

Architectural and Design History

Part One: The Drawings and Manuscripts of A.W.N. Pugin

From the Victoria and Albert
Museum, London

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Attention should be drawn to the nature of the original material prints and drawings within the Victoria and Albert Museum sometimes consist of faintly legible sketches, and correspondence, and records written with a variety of inks on paper which has become severely discoloured or stained. These original characteristics present difficulties of image and contrast which stringent tests and camera alterations cannot entirely overcome. Every effort has been made to minimize these difficulties though there are some few pages or documents which have proved impossible to reproduce satisfactorily. Conscious of this we have chosen to include these pages in order to make available the complete collection. Primary Source Media has exercised the most responsible care in the filming of this unique collection, and this microfilm publication meets the standards established by the Association for Information and Image Management (AIIM) and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The finest collection of materials relating to the life and works of the great nineteenth century architect and draughtsman, A.W.N. Pugin, are held in the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. We are proud to reproduce them in this unique microfilm edition.

Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852) had a major impact on architectural taste and style in the nineteenth century. He was the leading proponent of the Gothic Revival both through his writings and his designs for furniture, décor, and complete buildings and complexes. This movement swept through English architecture and heavily influenced movements in America and Europe. It anticipated literary and artistic interest in the Middle Ages, and bodies such as the Arts and Crafts Movement and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings.

Pugin's father, Augustus-Charles Pugin (c1769-1832) was a refugee from the French Revolution who settled in England. His skill as an artist/draughtsman led to his employment by John Nash (1752-1835) with whom he gained a reputation as one of the finest draughtsman in Britain. He exhibited at the Royal Academy and established his own flourishing school of architectural drawing, with pupils such as J. Amos, Francis Arundale, Talbot Bury, T. Cramer, J. D'Egville, Benjamin Ferret, R. Grantham, G.B. Moore, Joseph Nash, J. Pennethorne, W. Lake Price, T.L. Walker, and F.T. Whitaker. A number of his exquisite watercolours (of St. Paul's Westminster Abbey, and other subjects) are included in this publication, as well as his drawings of furniture, topography, and details of the interior of the House of Commons which his son later worked on.

The young A.W.N. Pugin was undoubtedly helped by his father's reputation and contracts, as well as by his encouragement. His first projects involved scenery designs at Drury Lane theatre and at the English Opera House, and Gothic furniture for Windsor Castle. These are all documents in his unfinished autobiography covering the period 1812 to 1831 which is included in this microfilm edition. The end date is significant. The years 1832 and 1833 were painful for Pugin and writing about them was not easy. His father and mother died within the space of these two years just as he turned twenty one, as did his first wife in the process of childbirth.

His fortune changed by 1835. A new wife, Louisa Burton (1813-1844), and his conversion to Roman Catholicism gave Pugin new purpose. The publication of his Gothic Furniture in the style of the 15th Century (1835) established his reputation as a writer, following themes that had been pursued by his father. Pugin also accepted the invitations of Charles Barry (1795-1860) and Gillespie Graham (1776-1855) to draw the entries of both for the met when shipwrecked off the coast of Leith, and worked with him on many projects, such as the refitting of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Edinburgh.

1836 saw the publication of his most influential work, Contrasts; or, A Parallel Between the Noble Edifices of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries, and similar Buildings of the Present Day; Showing the Present Decay in Taste (1836; 2nd Edition, 1841) which rigorously upheld the virtues of medieval architecture. The sketchbooks on which he based his building contracts are included in this collection together with many related drawings and notes.

For the next 15 years Pugin enhanced his reputation by establishing his own architectural practice (from 1837 onwards), working in close collaboration with George Myers, his builder, specialising in wood and stone carving; John Hardman, largely responsible for metalwork and stained glass; Herbert Minton, mainly producing ceramics and wall/floor tiles; and John Gregory Crace, who specialised in interior décor-furniture, textiles and wallpapers. It was Crace who served as archivist as well, and this collection is largely built upon his donations of material with some supplementary material coming from the family. As a result the collection provides extensive coverage of this period and on the numerous projects undertaken. These include the Roman Catholic Cathedrals in Birmingham, Southwark, Newcastle and Nottingham, as well as renovations or new designs for Castles, Churches, Manor Houses, and special projects such as the Medieval Court Exhibit which Pugin made for the Great Exhibition of 1851.

The importance of the patronage of the Earl of Shrewsbury is borne out by the sequence of letters between the two collected here. There are also letters to Pugin's third and final wife, Jane Knill (1827-1909) and a long sequence of diaries between 1835 and 1851.

The presence of such a wide range of materials – full structural drawings, views of buildings, meticulous drawings of details, fully worked sketches of wallpaper, carpets, stained glass, furniture, carving and ornament, and books with detailed schedules and castings – enable current scholars to understand the processes of nineteenth century building and see Pugin putting his ideas into practice.

Equally fascinating are the numerous sketchbooks which Pugin took on his European tours – a reservoir of exemplary architecture – and his 'ideal schemes' and imagings for an entire medieval town, a college, a deanery and other subjects.

Pugin continued to publish important works in this latter period and particularly significant works include The True Principles of Pointed or Christian Architecture (1841), An Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture in England (1843), his Glossary of Ecclesiastical Ornament and Costume (1844), and A treatise on Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts, their Antiquity, Use, and Symbolic Significance (1851). The drawings and notes for many of these appear in this collection.

Pugin continued his work in the designs for the interior of the House of Parliament throughout this period and until his death on 14 September 1852.

The full range of his work is presented here, testifying to the fertility of his imagination, the qualities of his draughtsmanship and design, and the scrupulous care he took to build on authentic models using the most appropriate materials.

The sizes of the designs vary enormously, and there are sharply contrasting styles of design from the sharp, dark-penned designs to faint pencil drawings, and highly tonal water colours. We have made every attempt to capture all of these using the most appropriate methods. Larger frames are used for the massive wallpaper designs, for instance, and colour film has been used wherever appropriate. Our thanks go to Michael Snodin, Curator of Design Collections, at the Department of Prints and Drawings at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and his staff for their valued assistance. We are also grateful to Alexandra Wedgwood, author of A.W.N. Pugin and the Pugin Family, London (1985), for her help and for permission to use her catalogue as the finding aid for this project.

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Development and Production Director
Research Publications

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