The East India House: An Embarrassment of Riches

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Introduction:

> When ornament was introduced, the costume of Hindostan should invariably have prevailed. With Greece or Rome the architect of an East India House had no manner of concern.[1]

This assessment from Edward Brayley, referring to the rendering of the East India House in an entirely neoclassical style, underlines the object of this study into the architectural and aesthetic design of the East India Company's (EIC) new headquarters on Leadenhall Street. The extensions, which began in 1796 under the direction of Richard Jupp, the company surveyor, and which were completed following Jupp's death by Henry Holland in 1799, provoked a slew of similar critical responses. Although some objection was based on stuffy Palladianism – a common thread to contemporary commentary was the excessive bulk of the portico, which was said to dominate the frontage – alongside such esoteric detractions was the view that the House's architectural effect was far too general.[2] There was little in the building's 'common-place' design to distinguish it from the headquarters of another City trading company.[3] Indeed, just two features hint to the Company's eastern connection. One being the somewhat anonymous figure of Asia seated on a camel, positioned above the pediment and alongside the statues of Britannia and Europe on a horse. The other reference, nestled on the tympanum, raised above street level by six Ionic columns, took the form of another sculpted representation of Asia, spilling her wealth to an image of Britannia. Although an apt depiction of the Anglo-Indian relationship, the emblem of Asia in Bacon's sculpted scene is impossible to casually discern, lumped alongside equally proportioned representations of Commerce, Navigation, Liberty, Religion, Justice, Industry and Integrity.[4] As Brayley states, the frontage lacked 'general allusion to the Asiatic Possessions of the Company'; 'there is nothing relative to the eastern world that presents itself to observation'.[5]

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[1] E. W. Brayley, J. N. Brewer, and J. H. Nightingale, *A topographical and historical description of London and Middlesex ... accompanied with biographical notices of eminent and learned men* vol.2 (London, 1810), p.762.
[2] Ibid, p.761.
R. Phillips, *Modern London: Being the history and present state of the British metropolis: Illustrated with numerous copper plates* (London, 1805) p.312.
[3] J. Britton, *Illustrations of the public buildings of London with historical and descriptive accounts of each edifice* (London, 1828), p.83.
[4] *The Naval chronicle: Containing a general and biographical history of the royal navy of the United kingdom with a variety of original papers on nautical subjects* vol.1, (London, 1799), p.438.
[5] Brayley, *topographical*, p.762.

Inside the House, the architectural and decorative effect is less clear. Mildred Archer, an historian of Anglo-Indian art in the colonial period, describes a deliberate lack of material or pictorial reference to the east, as if 'the Directors shrank from appearing even obliquely 'Chinese' or 'Indian'.'[6] Whilst this is broadly true with regards to public spaces, such as the Sale Room, which display a general aversion to even those exotic objects familiar to fashionable taste, the private apartments of the East India House proudly embrace the Company's Eastern connection. Likewise, the newly constructed Library and Museum, which were, as will be shown, firmly private spaces in our period, attest further to the EIC Directors' fixation on the East. The building, thus, epitomises the dichotomy between a disingenuous public image, which eschewed allusion to the East, and the reality of the Company's and its servants' entanglement in and enthrallment to the oriental world.

Although very little has been written regarding the East India House, this thesis draws from and sits alongside a number of historiographies and individual studies.[7] Recent research focusing on returning Company servants in a metropolitan context has been highly persuasive in demonstrating that social connections stayed with East India men long after the Bay of Bengal was out of sight: Indian society, it would seem, reformed at 'home'. Nechtman's wide-reaching investigation of eighteenth-century nabobs, for instance, reveals both superficial and sentimental connections to India, especially in the blossoming of friendships.[8] Meanwhile, Finn and Smith's comprehensive work on the colonial nodes of Britain's country houses from the mid-eighteenth to nineteenth-centuries offer a broadly similar view.[9] Though the contents of the estates, namely vast accumulations of prizes taken from the east, are perhaps unsurprising, the spatial distribution of nabob estates attests to the closeness of returned company men. Even if, admittedly, practical demands to some extent determined their decisions to purchase country estates near to one another - proximity to London was highly useful and the home counties were, therefore, an unsurprising locus for Company servants – personal associations were

[6] M. Archer, 'The East India Company and British Art', *Apollo* (1965), p.401.
[7] The only specific survey of the East India House is W. Foster's, *The East India House: Its history and associations* (London, 1924).
[8] T. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and identity in eighteenth-century Britain*, (Cambridge, 2010).
[9] M. Finn and K. Smith, *The East India Company at Home 1757-1857* (London, 2018).

critical too. Unsurprisingly, the East India Company Directorship, many of whom had resided in India at some point, were very much a part of this Anglo-Indian milieu.[10]

Alongside this growing body of research investigating the interconnectivity of Company men, who collectively displayed an enduring attachment to India, exists a supplementary understanding of a more consciously formulated scholarly nexus between East and West. Particularly pertinent has been research revealing assimilation of Indian ideas and aesthetics relating to architecture. *Oriental Architecture in the West* by Patrick Conner has proven a useful survey of this period of Indian influence on British architecture around the turn of the nineteenth century, revealing its brevity and peculiarity to Britain, distinguishing it from the earlier flourishing of Chinoiserie across Europe.[11] This so-called Indian revival was consciously propagated by contemporary academicians. Joshua Reynolds's highly influential eighth Discourse, itself referencing concurrent work by his fellow RA, William Hodges, contends that 'the barbaric splendour of Asiatick Buildings' might 'furnish an architect' with useful 'hints of composition and general effect'.[12] The fad of implementing Indian architectural styles in metropolitan constructions, importantly, renders more significant the East India House's un-Asian image, which is especially noteworthy given that construction was chronologically bookended by two undeniably orientally-inspired projects: Dance's Gothic-Hindu renovation of Guildhall and Brighton Pavilion, where the construction of stables by William Porden from 1803, set the tone for Nash's later additions.[13]

Relatedly, the study of artistic patronage of Company servants in India, which began in earnest with the work of Mildred Archer, and has since gained traction amongst a growing number of historians, has had a critical impact upon this thesis.[14] Although mostly outside the scope of this study, such investigations into the varied artistic products of the British project in India reinforce the methodological utility of art and material culture to uncover shifting or stadial contemporary interests and views. For instance, Almeidi and Gilpin have suggested that the increasing preponderance of hill

[10] C. Jeppeson, 'Growing up in a Company town: The East India Company presence in South Hertfordshire', in ibid, p.252.
C.H. Philips, *The East India Company, 1784-1834* (Manchester, 1940), p,335-7.
[11] P. Conner, *Oriental architecture in the West* (London, 1979), pp.113-130.
[12] J. Reynolds, *The Works of Joshua Reynolds*, ed. E. Malone (Cambridge, 2014), p.286.
[13] Conner, *Oriental architecture*, p.115, p.132.
[14] M. Archer, *India and British portraiture: 1770-1825* (London, 1979).

forts into the nineteenth-century in artistic depictions of the countryside represented an 'expression of British dominion'.[15] Likewise, the contrast between depictions of the *sati* in Zoffany's 1795 painting, *Sacrifice of an Hindoo Widow*, which presents the Hindu ritual as a deliberate act of martyrdom, and the brutal 1832 etching, *India's Cries to British Humanity*, provides an allegorical expression for a crystallising imperial ideology.[16] Most instructing for my own research are the ways in which artistic record can supplement historical study, where there might be a scarcity of traditional sources. This is true in the biographical study of Sir Elijah Impey, the First Chief Justice to the supreme court at Fort William. The loss of the Impey family papers has made study of his domestic affairs difficult; the artistic legacy of his patronage, however, throws light upon Elijah and Mary's keen interest in the Indian natural world and culture.[17] Thus, it follows that, considering the ever-changing composition of the Directorship, an analysis of the Company's material legacy could provide an invaluable insight into the nature of the EIC's overall corporate character and culture in the shadow of scandal and trial but also in a period of extraordinary commercial success.

The final historiographical crutch on which this thesis rests is the historical corpus investigating popular reactions to eighteenth century colonialism, and the EIC's transformation of its trading monopoly to territorial and administrative dominion. Whilst the consensus, established by Marshall, Bowen, and Dirks, is that the scandal of empire subsided during the 1790s, the fierce popular condemnation the Company faced just a decade prior had understandably left a lasting impression upon the Directors.[18] As the building's composition will demonstrate, the EIC remained cognisant to the various strands of public opposition.

This study's explanation for the House's curious composition draws on the aforementioned scholarship regarding imperial scandal and debate, but also investigations into the various influences of India and colonial service upon the individual. The observed aesthetic conflict of the East India House was the

[15] H.D. Almeida, and G.H. Gilpin, *Indian Renaissance: British Romantic Art and the Prospect of India* (Ashgate, 2005), p.179.
[16] Ibid, pp.229-232.
[17] W. Dalrymple and L. Harris, *Forgotten masters: Indian painting for the East India Company* (London, 2019), p.41.
[18] N. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, 2009), p.22.
P.J. Marshall, *The making and unmaking of empires: Britain, India, and America c.1750-1783* (Oxford, 2007), p.203.
H.V. Bowen, *The business of empire: The East India Company and imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge, 2006), p.44.
C.A. Bayly, *Imperial meridian: The British empire and the world, 1780-1830* (New York, 2016), p.113.

consequence of an enduring wariness of public opinion; the stylistic dissonance between façade and interior was at its essence a consequence of a very purposeful corporate public relations campaign. The East India Company would attempt to deflect popular criticism, grounded in accusations of material excess and Indianised manners, by softening their outward material exuberance and appearing to sever an Eastern aesthetic connection.

The sources investigated vary, but foremost amongst them are the elevations of the executed East India House, and those of the rejected plans of Soane and Dance, assessed in conjunction with the EIC's Court Minute records in the British Library. In considering the interior, the most valuable group of sources were descriptive guides of London, which illustrate in some detail the furnishings of the Company's various apartments, as well as William Foster's catalogue of the paintings and statues contained in the India Office, the governmental successor to the East India House. Foster's catalogue details which items were previously housed in the EIC's headquarters, when they were commissioned, and occasionally where they were situated. RIBA's collection of a number of bespoke furnishing designs from Henry Holland's office were also instructive. The Directors' Court Minutes were, again, helpful for the interior, specifically when addressing the Library and Museum. Ray Desmond's survey of the Museum was a useful reference, but his emphasis, as a researcher and archivist at Kew, was understandably on the natural history collection accumulated at the India Museum. In trying to determine the Library and Museum's function for our period, consultation of online newspaper records proved extremely helpful. Finally, letters have acted supplementarily at most stages, but particularly illuminating has been the correspondence of David Scott, a long-time Director and incumbent Chairman during the period of the House's construction.

This thesis bifurcates on two themes. The first broadly focuses on the exterior of the House and how it relates and interacts with the Company's public position. Within this section, several alternative elevations rejected by the Court of Directors are also addressed, which along with the executed building provide a schema by which the East India Company's projected values can be evaluated. In addressing these alternate plans, this study also briefly considers the historical contention relating to the East India House, namely the dispute over the attribution of the front elevations to Henry Holland, supposedly the

'anonymous architect' employed in lieu of Jupp.[19] Whilst this aside might seem somewhat extraneous, it is both inherently important to any comprehensive study of the House but also unavoidable given the source material. The fact that Soane's Museum contains a plan attributed to Henry Holland that is detail for detail nearly exactly the same as the executed design, means any study built on the various elevations of the East India House must necessarily address this issue of credit.

The objective of the second chapter is to further unpick the East India Company's public image by consideration of the interior of East India House. Whilst the public spaces cohere with the impression of the frontage in their lack of reference to the east, an examination of the less accessible parts of Company headquarters reveals an impression of an institution proud of its Indian connection. The chapter will focus firstly on the composition and positioning of the artwork and sculpture collected by the Direction. Secondly, the focus shifts to the Museum and Library, which were, in their inception and for nearly four decades hence, conceived as private collections, facilitating a growing body of orientalist scholarship.

Chapter One: The Façade

To understand the intended effect of the East India House upon the onlooker, it is necessary to properly contextualise the building in a period where the Company and its servants were intermittently beset by scandals and crises. The objections to the East India Company and its influence were numerous, sectional and fluid, yet at the very heart of the issue were the enormous riches which flowed from India under the Company administration. The sharp transition from trading company to territorial power brought with it staggering individual fortunes both as a direct consequence of conquest, in the form of gifts and compensation, and, less directly, as a result of the disintegration of native power, which no longer deterred the probing expansion of private trade beyond Calcutta.[20] Such rapid and profound enrichment, as it was feared, would corrupt Britain's liberal and balanced constitution. Scandals involving the purchased influence of Indian princes over parliament in the persons of returned nabobs,

[19] N. Brawer, 'The Anonymous Architect of the India House', *The Georgian Group Journal*, vol.7 (1997), p.32.
[20] L. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-century Politics* (Oxford, 1952), p.81.

proved particularly combustible.[21] As Lord Chatham gravely declared, ‘‘the riches of Asia have been upon us, and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but, I fear, Asiatic principles of government.”[22] Others, meanwhile, criticised the accumulation of private fortunes, perceived as the selfish appropriation of riches at the expense of the nation. Thus, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* celebrated news of the capture of the diwani as an astonishing national achievement, speculating at its potential to ‘pay off the national debt, to take off the land tax, and ease the poor of burdensome taxes’.[23] Just a month later, the same publication fiercely denounced the East India Company for its privation of India’s wealth.[24] For a few, snobbery, at least in part, dictated the response to their newly minted compatriots. Horace Walpole’s letter to William Mason in the context of a corruption scandal that had engulfed Francis Sykes and Thomas Rumbold is uncontained in its glee at their social downfall, revelling in the hope that ‘Rumbold is the last waiter at White’s, whose babe will be rocked in a cradle of gems and Sykes the last footman, who will be created a baronet’.[25] Relatedly, there were concerns that the accretion of such fortunes might lead to the importation of Indian values and manners. Recent scholarship uncovers a public deeply concerned by the perceived proliferation of Indian tastes, dress, and pastimes.[26] Indeed, for Chatham, Asiatic government was a frightful prospect, but ‘Asiatic Luxury’ was unquestionably upon Britain.

Thus, the foundation of public objection to the East India Company was Indian wealth. Less instinctive was the moral case against Company practises in India itself. Voices like William Tuke, a Quaker who stressed the humanitarian consequences of Company conquest, were outliers until at least the 1780s.[27] In the humbled aftermath of the American War, however, the public reaction crystallised in opposition to the alleged criminality of Company men in India. The trial of Warren Hastings was in many respects the apogee of this ‘phrenzy of the people’.[28] Wilbeforce’s high-minded, quasi-biblical assertion that the

[21] Nechtman, *Nabobs,* p.148.
[22] W. Pitt, Earl of Chatham, *The Speeches of the Earl of Chatham, the Hon. R.B. Sheridan, Lord Erskine, and the Hon. Edmund Burke; with Biographical Memoirs, Etc. Edited by a Barrister* (London, 1853), p.101.
[23] N. Robins, *The Corporation That Changed the World: How the East India Company Shaped the Modern Multinational* (London, 2012), p.18.
[24] Ibid, p.18.
[25] H. Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence,* ed. W.S. Lewis, vol.29 (New Haven, 1955), p.122.
[26] Nechtman, *Nabobs,* pp.71-6.
[27] N. Robins, ‘Loot: In Search of the East India Company, the World’s First Transnational Corporation’, *Environment and Urbanization* 14, no. 1, (2002), p.83.
[28] Sutherland, *Company,* p.222.

house had the 'great obligation to do to others, as we would they should do to us' was typical.[29] As Marshall contends, the vote of the commons to impeach Hastings was seemingly the 'genuine expression of the idealism and prejudices of ordinary members and not the result of any Machiavellian plot by ministers'.[30] Correspondingly, the charges levelled at the former Governor General focused on his aggressive defrauding of native princes.[31] The weight of the case levelled against Hastings was based on his alleged role as a malignant aggressor within Indian society. Whilst Clive could 'pronounce Calcutta to be one of the most wicked places in the Universe', the centre of 'corruption licentiousness and a want of principle', and in front of parliament justify his immense fortune as a consequence of native practice, fifteen years later, Hastings was the source of the rot there.[32]

However, despite the widely-held belief that the Company was, in both its domestic and foreign exploits, an agent of corruption and social disorder, any attempt to interfere in the Company's business by the British state provoked an even greater backlash against the perceived encroachment of the executive in the domain of a chartered independent business. Fox's East India Bill was, for instance, universally rejected as an illegal attempt to appropriate the patronage of the Company for himself and the executive. As Namier and Brooke demonstrate, the bill's 'merits or defects as a plan to reform the government of India were hardly discussed at all'; intervention was deemed inherently unconstitutional and Fox was punished with a decisive electoral swing towards Pitt the following year.[33]

The general belief in the sanctity of chartered rights constituted a significant bulwark against the meddling of the executive in the affairs and constitution of the East India Company. Whilst the wisdom of actioning some sort of reform was plain to most, who shared John Robinson's view that the Company's unmoderated transition into an imperial power was 'absurd and preposterous', natural suspicion of executive power meant that only in moments of acute strain was state interference countenanced.[34] Indeed, success for the government only came in 1784, as Marshall argues, as a

[29] P.J. Marshall, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings* (Oxford, 1965), p.42.
[30] Ibid, p.62.
[31] Ibid, p.88, p.109.
[32] G. Forrest, *The Life of Lord Clive* v. 2 (London, 1918), p.311.
[33] L.B. Namier and J. Brooke, *The House of Commons, 1754-1790* vol.1, (London, 1985), p.91.
[34] J. Robinson, 'Considerations on East India Affairs' (1778), printed in P.J Marshall, *Problems of Empire: Britain and India 1757-1813. Historical Problems: Studies and Documents* (London, 1968), p.111.

consequence of 'Fox's debacle' which 'set the limits within which his rivals must keep', namely that chartered rights were to be preserved as far as possible.[35] Even after Pitt's Act, governments were cautious not to overreach and the Company Direction remained resilient in its resistance of unwanted meddling. The persisting tensions for the last decade of the century between the bulk of the Court Directors and the government, allied with David Scott, over the shipping monopoly, was eventually settled quite conclusively in favour of the former group. Scott despairs, in a letter to Henry Dundas in November 1801, at having found himself 'insulated as both old and new administrations seem to have given it up', left to speculate at the reason for the retreat of his government; he concludes, 'it would seem Mr. Addington was afraid of offending the Court'.[36] This assessment of the Prime Minister is echoed some months later in Scott's letter to Wellesley, in which he states that Addington is 'apprehensive of the power of the Court of Directors as to the clamour that by canvassing and address they may raise as to chartered rights'.[37]

Thus, there was a duality to the Company's public position. Its reputation was fragile both on account of its financial vulnerability and its Indian connection, and yet, paradoxically robust. In times of crisis, it could count on a sizable group to rally to its side on the justification of its status as a chartered city institution. Unsurprisingly, the Directorship of the East India Company deliberately sought to embellish their City credentials, in order to provide a counterbalance to the accusations of tyranny and corruption. In this vein, the EIC very publicly answered William Pitt's call for volunteer units in 1796. The unit did also serve the practical purpose of guarding the Company's warehoused goods. Indeed, to the Court of Proprietors the proposal was justified in part due to the economics of it; 'the object of the defence of England requires an additional annual charge (after the first year) of £4,000 at the utmost', a 'trifling sum'.[38] Yet, overlaying such sound arguments was an evident desire to make a firm statement of loyalism. The appeal concludes by encouraging the Court to make a 'unanimous' decision and, thus, to 'be first to set an example of prompt and ready attention to the earnest recommendation in the late

[35] Marshall, *Studies and Documents*, p.42.
[36] D. Scott, *The Correspondence of David Scott, Director and Chairman of the East India Company, Relating to Indian Affairs, 1787-1805,* vol.2, ed. C.H. Philips (London, 1951), p.365.
[37] Ibid, p.395.
[38] *Considerations respecting the volunteer corps to be raised by the East-India Company; addressed to the proprietors of East-India stock,* (London, 1796), p.9.

Speech from the Throne', attaching an extract from the king's recent call to arms to set their resolve.[39] Page-long newspaper advertisements publicising the newly established 'Royal East India Volunteers' and the names of the Gentlemen 'graciously' appointed to commissions by His Majesty, as well as commemorative portraits of the Volunteers receiving their colours at Lords Cricket Ground painted by Henry Matthews, register as highly self-congratulatory.[40] The unified grandstand made by the Company Directors to enlist in defence of 'a constitution which affords such protection and comfort', can be seen as especially propagandistic when one considers the parallel struggle between the Directors and the government on the subject of the Company's force in India.[41] Cornwallis's request to Dundas that the Company undertake some military reform led the Court of Directors to consider establishing a recruiting depot, but finding this option to be overly expensive, they opted to re-issue their normal recruiting licence, much to the dismay of Dundas.[42] As such, the Directors were no doubt aware of the arguments of their many detractors, but also bolstered and emboldened by those of their supporters. The design for the East India House was, as will be demonstrated, a concerted attempt to balance these two external attitudes, projecting the outward self-image of a loyal and established City institution.

Before addressing the actual renovation, it is important to mention the recurrence of the image of the old East India House. The building, especially, indeed, for one so nondescript, crops up in numerous satirical prints relating to the East India Company. For instance, in *A Transfer of East India Stock*, Fox is depicted carrying the East India House on his shoulders into St James's, a critical reference to his failed India Bill. Besides the title, the documents spilling from Fox's pockets clearly indicate the author's stance, with one paper labelled 'resolved that the influence of the Crown has increased is increas[ing] ough[t to] dim[inished]', referring to Dunning's motion against executive largesse which Fox himself had supported.[43] Yet, the lack of visual cue to the East India Company beyond an image of its headquarters' plain Palladian exterior is interesting and indicative perhaps of the recognisability of the India House. The House's embeddedness in the general public consciousness as a symbol of the

[39] Ibid, p.15.
[40] London Oracle Advertisements (London), no. 19462 (26 October 1796), p.3, Gale Primary Sources [accessed 6th March 2022].
W. Foster, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Paintings, Statues and Framed Prints in the India Office* (London, 1893), p.26.
[41] D. Scott, *The Correspondence of David Scott, Director and Chairman of the East India Company, Relating to Indian Affairs, 1787-1805,* vol.1, ed. C.H. Philips (London, 1951), p.91.
[42] Ibid, p.93.
[43] See Fig.1, p.38.

Company and, by association, commerce, is further suggested by the use of its image in a number of provincial coins, issued in Huddersfield, Manchester, and Bristol.[44] To the extent that its exterior could be politicised and appropriated in cartoons and on coins, the image of the Company's headquarters was both well-known to the British public and recurrent in the highly active print media; its frontispiece was a well-understood synecdoche of the Company and its values. This would indeed continue to be the case; when the EIC returned once more to the forefront of public debate in 1813, the image of the East India House re-appeared as a useful hook for cartoonists.[45] For an institution so cognisant of its public reputation, it is unlikely that this slipped the mind of the Directorship when considering plans for a new East India House.

The immediate impetus for the reconstruction of the East India House was dictated, primarily, by practical demands. The expanding volume of business and increasing number of employees meant the Company had outgrown its former premises in both a poetic and prosaic sense. There was an understanding that Jacobsen's relatively-modest, narrow-fronted building no longer matched the Company's status as the wealthiest and most powerful commercial City institution. The judgement that the House was 'not at all equal to the grandeur of this Company' was indeed a ubiquitous refrain in nearly all commentary from around 1760 onwards.[46] The precise moment of the decision to rebuild is unclear, but by 1794 the Company had begun acquiring various buildings on the corner of Leadenhall Street and Lime Street in preparation.[47]

There is a frustrating lack of record regarding the deliberations on the new India House. Whilst a letter from Jupp sent to the Court of Directors on the 5th of August 1796 was written with the understanding that this day had been set aside by the Court of Directors 'to take their consideration on the subject of the improvements about to be made to the East India House', a reading of the Court minutes for the 5th of August yields no mention of the building.[48] Likewise, though Soane informs us that Jupp laid his

[44] J. Conder, *An arrangement of provincial coins, tokens, and medalets, issued in Great Britain, Ireland, and the colonies, within the last twenty years; from the farthing, to the penny size* (London, 1798), p.90.
T. Spencer, *The coin collector's companion. Being a descriptive alphabetical list of the modern provincial, political, and other copper coins* (London, 1795), p.24.
T. Prattent and M. Denton, *The virtuoso's companion coin collectors* guide, vol.2 (London, 1796), p.3.
[45] See fig.2, p.38.
[46] *The curiosities of London and Westminster described*, vol.2 (London, 1783), p.95.
[47] Foster, *East India House*, p.138.
[48] Miscellaneous letters received, 1796, IOR, E/1/95 p.60.

plans for a new India House before the Directors on the 18th of August, again there is no hint of this in the official committee minutes, which seem to only record decisions and resolutions rather than general discussion.[49] Indeed, the very first mention of the proposed House renovations is only found on the 23rd of September, referring to a report made the previous day by the Committee of House. The Committee's perfect 'satisfaction with the plans laid before them by Mr Jupp', and recommendation that the Court of Directors accept them was agreed unanimously.[50]

Accordingly, there is no existing written brief outlining what the court of Directors required from their architect. Yet, the plans themselves are highly indicative of some such communication. Of those who offered drawings to the court, namely Jupp, Wyatt, Soane, Dance and Holland, a number of plans from Soane and Dance remain. There is one elevation attributed to Holland by the Soane Museum collection and, accordingly, a significant proportion of the limited literature related to the House, but, as will be argued, is far more likely the work of Jupp. The broad similarities shared by each proposal suggest that there was a fairly clear brief. All are fifteen bays wide and rendered in a classical style, with a central portico supported by six columns, of the Ionic order in the case of Soane and Jupp, and Corinthian in the case of Dance.[51]

Dance's design is particularly surprising. Both his commitment to experimentation, believing that the 'emancipat[ion] of the public taste from that rigid adherence to a certain style of architecture' would unshackle the artist in his work, plus his notable use of Indian styles elsewhere, render the choice of designs interesting.[52] Guildhall was the most famous example of Dance's inspiration by Gothic Indian architecture, influenced most probably by the Hodges's contemporary *Select Views of India*, but his fondness for Mughal motifs and styles is similarly manifest in a number of his projects, including in the execution gatehouse of Stratton Park, the property of Company Director, Sir Francis Baring.[53] Dance's characteristically contemporary concern for 'appropriateness and expression' in architecture, especially

Court Minutes, 13 Apr 1796 to 23 Sep 1796, IOR, B/123, pp.472-84.
[49] Sir John Soane Museum, Private Correspondence, 111-j-12-31, quoted in Brawer, 'Anonymous', p.32.
[50] IOR B/123, p.642.
[51] See Fig.3, Fig.4 and Fig.5, p.39.
[52] J. Farington *The Farington diary, by Joseph Farington, R. A*, ed. J. Greig (London, 1928), p.218.
[53] J. Lever, *Catalogue of the Drawings of George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) and of George Dance the Elder (1695-1768)* (London, 2003), pp.142-3, pp.293-5.

when considered in conjunction with his demonstrable avant gardist tendencies make his proposed plans surprising.[54] It is improbable that he would consider designing a new headquarters for the 'Lords of Hindoostan' without at all referring to the east unless directed otherwise. Thus, the similarities shared by all the designs, but particularly Dance's, implies that the East India Company had a clear hand in the renovation of their headquarters, which was in the event a characteristically propagandist statement of corporate character.

The frontage of the East India House poses as a metaphor for the Company's self-definition. The intended meaning of the tympanum is outlined in an inscription belonging to John Bacon the Younger, son of the sculptor, which describes the sentiment of the arrangement as follows,

> That a Nation can then only be truly prosperous, when it has a King who makes Religion and Justice the basis of His Government, and a Constitution, which while it secures the Liberties of the People, maintains a due Subordination in the several ranks of society; and where the Integrity of the People, secures to each Individual those advantages which Industry creates and cultivates.[55]

The pediment of the East India House, thus, rebutted anti-Company rhetoric, re-casting its servants as the defenders of the principles of Justice, Integrity and Liberty, which they had so frequently been found to threaten. At least as contradictory, considering the East India Company's role in catapulting minor gentry and merchants from obscurity to stupendous fortune, is the stated hope that subordination in the ranks of society is maintained. Such a statement appears contrary to the entrepreneurial and meritocratic attitude that one might assume the Company would embrace; instead, patriotism and faux-conservatism typified their publicising. The East India Company perhaps seeks to deny here its reputation as an importer of foreign wealth and manners, which it had been claimed wrought creeping political and social subversion. The detail of the imagery, though an important insight into the Company's defiance of its critics, would not, given 'the obscurity pervading it, which render[ed] it difficult to decipher in

[54] T.J. Harkema, 'Architecture unshackled: George Dance the younger and appropriate invention', (Phd thesis, University of Leiden, 2012), p.9.
[55] *Naval chronicle*, p.438.

application.', be plain to the passer by.[56] It is, as such, limited in its propagandistic utility, but it gives an indication as to the thoughtfulness with which the Company built its artifices.

Much more striking, however, is the apparent inspiration taken from Mansion House. Though by no means a pastiche of the Lord Mayor's home, the portico of which dominates to a far greater degree the frontage of Mansion House, the crowded pediment of the East India House creates a similar effect to the elder Dance's building. This can hardly be viewed as an unthinking coincidence. Indeed, the direct similarities between the tympanum of Mansion House and that of the East India House appear to suggest that Taylor's work was used by Bacon as a template for his own sculpture. Figures such as the 'River God' lying 'reclin'd', pouring a plentiful stream of water, are reproduced almost exactly in the right-hand corner of Bacon's centrepiece.[57] Both share representations of Liberty, Commerce and Navigation, as well as the carved depiction of a swan. Robert Taylor's published description of his Basso Relief, supposed to represent, 'London Triumphant . . . in the necessary Arts of Trade and Commerce', unsurprisingly is echoed in Bacon's own explanation of his composition.[58] Clearly then, the East India Company took cues from the Mansion House in the construction of their new headquarters. It is possible that this was a consequence of a simple admiration of the building's style, though it is fairly unlikely. Mansion House was not commonly regarded as an example of good taste. Andre Rouquet, for instance, judged it to be an 'absurdity' by which the City had been 'disfigured', arguing 'nothing is so ridiculous' as the building's heavy inelegant pediment.[59] Though others seemed less appalled, there was a general consensus that the grandeur and weight of the House's edifice was ill-suited to its context in the over-crowded city centre.[60] Indisputably though, the Mansion House, by its synecdochal purpose as the actual home of the Lord Mayor and the spiritual home of London commerce, epitomised exactly the spirit of corporate respectability that the Directors of the East India Company aspired to. It is unsurprising then,

[56] Britton, *Illustrations* (London, 1828), p.83.
[57] R. Taylor, 'An Explanation of the Basso Relievo, Compos'd for the Grand Pediment of the Mansion House', printed in S. Jeffery, *The Mansion House* (Chichester, 1993) p.84.
[58] Ibid, p.84.
[59] A. Rouquet, *The present state of the arts in England* (London, 1755), p.99.
[60] *London and its environs described*, vol.4 (London, 1761), p.246.
W. Maitland, *The history and survey of London from its foundation to the present time*, vol.1 (London, 1760), p.82.

that Directors chose to emulate a building whose frontispiece connoted to the pedestrian public established corporatism.

Finally, much can be gained from consideration of the tendering of the project to the leading architects of the day, important for the element of choice it created. Just as the final design, both in granular details and generalistic impressions, presents ideas and ideals which the Company sought to project, the rejected designs similarly offer a potential schema from which we can further interpolate and extrapolate the ranked priorities of the Company in the cultivation of its self-presentation. The decision of the Directors to refer the project to other architects beyond their own surveyor is notable in itself. Jupp would comment bruisedly, that there was 'scarcely any precedent where such [public] bodies have resorted to the opinions of other architects than their own when buildings of any kind have been erected'.[61] Although the issue was apparently settled in Jupp's favour, this early show of ill-faith from the Directors and ensuing design has cast a shadow upon the matter of the House's true architect. H.B. Hodson was first to express doubt over the fact of Jupp's direction of the early works in 1853; his reasoning was based on the rather unconvincing pretext of having found a number of drawings of 'plans, sections, and numerous details at large' of the India House in Holland's office.[62] Howard Colvin addressed these claims comprehensively, arguing that not only was their discovery inconclusive evidence of Holland's authorship, but that one image delineating the Lime Street entrance bears Jupp's signature.[63]

More recently, Nicholas Brawer and Jil Lever have pointed to the indistinguishability of the final design from an unsigned and undated plan for an elevation attributed to 'Henry Holland Archt./1796' by George Bailey (curator at the Soane Museum between 1837 and 1860), as evidence of Holland's unacknowledged role in designing the frontage.[64] Whilst the near identicality of the plans (the only notable differences being the addition of fluted columns and windows instead of niches) are highly suggestive that the design labelled by Bailey was an earlier rendition of the executed design, their

[61] IOR E/1/95, p.60a.
[62] H.B. Hodson, 'Holland, the Architect,' *The Builder*, vol. 13 (1855), p.437.
[63] H. Colvin, *A biographical dictionary of British architects, 1600-1840* (London, 1978), p.479.
[64] Lever, *Catalogue of Drawings*, p.153.
See fig.4, p.39.
Brawer, 'Anonymous', p.32.

contention remains tenuous. Against the contradiction provided by the official Court Minutes of 23rd of September, which put it quite explicitly that Jupp's plans had been unanimously accepted, relying on the accuracy of a single curator's categorisation of one document, forty years after the fact seems uncomfortably conjectural.[65] It is very possible that Bailey only knew of the House's completion by Holland and nothing of the involvement of the less famous Jupp. Indeed, evidence of casual mistakes regarding the identity of the architect abound. One image belonging to the Soane collection of 'a front view of the East India House' produced in 1800, writes, entirely unaccountably, that it was 'built by James Wyatt'.[66] Crucially, that Holland would accept such an arrangement is dubious. Brawer's suggestion that his anonymity was agreed 'in return for a promise of succession to Jupp's position' fails to properly account for the contested ballot between Holland, Soane and Cockerell after Jupp's death that secured Holland's eventual appointment.[67]

Nonetheless, the opening of the commission to other architects is, itself, worthy of comment given, as Jupp claims, its total lack of precedence. Moreover, the various plans rejected by the Directors serve, by some process of elimination, to further clarify the character that they hoped the building would embody. As stated above, nearly all the designs follow a basic template, each with fifteen bays and a central portico supported by six columns. The only plans to which this description does not apply are those alternative elevations drawn up by Soane, one of which experiments with a frontage made up of three four-columned loggias, another with a central loggia of eight columns, and two of two columns on either side.[68] Though compositionally interesting, it is unlikely that either plan was submitted to the Directors. Indeed, as Soane outlined to Earl Spencer, his new East India House would 'retain the *old* original front'.[69] With this in mind, it is likely that Soane submitted the design shown in figure 3, which, contained a central raised portico with six Ionic columns, bookended by symmetrical delineations of the old frontage, one of which presumably was the existing façade, and the other, a replica.[70] It is possible that two further elevations which experiment with a central eight-columned loggia topped with

[65] IOR B/123.
[66] Soane Museum Collection, SM, 58/2/1, Print of the East India House, 1800.
[67] Brawer, 'Anonymous', p.31.
[68] SM, 61/6/7, Soane's alternate elevation, 1796.
SM, 61/6/6, Soane's alternate elevation, 1796.
[69] J. Soane, *A letter to the Earl Spencer* (London, 1799), p.15.
[70] See Fig.3, p.39.

an enormous roof extension, domed in one design and pitched in another, might have been submitted, as they both too seem to fit the description offered to Earl Spencer.[71] Yet, this seems less likely given the fact that both designs exist only as one off-drawings, where the other appears in the Soane collection four times, from a rough annotated sketch to a sharply delineated architectural plan (fig.3), which one imagines was the version presented to the Court.[72] Two elevations of Dance's East India House exist. The first is an altogether rougher sketch, but like Soane's final design both elevations are arranged in a tripartite division, also with fifteen bays. Both have a giant Corinthian order and festoons link the five pilasters either side of the portico. In the first sketch, the attic is balustraded and the wall behind the portico is plain.[73] The second design, which Lever has suggested was submitted to the Directors, is a 'clean[ed] up' version: the wall behind the portico is gone, at the apex of which is a large acroterion of the East India Company's crest; the attics on either side are no longer balustraded, but rather each capped with a Mansard-like roof instead.[74]

Both Soane's and Dance's proposals are unsurprisingly accomplished. Their rejection, thus, requires some explanation. Soane was himself nonplussed. In his letter to Earl Spencer, he claimed his plans would 'sav[e] an enormous sum to the Company . . . which had the fairest claims to public convenience, classical purity, and real magnificence'.[75] If Soane is to be believed, the preference for Jupp's plans were not then justified by cost. Soane's claims regarding the 'real magnificence' of his own plans might be closer to the mark, however. Although all the elevations share basic similarities, the grandeur and ambition of Soane's and Dance's plans far exceeded those in Jupp's proposal. The thickness and spacing between the columns in the portico and pilasters separating the arcades and windows on the wings would render these buildings considerably larger. Next to both, the columns of Jupp's portico seem comparatively delicate and the lack of pilasters separating the bays on either side make for two much more compact wings. Likewise, both Soane and Dance's proposals are significantly taller, the attic

[71] SM, 61/6/4, Soane's alternate elevation, 1796.
SM, 61/6/3, Soane's alternate elevation, 1796.
[72] SM: 61/6/2, Soane's annotated sketch for a new frontage, 1796.
SM: 13/6/6, Soane's design for a new frontage, 1796.
SM: 61/6/10, Soane's design for a new frontage, 1796.
See fig.3, p.39.
[73] SM: 13/6/1, Dance's sketch for a new frontage, 1796.
[74] Lever, *Catalogue of Drawings*, p.152.
See Fig.5, p.39.
[75] Soane, *A letter to the Earl Spencer*, p.15.

storey of Dance's plans elongating the building's frontage considerably. The verticality of Soane's plans, in particular, which contain a giant, columned Ionic order from the first storey, gives his design an imposing, imperial character. From a street-front, the onlooker's view would be dominated by Soane or Dance's building; commissioning either design would have constituted an unashamed public statement of Company power and splendour.

Thus, although the Direction understood that their premises were ill-suited to the Company's needs in a practical sense, and probably recognised the appropriateness of some sort of public-facing expansion, a palatial headquarters was clearly not in order. Indeed, given that much of the censure that had been directed towards the Company had a resoundingly material justification, accepting Soane's plans for using the Company's current front as a mere west-wing to a near double-height central portico would have no doubt seemed excessive. If Lord Kames oft-quoted maxim was held to be true, that 'every building was to have an expression corresponding to its destination, a palace . . . sumptuous and grand; a private dwelling, neat and modest', it logically follows that a building could influence the perception of the status of its occupant.[76] Whilst the incongruity of the EIC's existing headquarters was inappropriate, the Directors saw no need to unduly draw attention to the Company's wealth and status, with a building overly extravagant in scale and grandeur. In this regard, the EIC was not alone: Abramson, for instance, argues in his comprehensive architectural survey of the Bank of England, that its long term occupation of the inconspicuous Grocers' Hall was 'in part a tactic to deflect popular antagonism during the Bank's controversial early years'.[77] Thus, the façade of the new East India House can be seen as a literalisation of the Company's chosen public image, appropriating the established vernacular of a City corporation in general effect and, in allegorical expression, casting itself as a bastion of loyalism. The building stands beneath the exalted figure of Britannia, mirroring the subservience of the East India Company's operations to the British Crown and the British People.

[76] H. Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, ed. P. Jones (Indianapolis, 2005), p.706-7.
[77] D.M. Abramson, *Building the Bank of England: money, architecture, society, 1694-1942* (London, 2005), p.239.

Chapter Two: The Interiority

Whilst the artistic output created by the Anglo-Indian nexus has been the subject of increasing scholarly interest, comparatively little work has been undertaken on the subject of Company patronage and less still on the historical significance of the furnishing of the East India House. This is not entirely surprising. The British painters who followed Tilly Kettle to India in search of patronage and fortune, including Zoffany, Devis, Smart, Humphry, Hodges, the Daniells brothers, and Indian artists alike contributed to a vibrant and colourful artistic legacy, depicting a fascinating array of cultural confluences. Metropolitan corporate patronage was comparatively less novel. The Company's artistic patronage is nonetheless highly interesting from a historical perspective, with Geoff Quilley illustrating its central role in the EIC's propaganda mission.[78] For instance, Roma's painting of *Britannia Receiving the Riches of the East*, completed in 1778, depicting a peaceful and righteous transfer of eastern wealth, can be interpreted as a rejection of anti-Company rhetoric. The description, published in conjunction in the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, explained the painting's meaning in highly favourable terms, commending Roma's portrayal of the 'firmness and stability of the empire' that brings 'commerce from which both Britannia and the Company derive great and singular advantages'.[79] In a similar vein, Penny's historical painting, *Lord Clive about to Receive from the Nawab of Bengal a Sum of Money to be Used for a Charity Known as the Clive Fund*, represents a strikingly brazen deflection of public censure at the very moment of Clive's trial. The painting appealed to a sense of English patriotism by highlighting the suffering of British soldiers whilst simultaneously parrying criticisms of corruption and selfish greed, projecting an honourable philanthropic position.[80]

The sole historical assessment of the furnishing of the East India House by Mildred Archer is just nine pages long but accords with this general understanding of the propagandist function of artistic patronage. Archer asserts that by eschewing Indian images and objects, the East India Company was deliberately crafting a façade of solid sobriety.[81] This viewpoint is valid to a point. The Sale Room and

[78] G. Quilley, *British Art and the East India Company. Worlds of the East India Company* (Woodbridge, 2020), p.3.
[79] Ibid, p.9.
[80] N. Eaton, *Mimesis across Empires: Artworks and Networks in India, 1765 – 1860* (London, 2013), p.39.
[81] Archer, 'East India Company and British Art', pp.401-9.

New Sale Room were both 'fitted up much in the same manner'.[82] Little is known of the latter, beyond its oddly general ornamentation, with figures representing 'Europe, Asia, Africa, and America', seemingly emblematic of British expansionism rather than EIC power, specifically.[83] Fortunately, the main Sale Room is better documented. The central ornaments of the Sale Room were the marble statues by Peter Scheemakers, of Lord Clive, Admiral Sir George Pocock, and Major-General Lawrence, standing proud behind the Directors in the circular recess in 'Roman habits'.[84] Another statue of Sir Eyre Coote by Thomas Banks stood slightly to one side in the main gallery dressed in regimentals. Warren Hastings would later join the scene, again, in civilian costume. Each figure is exalted above the crowd by raised niches.[85] The choice of such eminent Company and military figures was purposefully triumphalistic. Yet, the effect of Scheemakers central sculpted scene is generalistic rather than historical – the depiction of the 'warriors bareheaded and in Roman costume' creates the impression of unspecified heroism.[86] As Archer argues, neoclassical garb was the usual costume for Company sculpture.[87] Curious for its realistic composition, though not housed in the East India House, was the statue of the Marquis Cornwallis by Thomas Banks, which like those of Sir Eyre Coote and Hastings broke with the classical convention.[88] The conscious selection of 'historical reality' for the depiction of Cornwallis, the hero of the Third Mysore War, was likely in recognition of popular support for his actions, and the consensualised moral righteousness of a war waged against the villainous Tipu. Likewise, Sir Eyre Coote was an honourable figure in the eyes of the nation, who would indeed, be memorialised in statue at Westminster Abbey.[89] By contrast, whilst such uncomplicatedly heroic figures required less contrived ornamentation, Clive's less laudable exploits necessitated the addition of some anonymising and glorifying classical costume. Nonetheless, despite these outline differences in execution, Brayley's comment made in reference to the building's frontage, that 'there is nothing relative to the eastern world that presents itself to observation', also extends to the ornamentation of the Sale Room, where the characters in statue, whilst bearing relation to India, as Company or military

[82] Britton, *Illustrations* (London, 1828), p.85.
[83] Ibid, p.85.
[84] Brayley, *topographical*, p.765.
[85] Ibid, p.48.
[86] Ibid, p.33
[87] M. Archer, 'Neo-classical sculpture in India', *Apollo* vol.120 (1984), pp.50-55.
[88] Ibid, p.52.
[89] Foster, *Catalogue*, p.48.

servants, also embody a certain detachment.[90] They are pedestalised, literally and figuratively, as great men, rather than imperialists. The lack of decoration beyond these statued figures, as shown in Ackermann's print, creates the purposeful impression of muted corporate functionality; there is little visual interest amidst the solid mahogany doors and bare niches.[91]

However, in Archer's, somewhat selective, assessment of aspects of the private apartments, her argument that the material surroundings of the Directorship bore 'scant relation to its everyday concerns' becomes far less convincing.[92] Archer dismisses a number of artworks of Indian scenery or figures as un-Indian purely on the specious grounds that they were executed by British artists, a fact which was, moreover, not true of all the House's ornamentation. Indeed, the fact that the majority of the decoration was done by British artists and craftsmen was much more likely a matter of practicality rather than an aversion to Eastern styles, given that the Company was headquartered in London. The Directors' Grand Court Room was, in actuality, more sumptuous in its décor and far bolder in expressing the EIC's links to the East. The connection is proudly expressed in George Lambert's four paintings, completed in 1731, of the Company's principal factories at Fort St George, Bombay, Fort William, Tellicherry, the Cape of Good Hope, and St Helena.[93] Rysbrack's contemporaneous marble sculpture stands opposite the Chairman's chair, depicting a scene of Asia, India, Britannia, and Africa, represented under the Company's arms, emblematic of the EIC's presiding role over this rich international trade. Rysbrack's bas-relief was framed by an elaborate marble chimney piece, supported by two caryatids which one commentator suggested were 'designed to represent Brahmins'.[94] 'An uncommonly fine Turk[ish] carpet' covering the whole floor completed the decorative effect of this uncluttered but nonetheless grandly appointed apartment.[95] Similarly, the paintings hanging in the Committee Room, including Willison's portrait of the Nawab of Arcot wreathed in pearls, and a selection of picturesque views of South India, painted and gifted by Ward, a former Company servant

[90] Brayley, *topographical*, p.762.
[91] See fig.6, p.40
[92] Archer, 'East India Company and British Art', p.401
[93] Brayley, *topographical*, p.764
See fig.7, p.40.
[94] Britton, *Illustrations*, p.84.
[95] Brayley, *topographical*, p.764.

and keen amateur artist, display an idealised prospect of India.[96] Ward's oils fit a romanticised view of a beautiful, unchartered world, reminiscent of the later work of Hodges and the Daniells brothers; Willison's portrait meanwhile represents the boundless riches of India. Together, they are suggestive of the Directions' general subscription to an ideal of India as a place of both wonder and fortune. Indeed, the portrait of Fath Ali Shah, King of Persia, hanging in the Library, seems to marry these two ideals.[97] Like the Nawab of Arcot, Fath Ali is adorned with jewels. Unlike the Nawab, he was painted in an eastern style by a Persian artist, Mirza Baba.[98] Whilst Willison's portrayal of the Nawab has been characterised as 'soft and tender', the impression of Mirza Baba's portrait is one of nobility and mystery; bearing a sceptre in one hand, Fath Ali exudes majesty.[99]

The placement of these various portraits and decorative affects was also highly deliberate and, thus, worthy of comment. Take the Library, for instance, ornamented with the busts of Warren Hastings, Robert Orme, Henry Colebrooke, and the Duke of Wellington, as well as the aforementioned portrait of Fath Ali Shah; each likeness was highly appropriate to the setting. Warren Hastings's actions as Governor-General, though not always principled, were most inflected with the ethos of the enlightenment, under whom scholarly pursuit into the intellectual legacy of India made its greatest strides. Indeed, he was one of the most prominent supporters of the establishment of an oriental museum.[100] One of Hastings's most important assistants in his 'exert[ion] . . . for the acquisition of knowledge', was the Sanskrit scholar, Colebrooke.[101] Colebrooke typified Robert Home's notion of the new colonial man 'who feel[s] more gratification from an increase in knowledge, than an increase in wealth'; his memorialisation in 'a public Repository for Oriental Writings' is therefore unsurprising.[102] The presence of Robert Orme, the Company historiographer, who had repeatedly pushed for the

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[96] Ibid, p.765.
See fig.8 and fig.9, p.41.
[97] Brayley, *description*, p.766.
See fig.10, p.42.
[98] Foster, *Catalogue*, p.16.
[99] Archer, *India and British Portraiture*, p.102
[100] R. Desmond, *The India Museum, 1801-1879*, (London, 1982) p.10.
[101] James Forbes quoted in Gilipin and Almeidi, *Indian Renaissance*, p.57.
R. Gombrich, 'Colebrooke, Henry Thomas (1765–1837), administrator in India and scholar', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (23 September 2004), https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5866?rskey=KpNjYj&result=3 [accessed 6th March 2022].
[102] Robert Home, *Select Views of Mysore, the Country of Tippoo Sultan, From Drawings Taken on the Spot by Mr. Home* (London, 1794), p.vi.

establishment of an oriental library, or Fath Ali Shah were similarly explicable.[103] Indeed, King Fath Ali of Persia was emblematic of the linguistic, literary and cultural heritage the Library aimed to preserve and promote. As the Court outlined in their 1798 dispatch, the Library was established in response to 'the decline of the Mogul Empire', hoping that 'by such a Collection the Literature of Persia and Mahomedan India may be preserved in this Country after, perhaps, it shall . . . be partly lost in its original Seats'.[104] The one outlier to this pantheon of orientalists and men of letters, was Wellington. However, again his presence was not accidental – the bust was commissioned from Turnerelli by the Directors specifically to be placed in the Library.[105] Besides his heroic status and extensive service in India, his later presidency of the soon-to-be Oriental Club demonstrates a commitment to Indian affairs and, thus, justified his placement.[106]

Nevertheless, the decoration of the Library illustrates an attention to detail and an awareness that form should fit function, as is also visible in other Company rooms. For instance, Lambert's paintings of Company forts are aesthetically crucially different from Wade's picturesque landscapes. Lambert glories in the power and authority of the Company rather than the beauty of the Indian natural world. His work thus suits the formality of the gilded Grand Court Room, just as Wade's images fit their (relatively) more relaxed setting in the Committee of Correspondence apartments. Crucially, this apparent understanding that material surroundings should relate to the space's function confirms the significance of the firmly Indianised private quarters of the Directors, consciously selected as an apt backdrop to the Directors' business.

Another detail of potential importance is the position of the EIC's arms above Britannia in Rysbrack's sculpture or, equally, the absence of deferential adornment to the mounted representation of the Company's arms behind the Chairman's seat, as shown in Thomas Shepherd's watercolour.[107] The contrast between this composition and that of the front elevation, figuratively dominated by the raised image of Britannia, is striking. Similarly, the tympanum, in which George III is shown as a benevolent

[103] Desmond, *India Museum* (London, 1982), p.4.
[104] India and Bengal Despatches, 25 May 1798, IOR, E/4/647, p.437.
[105] Foster, *Catalogue*, p.60.
[106] *The Asiatic journal and monthly miscellany*, v.17 (London, 1824), p.473.
[107] See fig.11, p.42.

militaristic figure armed with a sword and shield, presents an obsequiousness to king and country that is not present in the interior, the decoration of which on the contrary suggests corporate independence and pride.

Further, a number of the designs made by Holland and Jupp for various Company apartments illustrate an acculturation of Eastern styles. Holland's interior plans are, in general, quite experimental, but the designs for chimneypieces, in the 'small room' adjoining the main committee rooms and the Committee of Shipping, are particularly interesting. The decoration of the jambs of the former mantlepiece with, most probably, banana leaves and the part-drawn swastika meander of the latter design, are highly unorthodox, notable for their apparent Indian influences.[108] Whilst the significance of the swastika is clear, as a ubiquitous iconographic symbol in Hindu culture, expressing good-will and well-being, the banana leaves, whilst common to India, are not to my knowledge common to Indian architecture or symbolism.[109] Both carvings are however plainly exotic; the lack of authenticity regarding the latter design probably reflected**,** more than anything, Holland's ignorance of India and Indian styles. Likewise, Jupp's plans for the addition of a domed roof, patterned with interlacing, knot-like design is similarly, if imprecisely exotic.[110] Although it does not seem that Jupp's drawing was executed (the actual library was reportedly sixty feet across, far larger than the relatively small room depicted in Jupp's design), the experimentation by the House's architects with more avant-garde, non-classical styles is nonetheless interesting.[111] Whilst when assessed as individual elements, the relationship between the interiors and the East is potentially both minor and inconclusive, collectively, the material surroundings of the EIC Direction makes stark a visual dissonance, which is highly contrived, between the un-Indian effect of the building's public face and it's more orientally-luxurious private spaces. As such the effect is clear; a Company keenly fascinated with India but highly reluctant to present as such. Likewise, the contrast between the deferential tone of the exterior and the triumphalism of the interior reveals the other Janus-faced facet of Company character; the Company arms could be proudly emblazoned in the Court Room, but Dance's planned acroterion of a giant and unaccompanied

[108] See fig.12 and fig.13, pp.43-4.
[109] D. Cush and C.A. Robinson, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* (London, 2012), p.844.
[110] See fig.14, p.44.
[111] Britton, *Illustrations*, p.84.

representation of the Company's arms was perhaps viewed as inappropriate, working against the Company's carefully constructed public image. The stone facade of East India House, facing onto Leadenhall Street, was also, thus, a facade in the other sense of the word, concealing behind it a controversial but undeniable bond with the orient.

Finally, the decision to make space for a library and museum in 1798 to house an array of Eastern literature and artefacts is emblematic of the Direction's fixation on the East. The establishment of an oriental museum might appear somewhat contradictory to this essay's overarching contention that there was a dichotomous divide between the Company's public and private self-representations, concerned with the whitewashing of any Eastern connection. The Museum would, indeed, become a hugely popular repository for oriental exotica; following the court's decision in June 1838 to allow non-ticketed visitors access to the Museum between 11am and 3pm on Saturdays, the number of annual visitors soared.[112] By the mid nineteenth-century, the Museum's artefacts would attract the attention of the Victorian public, hundreds of thousands of whom would amble through the peacock-tailed arches of Wyatt's Indianised repository, perusing its varied oriental curiosities.[113] Yet, the opening up of the Museum to the wider public occurred long after the idea of British India had transformed from a matter of vexed national debate to one of national pride and, indeed, identity. It, thus, falls outside of the object of this study. As will be shown, in its early years, the India Museum was instead largely inaccessible to the general public, and can therefore be considered within the private realm of the Company.

Indeed, the Museum was not originally conceived as a public forum. Accordingly, when in 1808 the Company decided to display its most famous spoil from the Mysore wars, Tipu's Tiger – a mechanical toy and near life-size likeness of a tiger, symbolising the Sultanate, mauling an English soldier – it was exhibited first in the foyer of the East India House not the Museum.[114] Such material pronouncements of the EIC's Eastern association could be made because the Company was presenting itself in this instance as part of a crusade against tyranny and barbarism in the Orient, epitomised in the figure of

[112] Desmond, *India Museum*, p.30, p.36, p.86.
[113] *Illustrated London News* (London), no. 906 (6 March 1858), p.5, Gale Primary Sources [accessed 6th March 2022].
[114] Desmond, *India Museum*, p.21.
Gilipin and Almeidi, *Indian Renaissance*, p.35.

Tipu, not, as had been charged by critics, as a conduit for Eastern luxury and despotism. 'Tippoo's Man-Tiger Organ' thus best served its propagandist task at the House's entrance, free of admission charge, engendering acrimony towards the wicked Sultan and also, simultaneously and implicitly, justifying the Company's territorial aggrandisement. Although the organ did eventually move upstairs to the India Museum, this space was not primarily constructed with such propagandising in mind.

Though there is no mention of a museum in the 1798 dispatch sent to the Government of Bengal, expressing the Court of Directors' intention to form a Library for the patronage of a literary culture 'partly lost in its original Seats', it is evident that the Museum would serve similarly high-minded academic ambitions.[115] Wilkins's pitch for a 'Plan for an Oriental Museum' addresses the possibility of housing 'curiosities, chiefly presents' only parenthetically, dismissing these exhibits under the heading Miscellaneous Articles.[116] His chief concern was with the establishment of *A Cabinet of Natural Productions* as well as *Artificial Productions*, assessing 'the function of the Museum from the point of view of natural history, trade and technology'.[117] The memorandum to his proposal considers the possibility of setting up a society similar to the Asiatic Society in Bengal, using the Collection . . . to assist them in their researches'.[118] Although a formal Asiatic Society along these lines did not emerge until 1823, the Museum and Library were used to assist oriental research.[119] For instance, a number of works listed in the EIC Library's catalogue, particularly the ornithological and entomological studies, draw from the Museum's collection as their primary source material.[120]

Under Wilkins's stewardship, the Museum would build an impressive collection of natural and artificial productions, frequently of greater academic worth than monetary value. Babbage and Barlow, for instance, refer to the Museum's collection of rudimentary hand mills, a technology that originated in the East.[121] Correspondence between Sir Thomas Raffles and William Marsden, a member of the Asiatic Society and son-in-law of Wilkins who seems to have acted as a go-between on occasion, records the

[115] IOR, E/4/647 p.437
[116] C. Wilkins, *A stetch for a plan an Oriental Museum* (1799) printed in J. Forbes, *On the measures required for the efficient working of the India museum and library* (London,1874), pp.55-6
[117] Ibid, p.55.
[118] Ibid, p.56.

[120] *A catalogue of the library of the Hon. East India Company* (London, 1845), p.90.
[121] P. Barlow and C. Babbage *A treatise on the manufactures and machinery of Great Britain* (London, 1836), p.361.

transfer of 'quadrupeds, birds and insects' prepared by the naturalist and later Museum curator, Dr Horsfield.[122] By 1832, the natural history collection had grown so large that 8,500 species had to be transferred to the London Linnean Society.[123] Although undoubtedly interesting, the collections themselves are however of limited consequence to this thesis; the objects' collection was managed by a curator, and determined by the donations made by numerous servants; as such, they offer little insight into the psyche or attitudes of the EIC Directorship. Yet, the mere existence of a Museum and Library, especially formed along Wilkins's line, does attest to the notion that a role as patrons of a flourishing, orientally-inspired intellectualism was appended to the Directions' self-conception. Indeed, the Directors were evidently enthusiastic in this role expressing disappointment, in a dispatch sent to Bengal during the 'lean years', that the Museum's inventory remained meagre. They thusly encouraged their servants to transfer any objects of antiquarian interest to London as the Bengal Government accordingly reprinted the 1798 Dispatch in the Calcutta Gazette.[124] The Court also invested a considerable sum in the Library and Museum, spending 3,000 guineas on Richard Johnson's collection of 'manuscripts and Indian and Persian miniature paintings'.[125]

Moreover, critically, the Museum and Library's founders were not merely indifferent to public interest, but actually limited access from the outset. Whilst there were initially no formalised controls keeping visitor numbers in check, the only barrier to entry being 'a small gratuity to one of the attentive porters', this system was rectified as soon as public visits became more sustained.[126] Following a complaint from Wilkins in 1817 that people managed to 'obtain leave to visit the Library and Museum every day in the week except Sunday', the Committee of Library curbed public access by formulating a codified admission system, limiting the days of entry and issuance of tickets.[127] The swiftness with which they undertook this action suggests that there was no sustained period in which a sizeable public contingent was allowed entry until 1838, following a campaign against the Museum and Library's restrictive system of ticketing throughout the 1830s. Sharp criticisms of the ticketing system, such as that offered

[122] S. Raffles, *Memoir of the life and public services of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles*, v. 1 (London, 1835), p.220.
[123] J.F. Royle, *Essay on the Productive resources of India* (London, 1840), p.181.
[124] India and Bengal Despatches 5 June 1805, IOR, E/4/658, printed in Desmond, *India Museum*, pp.19-20.
[125] Ibid, p.20.
[126] Ibid, p.1.
[127] Library Committee minutes, 16 July 1817, IOR, MSS Eur F121/8, quoted in ibid, p.27.

by Gowan in 1834, who complained that the Library and Museum 'had no existence' to the wider public, in conjunction with an assessment of available newspaper records on Gale Primary demonstrate the Directors' success in maintaining both foundations as exclusive, scholarly spaces.[128]

Indeed, whilst a fairly crude statistical frequency analysis, a search for "India Museum" across Gale Primary, having filtered out any reference to the East India Museum in Salem, yielded only one hit in Gale's newspaper records before 1820, compared to thirty-eight hits for the same search between 1820 and 1840.[129] Moreover, the majority of the latter searches generated results for the late 1830s, where the India Museum is noted in a number of provincial and national papers, outlining for the benefit of their readership entry times and days.[130] Before this change in policy, access is rarely mentioned constructively, only in passing criticism. For example, in 1837, *The Mechanics Magazine Museum, Resister, Journal and Gazette*, praised the liberality of the Soane Museum's admission system in contrast to the India Museum, which required the 'introduction . . . of one of the Directors'.[131] Further, most of the mentions of the Museum before the 1830s come from scientific journals, suggestive that in its early years the Museum and Library acted primarily as antiquarian archival resources, rather than tourist destinations.[132] Thus, in their foundation, the Museum and Library were established because of genuine scholarly and orientalist curiosity; however, characteristically, this interest was not publicised.

Clearly then, in their role as governors of India, it was difficult for the Directors to remain wholly detached, even if such a disposition was better achieved by some governmental colleagues. Henry Dundas, for instance, staunchly opposed the creation of the India Museum and Library, just as he had pushed against the creation of Wellesley's College at Fort William, perceiving it as an uncomfortable step towards settlement.[133] In comparison, David Scott praised the College 'as one of the most meritorious services ever rendered by a Governor General'.[134] Abroad and at home, notwithstanding

[128] *Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, vol.13, (London, 1834), p.295.
[129] *Hampshire Chronicle*, (Hampshire), no. 1869 (8 January 1810), p.2, Gale Primary Sources [accessed 6th March 2022].
[130] *The Standard* (London), no. 21600 (25 December 1840), p.3, Gale Primary Sources [accessed 6th March 2022].
[131] *The Mechanics' Magazine, Museum, Resister, Journal and Gazette* (London, 1837), p.362.
[132] *Le Belle Assemblee*, published February 1, 1828, p.49, outlines a plan to publish the translated works of the Library and Museum in its Literary and Scientific Intelligence section. Likewise, *The Scots Magazine*, published February 1, 1825, p.105, anticipates the yet published study on insects by Horsfield.
[133] H. Dundas, R.W. Wellesley, *Two views of British India: the private correspondence of Mr. Dundas and Lord Wellesley, 1798-1801*, ed. E. Ingram (Bath, 1970), p.13.
[134] Scott, *The Correspondence of David Scott*, vol.2 p.314.

their primary motivation as ruthless profiteers, the EIC were not solely invested in the economics of the Company, a fact which is likewise reflected in the material ornamentation of the Directors' private apartments.

Conclusion:

The fact that the East India House has been overlooked is unsurprising. Though increasingly material investigations into the collision of British and Indian aesthetics have sought to offer corollary explanations for aspects this changeable period of cultural and social confluence, the subject of metropolitan patronage is invariably addressed, if at all, as an aside. Likewise, from the perspective of an historian concerned purely with architectural forms, the House offers little of interest. Notwithstanding the scarcity of competition in a 'dull-wartime context' during which the extensions were completed, the East India House is scarcely mentioned in Summerson's classic architectural survey, *Georgian London*.[135]

The India House was, indeed, just an office building and like all offices it served a highly functional purpose. Yet, functionalism was not always prosaic: all public buildings served a communicative, semi-propagandising role. For instance, Abramson's instructive work on the various architectural iterations of the Bank of England has emphasised the ways in which the corporation's built environment manifest its identity, viewing edificial construction 'as a cultural and symbolic act'.[136] The EIC, likewise, carefully considered its foremost public touchpoint. For example, in the seventeenth century to mark their wholehearted support for Charles II and the end of the 'Usurper['s]' rule (from whom they had recently happily accepted a renewed charter) the Court of Directors resolved to demonstrate their 'affection' for the new king.[137] Alongside the purchase of extravagant presents, preparations were made for 'the Coronation to represent the Companies loyall gratitude to His Majesty', including the 'beautif[ication]' of the House's frontage.[138] As Samuel Pepys recounts on April 17 1661 (six days

[135] J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (London, 1988), p.166.
[136] Abramson, *building*, p.240.
[137] Foster, *East India House*, p.40.
[138] Ibid, p.41.

before the coronation), an ornamental structure was completed in anticipation and honour of the new king; a 'picture of ships and other things [were] this morning set up before the East Indy House'.[139]

A century and a half later, dogged by scandal and trial, the East India Company displayed a similar savviness in manipulating their foremost public facing aspect to project loyalism, traditional corporatism, and Britishness, in the face of accusations of corruption, despotism, and Indianisation. Outside of the public eye, the contrivance of this public relations crafted image ceases: the material surroundings of the Directors demonstrate an unspoken curiosity and connection with India. The architecture of the East India House, thus, both illuminates the impact of the imperial crisis on the censured, but also provides the potential for fresh insight into the culture and character of the governors of India at the turn of the nineteenth century. In the context of historical study into the incorporation of empire and the nineteenth century crystallisation of imperial ideology, this study might provide a useful counterpoint.

[139] Ibid, p.42.

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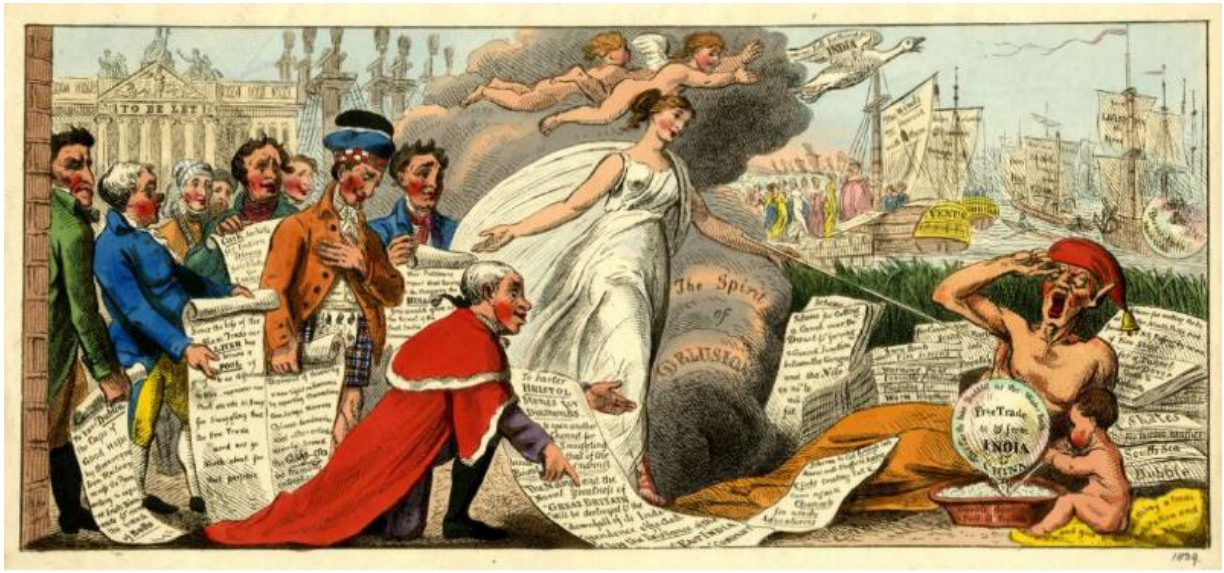

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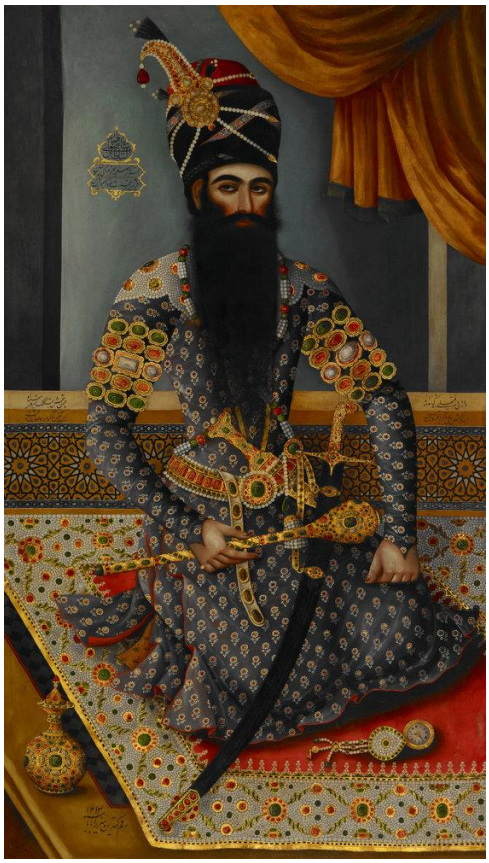

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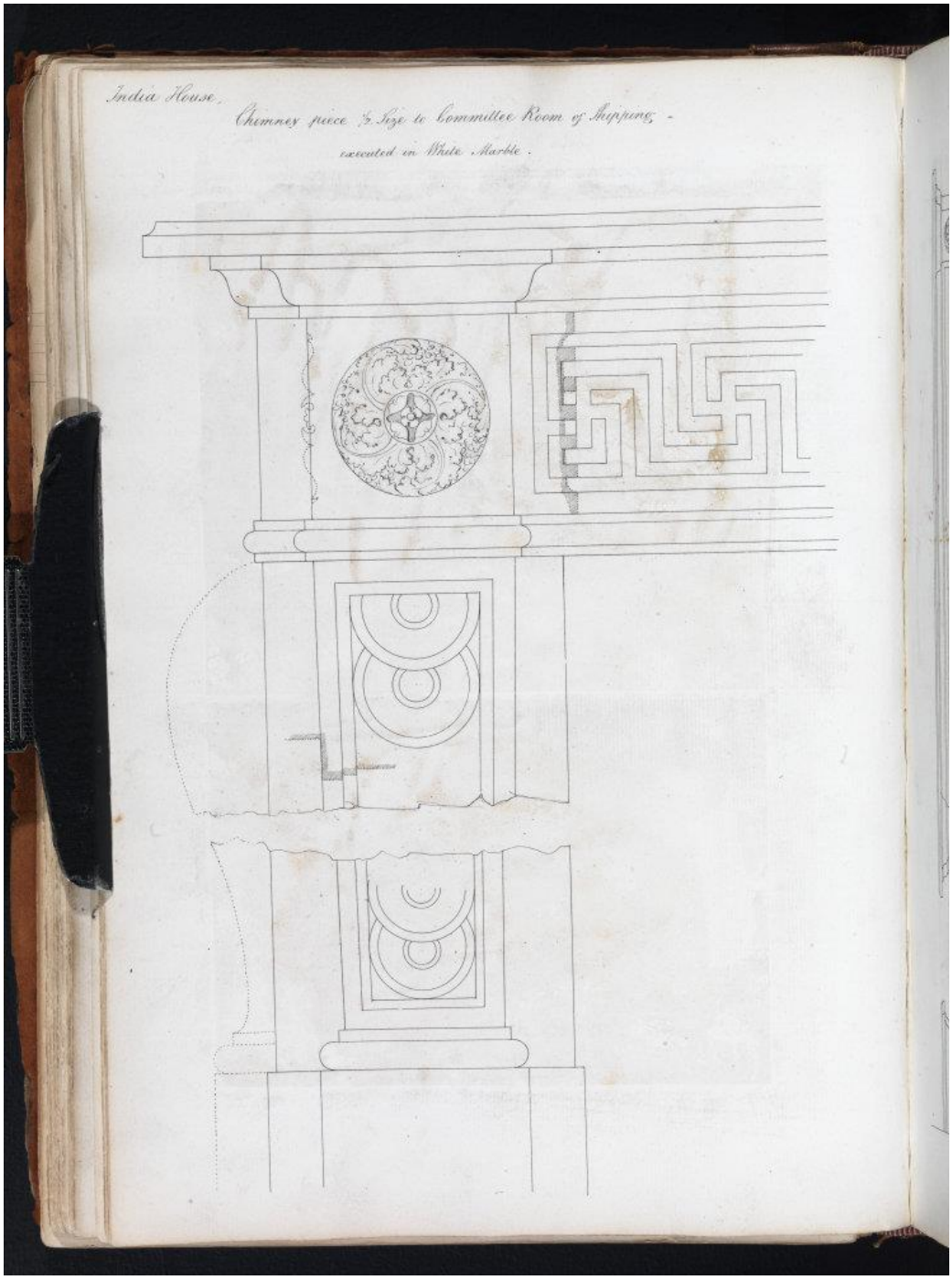

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