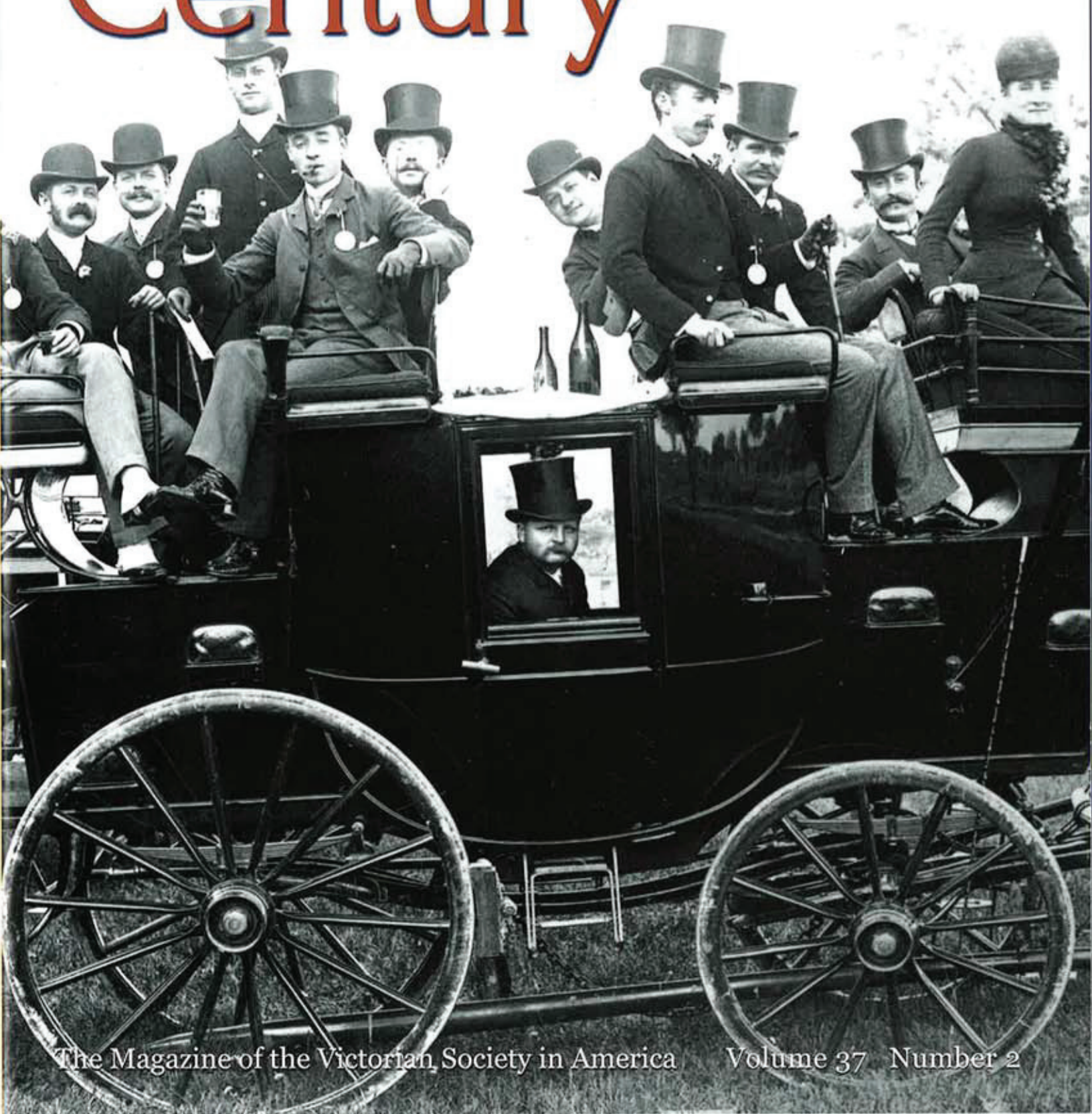


Nineteenth Century



The Bibliophile



John Lockwood Kipling: Arts & Crafts in the Punjab and London

Julius Bryant and Susan Weber, editors.

New York, New Haven and London: Bard Graduate Center Gallery and Yale University Press, 2017.

John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911) was an English artist, architectural sculptor, designer, teacher, museum curator, preservationist, manager of international exhibitions, and writer who made his reputation in India during the era of the Raj. Now, for the first time, these many facets of his career are brought together and explored in depth in a new book, *John Lockwood Kipling: Arts & Crafts in the Punjab and London*. The publication of this book coincides with an exhibition that originated at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and will be shown at the Bard Graduate Center in New York City from September 15, 2017, to January 7, 2018. I had the privilege of being a peer reviewer for two chapters and have been thoroughly engrossed with this ambitious, interesting, and richly illustrated publication.

Kipling is a fascinating and complex figure—a ceramic modeler and designer of lower-middle class origins whose marriage to Alice Macdonald in 1865 placed him at the epicenter of the British Arts and Crafts movement; his new brothers-in-law included Edward Burne-Jones and Edward Poynter. The Kiplings then moved to India where their son, the famous author, Rudyard Kipling, was born. There, John Lockwood Kipling spent more than two decades working tirelessly at government art schools, first at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art and Industry in Bombay (Mumbai) and then at the Mayo School of Art in Lahore.

Scholarly writing on Kipling appeared in the late 1970s and 1980s with important works by Partha Mitter, Mahrukh Tarapor, and Mildred Archer. Kipling's biography by Arthur Ankers was published in 1988. In the 2000s, Kipling appeared in postcolonial scholarship, notably in publications by Peter H. Hoffenberg, Tim Barringer, and Arindam Dutta. In my own work of that decade, I placed Kipling in the context of his friendship with Lockwood de Forest, the American business partner of Louis Comfort Tiffany who revived Indian woodcarving traditions for Gilded Age patrons. Against this backdrop of growing interest, it became clear that a new assessment of Kipling's legacy was overdue.

Although Rudyard Kipling destroyed most of his father's private papers shortly after his death, the amount of material that has survived is striking. This new book is certain to be the definitive source of information on Kipling, detailing a wealth of new research. It also gives a personal and ground-level view of the complex intersection of the British Arts and Crafts movement and art production in Victorian-era India. In her preface, Deborah Swallow introduces

Kipling as a thought-provoking case study because he illuminates the idealism of the Arts and Crafts era and its paradoxes, especially in India. Kipling was thoroughly impressed by the beauty of India's arts, and his encouragement of India's artists was no doubt sincere. At the same time, his efforts were part of a larger project of British colonialism in India, with its pressures and constraints. It is also clear that Kipling's personal experiences were not easy—his low social status amongst the British in India, the loss of children, illness, and the constant need to supplement the family income are made evident. Likewise, his sometimes-contradictory attitudes toward life in India are expressed in his dry wit.

The book is organized in a loosely chronological fashion with most chapters focused on a specific aspect of Kipling's life and art. This thematic approach results in repeating timelines, but establishes each of Kipling's many specific areas of accomplishment in England and India. The book begins with a succinct history of the South Kensington Museum and its relationship to Indian art. Attention then turns to Kipling's biography, followed by detailed chapters on his many pursuits. This segues to a chapter on Alice Kipling, followed by discussions on Kipling's post-India projects, and the book concludes with an assessment of Kipling's influence.

Julius Bryant writes the introduction, highlighting key characters beside Kipling that influenced the larger history of the Arts and Crafts movement as it played out in India, notably John Ruskin, George Birdwood, William Morris, Owen Jones, and later E.B. Havell. Bryant discusses the positive reception of Indian art at the Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations in 1851 and the founding of the South Kensington Museum, along with a parallel school of industrial arts. This phase of British enthusiasm for Indian design was short-lived. After the Sepoy Revolt of 1857-58, which resulted in the establishment of the British Raj, Ruskin shifted from being an early admirer of Indian arts to being a vocal detractor. Still, with Kipling's involvement, British India continued to be represented at international exhibitions, and the South Kensington Museum evolved into the Victoria and Albert Museum, which still maintains collections of historical and traditional Indian arts. Bryant's next chapter examines Kipling's personality, along with his career versatility as he moved from London to Bombay as an agent of the British Indian empire, a decision seemingly guided by the opportunity for upward mobility rather than the desire to render public service.

there are links to two “digital publications”—one link connects to all of the above and the other, titled “New York Crystal Palace 1853 Audio Guide” brings the listener to a title page with clickable photographs of the poet Walt Whitman, along with two (presumably fictional) characters: Philip DeGrasse, an African American man; and Aunt Kitty, a stout woman in a bonnet; these three people deliver commentary on various objects, places and events associated with the fair.

Whether or not all these elements are formally a part of the digital publication, or repurposed components of the exhibition (or both) is unclear, but they certainly all shed light on the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1853. Navigating through them all, however, can lead to either confusion or serendipity, depending upon your mood. I found David Jaffee’s introductory essay almost by chance (hint: click on the word “introduction,” not the author’s name or the short paragraph of text, which you might mistake for the entire introduction).^{*} It’s not always obvious how to enter and exit components, and there are errors, such as mislabeled images and typos, as well as technical glitches. But look beyond these difficulties. For example, despite encountering a paragraph of dummy text (lorem ipsum anyone?) as the heading to the audio guide, I clicked on the face of Aunt Kitty and was rewarded by hearing her no-nonsense views on fine china, statuary and the Singer sewing machine. The audio guide, the Stroll, and the Visitor’s Companion incorporate real or imaged textual and/or visual period quotations. For example, the masthead of the Visitor’s Companion is designed to look like a mid-nineteenth century illustrated magazine, and its text reads like a mid-nineteenth century guidebook. The digital format offers nifty interconnections. A bright blue soda water bottle encircled with a relief depicting the Crystal Palace is in the catalog section, and also turns up when the reader visits the Latting Observatory Ice Cream and Refreshment Saloon. A superlative feature of this digital publication is that with a simple touch all illustrations can be enlarged. This is true not only for the 49 objects in the exhibition, but for all the illustrations in essays and the Stroll and the Visitor’s Companion. It is a delight to use the iPad’s open and close pinch gesture to enlarge and shrink the 1854 daguerreotype view of the Crystal Palace nave, zooming in and out of this rare image, seeing more with greater ease than if I could hold the actual daguerreotype in my hand. (Of course, I cannot!) But, the virtues of this publication are also its weaknesses. By clicking here and there the reader wanders, finding surprises but also forgetting the path back to the rest of the book, or finding oneself sometimes in the nineteenth century along with Aunt Kitty, and the next moment abruptly in the twenty-first century with one of the essays. Like Hansel and Gretel without their breadcrumbs, the reader can get lost in the woods.

This digital publication on the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1853 is a solid source of information on an important topic about which too little is known. The illustrations give unparalleled visual data on

objects exhibited in fair, the architecture of the Palace, and nearby touristic sights. The captions accurately identify the objects, put them in the context of the fair, and sometimes, in a larger cultural context. The nine essays, written by Bard’s MA and PhD candidates, all follow a formula, undoubtedly dictated by their professors. Each of them is approximately 1,500 words long, has 4-8 illustrations, and makes use of primary and secondary sources. They are of varying quality. I recommend Sheila Moloney on the architecture of the Crystal Palace; Lara Schilling on mass transit; Rebecca Sadtler on how New York City’s nascent police force was legitimized through its work at the Fair; Roberta Gorin, on how showing off souvenirs of the fair reiterated the act of attending the fair and reinforced the spectacle of city life; and Alexandra Beuscher on how technologies that used light (photographs and light house lanterns) epitomized the Victorian predilection to connect science, art, philosophy and theology. Through the many accounts of the fair published in newspapers and illustrated press that are quoted throughout the digital publication, we get the mainstream media’s boosterish attitude towards the enterprise.

The audio guide gives us three very different and personal viewpoints: that of Whitman, who marvels at the spectacle; and that of two imagined characters: Philip DeGrasse, who while excluded from the Crystal Palace because of his race, experiences the fair by handling goods destined for display; and the New England matron Aunt Kitty, who is nearly, but not quite, flabbergasted by the Fair. The historical fiction delivered through these audio tracks seems well-documented, but I would have liked to know more about the sources used.

The digital publication as whole reinforces several points. The Crystal Palace was an ambitious proclamation of America’s power to produce goods and consume them. The organizers of the Crystal Palace hoped to bowl visitors over with stylish furnishings and fashions and the latest technological accomplishments. More subtle cultural products were also on display, such as the social control exerted by the police within the walls of the Palace, and the leisure practices of New York’s diverse population exercised in the midway booths outside the walls. The Crystal Palace was a spectacle within the larger spectacle of New York City. All in all, through some technical wizardry in the service of scholarship, this digital publication lets us experience the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1853.

Reviewed by Karen Zukowski

^{*}During the editing process for this review, the “New York Crystal Palace 1853 Audio Guide” was changed and improved.

The audio guide can now be found on one of the two entry interfaces (<http://crystalpalace.visualizingnyc.org>), biographies are now supplied for the three commentators, citing the sources used for their words.