *Quarterly Review*, 66, June 1840, 1-48; This article was reprinted in Eastlake, *Contributions*, chapter ix.

represented a departure from the traditional British approach that focused largely on the viewer's emotional response to the work of art.⁸⁰⁸ Albert's interest in both the Classical and Renaissance eras in general, and the work of Raphael in particular, led him to seek a revival of historic artistic skills. As will be discussed in Chapter 5 – "Ford Madox Brown's Manchester Frescos", Albert attempted to establish a British School of fresco painters.⁸⁰⁹

The second Renaissance artist featured is one whose work as a painter, sculptor and poet led Victorian writers to depict him as the archetypal example of spiritual suffering and endurance, through and for his art. This idea, which stemmed from Renaissance thinking, implies an empowerment of the individual and speaks of individual responsibility to strive, to set oneself challenges and be the best one can be. Michelangelo's reputation as a towering genius was important to the Pre-Raphaelites and other artists. Lene Østermark-Johansen discusses how the Victorians reinvented and reinvestigated Michelangelo, as more of his work became available for viewing in public collections, through photography and travel. A life-sized plaster cast of Michelangelo's "David" was sent as a gift to Queen Victoria in 1857.⁸¹⁰ Østermark-Johansen discusses how the Romantic view of art as the self-expressive product of the individual mind moved the focus from the art itself to the artist, as vividly illustrated on the Manchester monument.⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁸Susanna Avery-Quash and Corina Meyer, "Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation: Charles Lock Eastlake and Johann David Passavant's contribution to the professionalization of art-historical study through source-based research", <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/avery-quash-and-meyer.pdf>, 27. This article was developed from a paper delivered at the conference, *George Scharf and the emergence of the museum professional in nineteenth-century Britain*, held at the National Portrait Gallery, London, on 21 April 2015.

⁸⁰⁹ Perhaps under the influence of the German Nazarenes, as explored in Chapter 3.

⁸¹⁰ David was presented to Queen Victoria by way of an apology from Archduke Ferdinand III of Tuscany in 1856, after the veto of a purchase of a painting by Ghirlandaio, wanted by the National Gallery. See Paul Williamson (ed) *European Sculpture at the V & A Museum* (V&A Publications, 1996), 184. The cast is currently housed in the Cast Courts of the Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁸¹¹ Lene Østermark-Johansen, *Sweetness and Strength: The Reception of Michelangelo in Late Victorian England* (Aldershot, 1993) <https://archive.org/details/sweetnessstrengt0000ster> accessed 28/09/2022.

The inclusion of a portrait of John Milton (1608 –1674), English poet and intellectual, continues the theme of individualism and emphasises the value of subjective feeling and imagination. Milton wrote in English, Latin and Italian and was one of the first modern writers to use unrhymed verse outside the theatre. He is best known for his epic poem “Paradise Lost”, written during a time of religious change and political instability and in the face of his own struggles with blindness, ill health and bereavement. Milton also wrote in defence of freedom of speech and freedom of the press.⁸¹² The second writer featured is William Shakespeare, whose work had become something of a phenomenon during this period. Adrian Poole examines the Victorians’ obsession with Shakespeare, his impact upon the era’s consciousness, and the expression of this in their drama, novels, visual arts and poetry. He asserts that “Shakespeare sometimes seemed the Victorians’ utterance, a language for expressing and explaining themselves and their world.” Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, and Herman Melville are among the many contemporary authors who were heavily influenced by Shakespeare.⁸¹³ Emma Sdegno explores the reinterpretation of Shakespeare in the light of Romanticism.⁸¹⁴

To the modern audience, perhaps the least known of the figures portrayed is the Italian poet Torquato Tasso (1544-1595). He became a literary subject in the nineteenth century, represented as the man of genius who is misunderstood and persecuted. It has been suggested that he was one of the forerunners of

⁸¹² John Milton’s *Areopagitica* (London, 1644), was a speech addressed to Parliament in response to the Licensing Order passed in 1643. It defends freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

⁸¹³ Adrian Poole, *Shakespeare and the Victorians* (Arden, 2004), 296-8.

⁸¹⁴ Emma Sdegno, *Shakespeare and Victorian Essayism: ‘A Note of Provinciality’*, 2006. https://iris.unive.it/retrieve/e4239ddb-2bad-7180-e053-3705fe0a3322/Shakespeare%20and%20Victorian.pdf?_cf_chl_f_tk=NHJpXW9SUIABNTeFUDTjtLxldxMn85fjeEUyXODf_E-1783418579-1.0.1.1-C3blworDQZHAZfx2ykU8HP.Zbi1QvJ90m5ObppGGA1U accessed 02/01/2022.

Romanticism, merging passionate and melodramatic Italian romances with classical, Latin forms of epic poetry. Tasso's unfortunate and painful life provided a romantic and idealised model for the tortured artist who suffers for his work, as celebrated in Goethe's play "Torquato Tasso". This play was translated into English in 1861, with a foreword that includes a passage from *Wilhelm Meister*.⁸¹⁵

With this collection of historical figures, the monument's multi-layered iconography is complete. It provides us with a wide-ranging reflection of the Prince's qualities, interests and beliefs, as seen from the trading floor of the Cotton Exchange, the dining rooms of the Albert Club, the lecture theatre of the Royal Institution or the Concert Hall of the Hallé Orchestra. The pervading sense of a deep intellectual engagement across many disciplines, and a striving for intellectual and spiritual advancement, could be seen as finding its culmination in the spire of the monument, pointing forcefully and decisively upwards.

As *The Illustrated London News* detailed, the construction of all the different aspects of the memorial, with the single exception of the metal railings, was undertaken by local companies.⁸¹⁶ The use of local stonemasons and carvers contrasted with other architectural sculpture commissions taking place in Manchester at the time, where carvers from outside the city were employed. This may well indicate a particular local interest in contributing to the project.⁸¹⁷ The *Illustrated London News* credited each of the craftsmen involved. "The contractors for the building are Messrs. J. and H.

⁸¹⁵ Goethe, J. Cartwright (trans), *Torquato Tasso: Translated into English verse*. (D. Nutt. 1861). Goethe also composed a cantata text, *Rinaldo*, inspired by canto XVI of Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*. This was later set to music by Johannes Brahms.

⁸¹⁶ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 26 January, 1867, 89.

⁸¹⁷ The sculptural work on contemporary buildings had used outside craftsmen for example the Royal Manchester Institution: John Henning, the Free Trade Hall: John Thomas and the Assize Courts: Thomas Woolner.

Paterson, the carving and architectural sculpture having been chiefly executed by Messrs. J. R. and E. Williams, of Manchester. The upper stage of the pinnacles, with the exception of the figure, is by Mr. Bonehill, also of Manchester, and the terminal corona and lightning-conductor by Messrs, Hibbert and Co., of that city.”⁸¹⁸

The Inauguration

By January 1867, the widowed Queen in London had descended into a deep mourning from which she never re-emerged. Meanwhile, in Manchester, the inauguration of the completed Albert Memorial featured another recent widow. Prominently involved in Manchester's inauguration ceremony was Mrs Elizabeth Salisbury Goadsby, wife of the late Thomas Goadsby, who had died in February prior to the completion of the monument. Now missing the intercession of the Prince, it seems the Palace was no longer interested in the activities of Manchester manufacturers. The Committee Minute Book recounts several attempts to secure the Queen and then another member of the royal family to inaugurate the memorial, to no avail. The Committee was even asked to desist from further contact with the Palace on the subject.⁸¹⁹ The local press recorded how “this great city has been passed over in favour of more obscure places.”⁸²⁰ It was decided that a local celebrity, the engineer and inventor Thomas Fairbairn, who sat on the Memorial Committee, would fit the bill and that Elizabeth Goadsby should, “if it be in accordance with her wishes, have the opportunity of presenting to the city on the occasion of the inauguration of the memorial, the statue, the expense of which had

⁸¹⁸ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 26 January, 1867, 89.

⁸¹⁹ *Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee*, undated record of the reading of a letter received from the Palace. Chetham's Library Collection Mun.A.7.7a.

⁸²⁰ *Manchester Examiner and Times*, Wednesday 23 January, 1867, 2.

been paid by her late husband.”⁸²¹ Staring from the pages of the brown leather-bound books which she personally had published to commemorate the inauguration, Elizabeth Goadsby’s determined face can be seen, pictured via the new technology of photography, staring out across the ages from under a lace bonnet.⁸²²

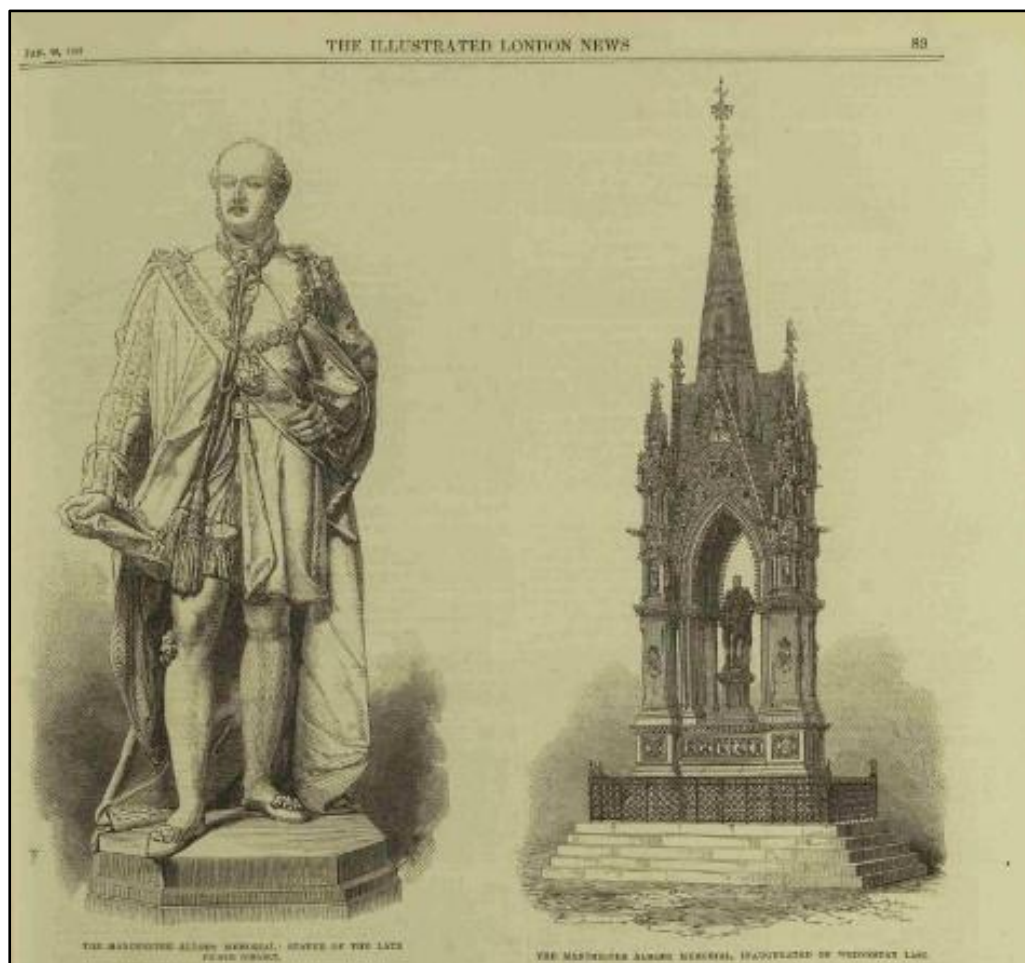


Figure 4.27 *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 26 January 1867, 89. “The Manchester Albert Memorial, Statue of the Late Prince Albert” & “The Manchester Albert Memorial Inaugurated Wednesday Last”. Etching, unattributed.

⁸²¹ *Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee*, Meeting held on 21 June 1866, Chetham’s Library Collection Mun.A.7.7a.

⁸²² *The Inauguration of the Albert Memorial, Manchester, January 23, 1867*, printed for presentation only by R Clark, Edinburgh, 1867. Contains a handwritten inscription “Presented to her esteemed friend James Collins Esq by Elizabeth Salisbury Goadsby”. Also includes: “The Record of the Inauguration”, reprinted from the *Manchester Examiner and Times* of 24th January, 1867, followed by an extract from the Leading Article in the *Manchester City News* of 26th January 1867. The volume is illustrated with a photograph of “the Memorial taken on the spot” and a photograph of “the Statue taken from Mr. Noble’s model”. Chetham’s Library Collection, Mun.A.7.7a.

The commemorative book, quoting accounts from local newspapers, recalls a day of inauguration which was hardly auspicious (Fig. 4.31).⁸²³ A brief thaw in the January ice and snow that had clad the city for weeks had left streets awash with a mire of filthy slush. A report in the *Manchester Examiner and Times* derisively remarked that the hordes of young “scavengers”, employed to clear the streets, only added to the chaos as they dodged between struggling pedestrians and sliding carriages “in their too late and useless endeavour to remove the masses of diluted snow and mud, which would have disgraced a country village even in the depths of winter.”⁸²⁴ As sleet driven by howling winds pelted the town, the inauguration party convened indoors for the first part of the ceremony. When the official group eventually moved outside, crowds braving the weather were largely unable to hear any of the ceremony. Despite this, the whole occasion was judged, at least by the Manchester press, to be a huge success. There was also fulsome praise for the memorial. “Of the monument itself, we can scarcely doubt that Manchester is tolerably unanimous. The architect and the sculptor divide a memorable honour, and the majestic and noble simplicity of the marble may fairly vie with the intrinsic beauty of the shrine by which it is so worthily encompassed.”⁸²⁵ The lack of a royal presence did not completely deter coverage from the national press. For example, *The Illustrated London News* included a half-page engraving of the monument which was “universally admitted to be one of the most chaste and truly ornamental erections in

⁸²³ The newspaper articles quoted were “Record of the Inauguration”, *The Manchester Examiner and Times*, 24 January 1867 and an extract from the leading article of the *Manchester City News*, 26 January 1867.

⁸²⁴ “Scavengers” were young children employed in cotton mills to clean and recoup cotton to avoid wastage in the area underneath a spinning loom. “Record of the Inauguration”, *Manchester Examiner and Times*, 24 January 1867, cuttings, pasted into the front of the Minute Book of the Prince Consort Memorial Committee, Chetham’s Library Collection Mun.A.7.7a.

⁸²⁵ “Record of the Inauguration”, *Manchester Examiner and Times*, January 23, 1867, 28.

the great cotton metropolis.” (Fig. 4.30).⁸²⁶

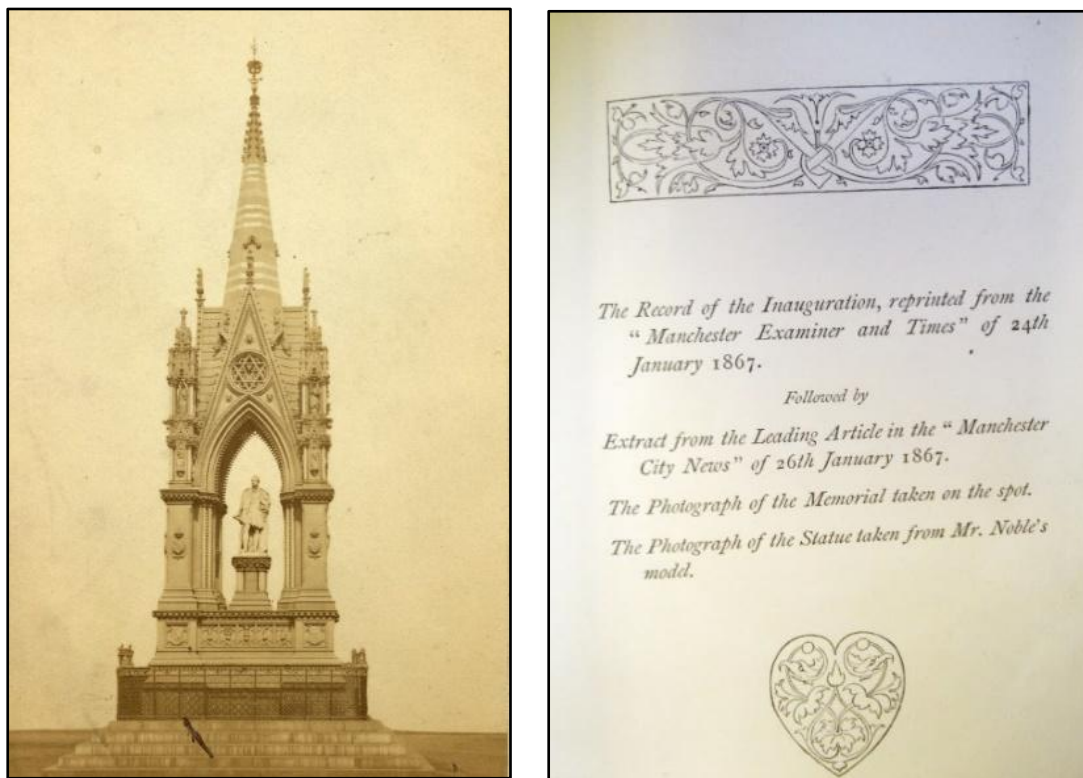


Figure 4.28 Photograph and front-page text from a copy of *The Inauguration of the Albert Memorial* (R. Clark, Edinburgh, 1867). Contains a handwritten inscription, “Presented to her esteemed friend James Collins Esq by Elizabeth Salisbury Goadsby”. Chetham’s Library Collection Mun.A.7.7a.

Commemorating one man, the Albert Memorial is also, as we have seen, a celebratory snapshot of a particular moment in Manchester’s history and culture. It did not stand alone in its dedicated public space for long. Over succeeding decades, Albert Square became the setting for the display of several other statues of men regarded as significant figures in the city. Thomas Woolner’s bronze statue of James Fraser (1818–1885), Bishop of Manchester, was installed in 1888. Two marble statues by Albert Bruce Joy (1842–1924), depicting banker and philanthropist Oliver Heywood (1825–1892) and reformist liberal politician John Bright (1811–1889), were

⁸²⁶ *The Illustrated London News*, Saturday 26 January 1867, 87. There was also coverage in *The Building News and Engineering Journal*, 25 January 1867, 73.
<https://archive.org/details/buildingnewsengi14londonoft/page/72/mode/2up?q=Worthington>

added in the early 1890s (Fig. 4.32). The display of sculptures of eminent Manchester figures also continued inside Alfred Waterhouse's town hall, once it was completed in 1877, with the addition of statues of physicist James Prescott Joule (1818–1889) by Alfred Gilbert and of John Dalton (1766 –1844) by Francis Chantrey. John Bright gained a further statue inside the Town Hall in 1892, by William Theed, and Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone (1809–1898) was similarly honoured in 1901.⁸²⁷ Wyke claims that in some instances, these public monuments were strong statements of political allegiance. "Supporters of free trade, for example, were prominent in commissioning statues to proclaim their economic creed. The placing of the statues of three living Liberal politicians – Gladstone, Bright and Villiers – in Manchester Town Hall was a political act, declaring that their new municipal palace was but a Gothic extension of the city's other great public building, the Free Trade Hall."⁸²⁸ Elizabeth Goadsby became an active political figure in her own right, prominent in Manchester's women's suffrage movement. She married again; her second husband was Alderman Abel Heywood (1810–1893), a member of the Memorial Committee, who later became Mayor of Manchester on two occasions.⁸²⁹

⁸²⁷ The statues of John Bright and Oliver Heywood were executed by Albert Bruce-Joy. The statue of James Fraser was by Thomas Woolner, and Mario Raggi created the statue of William Gladstone.

⁸²⁸ <http://www.speel.me.uk/sculptplaces/manchalbertsq.htm> accessed 14/08/2022.

⁸²⁹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculpture of Greater Manchester*, x.

⁸²⁹ <https://weasteheritagetrail.co.uk/salford-people/1857-1869/thomas-goadsby-1805-1866/> accessed 07/07/2026.



Figure 4.29 Photograph of Albert Square c1900, with three additional statues visible. For many years, the statue was on a large traffic-free island, prior to the complete pedestrianisation of the square in 1987. Note the effect of soot that has blackened the memorial and the surrounding architecture.

Manchester's Albert Memorial provides insight into contemporary perceptions and reflects German-influenced ideas about the potential educational and spiritual role of public art, and its ability to raise aspirations. The significance of the monument as a visual statement to future generations was recognised when the local press described it as "dedicated to the regard of those who will inherit all that living Manchester is able to bequeath, it will form one of the moral standards by which this generation will be judged."⁸³⁰ The monument also influenced subsequent memorials to other prominent figures. For example, in 1880, a monument with many similarities to the Albert Memorial was erected in Bradford to mill owner and philanthropist Sir Titus Salt (1803-1876), founder of the workers' colony Saltaire. The seated marble statue is covered by an ornate sandstone Gothic canopy, on clustered polished granite shafts featuring niches with statuettes.⁸³¹ Other monuments of a similar type

⁸³⁰ "Record of the Inauguration" The Manchester Examiner and Times, 24 January 1867, 26.

⁸³¹ This monument is situated in Lister Park, Bradford, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1057706>

include the Clarkson Memorial in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, which commemorates abolitionist Thomas Clarkson (1760–1846), and an Albert Memorial-inspired design was erected in Bradford in memory of a founder of the wool trade, Swithin Anderton (1803-1860) and his family.⁸³²

As a public monument, the audience for Manchester's Albert Memorial is everyone, and it requests participation from every passing individual to decode its meaning and perhaps be moved or inspired by its content. In commemorating the relationship of one man with the wider community of Manchester, the monument also speaks of the relationship between the individual and society, a theme much debated by the Victorians and as relevant now as it was then. It is the creative participation of the audience in reading the monument and constructing their own personal concept of it that gave, and continues to give, validity and life to the vision of its creators.

⁸³² For details and an image of the Clarkson memorial see <https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1228597>. The Swithin Anderton Memorial is signed S. L Thornton and situated in Undercliffe Cemetery, alongside other significant Victorian memorials. For details and an image, see <https://historicensland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1133644>.

Chapter 5 – Ford Madox Brown’s Manchester Frescos

“Fresco painting in England! Shipbuilding in Bohemia! Cyclopean architecture in Lilliput! ... What can we imagine so fantastic and far-fetched as the idea of fresco painting in England?” *The Athenaeum*, October 1841.⁸³³

The term “fresco” evokes images of fifteenth-century Italy, of Renaissance greats such as Raphael and Michelangelo, of barrel-vaulted, sun-bleached sandstone chapels. As the artist paints directly onto a wet plaster wall, it dries rapidly in the warm, dry conditions, with the carbonation of the lime permanently fusing the paint pigment into the surface. The resulting limited range of subtle, pale colours radiates sunlight and, in clean, dry air, retain their vibrancy for hundreds of years. 1870s Manchester, as even its greatest supporters could not deny, was a universally soot-blackened city, prone to extended periods of bitterly cold and incessantly damp weather. Why then did the 1878 Decorations and Furnishings Sub-Committee of Manchester Town Hall decree that the newly constructed Council Chamber be decorated with an ambitious series of History Paintings to be executed in fresco?⁸³⁴

The artist selected for this challenging undertaking was Ford Madox Brown (1821-1893), a painter closely linked with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and largely shunned by London’s patrons, the London art establishment and the influential Royal Academy. He had no previous experience executing a mural series on this scale, and the process took some eight years. The resulting twelve images were unveiled to popular acclaim in 1887. Walter Crane, Director of Manchester Art School, called Brown’s frescos “one of the best, most characteristic and appropriate pieces of

⁸³³ “On Fresco Painting”, *Athenaeum*, 2 October 1841, issue 764 and “Reviews”, *Athenaeum*, 10 September 1842, issue 796.

⁸³⁴ *Council Minute Book No. 17*, MCL, GB127, Council Minutes/Council Proceedings/17.

decoration which has been done in our time.”⁸³⁵ The frescos seem largely to have been ignored by twentieth-century commentators but have been reassessed by a number of scholars in recent decades. Current interest has also been prompted by the ongoing Town Hall restoration project, in its seventh year at the time of writing.⁸³⁶ The following chapter investigates the story behind the incongruous choice of media and the unusual compositional style and narrative content of the images. It is a journey that leads us once again back to Germany, via Rome, to Berlin and Munich, and provides a further illustration of the continued influence of German thinkers on the development of public art in Manchester late into the nineteenth century.

The Influence of Prince Albert

Key to this narrative is the posthumous influence of Prince Albert’s largely German-inspired ideas on the provision of public art in Manchester. It is appropriate that Albert’s statue, a testament to his close relationship with the people of Manchester, has surveyed Albert Square from his memorial since 1869. It would have been an ever-present witness to the construction of the Town Hall, from just metres away, facing the main entrance. The seemingly inappropriate introduction of fresco, a technique largely unused in Britain since Medieval times, into the heart of nineteenth-century Manchester was part of a wider revival of interest in the technique, which had been actively promoted by the Prince from as early as 1841.

⁸³⁵ *Art and Life, and the Building and Decoration of Cities, A Series of Lectures by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*, delivered at the fifth exhibition of the Society in 1896 (Rivington, Percival and Co., 1897), 147.
<https://archive.org/details/artlifebuildingd00arts> accessed 07/07/2026.

⁸³⁶ Key publications are Colin Trodd, *Ford Madox Brown, Manchester Murals* (Manchester University Press, 2022); Julian Treuherz, with contributions by Kenneth Bendiner and Angela Thirlwell, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer* (Manchester Art Gallery, 2012); Julian Treuherz (ed), *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer* (Philip Wilson, 2011); Paul Barlow, “Local Disturbances: Ford Madox Brown and the Problem of the Manchester Murals” in G. Ellen Harding, ed. *Re-framing the Pre-Raphaelites: Historical and Theoretical Essays* (Scolar Press, 1996); Kenneth Bendiner, *Art of Ford Madox Brown* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010) and Mary Bennett, *Ford Madox Brown: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Yale University Press, 2010).

Following Albert's visits to Italy as a young man, as several of his biographers detail, he became fascinated with the fresco technique, particularly as exemplified during the Renaissance period by Michelangelo and Raphael. Albert's longstanding admiration for Raphael and the research project which he instigated, culminating in the Raphael Collection, is discussed in Chapter 4 – "Manchester's Albert Memorial". Avery-Quash describes Albert's personal art collection at Osborne House as unusual because it was dominated by examples of early Italian art, "spanning the thirteenth century to Raphael's early work at the turn of the sixteenth."⁸³⁷ The collection also included a number of works in fresco. At this time, British collectors largely ignored "Primitives" (early Italian/Netherlandish art) in favour of later High Renaissance works. This unusual interest in, and appreciation of, early Italian works provides a further example of Albert acting as a conduit for the German ideas that proved particularly influential in Manchester. Firstly, it is likely that he was encouraged in this interest by his meeting, in Rome during 1839, as Davis outlines, with the group of expatriate German artists known as the Nazarenes. These artists claimed to be reforming the overly formulaic art promoted by German art academies by returning to the more authentic style of the Medieval and early Renaissance era. They specifically chose to employ the fresco technique as part of this reformation. Davis describes the Nazarenes as an "offshoot of Romanticism, opposed to Rationalism and Classicism and seeking to show the spiritual and historical value of art."⁸³⁸ Secondly, an interest in these early Italian artists, who were identified and discussed as the forerunners of High Renaissance art, brought German-inspired chronological art history into the mainstream of British collecting. As previously discussed in the

⁸³⁷ Avery-Quash, "Incessant personal exertions and comprehensive artistic knowledge': Prince Albert's interest in early Italian art", *Art & Love Symposium 2010*, 3. Published by the Royal Collection. First published online 23/04/2012.

⁸³⁸ Davis, *The Victorians and Germany*, 202.

context of the MAT exhibition, Albert was keen to promote the educational potential of art and art history and saw the grouping of art by national styles and chronological eras as key to this.

As Georgeanna Martell Spagnolo and Keith Andrews both detail, the artists who formed the Nazarene group originally met while attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna around 1809 under the guidance of Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869).⁸³⁹ Alongside Overbeck, members of the group living in Rome at various times included Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), Philipp Veit (1793-1877), Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld (1794-1872), Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow (1789-1862), Franz Pforr (1788-1812) and Ludwig Vogel (1788-1879).⁸⁴⁰ The majority returned to the German states, and several took up senior teaching posts in the very academies that they had so despised.⁸⁴¹ This led to their ideas having a significantly wider influence, not only in terms of the style of their work and their use of fresco technique. In the words of Kermit and Kate Champa, “as various members of the Nazarene group infiltrated academies in Germany, the basic values which had been held jointly began to exercise a deep and lasting effect. From roughly 1825 to 1850 Nazarenism provided what was really the only artistic common denominator between academies (and the art public) in various parts of Germany.”⁸⁴²

⁸³⁹ Keith Andrews, *Nazarenes: Brotherhood of German Painters in Rome* (Hacker Art Books, 1989). Also, *Art that is Not So New: Tracing Aesthetics and Thematic Elements of the Pre-Raphaelites, Arts and Crafts, and Art Nouveau Movements*. A dissertation submitted to the Caspersen School of Graduate Studies, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, August, 2023.

⁸⁴⁰ Cordula Grewe, “Historicism and the Symbolic Imagination in Nazarene Art.” *The Art Bulletin* 89 (1): 82–107. 2007, 83. The group at various times included: Peter von Cornelius, Friedrich Overbeck, Wilhelm Schadow, Philipp Veit, Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld, Friedrich Wilhelm Schadow, Franz Pforr, Johann Konrad Hottinger and Ludwig Vogel.

⁸⁴¹ Kermit S. Champa and Kate H. Champa, *German Paintings of the 19th Century*. Exhibition catalogue (Yale University Art Gallery, 1970), 6.

⁸⁴² Champa and Champa, *German Paintings of the 19th Century*, 6.

Cordula Grewe argues that the wider romantic self-reflective and conceptual basis of the Nazarenes' work and their links to contemporary German philosophical thinking is often overlooked. She claims that the group were engaged with the "absorption and reworking of some of the most advanced philosophical and cultural currents of the age." Grewe identifies how this was promoted by "personal contact with leading figures of Romantic, post-Kantian thought: for example, Humboldt in Rome, Tieck in Berlin, Schelling in Munich, and, most pervasively, Friedrich Schlegel, the stepfather of Veit."⁸⁴³

Frescos for the Palace of Westminster

In 1841, Albert had his first opportunity to formally promote a revival of the fresco technique in England. As the first President of the newly created Fine Arts Commission, he chaired a Select Committee on Fine Art that aimed to encourage British artists to return to History Painting and to establish a distinctive British school of painting. The Committee proposed that a series of frescos should be commissioned to decorate the new Houses of Parliament. Sir Charles Barry was designing a new building as the previous one had been destroyed by fire.⁸⁴⁴

As the final Report of the Select Committee illustrates, the Committee was strongly influenced by contemporary German public-art projects.⁸⁴⁵ The series produced by the leading German Nazarene fresco painter Cornelius, for Ludwig I of Bavaria in

⁸⁴³ Philipp Veit (1793–1877) was a founder member of the brotherhood. Cordula Grewe, "Historicism and the Symbolic Imagination in Nazarene Art", 83.

⁸⁴⁴ Avery-Quash, "Incessant personal exertions", 12.

⁸⁴⁵ The most detailed and authoritative account of these proceedings is still that of T. S. R. Boase, "The Decoration of the New Palace of Westminster, 1841-1863", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute*, 1954, Vol. 17, No. 3/4 (1954), 319-358. See also Winter "German Fresco Painting", 291-329.

Munich, was cited particularly as a model for emulation. Several witnesses even suggested that the commission would be best undertaken by a German artist, given the lack of fresco experience in England.⁸⁴⁶ In his evidence to the Committee, Sir Thomas Wyse (1791–1862) recalled a claim by Cornelius that the simplified composition and large scale, promoted by the fresco technique, allowed an easier understanding of the narrative:

...an observation I heard from Cornelius himself, that it was a difficult thing to impress upon the mind of a nation at large a general love of art, unless you were to use as an instrument Painting upon a large scale, and Fresco was particularly suited for this purpose; it was not to be expected that the lower classes of the community should have any just appreciation of the delicacies and finer characteristics of painting in oil, and that they required large and simple forms, very direct action, and in some instances exaggerated expression.⁸⁴⁷

The Select Committee members included several leading Manchester-based politicians. Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel, a Manchester industrialist from a dynasty of textile manufacturers, had appointed Prince Albert as Chair of the Commission.⁸⁴⁸ Martin quotes from letters between the two that illustrate the routine familiarity of Manchester's leading figures with contemporary German visual arts and literature. For instance, a letter from the Prince to Peel, dated October 3, 1841, accompanied the loan of a copy of the *Nibelungenlied*. This medieval poem, which came to be seen as the German national epic, was supposed to embody German bourgeois virtues. Albert particularly recommended the edition for its illustrations, which in his view were "fine specimens from the school of Düsseldorf," with their "correctness of drawing and composition" by artists Eduard Bendemann (1811-1889) and Wilhelm

⁸⁴⁶ *Report from the Select Committee on Fine Arts: together with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index.* by House of Commons, 1841, Vi, iv, vi <https://archive.org/details/1836SelectCommittee> accessed 26/04/2025.

⁸⁴⁷ *Report from the Select Committee on Fine Arts* - vi, iv, vi.

⁸⁴⁸ Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, Vol 1, 119. Sir Robert Peel was British Prime Minister from 1834 to 1835 and again from 1841 to 1846.

Huber (1787-1871). Both these artists worked on German fresco series and were taught by Nazarene artist Wilhelm von Schadow.⁸⁴⁹

Called to give evidence to the Committee was William Dyce, in his role as the Director of the New Government School of Design at Somerset House (see Chapter 3 – “Manchester School of Design”). He demonstrated his detailed knowledge of contemporary German experiments with fresco techniques, including specifically the fresco work of the Nazarenes at Villa Bartholdy.⁸⁵⁰ He recommended the use of fresco as opposed to oil, as it was less affected by light reflecting from its surface, and apparently, could be easily cleaned with bread!⁸⁵¹ A further influential witness was Sir Charles Eastlake.⁸⁵² Eastlake had already published an essay, “On Fresco Painting” in 1841, combining his insight as an artist with his research into the history of painting techniques. This essay was published in the Appendix to the Select Committee Report.⁸⁵³ Secretary to the Commission, Eastlake was personally known to Cornelius and Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

It could be argued that the aesthetic choices made by the Fine Art Commission were influenced by wider German approaches to art history. They chose not to align themselves with the oil painting and allegorical references of High Renaissance art, but instead favoured the Nazarenes, fresco technique and fourteenth-century art up

⁸⁴⁹ Cornelius was Director of the Düsseldorf Academy from 1819 to 1824. See Martin, *Life of the Prince Consort*, Vol 1, 119.

⁸⁵⁰ Vaughan discusses the English awareness of the Bartholdy frescos in *German Romanticism and English Art*, 34-47. See also Robert McVaugh, “A Revised Reconstruction of the Casa Bartholdy Fresco Cycle” in *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 66, no. 3, 1984, 442–52. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3050446> accessed 13/01/2024. Works were completed by Cornelius, Overbeck, Schadow and Veit.

⁸⁵¹ Evidence given by William Dyce, *Report from the Select Committee on Fine Arts*, 27. <https://archive.org/details/1841SelectCommittee> accessed 26/04/2025.

⁸⁵² Eastlake was an RA and art historian who, in collaboration with his wife, Elizabeth Rigby, made significant contributions to the development of art history as a discipline. He became the first director of the National Gallery. See Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*.

⁸⁵³ Eastlake’s essays were reprinted posthumously, and probably collaborated on during his lifetime, by his wife Elizabeth Rigby as *Contributions to the literature of the fine arts* (J. Murray, 1870). This essay was retitled “On the Origin of the Modern German School of Fresco Painting”, 20-28 <https://archive.org/details/contributionstol00eastrich> accessed 26/04/2025.

to Raphael. Francis Haskell discussed the impact of continental, and particularly German, scholarship on British art history.⁸⁵⁴ The new *Kunstgeschichte*, as modelled particularly by Karl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785-1843) and Johann David Passavant (1787-1861), approached art history in a scientific and scholarly way, as a mode of critical enquiry seeking verifiable evidence for changes in styles of painting. This research, by broadening knowledge about earlier styles of art, no longer followed the long-accepted model established by writers such as Giorgio Vasari (1511-1574), whose anecdote-based *Lives of the Artists* had placed High Renaissance art as the pinnacle of achievement.⁸⁵⁵

The wider influence of German visual art in England during the early and mid-nineteenth century has been extensively discussed by various writers, several of whom refer to the influence of the Nazarene group.⁸⁵⁶ John Steegman specifies that the decision by the Commission “to employ fresco is a reflection of the wide influence which German art was then exercising in this country. King Ludwig at München and Cornelius at Dusseldorf were accepted as the standards of reference.”⁸⁵⁷ When, in the autumn of 1839, Peter von Cornelius visited London, comments in the contemporary press illustrate the very significant position that he held in the art world of the time and the impact of his fresco projects in Munich. *The Athenaeum* of October 2, 1841, for instance, announced that “the great German painter Cornelius has arrived in London, and we hope advantage will be taken of his short stay in this country to do honour to his talent and to render his knowledge and

⁸⁵⁴ Francis Haskell, ‘The Growth of British Art History and its Debts to Europe’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 74, 1988, 203-224.

⁸⁵⁵ Vasari’s biography of Italian artists *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani* (The Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Architects, Painters, and Sculptors) was first published in 1550.

⁸⁵⁶ For example, Vaughan, *German Romanticism and English Art*.

⁸⁵⁷ Steegman, *The Consort of Taste*, 32 and 133. Cornelius was Director of the Düsseldorf Academy from 1819 to 1824.

skill in fresco painting available with reference to the intended decorations of the new Houses of Parliament.”⁸⁵⁸

As an early example of state patronage, this decorative scheme for the Houses of Parliament was intended to be nationalistic, with the first round of what became a prolonged series of open competitions, calling for designs for frescos featuring scenes from “British history or from the works of Spenser, Shakespeare or Milton.”⁸⁵⁹ As Hartley discusses, “this aesthetic initiative with political aims proceeded according to the twin assumptions that art can serve pedagogic function for the nation’s people, and that art can display the symbolic power of the British nation to other European nations.”⁸⁶⁰ Entries came from some of the nation’s most established history painters, the majority of whom were wrestling with the challenge of designing compositions for work in a completely unfamiliar painting technique. Still in his early twenties, Ford Madox Brown himself entered the competitions in 1843 and 1845, initially with his *The Body of Harold Brought before William the Conqueror*.⁸⁶¹ The competition’s third round, in 1845, called for work featuring the personification of abstract themes of “Justice, Religion and the Spirit of Chivalry.”⁸⁶² Madox Brown produced a design for the *Spirit of Justice*.⁸⁶³ Fellow competitor Benjamin Haydon, whose diary provides an exhaustive and emotional account of his own ultimately unsuccessful efforts in preparing his entry for the competition, found that “the only bit of fresco fit to look at is by Ford Brown. It is the figure of *Justice* and exquisite as far

⁸⁵⁸ *Athenaeum*, October 2 1841, 764.

⁸⁵⁹ Boase, “The Decoration of the New Palace of Westminster, 1841-1863”, 324.

⁸⁶⁰ Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 21.

⁸⁶¹ Signed F. Madox Brown 1844-61, oil with wax encaustic, 105 x 123 cm, Manchester City Art Galleries.

⁸⁶² Appendix No 1, “Notice respecting a Competition in Cartoons”, *Report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts* (1842), 7.

⁸⁶³ The original charcoal cartoon was mostly destroyed, but a smaller colour study remains. Study for *Spirit of Justice*, 1844-45, pencil, watercolour and bodycolour, 75.7 x 51.7cm, Manchester City Art Galleries.

as that figure goes.”⁸⁶⁴ The exhibition of competition entries generated great public interest and acclaim, prompting interest in the fresco technique in general. However, as Hartley describes, the actual frescos eventually produced for the Houses of Parliament were largely deemed a technical failure, due to the damp climate and the artists’ inexperience in using the technique. Dyce’s fresco, finished in July 1947, and those of Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), Charles West Cope (1811–1890) and John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903) completed by April 1848 had, within a few years, deteriorated to such an extent that some of the later artists selected to produce their work using the “water-glass” technique.⁸⁶⁵ As Madox Brown himself wrote some years later:

The old-fashioned Italian or "Buon Fresco" I look upon as practically given up in this country, and every other European country that has not a climate to equal Italy. If the climate of Paris will not admit of this process, how much less is our damp, foggy, changeable atmosphere likely to put up with it for many years!⁸⁶⁶

It is relevant to his work on the Manchester series that Madox Brown had trained at various European academies, including the Antwerp Academy, under Baron Gustave Wappers (1803-1874), founder of the Belgian romantic school of History Painting. As such, he had some experience of the demands of large-scale figure compositions.⁸⁶⁷ Madox Brown’s grandson used his diary, letters and personal papers as the basis for a detailed biography, published in 1896. This declares that his training “made him a master of all the processes of the art, from etching and lithography to painting in pastels, fresco, encaustic, oils and water-colours. He was enabled to distinguish

⁸⁶⁴ Tom Taylor (ed), *Life of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, 790.

⁸⁶⁵ Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 62. In the water-glass technique, after the paint has been applied to the plaster, it is coated with a solution of water glass (potassium silicate or sodium silicate), which provides a protective film when it dries. As water-glass is strongly alkaline, it can be used only with certain pigments. Within ten years, these frescos had also deteriorated <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803121253268> accessed 30/3/2024.

⁸⁶⁶ Ford Madox Brown, “Of Mural Painting”, *Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society*. William Morris (preface), Walter Crane, W. R. Lethaby, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson et al. (Longmans, Green & Co., 1903). https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_Essays/Of_Mural_Painting accessed 29/2/2024.

⁸⁶⁷ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 11.

himself in all these directions because he thoroughly understood the technique of each method.”⁸⁶⁸

While the scale and technique employed in the Westminster frescos may have emulated those used in public art in Germany, particularly the large-scale fresco work of Nazarene artist Cornelius, their style and composition departed considerably from the aesthetic of the Nazarenes. The English school of painting, as epitomised by the Royal Academicians from Joshua Reynolds onwards, prided itself on its mastery of painterly application of oils, chiaroscuro and use of colour. The technical limitations of fresco and the desire to emulate models from early Renaissance religious art produced a Nazarene style that was quite flat, emphasising line and composition, with no interest in tonal variation, brushwork or expressive handling of paint.⁸⁶⁹ The Westminster muralists, mostly inexperienced with the fresco technique, seemed to make few adaptations to their designs. This was something that Madox Brown was keenly aware of, as his published views on fresco painting show:

One thing may be urged as a rule, and that is, that very dark or Rembrandtesque subjects are particularly unsuited for mural paintings. I cannot go into the reasons for this, but a slight experiment ought to satisfy the painter, having once heard the principle enunciated: that is, if he belongs to the class likely to succeed at such work.⁸⁷⁰

Hartley suggests that the Commission ultimately failed in its aim to promote a distinctively British school of art because the designs commissioned followed the German example and employed a technique which at the time was identified with

⁸⁶⁸ Ford Madox Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*. (Longmans, 1896), 24. <https://archive.org/details/fordmadoxbrownre00forduoft> accessed 07/07/2026. Madox Brown's daughter, Cathy, married German musicologist and music critic for the *Times*, Franz Hueffer. Her son, Ford Madox Hueffer, anglicised his name in 1919 and is known as a writer under the name Ford Madox Ford. I will refer to him as Hueffer to avoid confusion.

⁸⁶⁹ Champa, and Champa, *German Paintings of the 19th Century*, 4.

⁸⁷⁰ Madox Brown, "Of Mural Painting", https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Arts_and_Crafts_Essays/Of_Mural_Painting accessed 29/2/2022.

German artists, using religious or generic themes.⁸⁷¹ “The assumption that art could express the power and prestige of the nation belied the challenge for the commissioners in explaining why fresco, the style so recently revived in Ludwig’s German renaissance, was the chosen mode to represent English national identity.”⁸⁷²

If we compare a study for *Spirit of Justice* (1845), one of Madox Brown’s unsuccessful entries for the Westminster competition, with the 1880s Manchester series, it is clear that Madox Brown’s style of work and compositional approach underwent a significant change during the interim period. Treuherz argues that this stylistic shift, giving his art “an entirely new direction of thought and feeling,” began to occur immediately after his visit to Italy in 1845-6.⁸⁷³ During his stay in Rome, he met with Friedrich Overbeck and Peter Cornelius, who were then working with the group of German Nazarene artists.⁸⁷⁴ Madox Brown recalled the impact of these encounters years later, writing on “Historic Art” in the *Universal Review* of 1888. Of Overbeck’s work, he wrote that, “the sentiment was so vivid, so unlike most other art, that one felt a disinclination to go away. One could not see enough of it. Today, more than 40 years later, when coming suddenly on one of these designs in a print shop window, I again experienced the same sensation.” He refers to Cornelius as “no commonplace being with his small fiery eyes...he was the man of genius, the man of the unexpected emphatically.”⁸⁷⁵

⁸⁷¹ Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 21.

⁸⁷² Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 47.

⁸⁷³ Madox Brown, 1865 catalogue, no 36.

⁸⁷⁴ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 9.

⁸⁷⁵ Ford Madox Brown, “Historic Art”, *Universal Review*, September 1888, 38-55, specifically 49.

In the third round of the Westminster competition, as discussed, entries were intended to serve as "...personifications of abstract representations of Religion, Justice and the Spirit of Chivalry" and others "corresponding with such representations and expressing the relation of the Sovereign to the Church, to the Law and, as the fountain of honour, to the State."⁸⁷⁶ The lower section of Madox Brown's *Spirit of Justice*, according to his own description, features "groups indicative of power and weakness... An unbefriended (stet) widow is seen to appeal to justice against the oppression of a perverse and powerful Baron."⁸⁷⁷ This foreground section of the composition, with its details of period costume and the focus on ordinary working people and the inequalities of society, perhaps hints at the direction in which Madox Brown's work was to develop.

⁸⁷⁶ Appendix No. 1 – "Notice of the Appointment of Artists to Execute Frescos Intended for the Decoration of the House of Lords". *Third Report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts*, 7.

⁸⁷⁷ Quoted in Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 108. Exhibition of 1845, no 98, from Hunt 1846.



Figure 5.1 Ford Madox Brown, *Study for The Spirit of Justice*, 1843.
Pencil and watercolour, 51.7 x 75.7cm with arched top corners.
Credit: Manchester Art Gallery: irn: 105964

In Madox Brown's composition, the balanced and symmetrical placement of the figures and the shallowness of the space, with rows of figures arranged in tiers one above the other, is modelled in the Munich mural paintings of the German Nazarene school. The contemporary interest in Medieval and chivalric references was also seen in the work of the Nazarenes and has been discussed in Chapter 4. While London buyers showed little interest in Madox Brown's work, this piece was

eventually purchased in 1889 by Madox Brown's friend and supporter, Henry Boddington (1813–1886), a Manchester brewing magnate.⁸⁷⁸

Post-1845 changes that can be clearly observed in Madox Brown's work include a lighter overall tonality with brighter hues, more naturalistic lighting effects and greater realism of facial expressions and gestures. As Treuherz identifies, a direct link to the work of one of the Nazarene artists can be seen in the first work completed by Madox Brown on his return to England from Italy in 1846. This work was *The Seraph's Watch*.⁸⁷⁹ Treuherz observes that the winged figures in this composition bear a strong resemblance to those in Nazarene artist Philipp Veit's frescos at the Casino Massimo, Rome.⁸⁸⁰ He sees the shift in Madox Brown's general style at this time as "...anticipating the foundation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood."⁸⁸¹

⁸⁷⁸ <https://auctions.tennants.co.uk/auction/lot/1126-ford-madox-brown-1821-1893-study-for-the/?lot=2417705&sd=1> accessed 20/11/2023.

⁸⁷⁹ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 116. Ford Madox Brown first displayed *The Seraph's Watch* at the British Institution for Promoting Fine Arts exhibition in 1847. It was then thought lost until rediscovery in a private collection in 2011. <https://www.thehistoryblog.com/archives/12320> accessed 29/04/2025.

⁸⁸⁰ Philipp Veit, *Heavens of the Blessed and the Empyrean*, ceiling fresco in the Dante Room, 1818 to 24, Casino Massimo, Rome.

⁸⁸¹ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 115-6.



Figure 5.2 Ford Madox Brown, *The Seraph's Watch*, 1847.
Oil on panel, 35 x 50.2cm.
Public domain.



Figure 5.3 Philipp Veit, detail from *The Empyreum and Figures of the Celestial Spheres of Paradise*.
After Dante's *Divine Comedy*, fresco on the ceiling at Casino Massimo, Rome, 1817 to 1827.
Photograph public domain https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Philipp_Veit_005.jpg

In my opinion, changes to one particular technical aspect of Madox Brown's work at this time unquestionably had a profound effect on its appearance. As his diary recalls, he began to use a white underpainting rather than the traditional brown. This change lightened and unified the tone and colour of the whole image. It is perhaps no coincidence that this effect is like that created by the white plaster ground of a fresco. Madox Brown wrote that there is "...nothing like a good coating of White to get a bright and sunny colour."⁸⁸²

Buckingham Palace Garden Pavilion

Alongside the Westminster project, Albert also had a personal scheme to promote the fresco technique, which allowed selected artists to experiment with fresco in a less public forum than the Palace of Westminster. In 1843, he approached some of the leading academicians of the time to decorate a newly built garden pavilion in the grounds of Buckingham Palace with a series of frescos. The eight artists selected were prominent RAs, including Charles Eastlake and William Dyce.⁸⁸³ The actual pavilion fell into disrepair and was demolished in 1924.⁸⁸⁴ However, the decorative scheme can be reconstructed from detailed colour plates in a contemporary publication by Albert's main art advisor, Ludwig Grüner.⁸⁸⁵ From these illustrations, it is clear that artists were commissioned to decorate rooms dedicated to the works of British authors, such as "Comus" by John Milton, and also to create a loggia in the

⁸⁸² The diary of Ford Madox Brown, 1821-1893, 35 <https://archive.org/details/diaryoffordmadox0000brow> accessed 26/2/2023.

⁸⁸³ The artists selected were Charles Eastlake, William Dyce, Edwin Landseer, Charles Robert Leslie, Daniel Maclise, Sir William Ross, Clarkson Stanfield and Thomas Unwins. Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 32.

⁸⁸⁴ See <https://www.rct.uk/collection/708005/the-decorations-of-the-garden-pavilion-in-the-grounds-of-buckingham-palace> accessed 25/11/2023.

⁸⁸⁵ Ludwig Grüner with text by Mrs Jameson, *The decorations of the Garden-Pavilion in the grounds of Buckingham Palace*, "Engraved Under the Superintendence of L Grüner, Author Of "Fresco Decoration in Italy During the 15th. and 16th. Centuries." <https://www.rct.uk/collection/708005/the-decorations-of-the-garden-pavilion-in-the-grounds-of-buckingham-palace> accessed 27/04/2025.

style of Raphael's Vatican rooms. Frescos were also painted on the lunettes in the central octagon of the pavilion (Fig. 4.5).

The engravings of Albert's pavilion project show obvious similarities in design and execution with Cornelius's Munich fresco project in the Loggia of the Alte Pinakothek, completed in 1840. In what was probably the first depiction of its kind, Cornelius's images symbolically illustrated the chronological development of art. As contemporary German art critic Ernst Förster (1800-1885) observed, "the corridor in front of the painting halls on the south side of the Pinakothek is divided into 25 loggias... for which the history of modern painting provided him with the material. One half of it is dedicated to *Italian art*, the other to *German art*, to which the latter is followed by *French art* with a few names."⁸⁸⁶ With their biographical approach, the frescos clearly illustrate the idea of art as the product of the individual mind and an expression of the individual human spirit. This chronological and comparative approach to presenting the history of art, as modelled in the German *Kunstgeschichte*, was the one strongly promoted by the Prince, as previously discussed, for the arrangement of the artwork at the MAT Exhibition in 1857. As Avery-Quash and Meyer outline, publications such as Franz Kugler's *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei* (Berlin, 1837) presented individual artworks as part of a continuous historical development, while still acknowledging the work itself as the product of the artist's subjective vision, influenced by their unique personality and circumstances. This new approach attempted to understand art history "not as an

⁸⁸⁶ For a detailed description of these frescos and engravings of their compositions, see *Peter of Cornelius, Drafts to the Art Historical Frescos in the Loggias, The Royal Pinakothek in Munich*, Engraved by H. Merz. with Explanatory Text by D. R. Ernst Förster (Alphons Dürr, 1875), 11.
https://de.wikisource.org/wiki/Peter_von_Cornelius_%E2%88%92_Entw%C3%BCrfe_zu_Fresken_in_den_Loggien_der_Pinakothek_zu_M%C3%BCnchen accessed 29/03/2023.

aggregate of separate details but as a coherent organic whole, and to reach a fuller understanding of the development of art by studying its history from its very origins.”⁸⁸⁷



⁸⁸⁷ Avery-Quash and Meyer, "Substituting an approach to historical evidence for the vagueness of speculation", 29.



Figure 5.4 Two Images of the frescos from the Garden Pavilion, Buckingham Palace, completed 1846. Plates from Ludwig Grüner, *The decorations of the Garden-Pavilion in the grounds of Buckingham Palace*. Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 708005.



Figure 5.5 Peter Cornelius, west wing of the Loggia of the Alte Pinakothek. Featuring the history of Northern art, this scheme was designed between 1827 and 1836, executed between 1834 and 1840 and destroyed during World War II. Photograph 1930, Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlung, Neue Pinakothek, Munich, Public Domain.



Figure 5.6 Peter Cornelius, *Death of Raphael*, fresco design. *Drafts of the Art Historical Frescos in the Loggia, The Royal Pinakothek in Munich*. Engraved by H. Merz, with explanatory text by D. R. Ernst Förster (Alphons Dürer, 1875).

Albert's interest in fresco continued over a prolonged period and he was undoubtedly significant in the general promotion of the technique in Britain. In 1847 he commissioned William Dyce to decorate the staircase at Osborne House with a fresco of *Neptune Resigning the Empire of the Seas to Britannia*.⁸⁸⁸ Avery Quash and Sheldon record that the Westminster mural scheme ran, with ever-decreasing momentum, as a "conspicuous and expensive public project" for almost 30 years from 1841 to 1870.⁸⁸⁹ It has also been shown that leading Manchester figures played a role in Albert's fresco projects, and that Madox Brown himself entered two of the early fresco competitions overseen by the Prince. Coincidentally, I noticed that Charles and Elizabeth Eastlake and Prince Albert's art advisor Ludwig Grüner lived

⁸⁸⁸ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 12.

⁸⁸⁹ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 193.

in Bloomsbury's Fitzroy Square as neighbours of a young Madox Brown during the 1840s.⁸⁹⁰

Ford Madox Brown's Frescos

The selection of Madox Brown to undertake the Manchester fresco series was an opaque process, with no evidence of the open competition often held for public commissions during this period.⁸⁹¹ Madox Brown, then living in London, was proposed for the commission by his Manchester-based friend and supporter, Frederic Shields (1833-1911). Shields was an ally of town-hall architect Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905), who assumed overall control of the whole decorative scheme. Shields offered to share the work with Madox Brown, with each man completing six of the frescos.

While it may have been a personal connection that led Madox Brown to be offered the commission, his work was known and admired in Manchester, and he had exhibited at both the RMI and the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition. In 1874, Madox Brown gave lectures at the RMI on the "Latest Phase of Painting in Europe" and "Style in Art".⁸⁹² Madox Brown's diaries from his time in London, in contrast, record a far less positive experience, with many years of poor sales and financial worry. The disinterest of the London patrons in Madox Brown's work is described by German writer and critic Mathilde Blind (1841-1896), writing in *Art Weekly* on the occasion of the temporary exhibition of Madox Brown's *John Kay, Inventor of the Fly Shuttle*, held in 1890 at Dowdeswell's Gallery, London:

⁸⁹⁰ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 32.

⁸⁹¹ Full details of the events surrounding the Manchester mural project are outlined in the catalogue produced for the 2011/12 exhibition held at Manchester City Art Gallery, Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*.

⁸⁹² Anon, reported on favourably in an article in *The Manchester Weekly Times*, Saturday 19 December 1874, 7.

It is to be regretted that the perusal of this page of our art history is offered so seldom to the London student that to many Madox Brown can be nothing but an empty name, unassociated with any distinct idea of production, good or bad. In Manchester it is a name to conjure by, and there its owner has long since earned the reward of praise and pudding denied to him by the self-confident but somewhat thick-sighted metropolis.⁸⁹³

As Trodd outlines, although never an official member of the Pre-Raphaelites, Madox Brown became closely associated with the group after tutoring Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882). The new style which his work represented was favoured by a number of Manchester collectors, and Manchester City Art Gallery still has a significant collection of Pre-Raphaelite work. Among Madox Brown's influential allies in Manchester were C. P. Scott, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*; Thomas Horsfall, cultural philanthropist; Charles Rowley, the frame-maker, art dealer and educationalist; and Walter Crane, who would become Director of Manchester Art School in 1893.⁸⁹⁴ Paintings in the Pre-Raphaelite style were also well represented in the 1857 Manchester Art Treasures exhibition, with several images by William Holman Hunt (1827-1910) and Madox Brown himself, lent by fellow artists and local Manchester owners.⁸⁹⁵ The exhibition also included *The Incredulity of St. Thomas* (cat. 674) by Overbeck, one of the leaders of the Nazarene movement. Perhaps Madox Brown's most significant composition, entitled *Work*, was purchased by the RMI in 1886 to much popular acclaim. Georgeanna Martell Spagnolo has explored the way in which the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was inspired, in

⁸⁹³ Mathilde Blind "Mr Ford Madox Brown's Pictures at Dowdeswell's", *Art Weekly*, 19 April, 1890, 70-71. "Regarding the small collection of his works now on view at Messrs. Dowdeswell's Gallery in Bond Street, we reflect with annoyance, not unmixed with shame, that such examples of earnest and thorough workmanship are with us only for a while, and that they owe their existence to the enterprise and good taste of the corporation of that town of eternal rain with which the Londoner scornfully connects only smoke and manufactories, cotton and commerce.
<https://mathildeblind.jamesdiedrick.agnesscott.org/nonfiction/mr-ford-madox-browns-pictures-at-dowdsewells/>
accessed 18/01/2024.

⁸⁹⁴ Trodd, *Ford Madox Brown, Manchester Murals*, 50-52.

⁸⁹⁵ Thomas Fairbairn lent Holman Hunt's *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (cat. 470), and *The Awakened Conscience* (cat. 550); naturalist J. Broderip lent Holman Hunt's *The Hiring Shepherd* (cat. 424). William Morris lent Ford Madox Brown's *The Hayfield* (cat. 319). Artist Augustus Egg lent Madox Brown's *Claudio and Isabella* (cat. 565), and the artist himself lent *Christ Washing Peter's Feet* (cat. 554). Also featured was John Everett Millais *Autumn Leaves* (cat. 543).

part, by the Nazarenes. Spagnolo claims that Madox Brown, who was educated on the continent, speaking three languages fluently, influenced the development of the Pre-Raphaelite style when he brought his knowledge of the Nazarene movement back to the United Kingdom.⁸⁹⁶

The frescos were, from the start, an integral part of the extensive decorative scheme for Alfred Waterhouse's Town Hall design.⁸⁹⁷ Such was his enthusiasm for their inclusion that spaces were also designed to continue through the suite of ceremonial rooms near the main entrance, although these were never completed.⁸⁹⁸ Running down each long side of the Great Hall, under the vaulted ceiling with its high windows and above its oak-panelled lower wall, Madox Brown's images were placed at eye level. There was evidently concern that the images should be clearly seen by the viewer. Historically, it was common for paintings to be arranged at various heights to cover a wall. For example, some of the visitors to the 1857 MAT exhibition were clearly anticipating challenging viewing conditions. The meticulously recorded items of property lost at the exhibition include three pairs of opera glasses, twelve opera glass cases and three telescopes.⁸⁹⁹

The growing concern for the promotion of both active engagement from the viewer and respect for the individual creative production of the artist was reflected in critical commentaries of the time, such as critic Philip Hamerton's *Thoughts about Art*:

When you go to a painters' studio and ask him to show you a picture, he does not run upstairs with it and hang it out at the window of the third storey and tell

⁸⁹⁶ Georgeanna Martell Spagnolo, *Art that is Not So New*.

⁸⁹⁷ Manchester Town Hall was designed by Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905) and built from 1867 to 1877.

⁸⁹⁸ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 167.

⁸⁹⁹ *Executive Report*, Appendix Xiii – *Return of Lost Property*.

you to go out in the street and look up at it; he puts it on an easel, level to your eye, wheels the easel into the best light, and you really see the work.⁹⁰⁰

Wall paintings had an advantage over easel paintings as they formed an integral part of the architecture. In an educational and democratic spirit, the placement of images in public buildings made them widely accessible. The inclusion of a series of historical scenes in the Town Hall reflected the widely read view of John Ruskin, expressed in his *Seven Lamps of Architecture* – “There should not be a single ornament put upon great civic buildings, without some intellectual intention.”⁹⁰¹ Between 1857 and 1859, Ruskin commissioned a series of fresco murals depicting scenes from Arthurian myth for the Oxford Union library building. These were executed by a team of Pre-Raphaelite artists, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), and Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898).⁹⁰² Fresco presented one particular advantage for a mural work in that it had a non-reflective matt surface which would not generate distracting reflections for the viewer. Traditionally, frescos cover a wall surface without any framing device. However, as a hybrid version of frescos, the Manchester series is presented on individual sections of wall and framed. Perhaps in an effort to ensure clear communication with the viewer, the titles of the images are inscribed on the frames. The educational value of murals in making fine art accessible to the general population was also advocated by prominent figures such as Sir Henry Cole, who commissioned murals for the new buildings at South Kensington Museum.

⁹⁰⁰ Philip Hamerton, *Thoughts about Art* (Macmillan 1889), 243.

⁹⁰¹ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, originally published by Smith, Elder & Co. in 1849, Chapter 6, “The Lamp of Memory”, 174.

⁹⁰² For further information about this project see Clare A. P. Willsdon, *Mural painting in Britain 1840-1940: image and meaning* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 258.

The Town Hall itself could also be interpreted as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a concept influenced by nineteenth-century Romanticism, in which different art forms combine to create a single, unified whole. The entire building, much like Pugin's Houses of Parliament, is a multi-media symbolic entity, with the Manchester bee, cotton plants, strands of cotton, and other armorials and emblems incorporated throughout the building, from floor tiles to ceiling bosses. It reflects the values of the city's civic leaders and the importance of commerce and the textile industry to Manchester's identity. There exists a letter in which Waterhouse suggests to Joseph Thompson, Chair of the building committee, that it might be prudent to reduce some of the cotton references. "It would perhaps be well to introduce illustrations from some poet of some story not necessarily connected with Manchester, so as to take people's thoughts entirely away from cotton and all its works!"⁹⁰³ Mark Crinson suggests an implicit reference to industrial machinery and the chimneys and pipes associated with steam power in the clustered sets of ringed shafts that articulated the walls of the Great Hall and frame each of the murals.⁹⁰⁴ Crinson observes that the building demonstrates "a shared line of techno-scientific and architectural thinking that linked the medieval and the industrial."⁹⁰⁵ As can be seen in Fig. 5.10, the simple dark wood frames of the frescos have a dentilled design, reminiscent of the square teeth of cogs in machinery.

The setting for Madox Brown's frescos is the main chamber of the Town Hall. A huge public space with multiple functions, this room is in the form of a vaulted hall with

⁹⁰³ Waterhouse to Thompson, 22 May 1876, MCL gb127.

⁹⁰⁴ Mark Crinson, *Shock City: Image and Architecture in Industrial Manchester* (Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2022), 115.

⁹⁰⁵ Crinson, *Shock City*, 132.

seven bays.⁹⁰⁶ At the eastern end is a vaulted apse, which contains an organ and a platform. If an audience were seated in the hall, they would face towards this platform, with the murals being seen as two sequences of six, to their left and right.



Figure 5.7 The Great Hall of Manchester Town Hall, view to the east. Designed by Alfred Waterhouse (1830-1905), and built from 1867 to 1877, showing three of the twelve frescos in situ. Photograph by Tom Page, from Wikimedia Commons, under the Creative Commons license.

⁹⁰⁶ John H. G. Archer, "A Classic of Its Age", 137-161 in *Art & Architecture in Victorian Manchester*, John H. G. Archer (ed) (Manchester University Press, 1985).



Figure 5.8 The Great Hall - view to the west showing four of the frescos in the series. victorianweb.org. Public domain.

The lighting of the chamber is sympathetic to the frescos. There are large traceried windows which use mainly grey tints and have little colour. This provides plenty of light by which to view the compositions, but avoids coloured light falling on the frescos. The decoration of the lower part of the walls, as can be seen (Fig. 5.8), is restrained to avoid distraction. This is in stark contrast to the wagon roof, which is decorated with symbols of countries and cities with commercial links to Manchester, alongside various other symbols, such as the bee and cotton flower, related to textile manufacture and industry.

In May 1881, Shields formally withdrew from the project without making any start, leaving Madox Brown to complete all twelve images alone.⁹⁰⁷ The images were large, measuring 10.6' x 4.9', and if they were to be completed in fresco, it was

⁹⁰⁷ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 64.

necessary to complete them on site, directly onto the walls of the Great Hall.⁹⁰⁸ We know that Brown composed the images with a concern for their contribution to the total architectural scheme, not as standalone images, as would have been the case with easel paintings. He emphasises the picture surface through the use of linear patterns, which balance spatial effects such as the foreshortened figures. He believed that “the very essence of the wall picture is its solidity, or at least its not appearing to be a hole in the wall.”⁹⁰⁹ He expressed a desire also to paint the end walls of the room because “the idea of pictures round a room would then be done away with, and the mural decoration of the Hall perfected.”⁹¹⁰

There is a noticeable feature of the arrangement of Madox Brown’s figure groups which, I would suggest, links directly to the use of fresco technique and can also be seen in the work of the Nazarene artists and fresco work in general. The figure groups in Madox Brown’s compositions are frequently arranged in blocks, with a simple silhouette often formed by clothing. A key challenge of true fresco techniques is that the artist paints directly and definitively onto a wall prepared with a section of wet lime plaster, known as a *giornata*, just enough for a day’s painting. This, of necessity, required the completion of sections with a relatively smooth and straightforward outline. A faint seam can often be seen separating the different *giornate* on large frescos, and it would not be desirable to have this seam running through a figure. Hence, the *giornate* were often planned with the patch of wet plaster sufficient for a group of figures or a single larger figure. Fig. 5.11 shows a

⁹⁰⁸ 3.2m x 1.45m, Archer “A Classic of Its Age”, 81.

⁹⁰⁹ Ford Madox Brown, “Of Mural Painting”, 157-8.

⁹¹⁰ Ford Madox Brown, “Mural painting and coloured decoration: the Gambier Parry process”, *RIBA Sessional Papers*, vol 21, 1880-81, 276.

study for the *John Kay* image which seems to indicate that the work was approached as blocks of painting.

The local familiarity with and interest in German fresco technique is illustrated by the fact that in 1857, the RMI exhibited cartoons for frescos by a Herr Gotzenberger, "Court Painter at Baden-Baden." The coverage in the *Manchester Times* explains to the reader that the exhibition provides "...a means of conveying information upon the modes by which eminent artists proceed in the working out and maturing their conceptions... Such preparatory works are indispensable for the fresco painter, as his method of painting affords less facility for change of plan than other modes of artistic production; consequently, it is of the first importance that the design should be perfected in some previous drawing..."⁹¹¹ In actual fact, as Madox Brown's diaries testify, only the first seven images were painted directly onto the wall, and due to concerns about the damp and the dirt from the air, none of them was painted using a "true" fresco technique. When faced with the impossibility of successfully applying the Mediterranean fresco technique, Victorian ingenuity adapted the technique into a fresco more suited for northern climates. In 1862, Thomas Gambier Parry published his complex recipe for a spirit fresco.⁹¹² The medium of beeswax, oil of spike lavender, turpentine, elemi resin and copal varnish was applied to a specially prepared plaster or canvas ground.⁹¹³ As Hall Caine noted two decades later:

The process known as "spirit fresco" (of Mr. Gambier Parry's invention) is the one employed, and Mr. Brown says that to the facilities for working the colours and executing different textures by this process there seem practically no limits.

⁹¹¹ This artist was Jakob Götzenberger (1802-1866), a German mural painter and portraitist who had been a pupil of Peter Cornelius. *The Manchester Times*, 19 July 1854, 5.

⁹¹² T. Gambier Parry, *Spirit fresco painting: an account of the process* (London: Science and Art Department, 1880).

⁹¹³ Stephen Rickerby, "Conservation of Lord Leighton's Spirit Frescos 'War' and 'Peace'" *Conservation Journal*, Autumn 1995, Issue 17. <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1331653/the-arts-of-industry-as-spirit-fresco-leighton-frederic-lord/> accessed 07/07/2026.

Every excellence that is attainable in oil or water-colour or fresco is attainable in spirit fresco—depth of tone and brilliancy in the lights, with the utmost transparency in the shadows, and all varieties of glazing, scumbling, re-touching, and stippling. The spaces designed for the pictures were in the first case filled by the builders with a compound of lime and marble dust, fine and hard like ivory, but the faces had to be cut down with gritstone and heated with a gas apparatus, so as to increase the absorbency of the stucco.⁹¹⁴

Madox Brown's diaries record his working late into the night by gas lamp. A canvas "studio" was erected to provide privacy and prevent distraction as the daily Town Hall business of flower shows, organ recitals, public meetings and dinners went on around him. However, even the revised fresco technique proved hugely time-consuming, and an exhausted Madox Brown completed the last five images on canvas after ill health forced a return to London.

The subject matter for one of the significant public precedents to the Manchester scheme, the Westminster frescos, which had commenced with a first call to artists in 1842, was British history, heroic scenes from Milton, Shakespeare, or Spenser, or allegorical representations of "Justice, Religion and the Spirit of Chivalry."⁹¹⁵ A further well-known fresco series was *A Hemicycle of Law Givers* in the Great Hall at Lincoln's Inn, executed by George Frederick Watts (1817–1904) between 1852 and 1859.⁹¹⁶ These works were designed to convey to the public the greatness and moral superiority of Britain as a world leader. As was typical of the History Painting tradition, these images, as Madox Brown illustrates in his description of his own submission for the Parliament scheme, featured allegorical references and had balanced compositions with a central focus. The groups of idealised figures were

⁹¹⁴ Hall Caine, "The Manchester Murals Paintings", *The Magazine of Art*, February 1882, (Cassell & Co), 114-115. <https://archive.org/details/magazineofart05londuoft/page/114/mode/2up> accessed 29/12/2022.

⁹¹⁵ Appendix No. 1, "Notice respecting a Competition in Cartoons", *Report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts* (1842), 7.

⁹¹⁶ Willsdon, *Mural Painting in Britain, 1840-1940*, 27–61, 259–61; Jonathon Marsden, (ed.), *Victoria & Albert: Art & Love*, London: Royal Collection Enterprises Ltd., 2010, 21–22.

carefully posed and draped.⁹¹⁷ As Henry Hallam, Professor of Ancient History at the Royal Academy from 1836 to 1859, stated, History was the most appropriate subject because it could present models for emulation by extracting general lessons from particular events. Hallam also suggested that the pedagogic role of art as an articulation of the power and prestige of England would only be effective if artists were given the opportunity to represent subjects of universal interest.⁹¹⁸ Hence, in the Westminster fresco series, scenes and details are mostly generalised and symbolic. The space is clearly articulated, with a single vanishing point placed centrally. The Manchester scenes, in contrast, feature, as we will explore in more detail later, local events presented from multiple viewpoints, with multiple vanishing points, individualised figures often based on portraits from life, depicted with much detail that is ordinary, often humorous, and particular to the event.

I discussed previously how, particularly in Germany, new philosophical ideas and empirically-based research approaches were also applied to art history.

Winckelmann, in combining history and aesthetics, had linked artistic “perfection” to a particular historical period, which he identified as ancient Greece. In this, he transformed art history, making it significant as providing a model of perfection here on earth, in a sense that it had not been before. According to Watson, “Winckelmann’s achievement was that he took beauty seriously, as the centre of existence, not as an embellishment. Above all, he suggested that if we allow the Greek ideal to influence and permeate our lives, we can hope to reproduce the conditions necessary for great art, we can attain, in other words, a form of

⁹¹⁷ Boase, “The Decoration of the New Palace of Westminster, 1841-1863”, 319-358.

⁹¹⁸ Henry Hallam, Appendix No. 8, “Observations in the Principles which may regulate the Selection of Subjects for Painting in the Palace at Westminster”, by Mr Hallam. *Third report of the Commissioners on the Fine Arts, Parliamentary Papers* (1844) XXXI, 21-24.

perfection.”⁹¹⁹ Hegel also lectured on aesthetics, applying his theories directly to art history and art criticism.⁹²⁰ Hartley discusses the change of approach, “termed *Kunstgeschichte*, this new kind of art-historical study consisted of the careful scrutiny of objects, artists, and collections in order to arrive at a formal definition of stylistic difference.”⁹²¹ As previously discussed, works by German writers such as Carl Friedrich von Rumohr (1785-1843), Johann David Passavant (1787–1861), Franz Kugler (1808–1858), and Gustav Waagen (1794–1868) were translated into English and widely read.⁹²² Both Waagen and Passavant toured the art collections of Britain and wrote of their findings. Waagen, in particular, as covered in Chapters 2 and 3, was a well-known figure in Britain, invited to give evidence before Parliamentary Committees and connected to senior figures of the British art world such as Elizabeth (née Rigby) and Charles Eastlake.⁹²³

The subjects chosen for the frescos were designed to resonate with the people of the locality. Alderman Joseph Thompson, cotton mill owner and bibliophile, was a member of the Decorations and Furnishings Sub-Committee, responsible for managing what was initially an enormously long list of possible topics for the works. He was “most anxious to teach the people that Manchester has a history of which they may be proud... something to brighten the age and quicken the pulse.”⁹²⁴

⁹¹⁹ Watson, *German Genius*, 99.

⁹²⁰ *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik* is a compilation of notes from university lectures on aesthetics given by Hegel in Heidelberg in 1818 and in Berlin in 1820/21, 1823, 1826 and 1828/29.

⁹²¹ Hartley, *Democratising Beauty*, 42.

⁹²² Elizabeth Rigby, later wife of National Gallery Director Sir Charles Eastlake, translated Passavant's *Tour of a German Artist in England* (1836) and Gustav Waagen's *Treasures of Art in Great Britain: Being an Account of the Chief Collections of Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures, Illuminated MSS, etc.* (John Murray, 1854). In 1841, Franz Kugler, Professor of Art History at the University of Berlin, published his *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei, von Constantin dem Grossen bis auf die neuere Zeit*, which was edited by Charles Eastlake. <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/book/a-hand-book-of-the-history-of-painting-by-dr-franz-kugler-part-ii-the>

⁹²³ Avery-Quash and Sheldon, *Art for the Nation*, 89.

⁹²⁴ Julian Treuherz, “Ford Madox Brown and the Manchester Murals” in John H.G. Archer (ed) *Art and Architecture*, Manchester University Press, 1985, 162-207.

There was a notable precedent for Madox Brown's murals in the scenes of Northumbrian history painted at Wallington Hall, by Pre-Raphaelite William Bell Scott (1811-1890) for Lady Pauline Trevelyan, a friend of Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites. Lucy West has explored this mural project in some detail, particularly focusing on the role of female artists and the tense relationship between Bell Scott and Ruskin. West explores the conflicting evidence as to the extent and significance of Ruskin's involvement.⁹²⁵ As Trevelyan records, Madox Brown occasionally visited Wallington.⁹²⁶ It is apparent that he reused some of Scott's motifs: for instance, Scott's first scene also illustrates the building of a Roman fort and has a very similar composition.⁹²⁷

Trodd argues, in his recent publication, that the Manchester murals were the most important public artworks of their day and particularly focuses on how the images might also be interpreted as feeding a more radical localist agenda of anti-authoritarianism and independence.⁹²⁸ I would suggest that the unusual choice of subject matter may also be explained by the politically radical views of the artist himself. According to his grandson, Ford Madox Hueffer, he was a "Socialist of an extreme type" always sympathetic to the "humble and meek."⁹²⁹ It is noticeable throughout the series that everyday events and ordinary people are the main focus of the compositions. The precise choice of subject matter was the artist's own, after approval of the committee. Hueffer reprinted the original list of Madox Brown's

⁹²⁵ Lucy West, 'She enclosed & decorated this hall on the advice of John Ruskin': Pauline, Lady Trevelyan and the creation of Wallington Hall's Central Hall', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 22 June 2020; see <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/wpcontent/uploads/2020/05/west.pdf>.

⁹²⁶ Trevelyan, in Archer (ed) *Art and Architecture*, 167.

⁹²⁷ R. Ironside "Pre-Raphaelite paintings at Wallington", *Architectural Review*, vol 92, 1952, 147.

⁹²⁸ Colin Trodd, "Afterword: The Last of Ford Madox Brown," *Ford Madox Brown: The Manchester Murals and the Matter of History* (Manchester University Press, 2022), 215–23. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv2nnv52n.13>. accessed 1/10/2023.

⁹²⁹ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 400.

chosen subjects: “those submitted to the Committee at the request of Town

Councillor Rowley in November of the year previous: —

1. Agricola builds a Roman fort as a camp, A.D. 60
2. Edwin baptised at Manchester (sic) A.D. 600.
3. The Danes take the town after an obstinate fight.
4. Edward III induces Flemish weavers to settle in Manchester.
5. John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, defends Wickliffe before the Consistory of St. Paul's.
6. Weights and Measures noted and legalised.
7. Chetham founds Collegiate schools for twenty boys.
8. The Sun's parallax determined by an observation [Crabtree's] of the passage of Venus across the sun.
9. The first blood in the Civil War shed at an attack on the bridge at Manchester.
10. The Pretender reviews his adherents in a churchyard at Manchester.
11. One of the first inventors of machines [John Kay] contemplating his work destroyed by the mob.
12. The Peterloo meeting [which led to Reform, which led to Free Trade, without which no steam-power could have availed].”⁹³⁰

Most of Madox Brown's ideas were accepted without question, with the exception of the image proposed as the finale of the series: *The Peterloo Massacre*, which was deemed to be too controversial.⁹³¹ *The Opening of the Bridgewater Canal* was added to the list as an alternative subject.⁹³² The images were intended to represent key scenes from Manchester's history. They provide insight into how the civic leaders of Manchester wanted their city and its people to be viewed. Judging by the images chosen, they saw themselves as non-conformist, philanthropic, acting with commercial integrity, and valuing education and science. However, not all the events depicted actually took place in Manchester. As several writers identify, *The Baptism of Edwin* actually took place in York, Wycliffe was tried in London, and the John Kay incident took place at Bury.⁹³³

⁹³⁰ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 330.

⁹³¹ <https://www.peterloomassacre.org/history.html> accessed 20/11/2023. In 1816 at St Peter's Field, only a short distance from the actual site of the new town hall, sixteen people had died and up to 700 were injured when cavalry charged into a peaceful crowd of around 60,000 men, women and children who had gathered to demand the reform of parliamentary representation.

⁹³² Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 332.

⁹³³ Treuherz, “Ford Madox Brown and the Manchester Murals”, 173.

In an article published posthumously, Madox Brown revealed his views on the autonomy and individuality of the artist. “Another sine qua non as to subject is that the painter himself must be allowed to select it... the actual invention of the subject and working out of it must be his.”⁹³⁴ He also stressed the importance of presenting the subject in a form that the audience could appreciate and understand.

“Much depends on whom the works are for; if for the general public, care should be taken that the subjects are such as they can understand and take interest in...downright facts, either in history or in sociology, are calculated most to excite the imagination.”⁹³⁵

Madox Brown seems to imply here that a move away from symbolism and allegory, towards realistic, factual representation, is a move towards democracy and universal access. The idea that the viewers’ visual perception could be shaped and manipulated through the way in which an image is represented implies an understanding of vision as a subjective physiological and psychological construct. This concept was pioneered by German philosophers from Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) onwards and gained acceptance in the nineteenth century. Physical experiments such as those of Goethe on the perception of after-images following exposure to direct light and the challenges raised by the observation of the fast movement seen in new technologies, such as factory machinery and trains, led to an understanding of “vision” as a complex phenomenon, which could be examined as a biological, physiological, and psychological process. The idea that historical events are multi-faceted and viewed subjectively by each participant could also be inferred from Madox Brown’s compositions. Hueffer recorded a telling aspect of Madox Brown’s working technique:

⁹³⁴ Madox Brown, “Of Mural Painting”, 157.

⁹³⁵ Madox Brown, “Of Mural Painting”, 157.

It was Brown's practice to begin a painting by putting in the eyes of the central figure. This, he considered, gave him the requisite strength of tone that would be applied to the whole canvas... Once he had painted those eyes, he never in any picture altered them, however much he might alter the picture itself. He used them as it were to work up to.⁹³⁶

Also evident to the viewer throughout the fresco series is a concern for historical accuracy and for the depiction of historical events in appropriate contemporary settings. The discipline of History itself was an evolving field, and the idea that historical events should be portrayed with figures in clothing and settings accurate to their period, or as then believed to be accurate based on the relatively limited research available, was something new. Madox Brown's diaries record his efforts to ensure the accuracy of every detail of his images by working as much as possible from direct observation. At times, this could be taken to extremes. Hueffer recalls that during Madox Brown's residence at Manchester Town Hall, an evening organ recital was dramatically interrupted by the high-pitched squealing of a pig. It transpired that Madox Brown had the animal caged in his canvas studio for reference as he completed work on the scene of *The Expulsion of the Danes from Manchester*. The pig, mirroring its fictional counterpart, subsequently escaped, causing much havoc.⁹³⁷

Madox Brown also clearly respected the autonomy of the viewer and accepted that the artist's intention might not always be received as anticipated. He commented on the reception of *The Expulsion of the Danes from Manchester* (Fig. 5.9):

It is not always necessary for the spectator to be exact in his conclusions. I remember once at Manchester; the members of a Young Men's Christian Association had come to a meeting in the great hall. Some of them were there too soon, and so were looking round the room. One observed:

⁹³⁶ Ford Madox Hueffer, "Ancient Lights" (Chapman & Hall Ltd, 1913), 204-5, <https://archive.org/details/ancientlightscer00ford> accessed 21/2/2024.

⁹³⁷ Incident detailed in Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 346-47.

"What's this about?" His friend answered: "Fallen off a ladder, the police are running him in!" Well, this was not quite correct. A wounded young Danish chieftain was being hurried out of Manchester on his comrades' shoulders, with a view to save his life. The Phrygian helmets of the Danes indicated neither firemen nor policemen; but the idea was one of misfortune, and care bestowed on it—and did as well, and showed sympathy in a somewhat uncultivated, though well-intentioned, class of Lancastrians.⁹³⁸



Figure 5.9 Ford Madox Brown, *The Expulsion of the Danes from Manchester*

Gambier Parry process of spirit fresco, 10.6 x 4.9 feet.

Public domain: <https://victorianweb.org/painting/fmb/paintings/7.html> accessed 04/01/2026.

The Danes carry their chief on an improvised stretcher through Manchester. Some trip over an escaped pig while trying to avoid various missiles hurled at them by nearby residents.

As Grewe outlines, the subjectivity of the Romantic imagination as seen in the work of the Nazarenes could be interpreted as a form of doubled reflection, stemming initially from Kant and later developed in the subjective idealism of Johann Gottlieb Fichte's "Ich". "This represents, firstly, reflection on the world, and secondly, self-reflection. The Romantics perpetuated the notion that any search for knowledge must always imply an inquiry into the conditions of the possibility of cognition

⁹³⁸ Madox Brown, "Of Mural Painting", 158.

itself.”⁹³⁹ Madox Brown also wrote a detailed series of descriptions of the completed works, which gives us insight into how he perceived them at the time of their creation and how he wanted the viewer to engage with them.⁹⁴⁰

For the purposes of this thesis, to illustrate the influences on Madox Brown’s stylistic and compositional approaches already discussed, I have chosen three of the twelve fresco compositions to analyse in greater depth.

John Kay: Inventor of the Fly Shuttle

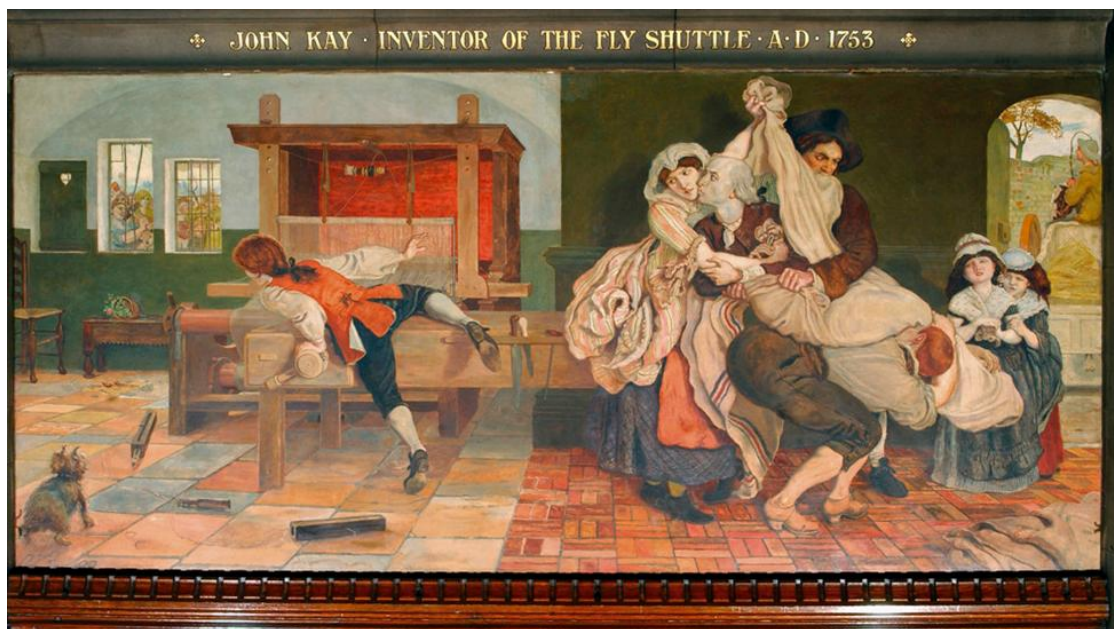


Figure 5.10 Ford Madox Brown, *John Kay: Inventor of the Fly Shuttle*.

Oil on canvas, 1888.

Public domain, <https://victorianweb.org/painting/fmb/paintings/14.html> accessed 04/01/2026.

The tenth work in the series, this image symbolises Manchester’s role in the Industrial Revolution. John Kay invented the fly-shuttle, pictured in the mural as the rectangular wooden object cast away on the floor to the left of the loom. It consisted

⁹³⁹ Grewe, “Historicism and the Symbolic Imagination in Nazarene Art”, 88.

⁹⁴⁰ Quoted variously in Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, e.g. 386.

of "two boxes fastened to the loom," which "fire the shuttle, so to say, to and fro into each other's mouths..."⁹⁴¹ The mechanical launching of a shuttle marked the first step towards a fully automatic steam-powered loom. As Madox Brown described it: "henceforth, through the unique intellect of this Lancashire gentle-man, all was to be changed. A single one-armed weaver could now get through work that before would have needed the four arms of a pair of weavers..."⁹⁴² However, the commercially beneficial new technology was also the cause of unemployment and protest. Madox Brown chose to remind the viewer of this: "About twenty years after, however, the weaving population began to notice this fact, and rioters broke into Kay's house at Bury with the most sinister intentions."⁹⁴³ The shuttle was such a well-recognised symbol of Manchester's industry and wealth that it is employed as a decorative device in various areas of the Town Hall, including in the Council Chamber, where bands of crossed shuttles decorate the ceiling.

In a city founded on industry, with a great financial and intellectual interest in engineering and technological progress, one might assume that Kay would perhaps be portrayed as a heroic figure, although the idea that an inventor of technological developments was worth celebrating as a hero was perhaps also a novel concept. In fact, the image portrays Kay as anything but heroic. The viewer might struggle even to identify the main protagonist at all. He is pictured in the process of being bundled up in blankets as he is helped to escape from a mob about to break in and destroy his invention. The viewer is drawn into the image by the engaging details, such as the small dog depicted barking frantically to one side of the composition as the

⁹⁴¹ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 386.

⁹⁴² Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 386.

⁹⁴³ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 386.

rioters enter via the window. Kenneth Bendiner points to the humorous elements included on the fringes of Brown's subject matter as devices to encourage the active involvement of the viewer in analysing and questioning the meaning of the image.⁹⁴⁴ In this scene, the normal hierarchies of society are reversed, with the hero vulnerable and the enemy, a group of seemingly ordinary, approachable-looking citizens, depicted as characters with whom we should also empathise. The viewer is drawn into the jeopardy: as Kay's family fears for his life, we are comforted, as on the opposite side of the composition, we glimpse the preparation of a cart on which, perhaps, Kay is about to escape to safety. Kay is not simply a professional inventor; he is also a family man. His domestic role is emphasised by the presence of a younger man, perhaps his son, who attempts to protect the loom and what appear to be his two distraught daughters who cower to the right of the scene. A woman kisses him goodbye and attempts to help him hide.

This approach to the subject matter and composition, which is employed across the entire mural series, is linked by both Codell and Trodd to the contemporary, largely German-led, cultural shift in concepts of history and the depiction of heroes. Codell suggests that Madox Brown's Manchester frescos, with their focus on events driven by key individuals, could be interpreted as a visual representation of the approach to history seen in the work of contemporary German-influenced writers such as Thomas Carlyle.⁹⁴⁵ Carlyle developed what is referred to as the "Great Man" theory. This philosophy of history focuses on the role of exceptional individuals in shaping events. Madox Brown's admiration for Carlyle is well documented, and Carlyle's

⁹⁴⁴ Kenneth Bendiner, "The Game of Life. Ford Madox Brown – a character study" in Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 45.

⁹⁴⁵ Julie Codell, "Ford Madox Brown, Carlyle, Macaulay and Bakhtin: The Pratfalls and Penultimates of History", *Art History*, Volume 21, Number 3, September 1998, 324.

portrait appears in *Work*, one of Madox Brown's best-known paintings.⁹⁴⁶ *Work* also contains a reference, on a hoarding, to Bobus Higgins, a corrupt butcher and later politician who appears in several of Carlyle's writings.⁹⁴⁷

This "celebration" of developments in industrial technology, for which Manchester was famous, is depicted in all its complexity and social impact. It is made clear that technological advances do not always bring universal benefit, perhaps a rather unexpected viewpoint for Manchester's leaders. Codell points out that Madox Brown was a close acquaintance of William Morris and was interested in his utopian socialist ideas. In 1888, the year this mural was completed, Madox Brown joined the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.⁹⁴⁸ Morris and other members of the Arts and Crafts Movement continued to strive for a model of commerce that did not undermine human relationships and permitted the development of the inner life and potential of the individual. This was very much the ideal of human wealth as outlined by the German Romantics.

⁹⁴⁶ Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 206. *Work* was purchased by Manchester Art Gallery and is still in their collection.

⁹⁴⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, Chapter 5 <https://www.online-literature.com/thomas-carlyle/past-and-present/5/> accessed 18/01/2024.

⁹⁴⁸ See Treuherz's chronology, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 65.



Figure 5.11 Ford Madox Brown, *Unfinished Study for John Kay, Inventor of the Fly Shuttle*.
 Tempera on panel, 78.8 x 35.4cm.
 Public Domain | Manchester Art Gallery, irn: 5468

The composition of *John Kay: Inventor of the Fly Shuttle* is divided into two main sections and two sub-sections, each of which illustrates a separate part of the narrative. Rather than a static scene, these events are unfolding as we view them and even hint at a future event in Kay's escape on the hay cart. This device of depicting an unfolding narrative, almost like a cartoon strip, viewed in separately created spaces of the composition, is, I would suggest, reminiscent of the early Renaissance works such as Domenico Ghirlandaio's (1448–1494) *Birth of the Virgin*, 1491 or even the scenes in the panels of Jan Van Eyck's (c. before 1390-1441) *Ghent Altarpiece* of 1432, which so influenced the Nazarenes and later the Pre-Raphaelites.⁹⁴⁹ Trodd suggests that Madox Brown's compositions illustrate a history composed of multiple individual experiences, rather than one single experience. The upright figures in the dignified, often symmetrical poses of traditional history paintings have vanished to be replaced by groups fused in a mass of intertwining forms. Trodd draws links between the maelstrom depicted by Madox Brown in this

⁹⁴⁹ Jan Van Eyck's *Ghent Altarpiece* was one of several pieces of Early Netherlandish art to be exhibited at the MAT in 1857.

image and the *Sturm und Drang* of romantic literature.⁹⁵⁰ In my view, the homogenous mass of bodies, one recumbent and wrapped in a shroud-like cloth, is reminiscent of the early Flemish depictions of the *Descent from the Cross* as seen in the work of Rogier van der Weyden (1400-1464), c. 1435 or Hugo van der Goes (c. 1430/1440–1482), c.1525. Madox Brown would have seen Van der Weyden's work at the MAT exhibition, where several pieces of his own work were also exhibited, in 1857.⁹⁵¹ Kay's face appears ashen with fear as he kisses his wife goodbye, the same grey hue as seen in Grünewald's (1512–1516) graphic depiction of the dead Christ.⁹⁵² The subject matter of this image may be secular, but as Madox Brown himself discussed, the use of interactive devices aims to create a universal engagement and emotional appeal in a way similar to religious works of the early Renaissance. The creation of emotional investment in the viewer is something that Madox Brown also identified in the work of Cornelius and Overbeck:

I have noticed that subjects that interest infallibly all classes, educated or illiterate, are religious subjects. It is not a question of piety—but comes from the simple breadth of poetry and humanity usually involved in this class of subject. The amount of religiosity in either spectator or producer has nothing to do with the feeling.⁹⁵³

⁹⁵⁰ Trodd, *Ford Madox Brown, Manchester Murals*, 45.

⁹⁵¹ Brown attended the MAT exhibition in 1857. See Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 145-147., Van der Weyden's work was in the *Ancient Master's* section, catalogue number 412.

⁹⁵² Crucifixion panel from *The Isenheim Altarpiece*, Matthias Grünewald, 1512–1516, Unterlinden Museum, Colmar.

⁹⁵³ Madox Brown, "Of Mural Painting", 158.

Dalton Collecting Marsh Fire Gas



Figure 5.12 Ford Madox Brown, *Dalton Collecting Marsh Fire Gas*, 1887.

Oil on canvas, 10.6 x 4.9 feet.

Public domain, <https://victorianweb.org/painting/fmb/paintings/12.html> accessed 04/01/2026.

Dalton Collecting Marsh Fire Gas was the twelfth and final image in the series, although it was actually the ninth to be completed. This is the only nineteenth-century subject in the series. Dr John Dalton (1766-1844) was a Manchester-based chemist, physicist, meteorologist, philosopher and teacher. His discoveries, which began with his experiments on the composition of natural gas, were hugely important in atomic theory and led to the development of the table of atomic weights.⁹⁵⁴ As one of the first to formally identify colour blindness, his work highlighted the subjective nature of visual experience – something which chimes well with Madox Brown's own thinking. The study of optics and the discoveries of early physics in the nineteenth

⁹⁵⁴ Frank Greenaway, "Dalton, John (1766-1844)." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Online ed. accessed 21/3/2022. Dalton published *A New System of Chemical Philosophy* as a series over a period of 19 years (1808-27). <https://archive.org/details/newssystemofchemi01daltuoft> accessed 16/11/2025.

century led to an understanding of sight as a physiological phenomenon, constructed by light entering the eye. This was explored particularly among German thinkers and, as previously discussed, in the writing of figures such as Goethe.⁹⁵⁵ Madox Brown spent his career analysing and constructing visual elements to create and communicate his own visual reconstruction of the world. Dalton also focused his attention on vision as a subjective construct, lecturing on the topic in Manchester in 1794.⁹⁵⁶ Born colourblind, his identification of the phenomena and subsequent research contributed to the contemporary analysis of vision. Madox Brown, unlike the sculptors and painters of the majority of the other existing portraits, chooses to picture Dalton wearing the glasses that he habitually wore due to being shortsighted.

It has been claimed that, in his choice of subjects, Madox Brown aimed to draw attention to insufficiently recognised figures.⁹⁵⁷ While this might be true from a twenty-first-century viewpoint, in the period in question, Dalton was incredibly well-known in Manchester. On his death, he was accorded a civic funeral, and more than 40,000 people filed past his coffin.⁹⁵⁸ Dalton's statue, by Sir Francis Chantrey (1838), one of four across the town, would have been seen by Madox Brown in the entrance vestibule each day as he entered the Town Hall. We have previously encountered this sculpture in Chapter 2, in its original setting—the entrance hall of the RMI, from where it was transferred to the Town Hall in 1884.⁹⁵⁹

⁹⁵⁵ Goethe, *Theory of Colours*.

⁹⁵⁶ John Dalton, "Extraordinary facts relating to the vision of colours: with observations". *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*. 1798, 5: 28–45.
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=inu.32000002723619&seq=1&_cf_chl_f_tk=1clbZX54XdqQzB4crpVhpRu2GdY9Qeo0bso7i1upPRM-1783422529-1.0.1.1-HAhLvARDgfwLxSPAPTiBO.m77qpGcYAroo.sR_uydL4 accessed 21/01/2024.

⁹⁵⁷ Trodd, *Ford Madox Brown, Manchester Murals*, 75.

⁹⁵⁸ Kristine King, "Science celebrates 'father of nanotech'", BBC News, 10 October 2003. Archived from the original on 16 August 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3178890.stm> accessed 16/11/2025.

⁹⁵⁹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculptures of Greater Manchester*, 32.

Madox Brown depicts Dalton as an ordinary-looking figure in contemporary dress, leaning awkwardly over a stagnant pond, which he is stirring to release marsh-fire gas, one of the natural and primitive forms of gas. His farmer's boy assistant catches the bubbles in a wide-mouthed bottle as they rise to the surface.⁹⁶⁰ Pictured not in a laboratory but in a field, accompanied by children and farm animals, this image, like that of John Kay, challenges traditional heroic depictions. Madox Brown's own description, however, implies that Dalton represents a particular type of heroism, indeed of continuous striving to achieve in life, the extraordinary built from the ordinary.

[Dalton]...maintained himself in Manchester by school-teaching, but his laborious, if honourable, occupation did not hinder him from indulging in the most abstruse and far-reaching speculations and researches ...this Manchester schoolmaster, alone and unassisted, made himself the father of modern chemistry.⁹⁶¹

This reflects the German philosophy of *Bildung*, which, as previously discussed, involved the possibility, and indeed the responsibility, of the individual for self-development and assumed the form of the *Bildungsroman* in both German and British literature. Thomas Carlyle was responsible for the 1839 English translations of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *Wilhelm Meister's Travels*, generally identified as the forerunners of the *Bildungsroman*.⁹⁶²

As the final mural in the series, it might be assumed that this image was a summary or final statement; however, the spacious and calm rural scene appears to have little connection to the teeming industrial city that was Manchester in 1888. According to

⁹⁶⁰ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 379.

⁹⁶¹ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 379.

⁹⁶² Goethe, translated by Thomas Carlyle, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*, Vol. I (of 2), Release Date: June 20, 2011 [eBook #36483] <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/36483/36483-h/36483-h.htm> accessed 05/04/2024.

Hueffer, this image was intended to bring "...the whole (*mural series*) into touch with modern methods of thought."⁹⁶³ There does seem, however, to be some sense of the continuous passage of time and circularity of events in the connection with Manchester's rural past and the group of children who represent its future. As Crinson observes: "the murals Ford Madox Brown painted for the Great Hall were intended to establish a sense of Manchester's history and of the relations between its past and its industrial present."⁹⁶⁴ This may reflect Madox Brown's awareness of Carlyle's premise that historical events are the result of an endless series of shifting influences and interactions:

Actual events are nowise so simply related to each other as parent and offspring are; every single event is the offspring not of one, but of all other events, prior or contemporaneous, and all will in its turn combine with others to give birth to new: it is an ever-living, ever-working Chaos of Being, wherein shape after shape bodies itself forth from innumerable elements.⁹⁶⁵

In his description of this fresco, Madox Brown gave autonomy and voice to the figures who populated the scene. "A group of children are watching him, and the eldest, who has charge of them, is telling the little boy, who is bent on catching sticklebacks, that 'Mr. Dalton is catching Jack o' Lanterns' — marsh-fire gas being, when on fire, the substance the "'Will o' the Wisp" is composed of."⁹⁶⁶ According to Madox Brown's later recollections, the depiction of the group of children included a self-reflective, autobiographical element. Madox Brown described how he dressed the boy with the fishing rod in the same clothing that he wore at that age: "I was dressed in what was then called a blouse—jacket and

⁹⁶³ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 377.

⁹⁶⁴ Crinson, *Shock City*, 132.

⁹⁶⁵ Carlyle published his philosophy of history in an essay "Thoughts on History" (1830) actually centres on the argument that that real history is not a record of politics and battles but made by "all the forgotten train of artists and artisans" who have shaped the "inventions and traditions and daily habits that regulate and support our existence", of religion and beliefs, of inventions, philosophy and literature <http://www.blupete.com/Literature/Essays/Best/CarlyleHistory.htm>. Grażyna Siedlecka's paper "Carlyle's Conception of History," associated with the University of Warsaw, explores Carlyle's view of history as a divine, non-rational, and idealistic process, centred on the actions of great men. <https://repozytorium.amu.edu.pl/server/api/core/bitstreams/ecea5a81-dab6-437c-8835-7c642daf14de/content>

⁹⁶⁶ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 379.

trousers all in one, buttoned up behind, and a little of the shirt frequently, on that side, remained out....Precisely so, I have painted the little boy in the fresco of John Dalton of Manchester, only mine was of blue cloth.”⁹⁶⁷ I suggest that compositional considerations probably precluded the use of blue in this area of the image. There have been many instances of artists including self-portraits in compositions to present themselves as mediators between the present and the past. This is evident, for example, in Raphael’s self-portrait in the *School of Athens*, a work that Madox Brown, who spent an extended period visiting Rome, would surely have been familiar with.⁹⁶⁸ Here, the role of this figure as a bridge between the viewer and the historic scene is emphasised by the placement of the child’s foot, which almost appears to protrude from the canvas, across the frame and into the viewer’s space. It is also apparent, however, that although the boy looks directly at the assistant collecting the gas bubbles, at the same time, he appears visually separated from the scene by the fishing rod, which forms a line, dividing the compact group of children (the future) from the unfolding events (the past).

⁹⁶⁷ Letter from Madox Brown to Boddington, cited in Angela Thirlwell, *Into the Frame: The Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown* (Pimlico, 2011), 10-11.

⁹⁶⁸ Raphael, *School of Athens*, fresco (1508–11) in the *Stanza della Segnatura*, Vatican.

Chetham's Life Dream

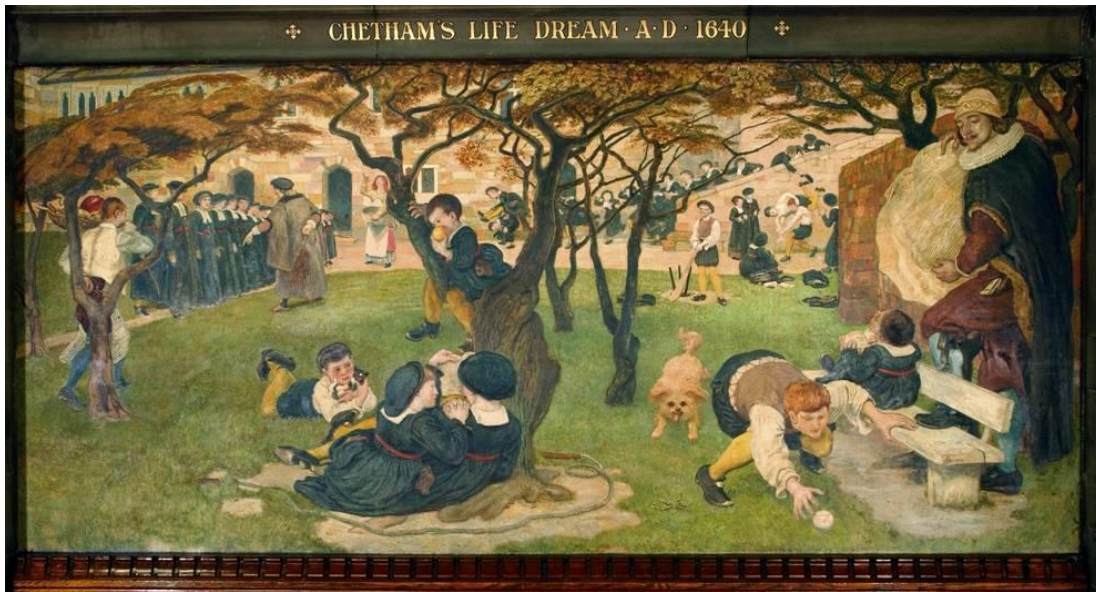


Figure 5.13 Ford Madox Brown, *Chetham's Life Dream*, 1886.

Oil on canvas, 10.6 x 4.9 feet.

Public domain, <https://victorianweb.org/painting/fmb/paintings/12.html> accessed 04/07/2025.

Completed in 1886, *Chetham's Life Dream* was the first of the series to be painted on canvas in Madox Brown's London studio and later attached to the Town Hall wall. Humphrey Chetham (1580-1653) was a Manchester cloth-merchant and banker widely recognised for his philanthropic activities.⁹⁶⁹ During his life, he founded a public library and a school for some 40 boys who would not otherwise have had the opportunity of an education. Chetham is pictured standing on the extreme right of the image, holding the will in which he endowed the library and school to ensure their continuation and growth long into the future. Madox Brown would have been familiar with the school, whose buildings he accurately portrayed in the background.⁹⁷⁰ The portrait of Chetham, as Treuherz points out, with its ruff and cap, has similarities to a portrait held at the college and also, I would suggest, to William Theed's 1853 statue

⁹⁶⁹ For example, William Theed Junior's monument to Chetham in Manchester Cathedral, see Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculptures of Greater Manchester*, 8.

⁹⁷⁰ These now house Chetham's Library and Music School.

of Chetham in Manchester Cathedral.⁹⁷¹ Providing a link between present and past, Madox Brown's student Harold Rathbone sat for the portrait.⁹⁷² Hueffer recorded Madox Brown's description of the everyday details in this projected future of learning, which included "the school-cook...impatiently awaiting the butcher", and "the scholars engaged in drilling, reading, leap-frog, wrestling, and a game called 'stools,' apparently the forerunner of cricket."⁹⁷³ Evidently, Madox Brown's search for an authentic view of historical events extended further than period costumes. Like the other works in the series, this composition contains engaging details and humorous elements. A small dog enjoys a game. Children under the tree play with a kitten, eat an apple and read a book. The humour not only draws in his viewer but could also be interpreted as a further example of Madox Brown seeking to explore the subjective and individual nature of historical events.



HUMPHREY CHETHAM'S LIFE DREAM.
(From the Sketch for the Fresco in the Town Hall, by Ford Madox Brown.)

Figure 5.14 Ford Madox Brown, sketch for *Chetham's Life Dream*.

Published in William Arthur Shaw, *Manchester Old and New* (Cassell and Co., 1894), Vol 1, 141.

Credit: Cornell University Library <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo1.ark:/13960/t4sj22h58&seq=177>

⁹⁷¹ Wyke and Cocks, *Public Sculptures of Greater Manchester*, 8.

⁹⁷² Rathbone (1858-1929) was a pupil of Madox Brown who later founded the Della Robbia Pottery Company. See Treuherz, *Ford Madox Brown: Pre-Raphaelite Pioneer*, 298.

⁹⁷³ Hueffer, *Ford Madox Brown: A Record of His Life and Work*, 372.

The composition of this image is particularly unusual and, like others in the series, breaks with what would traditionally be expected of a History Painting. There is a centrally placed feature, but unusually, it is a tree and a group of children with their backs to the viewer. The main protagonist, by contrast, is in the shadows on the margins of the scene. Space is indicated in the image by extreme changes in the scale of the figures, but spatial illusion is undermined by the lack of tonal shading or aerial perspective. The flat and decorative effect is further increased by the stylised tree branches. Both those close to the viewer and those further away appear to interweave on the same plane, across the surface of the picture. Spatial illusion becomes a device to link the present-day viewer to past events. As Chetham's *Life Dream*, his vision of the future, is laid out before us, a young boy chasing a ball appears to lunge awkwardly out of the image, breaking the proverbial fourth wall into the lived space of the viewer.

The fresco series simply would not have existed in its current form without the influence of artists and ideas originating in Germany. The unusual adoption of the fresco technique in Manchester followed its promotion in England by Prince Albert and in Europe by the German artists known as the Nazarenes. As we have seen, the large-scale fresco series completed by Cornelius in Munich was taken as a model for the earlier Westminster fresco series. The Nazarenes' work was also a significant influence on the style and composition of Madox Brown's work in general. The specific approach to the subject matter, with its individualised, subjective take on historic events, reflected Madox Brown's close interest in the writings of Thomas Carlyle, a significant conduit in Britain for the ideas of German thinkers. A comparison of these murals with previous British History Painting reveals a

significant conceptual and stylistic shift, which, while not within the scope of this thesis, some writers have identified as being influential on the wider development of British painting and on the development of History Painting in particular.⁹⁷⁴ The murals reflect both individual aspiration for self-improvement and a belief in the capacity of an individual to transform both herself and wider society. This is depicted as the *Life Dream* of Chetham and also reflected in Madox Brown's own description of the Dalton image. This seems closely linked to the German-originated philosophical approach of *Bildung* that I have explored in various other contexts within this thesis.

Madox Brown's Town Hall fresco series provides further evidence of the broad and profound influence of ideas stemming from Germany on the development of public art in nineteenth-century Manchester. The novel idea that visual art should be displayed in an accessible public space for the education, enjoyment and spiritual enrichment of the general public was an approach modelled in German cities such as Munich and Berlin. The spiritual and life-enhancing qualities ascribed to art and aesthetic experience had been given a philosophical foundation, most notably in the writings of Schiller, a German theorist and creative who was widely celebrated in nineteenth-century Manchester.

⁹⁷⁴ See Trodd, *Ford Madox Brown, Manchester Murals* and Codell, "Ford Madox Brown, Carlyle, Macaulay and Bakhtin: The Pratfalls and Penultimates of History".

Conclusion

The four individual case studies in this thesis demonstrate ways in which the commissioners and civic leaders of Manchester, confronted by the challenge of structuring new forums for the public viewing of art, referred to the established art galleries of states such as Bavaria and Prussia as their models and took German ideas as part of their intellectual foundation. My study reveals that this was an all-pervasive influence, which could equally have been demonstrated by examining many other sites of public art in or around Manchester. What ultimately becomes clear through this research is that Manchester's civic culture was truly cosmopolitan, with the race, religion and even the politics of its metropolitan leaders seemingly of little relevance and rarely referred to in any commentary relating to municipal endeavour. It was, rather, behaviour and self-identity that defined the social position of the individual. Manchester's nineteenth-century cultural and intellectual focus on self-realisation and personal identity connects to one of the most significant German ideas revealed in the contemporary commentaries: the concept of *Bildung*. This innate spirit of self-improvement, initially at an individual level, was undoubtedly encouraged in the competitive, innovative and ambitious Manchester context.

This thesis employs a broad, single-city analysis, drawing on diverse case studies to uncover the profound and widespread impact of German theories and ideas, particularly the phenomenon of *Bildung*, on the early development of Manchester's public art. This productive approach invites further scholarship focused on other provincial centres and expands upon the groundwork already laid by scholars such as Waterfield in the context of northern cities and Klonk in London. I would suggest

that an appreciation of the largely German-inspired philosophies and underlying motives for the initial provision of public access to visual art is fundamental to understanding the workings of British arts institutions today. These values and beliefs directly influenced their initial working practices, gallery layouts, and public engagement methods. They even influenced the design and architecture of the museum buildings themselves. An understanding of the intellectual foundations of public art and arts institutions enables current practice to be examined in a more engaged and enlightened way and contributes valuably to debates about the purpose and future of public art. For example, the motives behind the provision of forums for the display of art to the public, such as the Royal Manchester Institution or the Albert Memorial, and organisations such as Manchester School of Art, included civic pride and economic competitiveness. Industrialists believed that exposing workers to art, and providing them with training in practical art would improve the design and saleability of manufactured goods. Today, British arts institutions can face pressure to justify public funding using economic arguments, such as boosting tourism, or supporting the creative industries, which continue to rely on Victorian utilitarian thinking.

Less often recognised as a driving force for public art access, and made very apparent in this thesis, was the belief, as outlined in the work of Schiller, that the aesthetic experience provided by visual art can elevate individual and collective human consciousness (*Bildung*). For the Victorians, as I have discussed, this motive was frequently overtaken, particularly in the later years of the nineteenth century, by what can be interpreted as either philanthropic approaches, or motives of social control, in which art galleries, in particular, became vehicles for promoting good

“taste” and educating and “civilising” the working classes. This historic ideological conflict between preserving the experience of an elite space for aesthetic contemplation, and allowing access to cultural capital by all sections of society, continues to be apparent today. The Arts Council *Impact Framework* measures, among other things, “social and economic benefits” and “community engagement”.⁹⁷⁵

When Waagen’s method of curation, which grouped art by national “schools” and chronological eras, became the blueprint followed by British curators, this brought not only the promise of accessible education in art history but a narrative which we now recognise as promoting Western, male superiority. In Britain, this also represented Imperial dominance. We can see a direct response to this in the current institutional debates about the restructuring of displays and cataloguing systems and the widespread moves to decolonialise and refocus collections. Some public monuments have also been the subject of debate. In 2023, government guidance was published advising custodians facing calls for the removal of controversial public statues to “retain and explain”.⁹⁷⁶

I have discussed how the architecture of early Neoclassical “temples of art”, such as the RMI, modelled on German precedents, was intended to inspire awe and encourage certain types of reverential and intellectual behaviour. The specialist language and scholarly framework traditional to the discipline of art history have also been recognised as a significant barrier to access for people from lower

⁹⁷⁵ <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/delivery-plan-2021-2024/measuring-impact> accessed 07/07/26.

⁹⁷⁶ Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Historic England, The Rt Hon Lucy Frazer KC and Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/retain-and-explain-guidance-published-to-protect-historic-statues> accessed 05/02/2026.

socioeconomic backgrounds.⁹⁷⁷ The interiors of these Victorian buildings are also frequently imposing, creating a shrine-like setting for aesthetic contemplation. Some modern institutions, conscious of the exclusionary impact this can have on sections of society, have developed new approaches and display strategies in an attempt to create a more relaxed and inclusive environment.

In Manchester, German theories of subjectivity and self-realisation pervaded the cultural and social scene and were even reflected in the popular literature of the Manchester *Bildungsroman*. Commentaries throughout this study reveal the incredible drive and intellectual ambition of many of Manchester's leading figures who, unsurprisingly, could relate to the "Renaissance men" depicted on Prince Albert's memorial. *Bildung* and the ideals of liberal arts education, as advanced by Humboldt in Prussia, appear to have influenced the conception, creation, and reach of Manchester's cultural institutions. Following the ideas of writers such as Schiller, the visual arts were valued for their potential insight into the human soul and for the role they could play in providing opportunities to experience *Bildung* through the appreciation of beauty. Schiller expressed his belief in the power of the arts (poetry, literature, visual arts, theatre and music) to provide access to higher-order thought and feeling. As initially formulated in the German context, *Bildung* was to be pursued as an end in itself, dissociated from practical or economic gain. In Manchester, commentaries hint at a modified approach. Statements such as the founding documents of the RMI promoted the character-building aspects of cultural experience and closely aligned cultural and commercial activities. The RMI Council aimed "to unite with the activity and enterprise of trade a taste for what is elegant

⁹⁷⁷ Laura Lee, "Finding Language for Working Class Stories: Art Schools and the Turn to Research-Based Practices," *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 23, no. 3 (2024): 287–300.

and graceful in art.”⁹⁷⁸ The pursuit of cultural experience was thus seen as complementary to industrial and commercial life.

More broadly, by exploring the four varied aspects of public art across the city, this thesis’s research findings present an alternative narrative to the more commonly presented monolithic histories of institutions. This enables an appreciation of the multifaceted sense of agency evident among the wide array of actors, many of German descent, who actively participated in shaping Manchester’s cultural organisations. This is particularly evident, to cite but one example, in Manchester’s obvious affinity with Prince Albert, as outlined in my discussion of the memorial that the city’s patron class erected in his honour. In this period, before the establishment of civic governance, aspirational individuals had the opportunity to directly influence the development of their own social and cultural environment. Key German figures recur in the lists of founders, fundraising committees and managing councils of Manchester’s many civic organisations, substantiating the extent to which this defining moment of the city’s cultural history was inextricably connected to Germany.

Taken as a whole, what I have described in this study serves to both extend and complicate the notion of German influence on the development of public art and arts institutions in nineteenth-century Manchester. What becomes clear is that the influences and ideas were not just received as an external input and consciously acted upon; instead, they formed part of a fundamental, underlying, cross-continental culture. In addition, cross-cultural exchange routinely took more tactical and tangible forms. As I have discussed, Germans such as Schinkel and the Prussian

⁹⁷⁸ RMI Council Minute Book, 5 November 1823, MCL GB127.M6.

technologist Peter Beuth travelled to London and Manchester, fascinated by new industrial developments, and Waagen and Passavant toured Britain collating details of private art collections.⁹⁷⁹ Manchester manufacturers saw nothing unusual in sending their sons to German universities, attending evening soirées at the Schiller Institute and listening to the Hallé orchestra play Mendelssohn. Manchester's distinctive cultural identity, in itself, contributed to the ready reception of German ideas and to their reinterpreting and repurposing in unique ways. In Manchester's middle-class society, it was possible to be both "German" and "British" and to exhibit what Simon Gunn refers to as a "specific cultural praxis", somewhere in between the two.⁹⁸⁰

That is not to say, however, that Manchester's identity was absorbed into an amorphous "European" culture. Manchester, with its city status, coat of arms, strong sense of self-identity and regional pride, viewed itself as a kind of city-state. Indeed, as we have seen, the cultured industrialists of the city drew parallels between themselves and the Medici of Renaissance Italy. Manchester was proudly autonomous, with its own distinctive regional identity and, by the late nineteenth century, its own civic systems and local government organisations. When the splendid Gothic Town Hall opened in 1877, it housed offices for the newly formed departments of waterworks, gas, sanitation and law enforcement. These were all functions of a locally organised City Council with very little connection to London. The decentralised nature of British society in the nineteenth century is a factor that has not been fully explored in accounts of early public art and arts institutions. In the

⁹⁷⁹ Peter Christian Wilhelm Beuth (1791-1853). See William Otto Henderson, "Peter Beuth and the Rise of Prussian Industry, 1810-1845", *The Economic History Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1955, 222-231. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2590990> accessed 12/11/2024.

⁹⁸⁰ Gunn, *Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class*, 27.

mid-century, prior to the provision of railways, travel from London to Manchester meant a gruelling 17 hours in a horse-drawn coach. A clear instance of Manchester's independence was evidenced in discussions about the Manchester School of Design. Manchester fiercely opposed the curriculum that London attempted to impose on provincial schools, implementing instead broader approaches to applied art education. The pattern production of the region's textile industry, with its focus on elements of art: line, form, tone and colour, and designs based largely on abstractions of natural forms, was fundamental to the Manchester School's art and design curriculum. This focus on design, derived from plant forms, also contributed to a move away from both the longstanding academic ideal of the human figure, as promoted by the Royal Academy, and traditional subject-based art.

In Manchester, as the case studies reveal, the cultural nexus appears to have been both regional and international. This contrasts with the nationalistic and imperialist discourses reflected in London-led visual arts projects such as the Palace of Westminster frescos and London's Albert Memorial. Ford Madox Brown's Town Hall frescos, for example, tell a specifically local and individual story of Manchester's history, reflecting new, largely German-led approaches to the interpretation of historical events. These frescos are housed within the Great Hall, where the coats of arms of Manchester's international trading partners, and symbols of the textile industry, make a powerful statement about Manchester's wider role in the world. Iconography discussed in the case studies, such as the allegorical figures representing the continents on the Albert Memorial and the symbolism within the Manchester coat of arms, also acknowledges Manchester's international recognition through its trade and social networks, dealing directly with the wider world.

Additionally, Mancunians appear to have identified particularly with the independent German states, each of which had its own ruler and governing structure. As this thesis outlines, these cosmopolitan values and culture, focused on the individual, the regional and the international, were reflected in the public art within Manchester's civic spaces and in the development of the city's public arts institutions. This implies the need for a modification of the accepted discourse, which equates cultural reflections of "Britishness" with nationalism and imperial expansion.

The potential benefits of experiencing beauty through exposure to artwork and the exact nature of art's transformational potential continue to be a focus of interest. In May 2025, Cambridge researchers published a study which found that focusing on the beauty of objects resulted in participants experiencing "elevated psychological states" and being likely to report "feeling enlightened, moved, or transformed."⁹⁸¹ "Appreciating the beauty of artworks led participants to think in a more abstract way... as well as to transformative, and self-transcendent emotions."⁹⁸² This was something that German thinkers and the civic leaders of nineteenth-century Manchester instinctively knew, and Thomas Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* in the 1830s had already observed:

The man who cannot wonder, who does not habitually wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole *Mécanique Céleste* and Hegel's *Philosophy*, and the epitome of all Laboratories and observatories with their results, in his single head – is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no Eye...⁹⁸³

⁹⁸¹ University of Cambridge <https://www.cam.ac.uk/stories/artistic-beauty-abstract-thinking#:~:text=Now%2C%20a%20new%20study%20from,it%20comes%20to%20our%20lives> published 7 May 2025. Story: Fred Lewsey accessed 08/05/2025.

⁹⁸² Elzé Sigutė Mikalonytė, Jasmina Stevanov and Simone Schnall, International Association of Empirical Aesthetics, *Transformed by Beauty: Aesthetic Appreciation Increases Abstract Thinking and Self-Transcendent Emotions in an Art Museum* <https://doi.org/10.1177/02762374251337699> accessed 29/05/2025.

⁹⁸³ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh in Three Books* (Oxford University Press, 2000), 4. This novel was first published as a serial in *Fraser's Magazine* from November 1833 to August 1834. It purports to be an editorial commentary on the thoughts of a German philosopher called Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. It parodies Hegel and German Idealism.

The particular relationship with German ideas and German individuals, which was so influential in nineteenth-century Manchester, arose due to a combination of social, political, religious and commercial circumstances. These same factors led to its definitive end in 1914. As WWI approached, all things German became anathema and even the British royal family, whose German heritage had been so proudly shared by Prince Albert, anglicised its name.⁹⁸⁴ While the German population largely disappeared as a visible force, its fundamental influence on key British institutions and civic structures remained. This examination of the connection between the Manchester art world and Germany has provided an instructive case study in transnational influence and the processes of individual and institutional dialogue by which this occurs.

⁹⁸⁴ The House of Windsor came into being in 1917, when the name was adopted as the British Royal Family's official name by a proclamation of King George V, replacing the historic name of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha <https://www.royal.uk/house-windsor> accessed 07/07/26.

Appendix:

Public Memorial Statues of Albert, Prince Consort, in the UK						
Listing	Location	Date	Sculptor	Medium	Monument/Statue Type	Website hyperlink
Not listed	Aberdeen, Rosemount Viaduct	1863	Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805-1867)	Bronze	Seated figure wearing the uniform of field marshal and the robe of the insignia of The Order of the Thistle.	http://www.a-b.uk/section/1117283/the-statue-of-the-prince-consort-1818-1861-in-canton-street-aberdeen
1368287	Abingdon on Thames, Oxfordshire	1864	Designed by the architect John Gibbs (c.1827-?) The statue itself was sculpted by a Mr Bolton of Worcester.	Marble	Standing figure wearing Elizabethan costume holding a scroll. On a 14.6m high hexagonal ashlar column carved with shields and flowers in medallions.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1368287
Not listed	Birmingham, staircase of "Council House"	1866	John Henry Foley (1818-1874)	Marble	Standing figure wearing Garter Robes. This was originally intended to be an outdoor memorial placed beneath a Gothic canopy.	https://victorianweb.org/bsculpture/foley/j1.html
1331148	Cambridge University	1866	John Henry Foley (1818-1874)	Marble	Standing figure wearing the robes of Chancellor of Cambridge University.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1331148?section=official Report error
Ireland	Dublin	1871	John Henry Foley (1818-1874)	Bronze	Standing figure wearing Elizabethan costume, holding a book in his left hand, with additional figures on plinth.	http://www.britainweb.org.uk/britain/search/building/20200232/annals-of-ireland/victor-bacon-dublin ?subunit=...text=The%20monument%20to%20the%20work%20and%20a%20complex%20of%20girth
1030357	Framlingham, East Suffolk	1865	Joseph Durham (1814-1877)	Bronze	Standing figure wearing Elizabethan costume.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1030357
National Record of the Historic Environment LB27840	Edinburgh, Charlotte Square	1866	Sir John Steell (1804-1891)	Bronze	Equestrian statue featuring the Prince's horse "Nimrod". Figure wearing Field Marshal's uniform.	https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/apex/?p=1505:300---VIEW%TYPE%VIEWRE%20pageone.LB27840
Not listed.	Exeter, RAMM	1868	Edward Bowring Stephens (1815-1882)	Marble	Standing figure wearing the robes of the Chancellor of Cambridge University, contained in an aedicule in the entrance hall of RAMM.	http://www.exetermemories.co.uk/templ_people/stephen.php
Not listed.	Glasgow, George Square	1866	Baron Carlo Marochetti (1805-1867)	Bronze	A bronze equestrian statue wearing military uniform, on a red and grey granite pedestal, featuring bronze reliefs depicting fine arts and industry. In 1888 the Queen ordered a replica to be erected in Windsor Great Park.	https://victorianweb.org/bsculpture/marochetti/s.html
1379874	Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire	1879	William Theed (1804-1891)	Bronze	Standing figure wearing the Robes of the Garter and holding plans of the Royal Dock, Great Grimsby, which he had officially opened in 1852.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1379874
Not listed.	Guernsey - St Peter Port	1863	Joseph Durham (1814-1877)	Bronze	Standing figure wearing the Robes of the Garter. Duplicate of Durham's statue of Prince Albert in London, which stands on a higher, more elaborate pedestal behind the Royal Albert Hall.	https://victorianweb.org/bsculpture/durham/d1a.html
1261493	Halifax	1864	Thomas Thornycroft (1815-1885)	Bronze	Equestrian statue in Field Marshal's uniform.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1261493
1283109	Hull, Pearson Park.	1868	Thomas Earle (1810-1876)	Marble	Standing figure in contemporary dress.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1283109
Not listed.	Leeds, in the vestibule of the town hall	1865	Matthew Noble (1817-1876)	Marble	Standing figure wearing what appear to be light academic robes which give the statue a classical feel. In the left hand the figure holds an academic cap.	https://victorianweb.org/bsculpture/noble/1.2.html
1073462	Liverpool, St George's Plateau	1865	Thomas Thornycroft (1815-1885)	Bronze	Equestrian statue wearing contemporary dress.	https://victorianweb.org/bsculpture/thornycroft/a.html
1227163	London, Prince Consort Road, Kensington	1863	Joseph Durham (1814-1877)	Bronze	Standing figure wearing the robes of the Order of the Garter. Memorial to 1851 Exhibition	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1227163
1217741	London, Kensington	1871	Monument designed by George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878). Statue by John Henry Foley	Gilded bronze statue.	Prince Consort National Memorial. Seated figure is shown looking towards the Royal Albert Hall and wearing robes of the Knight of the Garter. Figure holds a catalogue of the Great Exhibition. This is a complex monument with sculptural and decorative elements.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1217741
1064639	London, Holborn Circus	1874	Charles Bacon (1821-1886)	Bronze	Equestrian statue in military uniform, raising a cocked hat.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1064639
1323670	London, Windsor Great Park	1887	Joseph Edgar Boehm (1834-1890)	Bronze	Equestrian statue wearing a Field Marshal's uniform. Copy of the Edinburgh statue.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1323670
1197820	Manchester, Albert Square	1867	Thomas Worthington (1826-1909) Statue by Matthew Noble (1817-1876)	Sandstone with marble statue	Gothic canopy by Thomas Worthington. Standing figure wearing the robes of the Order of the Garter.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1197820
Historic Environment Scotland: LB39336	Perth, North Inch Park	1864	William Brodie (1815-1881)	Sandstone	Standing figure dressed in the robes of the Knight of the Thistle and holding a plan of the Crystal Palace.	https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/apex/?p=1505:300---VIEW%TYPE%VIEWRE%20pageone.LB39336
1386180	Salford, Peel Park	1864	Matthew Noble (1817-1876)	Limestone	Standing figure wearing academic robes. In his right hand is a university cap, in his other hand a scroll. The cap rests on a globe and books, placed behind his left foot.	https://manchesterhistory.net/manchester/outside/MAN/ENB/ycwca/abert.html
Cadw (Welsh) Listing: 6114	Tenby - Wales	1865	John Evan Thomas (1810-1873)	Marble	Standing figure wearing a military uniform with the mantle and collar of the Order of the Garter and holding a Field Marshal's baton.	http://www.welshhistory.net/reports/listedbuildings/10/report23angusand6114
1201858	Wolverhampton, Queen's Square	1866	Thomas Thornycroft (1815-1885)	Bronze	Equestrian statue with figure wearing a Field Marshal's uniform.	https://historicalengland.org.uk/listing/the-list-first-entry/1201858

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