

VIEW



John Lockwood Kipling: Arts & Crafts In the Punjab and London, Bard Graduate Centre, 18 West 86th Street, New York, 10024, 15 September – 7 January 2018 www.bgc.bard.edu

John Lockwood Kipling (1837-1911), less well-known than his famous son, Rudyard, finally receives due recognition in this splendid and thought-provoking exhibition. Curated by Susan Weber and Julius Bryant, this show premiered to great acclaim at the V&A last January. The New York exhibition includes 250 objects including metalwork, furniture, drawings and paintings, textiles, books, architectural ornaments, ceramics and relief sculpture from the V&A collection and lenders across Britain, the United States, and Pakistan.

An artist, teacher, curator and influential figure in the Arts and Crafts movement, John was a social campaigner for the preservation and promotion of Indian crafts, while also a designer of architectural sculpture whose creations can be seen on buildings in London, Mumbai, and Lahore. Born in Yorkshire in 1837, he was inspired to become an artist after a visit to the 1851 Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace, where he saw Indian objects later purchased by the V&A. This show includes excellent examples of Indian craftsmanship displayed there in 1851, such as a purple woven silk prayer carpet, a sword decorated in gold and enamel, and a watered steel and gold helmet with heron feather ornaments.

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In the early 1860s, John joined the South Kensington Museum (as the V&A was known until 1899) producing terracotta architectural decoration for its new buildings. He left London for India in 1865 with his wife Alice, who was pregnant with Rudyard, and spent the next ten years in Bombay teaching sculpture at the Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art. In 1875, he moved to Lahore, the capital of the Punjab, to become the founding principal of what would become Pakistan's National College of Arts, and curator of the Lahore Museum. Then, craft traditions were in decline and John developed a pioneering approach to art education based on traditional crafts and training methods. As he wrote soon after his arrival, 'It is the object of the Lahore School to revive crafts now half forgotten,' and he travelled to observe, collect, and record these skills. Particularly fascinating are his evocative portrait drawings of craftsmen and cotton workers on view alongside 19th century objects made using the techniques depicted.

In 1893 he retired from his position in Lahore and returned to England, where he and Rudyard often collaborated. Rudyard wove his father's vivid recollections into his stories, many of which John illustrated. A great number of these editions are displayed, including John's illustrations for the novels *Kim* and *The Jungle Book*. The exhibition is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated and researched catalogue, giving the full spectrum of John Lockwood Kipling's achievements. ***

Left: Three weavers seated at a loom, drawing. Himachal Pradesh, India, 1870

Alice Pattullo: *Of House and Home*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG, 17 June – 17 September 2017 www.ysp.co.uk

'I'm not a very superstitious person,' Alice Pattullo confides as we walk through her exhibition at YSP, stopping to read a selection of illustrated aphorisms that exhort us to put lemon under our chairs to preserve friendships or to kiss logs to make a good fire. 'Maybe that's why I like folklore so much, I'm looking at it from a distance.' Her show explores the exotic world of the Victorian home, taking us on a short walk from the garden, through the kitchen and into the parlour. This last room is replete with tiled hearth, a lime green mantlepiece, paper Staffordshire dogs and an array of images of the intricate pastimes with which middle class Victorians whiled away their time.

There are flower arrangements and ornaments made from shells and mourning jewellery made from hair, taxidermied arrangements of birds and ferns in vivariums. Alice talks about her research into the period, and the way Darwin's scientific ideas about nature were gaining traction and had started to percolate into the hobbies and domestic displays of the middle classes. Objects like glass domes enabled people who could afford them to display artfully contrived arrangements. There was a huge interest at the time in collecting and presenting nature under a prettified lens, thus aligning it with folk art, albeit of the middle classes.

The images of intricate floral arrangements made

from beadwork, flowers and shells, creates a parade of domesticated Victoriana, 'in ghastly good taste' as the poet Betjemen would have put it. Pattullo admits that she doesn't think confections are beautiful in themselves, but that they have an aesthetic 'so horrible I kind of love it'. Working with a limited palette, she digitally layers each image to be screenprinted – a process that suits her highly intricate, pieced-together compositions.

Those familiar with Pattullo's work will already know of her love for mid-20th century artists like Barbara Jones, and the colours of lemon, cobalt and tomato red that are associated with the print culture of this time, singing out from her work. A vitrine with a selection of her sketchbooks and sourcebooks is testimony to this love of the old fashioned, with a dash of the 20th century modern.

Further on in the show, Pattullo displays a series of images depicting people gardening, cooking and engaged in various other hobbies at home. Each of her characters are frozen in time, smiling serenely as they demonstrate the folklore around them; elements in pictorial boxes, labelled and presented like a tabletop museum. Her figures appear as icons; portraits of saints, holding the paraphernalia of their martyrdom, presented in an emblematic rather than a straightforward narrative mode.

Of House and Home reveals the many codified eccentricities of British taste, ideas that are re-imagined as a patchwork of delights. This show is, in essence, a series of careful retrievals from a forgotten past. *** **Desdemona McCannon**