

THE CRYSTAL PALACE AT SYDENHAM

Conference, 26th March 2004 at the Dulwich Picture Gallery

(The Centre is co-organising this conference in association with the exhibition on the Crystal Palace in its Sydenham incarnation)

The Great Exhibition of 1851 and Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace in Hyde Park are well known and much discussed, but little attention has been given to the contents of the Crystal Palace in its incarnation at Sydenham. Pugin's Mediaeval Court at the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, with its 'blaze of gold and colour', helped revive Gothic primary colours and the stylisation of natural forms. Encouraged by its success, but with a more academic, didactic intention, Owen Jones and Matthew Digby Wyatt intended in the Courts at Sydenham to refine the taste and knowledge of the people and to overcome their ignorance of colour and ornament, by building, plastering and colouring ambitious reproductions of architectural styles, like film sets that one could walk through. The interior of the Palace, and even the Park at Sydenham, was intended as an 'illustrated encyclopaedia' to teach the history of civilisation and of natural history. Papers in this conference will discuss the attempts of the architects to make the people aware of historic styles and to teach them the grammar of ornament. There will be some discussion of the influence this had on artistic life in the second half of the century and the mid-century cultural connotations of the architectural styles in the minds of the Victorian intelligentsia. Speakers will include:

Jan Piggott

The Fine Arts Courts at the Crystal Palace and the Contemporary Response

Rosemary Hill

'The earnest enthusiasm and profound knowledge of one man': A.W.N. Pugin and the Mediaeval Court of 1851

Shelly Hales, University of Bristol

Re-casting Antiquity: Classics and the Crystal Palace

Kathryn Ferry, University of Cambridge

'Monumental Architecture under a Glass Roof': Owen Jones's Egyptian and Alhambra courts.

Carol Flores, Ball State University, Indiana

'Beauty of Effect and Arrangement': The Exhibition Architecture of Owen Jones

John Kenworthy-Browne

The Sculpture

Charles Newton, Victoria & Albert Museum

Owen Jones and Christopher Dresser: Their Responses to the Problems of Design in the Nineteenth Century

Tickets are £15 (£10 concessions) and may be purchased by sending a cheque made payable to the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, marked for the attention of Maisoon Rehani, Paul Mellon Centre, 16 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JA.



Inauguration of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, 1854
Courtesy of Frederick Koch, Sutton Place