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### Egyptian Revival

Envision wandering through the bustling streets of 19th-century London, only to be transported back in time into the realms of ancient Egypt. During the 19th century, Egyptomania gained pace in Europe as a result of Napoleon's conquest of Egypt and his artist, Vivant Denon's account of Egyptian architecture.<sup>1</sup> The widespread interest in ancient Egypt gave rise to the Egyptian Revival movement, which brought Egyptian styles such as pyramids, hieroglyphs, obelisks, and the sphinx to the West. Due to the euphoria of Egyptomania, throughout the nineteenth century, the Egyptian Revival movement aesthetically integrated motifs of ancient Egyptian architecture into the modern British world, yet often failed to grasp the symbolic significance behind these elements.

The Egyptian Room built by Thomas Hope in 1807 is a prime example of Egyptian Revival architecture, as it combines a Neoclassical facade with an Egyptian interior. Known as one of the pioneering architects of Egyptian Revival architecture, Thomas Hope's sources of inspiration were the Egyptianizing of his classical collections. According to art historian James Stevens Curl, Hope used Ancient Egyptian materials such as porphyry, granite, serpentine, and basalt within the ornamentation. Along with this, Curl points out the motifs seen throughout the room such as armchairs with canopic vases, couches adorned with Anubis, an Isis clock, panels

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<sup>1</sup> Carrott, Richard G. *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments, and Meaning, 1808–1858*. Reprint 2020. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2020, 24-25.

decorated with Hathor, and more.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hope's Egyptian Room is not a copy of ancient Egyptian architecture, but rather a reinvention of it. The ornamentation and furniture are adorned with Egyptian motifs, however, they are still within a very Neoclassical and Western building. The success of Hope's translation of Egyptian culture into the modern day influenced another architect, Peter Robinson to create the Egyptian Hall.

Commissioned by William Bullock in 1812, architect Peter Robinson explores a similar duality of cultures in the Egyptian Hall. According to author Susan Pearce, the Egyptian Hall stands "with its exotic facade in the style of an ancient Egyptian Temple." The impression of an Egyptian temple can be seen through the motifs of pilasters covered in hieroglyphics, with sphinxes and falcon wings adorned at the entrance. While the facade resembles ancient Egyptian architecture, the interior of the first exhibition had nothing to do with Egypt. The hall simulated natural habitats and history with an emphasis "upon the relationship of natural groups to their environments."<sup>3</sup> Even as the years went by, Egyptian Hall displayed a variety of arts and entertainment that was far from Egyptian. Peter Robinson's architecture continues the theme of the reinvention and blending of Western and Egyptian cultures with an temple-inspired exterior and natural history interior.

Similar to Egyptian Hall, Temple Works is another work of Egyptian Revival architecture that blends ancient Egyptian culture into Western environments in the form of a factory. Commissioned by John Marshall around 1836 to 1840, Temple Works opens with an Egyptian falcon-adorned cornice and stone facade inspired by the Temple of Edfu.<sup>4</sup> The temple-inspired

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<sup>2</sup> Curl, James Stevens. *The Egyptian Revival : Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2005, 207-209.

<sup>3</sup> Pearce, S. "William Bullock: Collections and Exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall, London, 1816-25." *Journal of the History of Collections* 20, no. 1 (2008): 17-18

<sup>4</sup> *Europeana, Marshall's Mill, Temple Works*. n.d.

facade hides the contrasting inner workings of an office and factory building. While the facade of the Temple Works is Egyptian in architecture, the inside houses office buildings, and factories are far from an Egyptian style. Similar to both the Egyptian Room and Egyptian Hall, Temple Works integrates the Egyptian style into the existing Western architecture blending both into the Egyptian Revival.

Though the Egyptian Revival prompted a rediscovery and blending of ancient Egyptian culture with the British world, many only used it for aesthetic purposes forgetting to study and understand Egyptian history. As with the Egyptian Room, Egyptian Hall, and Temple Works, the Egyptian style is used in aesthetic ways. Whether for a facade, or furniture the Egyptian elements are always there for decoration. In other words, “the fashion for things Egyptian has little relationship to the archaeological rediscovery of ancient Egypt.”<sup>5</sup> The works created throughout the Egyptian Revival movement rarely clearly understand the original artistic theme and the evolution of the motifs used.

The Egyptian Revival combined ancient Egyptian motifs with the Western world through several works such as the Egyptian Room, Egyptian Hall, and Temple Works. These works do not copy the architecture of ancient Egypt but rather develop into a new style of integration within the British Isles. This new style of architecture combined everyday nineteenth-century Britain with the aesthetics of ancient Egypt such as hieroglyphs, falcons, sphinxes, and motifs of the Ennead. Despite the innovation of the Egyptian Revival, these symbols were only used as a means of aesthetics, and their meanings were rarely understood. Learning from the Egyptian Revival movement, let the world strive for a deeper understanding of cultural contexts before

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<sup>5</sup> Sigala, Stephan  
ie. “EGYPTOMANIA: EGYPT IN WESTERN ART, 1730-1930 . Jean-Marcel Humbert ,  
Michael Pantazzi , Christianne Ziegler.” *Art Documentation* 13, no. 4 (1994): 36.

using them for decorative purposes.

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