"A Novelty among Exhibitions"

The Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries, Bristol 1885

> Bristol may take credit to itself for having devised a novelty among Exhibitions. The present is peculiarly an exhibiting age, but there has not been till now an Exhibition devoted exclusively to women's industries. Bristol has, however, led the way, and the Exhibition just opened is so successful and so interesting that it will be surprising if the example is not rapidly followed in other places.[1]

Reported to be the first of its kind held in England, the Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries opened at Queen's Villa in the Clifton suburb of Bristol on 26th February 1885.[2] By the time it closed at the end of April, the Exhibition had been visited by more than 18,000 people, and 'had proved to be a success beyond the most sanguine expectations of the promoters.'[3]

Although several of the exhibitors were men, the Exhibition displayed only the work of women: the Catalogue stated explicitly that little effort had been made 'to shew such manufactures as are carried on by the joint labour of men and women, with the aid of machinery.'[4] It also reminded visitors

> that all the modern work they will see in this Exhibition is done by women who make a profession of their pursuit, either for arts' sake, or for the sake of earning a livelihood. No work is shewn done for recreation or amusement only.[5]

Using primary sources, which reveal the public response to the Exhibition, this essay considers the nature of the work exhibited and the space in which it was displayed.[6] Using a model devised by the architect Thomas A. Markus, it suggests that this event briefly transformed Queen's Villa from a domestic space into a multifunctional public building that functioned as a museum and art gallery, exhibition hall and lecture theatre and thus produced *visible*, *ephemeral* and *invisible* knowledge. However, given that the ideological position of the Exhibition's organising Committee 'shaped the content, classification and explanation'[7] of the exhibits, it is first essential to consider the origins of this event, the class identities of the exhibitors, and their links with the Suffrage Movement.

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The organization of the Exhibition was reported extensively in the local press, which in a surge of civic pride was highly supportive of the event. The Exhibition had been inspired by the success of the Industrial & Fine Art Exhibition held in Bristol at the Drill Hall the previous autumn.[8] The profits from this earlier exhibition had been donated to University College, Bristol, 'whose doors were open to the education and technical training of both sexes.'[9] Similarly, the primary objective of the Committee formed to organise the Exhibition of Women's Industries was to encourage 'opportunities afforded women for scientific study and technical training'[10], and its members

> …lost no time in putting themselves into communication with the Women's Employment Society in London, the Female School of Art, the School of Wood Carving and the various employers of female labour throughout the country...[11]

These organizations, and others involved with the training and employment of women, submitted exhibits to advertise their activities, to demonstrate the benefits of technical education, and 'to make access to those paths of appropriate work more plain and obvious.'[12] An advertisement heralding the Exhibition in the *Clifton Chronicle* described the range of work to be displayed:

> The principal feature will be Specimens of such works as illustrate the progress made by Women in industries demanding special technical and artistic training. Industrial Occupations, Painting, Wood Engraving, Wood Carving, Articles of Domestic Furniture, Lace, Needlework, Ancient and Modern, Telegraphy, &c., will be shewn.[13]

The "industries of women" may have formed a unifying theme for the Exhibition, but the displays at Queen's Villa also indicated the middle-class identity of its organisers, who were demanding 'greater participation in the workforce.'[14] This was reinforced by the motto printed across the front cover of the Catalogue, which had been 'fitly chosen'[15] from Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's poem *Aurora Leigh* (1856): '… Get leave to work / In this world: 'tis the best you get at all'.[16]

The review in the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented:

> though the regular trades – such as the textile industries, in which women of the working classes are employed in large numbers – are represented, more prominence is given in the Exhibition to skilled industries where the employés are not "hands" and are not reckoned by the thousand, but where each worker brings her own individuality to bear on the product of her industry.[17]

Despite offering a reduced admission price of 6d to the working-classes on Saturdays, which was 'productive of a much larger attendance',[18] the emphasis was upon the types of remunerative work and technical training suitable for middle-class women. Indeed as the *Clifton Chronicle* noted, the exhibitors were '… for the most part, though not all, women of superior education; some of them women of scientific acquirement … more of them are women of cultivated taste and skill.'[19]

Many of the exhibitors were also involved with philanthropic organizations, and particularly with lace associations,[20] but, while the Catalogue carefully recorded the name of each "exhibitor", "artist" or "designer", the working-class women, who actually produced these hand-made textile items, remained unnamed.[21] These exhibits should be understood as "double-displays" that demonstrated examples of dying craft traditions practised by peasant women, but which prioritised the philanthropic work undertaken by the upper-middle class women whose names appeared in the Catalogue as "exhibitors".

"Double-display" was *the* feature of the Exhibition, itself a larger example of this strategy. Ostensibly exhibiting the more tangible products of "feminine industry", the Exhibition was also used to demonstrate the managerial skills possessed by its female organisers. Indeed, despite having a male President and Chairman, the Committee that organised the Exhibition was composed entirely of women. This was remarked upon in many reports. The reviewer for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who signed herself "A Woman, but not an Exhibitor", commented:

> Exhibitions in general present on the opening day a sea of shavings and paper wrappings, interspersed with packing cases and empty or half-empty stands; the Bristol exhibition was a curious contrast to this state of things; the opening

> day found it in trim and dainty order; the laces, embroideries, pictures and other products of feminine industry were in their places, suggesting the thought that order and punctuality are among the virtues of persons who, as Mr E. A. Leatham says "are not even men".[22]

The gendered nature of the Exhibition may have partially obscured the class position of the exhibitors, but the political intentions of its organisers were unambiguous; the proceeds of the Exhibition being donated to the 'National Society for the Promotion of the Franchise of Women.'[23] This clear connection with the Women's Suffrage Movement was also commented upon in all the newspaper reports.

The *Bristol Times* noted that the idea for the Exhibition had 'originated with Miss Helen Blackburn and Mr Alan Greenwell.'[24] A committed suffragist, the Reverend Greenwell, was the Chairman of the Exhibition Committee, while Helen Blackburn, the Honourable Secretary to the Exhibition, was also the Secretary of both the West of England Suffrage Society and the National Society for Women's Suffrage (1874 – 1895).[25] Editor of the *Englishwoman's Review* from 1881 until 1890, she later wrote, *Women's Suffrage* (1902) which remains an important text of "the struggle". Rather modestly, this publication made no mention of the Bristol Exhibition, however, in 1918, a publication titled *How the Suffrage Movement began in Bristol Fifty Years Ago* noted:

> Among Miss Blackburn's indefatigable activities in Bristol was a bit of indirect Suffrage work – a Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries, which attracted many helpers who had not before been interested in Women's Suffrage, and made a very good object lesson for the general public.[26]

The date of Exhibition is particularly significant, occurring at a time when the suffrage movement was in 'a temporary decline' following the rejection of Woodall's amendment to the 1884 Reform Bill by the largest majority 'returned against a British woman suffrage proposal in the movement's history to date.'[27] The amendment would have enfranchised about 100,000 property-owning women, and the implication behind its rejection, which was greatly resented by upper and middle-class women, was that 'masculinity was valued more than class position.'[28] Thus, as an event that prioritised the feminine, the Exhibition of Women's Industries must be considered in the context of contemporary gender politics in which many members of the Committee played active roles. Indeed as the *Clifton Chronicle* noted:

> To prove women's capacity for exercising the franchise, probably no better plan could have been devised than to make manifest their intelligence in scientific and artistic pursuits, than by collecting in one building women's finest productions.[29]

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Unlike the purpose built Women's Pavilions and Palaces erected at contemporary international Exhibitions[30], the Bristol Exhibition of Women's Industries was housed in a 'commodious residence opposite the Queen's Hotel'[31] which contained 'besides the entrance hall, three or four rooms on the ground floor, with the same number above.'[32]

A sense of the physical space inside Queen's Villa can be gained from the Catalogue and from reviews of the Exhibition published in the local, national and suffrage press. The *Clifton Chronicle* printed several whimsical articles written by the female "Ghost of the Queen's Villa", which gave the reader detailed reviews and

well-informed assessments of several exhibits. This was an interesting literary device that reflected the contemporary popularity of psychical science and spiritualism, to which the ghost also referred.[33] Other less fanciful reports described the route taken by visitors, the best example being the guided tour published the *Englishwoman's Review*.[34]

On arrival, the visitors passed through the Entrance Porch and Vestibule, decorated with "flags of all nations", into the Hall, where there were displays of woodcarving, ceramics and pictures by Emily Ford.[35] To the right of the Hall, a large reception room, re-designated "Room I", displayed oil paintings and "art pottery" and was where the lectures and music recitals were given. A second reception room (Room II) displayed watercolours, ceramic plaques and the majority of the textile exhibits including lace, crochet and embroidery: also downstairs was the Tea Room, which was 'crowded' with portraits of eminent women.[36]

As visitors climbed the stairs they saw diagrams of "marine architecture" exhibited by the Leven Shipyard; designs for landscape gardening by Fanny Wilkinson[37]; and fans decorated by students at the Female School of Art. Upstairs in Room III was the "Dress Section", and in Room IV were displays of drawings; historical relics; "peasant" textile-crafts and ethnographic objects. On the Landing there were floral displays; agricultural produce[38]; and a demonstration of telegraphy 'worked on the spot, by a pupil from the Red Maid's School.'[39] Room V was devoted to "house decoration" by R. & A. Garrett[40], while Room VI exhibited the work of the Bristol Associated Decorators; examples of Nottingham lace; specimens of law-copying[41]; and, the architectural and technical tracings sent by the Ladies' Tracing Office. Finally, in Room VII, the visitor viewed examples of Bedfordshire straw

work; Birmingham metalwork; wallpaper designs; the inventions of Eliza Turck[42]; and work by the Chromolithographic Studio.

While these exhibits, according to *The Queen*, were 'arranged with care and judgement, and as a whole, constitute a splendid array of women's work', the same article commented on the lack of space for the number of visitors.[43] The *Englishwoman's Review* also described the rooms as "crowded" with people and with objects, and the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented that 'every nook and corner of the moderate sized house in which the Exhibition is held is full.'[44] Perhaps intentionally, this over-crowding suggested that women's work was so extensive that it could no longer be contained in a domestic space.

In a parody of domestic functions and private activities, including cooking, eating, dressing, childcare and "At Home" entertainments, the exhibition transformed Queen's Villa into a public space, which allowed the display *and* the acquisition of knowledge. Indeed, quoting Tennyson, the front cover of the Catalogue, stated that "Knowledge is now no more a fountain sealed."[45]

Reminding us that "Knowledge is power", Markus has commented that 'all museums have political meaning.'[46] Functioning as a museum and thus producing *visible* knowledge, some of the displays in Queen's Villa celebrated the achievements of women over time and from other cultures; the latter reflecting the popularity of ethnographic displays and mapping race directly into the space and form of Queen's Villa.[47] While the various "relics" that were displayed suggested women were *keepers* of history[48], primarily, the historical exhibits at Queen's Villa attempted to record the history of women at work.'[49] Examples of antique needlework were an important record of the history of women's work; as the report in *The Queen* noted: 'We were conscious of feeling akin to reverence when we laid hands on some of these

old quilts. What a "history of our own times" they could tell!'[50] However, having admired the quilts and the samplers displayed, the same reviewer, once again indicating the class identity of the Exhibition, commented:

> But in all this old work there is the same tale which saddens one in thinking of it – the same tale of monotonous and rather uninteresting life – of work done only to keep the hands from lying idle. There was nothing else then for most women but the needle. [51]

However, in place of honour in this display of the history of women's work was the Spinning Wheel; spinning being an occupation with symbolic associations for "spinsters" and one of the "lost trades", which had 'since the introduction of machinery passed from their hands entirely.'[52] Many of the speeches reported during the Exhibition lamented the demise of spinning and weaving as traditional forms of remunerative employment for women that had taken place, not in public, but within the home:

> Not many years ago every little home had its centre of industry. The spinning jenny, the mule, and the weaving machine enabled girls to produce at their respective homes many little things to support their families in decency, and gave employment to all concerned.[53]

It is significant that the majority of the exhibits shown at Queen's Villa were "domestic industries" produced in the *home*, either by working-class women "out-

workers" or middle-class artists and craftswomen. Indeed, as Anthea Callen has noted:

> The crafts most commonly practised by women echoed both traditional and more recent patterns of sexual labour divisions. Embroidery, lacemaking, china painting, jewellery, bookbinding, illustrating and even woodcarving were all activities which could be pursued *within the home*, often without the need for a special workshop or studio.[54]

Even the knowledge produced by the Exhibition was "made" in a domestic setting. Clearly the *act* of work was more important to the organisers than the *space* in which it occurred.

Other displays portrayed women not only as makers *in* history but also as makers *of* history. Exhibited downstairs in the Tea Room[55], and intended as a record of female achievement, was a collection of portraits of more than ninety eminent women who had 'left their mark on the world'.[56] This display was identified in all the newspaper reports as 'the keynote of the Exhibition'.[57] Deborah Cherry (2000) has commented that collections of female portraits 'created a visual genealogy of authoritative and powerful women which countered illustrated profiles of masculine high achievers and public figures.'[58] Literally making an exhibition of themselves, many of the contemporary portraits were sent to Queen's Villa by the sitters. This tactic of "self-display" enabled women such as Frances Cobbe Power, Bessie Rayner Parkes, Mme Bodichon, and Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell to endorse the Exhibition, to appear in the Catalogue as "exhibitors" and to attend the event by proxy. Some portraits were of women who did not necessarily support the Suffrage Movement,

however all were in favour of extending technical education and opportunities for work.

Functioning as a contemporary trade exhibition and producing *ephemeral* knowledge, the exhibits at Queen's Villa also celebrated current examples of women's work and indicated what might be achieved in the future given access to technical education. Many of the exhibits at Queen's Villa were displayed to demonstrate the contribution women could make to British trade, which no doubt had particular significance given the economic depression of the 1880s and the falling value of British exports.[59] Indeed, Mr. J. D. Weston, a former Mayor of Bristol and President of the Exhibition, commented at the opening ceremony that:

> … there appeared no reason to him why many articles should not be produced by their own women rather than they should be imported from France and other countries.[60]

Inevitably, the Arts, as 'a field of employment that appeared to be merely an extension of traditional female accomplishments'[61], were better represented than either science or heavy industry. Nonetheless, the wide range of objects displayed still corresponded to the six broad Divisions that had been used to classify objects displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Thus, there were "RAW MATERIALS" such as the agricultural produce 'clearly demonstrating that women can be practical farmers.'[62] There were items that fell into some classes of the second Division "MACHINERY" including the "Griswold Knitting Machine" and other exhibits produced by women who had benefited from scientific study and technical training. These included the 'Marks Patent Line Divider, for dividing any line into any number

of equal parts'[63], exhibited by a former student at Girton, and the medal-winning invention of Mrs Knevett, titled "Apparatus to prevent children from being burnt or scalded in the absence of their parents."[64] However, the most impressive display in this category was exhibited by Messrs Denny Brothers of the Leven Shipyard at Dumbarton, which included 'tracings, drawings, and calculations and diagrams of displacement, and stability calculations, used in marine architecture, all the work of women employed by the firm.'[65]

Census figures show that in 1881 the textile industry employed 745,000 women, and at Queen's Villa there were exhibits belonging to all ten classes categorised in 1851 within the Division "MANUFACTURES: TEXTILE FABRICS".[66] In fact, textile products formed the largest category of exhibits, and to avoid displaying 'manufactures as are carried on by the joint labour of men and women, with the aid of machinery'[67] almost all were hand-made items. The tradition of textile work as a female occupation had been emphasised by the displays of historic needlework and spinning, but the majority of the textile exhibits were contemporary pieces submitted by local, regional, national and international exhibitors. There were embroideries worked by the nuns at Manilla Hall, Clifton and exhibits by the Clifton Ladies Work Society. Messrs. Morley of Nottingham sent examples of lace and hosiery[68] and there was an exhibit from the Leek Embroidery Association.[69] Morris & Co., sent embroideries, a portière, and three Hammersmith rugs[70]: these items, which were described as hand-made by women received much praise and attention from reviewers. William Morris also visited the Exhibition and addressed the visitors.[71] However, it seems likely that his comments in support of the family wage and 'the evil resulting from married women engaging in bread-winning work'[72] would have been less popular with his audience. More than 30% of exhibitors were married

women, as were the anonymous working class or "peasant" women, who made a vital contribution to the family income through their work.[73]

Many of the textile exhibits came from Ireland[74], including one that formed an important example of "double-display" at Queen's Villa. Exhibited by Mrs Ernest Hart, examples of hosiery knitted by famine stricken "Donegal Peasants" received a lengthy Catalogue description. However, rather than describing the work, this entry explained how members of the Exhibition Committee contributed to this philanthropic effort, supplying the Donegal peasant women with yarn and arranging the sale of the hosiery.[75]

Philanthropic organizations that aimed to revive craft traditions in Scandinavia also sent "double-displays" to Bristol. Swedish embroidery was exhibited by Mrs C. H. Derby, one of the original directors of the "Handarbetes Vänner" (the friends of Manual Arts at Stockholm); and, a Mrs Magnusson, who had exhibited at the International Health Exhibition the previous year, displayed examples of spinning, knitting, and embroidery from Iceland.[76]

Another branch of the textile industry that employed 667,000 women, which had also formed an important exhibit at the Health Exhibition, was displayed upstairs in Room III as an "Exhibition of Dress".[77] Despite the displays of national and folk costume and examples of dress from India, Roumania, Bavaria, and Egypt, this section had its own agenda:

> The Committee of the Dress Section being limited to space, have only been able to show examples of different types of Modern Dress, that a just comparison may be made between the Rational or Reformed Dress, the Artistic, and the fashionable Present-Day Costume.[78]

Formed in 1881 by Viscountess Harberton and Mrs E. M. King, the Rational Dress Society was well represented at Bristol.[79] Lady Harberton, President of the Society, and 'one of the supporters of the movement for women's enfranchisement'[80], was also among the exhibitors, contributing her own famous design, 'the "Harberton Walking Costume" with an adaptation of the Eastern Trouser.'[81]

Among the exhibits of "Dress" was a "Model Baby, dressed hygienically" in a set of clothes that had been 'awarded the bronze medal in 1883, given by the National Health Society.'[82] Devised and executed by Miss Loader of Thame, Oxfordshire to exhibit an improved system of infant's clothing, this wax baby drew more comments than the garments. The *Western Daily Press* referred to this exhibit as 'a delicate hint of women's work in domestic departments'[83] while the *Pall Mall Gazette* commented that 'Very appropriately in this room is a life-size wax model of a baby, the chief of women's industries!'[84]

Given that 49,000 women were employed in the metal manufacture industry and a further 27,000 were also employed in the pottery and glass industries, the Exhibition also displayed examples of the processes and products, which would have been categorised as "MANUFACTURES: METALLIC, VITREOUS AND CERAMIC".[85] The examples of metalwork sent from Birmingham included 'specimens of chains and nails in their various stages'[86] exhibited by Eliza Tinsley & Company.

The work of female ceramists and glass workers formed a particularly important category in the Exhibition. These displays ranged from the painted glass mirrors of Mrs Hodgson and Mrs Backhouse and the glass jug 'designed and engraved by young women trained by the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women'[87] to the exhibits sent by larger manufacturers of pottery and porcelain. The work sent by the Bristol firm of Messrs. S. J. Kepple & Co., featured in many of the

local newspaper reports.[88] One display demonstrated 'that a first rate dinner service can be made by women at the remarkable low price of 4 ½d per plate printed, 6d painted'[89]: unwittingly, this small price differential also demonstrated the exploitation of female pottery painters. Following a well-established precedent at Exhibitions, a second display by Kepple & Co., was designed to show the process of manufacture from raw material to finished product, indicating how women were involved in each stage.[90] This local manufacturer also sent 'upwards of £300 worth of specimens'[91] of "Art Pottery" which was exhibited in Room I alongside displays from other factories employing large numbers of women. These included examples from Doulton's of Lambeth by Hannah and Florence Barlow, Edith Lupton, Edith Rogers, Eliza Simmance and Linnie Watt.[92] These were shown alongside ceramics from Worcester where 'the tinting, gilding, burnishing and all the decoration is women's work'[93], and, Crown Derby where 'the painted and raised gold is done by them also.'[94] Significantly, prioritising artistic over technical skill, the Catalogue named the "designers" of these exhibits from Doulton's while the work from other factories were simply "women's work".

Numerous exhibits fell into the fifth Division of "MISCELLANEOUS", from the interior decor shown by Agnes Garrett to ephemera such as the hedgehog quill embroidery 'invented and designed by Miss Lucy Griffith.'[95] Finally, the Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries included a large number of items classified as "FINE ART", including paintings, watercolours and sculpture.[96] There were extensive displays organised by Miss Edith Mendham, with three of the Rooms, the "Landing", and "Passage" used as exhibition space. Among the important loan exhibits were works by Emily Osborn(e), Hilda and Clara Montalba, Mrs Helen Allingham, Mrs Louise Jopling, Mrs Alma Tadema, Madame Bodichon, Mrs Butler, Miss Francesca

Alexander and Mrs E. M. Ward, some of whom, though not all, had links with the Suffrage Movement.[97] Listed separately in the Catalogue under the name of the "Artist" rather than the exhibitor, the exhibits of Fine Art were grouped in a hierarchy of media. Oil paintings were displayed in Room I, which was a 'large reception room, where the lectures and concerts are given and the principal pictures are hung.'[98] Watercolours were shown in Room II, while sketches and drawings predominated upstairs in Room IV. The prominence given to the displays of Art once more indicated the middle-class agenda of the Exhibition Committee. It is significant that one of four women depicted upon front cover of the Catalogue, which itself illustrated the theme of work was an artist; the others being a writer, a spinster and a teacher.

Thomas Markus has stated that the 'usual way of producing knowledge is to teach' and the 'characteristic teaching space is the lecture theatre'[99]; and this was a function that Queen's Villa also fulfilled. Thus, throughout the Exhibition music recitals, cookery demonstrations and, a range of international women speakers contributing to the lecture programme imparted invisible knowledge to Exhibition-goers.

Held in Room I, the principal reception room in Queen's Villa, music recitals were performed every Wednesday afternoon and Saturday evening. The *Clifton Chronicle* reported extensively on the musical programme 'generously superintended' by Miss Farler, which included a "Pianoforte Recital of Works by Women Composers" performed twice by Mrs Roeckel.[100] The Exhibition programme also advertised a series of lectures given by female authorities in Room I on Tuesday and Saturday afternoons. These included "Icelandic Spinning"; "Rational Dress"; "The Medical Education of Women in India"; "Dress, Economic and Technical"; "The Kindergarten System"; "Printing as a Trade for Women"; and, "Wood Carving".

Given the close proximity of the "Deaf and Dumb Institute" to Queen's Villa, there was also a lecture on "The Oral System of Teaching the Deaf and Dumb."[101] Deemed 'an important element' of the Exhibition, several lectures were reprinted in the *Englishwoman's Review*, thus reaching an even wider audience.[102]

Many reviews commented on the growing importance of domestic science and the popularity of the "practical" or "demonstrative" cookery lessons given by Miss May Baker and Miss Arnott 'holding Diplomas from South Kensington'[103], which took place 'deep down in the basement.'[104] There are interesting parallels between this new science practised in the basement of Queen's Villa and the similarly located chemistry laboratories found in many early museums. Markus has explained that while the positioning of laboratories was intended to counter the danger of fire and explosion and to prevent smells percolating upstairs, 'there were also social reasons – chemistry teaching was to a lower class of student.'[105] This socio-spatial positioning was true also of the Cookery Lessons at Queen's Villa, which like the classes at the National School of Cookery were aimed largely at working-class women.[106] However, the basement location of the cookery classes was not entirely successful. The *Clifton Chronicle* noted:

> Miss Baker is receiving a desirable amount of patronage in her demonstrative cookery lessons down-stairs, though it is to be regretted that the fumes from the gas-stove used in cooking, at times imparts an odour in the upper regions devoted to art which is far from savoury.[107]

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The Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries was ostensibly a celebration of women's work, yet the nature of the work exhibited, notably the examples of

philanthropic "double-display" and hagiographic "self-display" revealed the existence of 'at least two labour markets for women in Victorian Britain.'[108] The class identity of the politically motivated organisers was also reflected in the spatial arrangement of the exhibits displayed and the lectures that took place within Queen's Villa.

Standing empty for twelve years, the original domestic function of Queen's Villa was almost over and the building was soon to be converted into a commercial property; another 'shift in function to a new use' which created 'new social relations with new meanings.'[109] However, if a 'building is a developing story, traces of which are always present'[110], then the Exhibition of Women's Industries was a short, but important chapter in the narrative of Queen's Villa, which described its temporary transformation from a private domestic space into a public exhibition of work and knowledge. The "drawing room", the "dining-room", the "kitchen", the "nursery" and the "bedroom" had disappeared, but the physical form and space of this building remained unchanged and its original purpose remained psychologically and ideologically significant. Thus, the organisers of the Exhibition of Women's Industries were able to parody the functions and subvert the meaning of this space while the 18,000 visitors found it acceptable to view women's industries in building whose very name displayed its feminine and domestic origins.

Endnotes:

[1] "A Novelty in Exhibitions", in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 26th, 1885, p. 4. Research undertaken for this essay has uncovered a wealth of primary sources. These include the Catalogue of the *Exhibition of Women's Industries* and a range of contemporary newspaper and magazine articles. The majority of the reports on the Exhibition appeared in the Bristol weekly journals: *The Clifton Chronicle*, *The Bristol Observer*, *The Western Daily Press* and *The Bristol Times*. Reviews were also published in the *Pall Mall Gazette* and *The Queen*, and in the suffrage press. The *Englishwoman's Review* reported on the Exhibition throughout its duration, while the *Women's Union Journal* commented on its closing.
[2] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 4th March, 1885, p.2
[3] *Women's Union Journal*, May, 1885, p. 35; *The Bristol Times*, 29th April, 1885, p. 6
[4] Catalogue: *Exhibition of Women's Industries*, Bristol, 1885, "Introductory". Of the 303 exhibitors, 116 were listed as "Miss" and 91 were listed as "Mrs" or "Madame". 14 were female who gave only their first and surnames; 6 were titled women and one exhibitor was the unmarried female doctor Elizabeth Blackwell. 19 of the exhibitors were women's organizations and 20 were businesses exhibiting women's work. 29 were men, for instance, John Ruskin and Albert Fleming both sent samples of linen produced by the women at St. Martin's, Langdale. Finally, 7 exhibitors (probably women) gave only initials and a surname.
[5] Ibid., p. 7
[6] The Report and Balance Sheet, the Address Book and the Minute Book of the Exhibition Committee, which give details of the planning of the Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries are in the "Helen Blackburn Collection" at Girton College, Cambridge. I am very grateful to Kate Perry, Archivist at Girton College for locating these items.
[7] T. A. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in Modern Building Types*, Routledge, 1993, p. 208
[8] *The Western Daily Press*, 26th February 1885, p. 6 The Industrial and Fine Art Exhibition ran from 2nd September until 29th November 1884.
[9] *The Bristol Times*, 27th February, 1885, p. 1
[10] *The Western Daily Press*, 29th April, 1885
[11] *The Bristol Times*, 27th February, 1885, p. 1
[12] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 22nd April, 1885, p. 5
[13] Ibid., 11th February, 1885, p.4
[14] P. Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women 1815 – 1914*, Hodder & Stoughton, 1996, p. 69
[15] *Englishwoman's Review*, March 14th, 1885, p. 98
[16] E. Barrett-Browning, 1857 Book III, ll., 161-2, [reprinted Oxford University Press, edited and with an introduction by Kerry McSweeney, 1993, p. 79]
[17] *Pall Mall Gazette*, February 26th, 1885, p. 4
[18] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 18th March, 1885, p. 5
[19] Ibid., 22nd April, 1885, p. 5
[20] A. Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870 - 1914*, Astragal, 1979, pp. 4 - 8
[21] This was also the case in the exhibits of factory-made ceramics displayed by manufacturers.
[22] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26th February 1885, p. 4. E. A. Leatham was an author and MP for Huddersfield and brother-in-law of John Bright.
[23] *The Bristol Times*, 27th February 1885, p. 1. The reporter (or J. D. Weston) meant the National Society for Women's Suffrage.
[24] *The Bristol Times*, 27th February, 1885, p. 1. S. J. Tanner, *How the Suffrage Movement began in Bristol Fifty Years Ago*, Bristol: The Carlyle Press, 1918, p. 9 recorded that Greenwell and his wife had joined the Bristol & Clifton Suffrage Society in 1872.
[25] Helen Blackburn (1842 – 1903) *Dictionary of National Biography 1901 - 1911*, pp. 168 – 9 and O. Banks, *The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists*, Volume 1: 1800 - 1930, Harvester Press, 1985
[26] S. J. Tanner, 1918, p. 13
[27] B. Harrison, *Separate Spheres – The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain*, Croom Helm, 1978, p. 44
[28] H. L. Smith, *The British Women's Suffrage Campaign, 1866 – 1828*, Longman, 1998, p. 9
[29] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 25th February, 1885, p.5

[30] P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851 – 1939*, Manchester University Press, 1988, pp. 174 – 197.
[31] *The Western Daily Press*, 26th February, 1885, p. 6
[32] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 97
[33] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 11th March, 1885, p. 5. Deborah Cherry, 2000, pp. 206 - 211 also considers this subject and interestingly lists many of the women exhibitors at Bristol among those with an interest in psychical science or spiritualism.
[34] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, pp. 97 - 105
[35] See D. Cherry, *Beyond the Frame: Feminism and Visual Culture, Britain 1850 – 1900*, London: Routledge, 2000 for information on Emily Ford's art and her involvement with Women's Suffrage.
[36] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 100
[37] E. Crawford, *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and their Circle*, London: Francis Boutle,2002, Chapter 5 "The Land", pp. 218 - 239
[38] The Catalogue places the swedes and mangold wurzels on the Landing while the tour in the *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 98 – 99, notes that they are exhibited in the Entrance Porch.
[39] Catalogue, p. 54
[40] E. Ferry, '"Decorators May be Compared to Doctors": An analysis of Rhoda an Agnes Garrett's Suggestion for House decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture', in *Journal of Design History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2003, pp. 15 – 33. The Loan Exhibition of Women's Industries is referred to in an interview with Agnes Garrett published in the *Women's Penny Paper*, 18th January, 1890.
[41]Sent by Mrs Sunter of the Law Copying Office for the Employment of Women at 2 Portugal Street, Lincoln's Inn, London.
[42] These were "Florentine Tapestry" and "Mirrorine".
[43] *The Queen*, 7th March, 1885, p. 247
[44] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26th February, 1885, p. 4
[45] Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Princess*, 1847, Book II, l. 76.
[46] T. A. Markus, 1993, p. 194. "*Nam et ipsa scienta potestas est*" is attributed to Francis Bacon (1561 – 1626).
[47] Part of Room IV displayed "Indian work, … and native productions from Madagascar, North America (Indian), Hindustan, Burmah, Fiji, Algeria, and Iceland." The hand-crafted ethnographic objects on display, all of which were exhibited by white middle-class women, included a 'Rush Basket, Head-band and Necklace made by Kaffir women'; Native American bead work and costumes made by the Apache, Cree, and Chippewa tribes; Fijian drinking vessels; and, embroidery executed by Hindu women. These exhibits further complicate the primary issue of *which* women were exhibiting.
[48] Catalogue, p. 48 described highly popular exhibit of the relics of King Charles I
[49] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 25th February, 1885, p.5
[50] *The Queen*, 21st March, 1885, p. 302
[51] Ibid.
[52] Catalogue, "Introductory"
[53] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 4th March, 1885, p. 2
[54] A. Callen, "Sexual Division of Labour in the Arts and Crafts Movement" in J. Attfield & P. Kirkham (eds.), *A View from the Interior: Women & Design*, 1989; 1995 edition, p. 159
[55] See Lynn Walker's essay "Vistas of Pleasure: Women Consumers of Urban Space in the West End of London 1850 – 1900" in C. Campbell-Orr (ed.), *Women in the Victorian Art World*, Manchester University Press, 1995, p. 76 for a discussion of the significance of eating in public.
[56] Catalogue, "Introductory". This collection formed the basis of a bigger collection of eminent British Women, which was later sent to the Chicago Exhibition of 1893. The Royal Commission of the Chicago Exhibition gave Helen Blackburn a grant of £100 to add to this collection. She collected 190 portraits that were arranged in 12 groups: Medieval, Tudor, Civil War, Early 18th Century, pioneers in philanthropy and the advancement of women, pioneers in education, royal ladies, history, science, general literature, poets, fiction, painting, music and drama. *The Western Daily Press*, 28th January 1895 noted that when the Loan Collection was returned from Chicago, Helen Blackburn presented this valuable collection to University College, Bristol to be placed in the Women Student's Room. See L. B. Voss Snook, "The Woman's Reading Room", *The Magnet* Vol. 2. No. 5, 21st June 1900, pp. 161 – 162. Sadly, this collection now seems to have been dispersed.
[57] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26th February, 1885, p. 4
[58] D. Cherry, 2000, p.195

[59] P. Gregg, *A Social and Economic History of Britain 1760 – 1980*, 8th Edition, Harrap, 1982, p. 368 – 369. In 1885 British exports were valued at £213 million and imports stood at £371 million.
[60] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 4th March, 1885, p. 2
[61] A. Callen, 1989; 1995 edition, p. 153
[62] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 98 – 99
[63] Catalogue, p. 58
[64] Ibid., p. 61
[65] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March 1885, p. 101. The Catalogue gave detailed explanatory notes on the eight technical diagrams exhibited, pp. 36 - 38
[66] A. V. John, (ed.) *Unequal opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800 – 1918*, Blackwell, 1986, "Introduction", Appendix B, p. 37
[67] Catalogue, "Introductory"
[68] The Catalogue included a four-page insert entitled "The Work of Women in the Nottingham Lace Trade".
[69] Founded in 1879 by Elizabeth Wardle, wife of Thomas Wardle, the President of the Silk association of Great Britain and Ireland. See K. Parkes, "The Leek Embroidery Society", *Studio*, volume 1, 1893, pp. 136 - 40
[70] Morris & Co., displayed rugs in the Quatrefoil, Pine and Little Tree patterns.
[71] N. Salmon, *The William Morris Chronology*, Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 145. Morris had delivered a lecture on "Art and Labour" at a meeting sponsored by the Bristol Branch of the Socialist League at the Bristol Museum and Library on 3rd March. His "address" at the Exhibition is not mentioned in the Morris chronology.
[72] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 22nd April, 1885, p. 5
[73] A significant number of the newspaper reports written in response to the Exhibition contained references to women as "bread-winners". See *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26th February, 1885, p. 4; *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 105; and *The Clifton Chronicle*, 1st April, 1885, p. 5.
[74] Born on Valencia Island, Co. Kerry, Helen Blackburn moved with her family to London in 1859. The Irish exhibits included work by the Royal Irish School of Art Needlework; examples of point lace from Youghal; "peasant" knitting from Valencia Island, Co. Kerry; and, Irish crochet from the Mountmellick Industrial Association.
[75] Catalogue p. 50. Mrs Hart was the founder of the Donegal Industrial Fund, a charity formed in response to a famine in Donegal in the 1880s. See A. Callen,1979, p. 116
[76] S. M. Newton, *Health, Art & Reason – Dress Reformers of the Nineteenth Century*, John Murray, 1974, chapter 6. The International Health Exhibition was held in Kensington in 1884. Mrs Magnusson also gave lectures at Queen's Villa.
[77] A. V. John (ed.,), 1986, p. 37
[78] Catalogue, p. 40
[79] S. M. Newton, 1974, p. 108. Mrs E. M. King was the honourable Secretary of the Society under the Presidency of Lady Haberton. In 1883, they had organised the Rational Dress Exhibition at Prince's Hall in Piccadilly, and consequently were made responsible for the section on Dress reform in the International Health Exhibition in 1884.
[80] Ibid., p. 103
[81] Catalogue, p. 43
[82] Ibid., p. 46
[83] *The Western Daily Press*, 26th February, 1885, p. 6
[84] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 26th February, 1885, p. 4
[85] A. V. John (ed.,), 1986 p. 37. The figures given for female pottery and glass workers included women employed in the brick and cement industries.
[86] Catalogue, p. 60
[87] Catalogue, p. 58
[88] Messrs. S. J. Kepple & Co., were based at 3, Clare Street, Bristol.
[89] Catalogue, p. 10
[90] T. A. Markus, 1993, pp. 219 – 220 The idea of exhibiting processes as well as precedents dates to the 16th century. At the Exhibition, Messrs. Price of the Bristol Stoneware Potteries, also displayed unfired "Etruscan vases" decorated with flowers moulded by women, to demonstrate the process of manufacture.
[91] *The Queen*, 7th March, 1885, p. 247
[92] See A. Callen,1979, "Ceramics" pp. 51 - 94
[93] Catalogue, p. 119

[94] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p. 99
[95] Catalogue, p. 51
[96] At the Great Exhibition the class "Fine Arts" included only sculpture, models and plastic art; all other fine arts were excluded.
[97] P. Gerrish Nunn, *Victorian Women Artists*, The Women's Press, 1987, pp.132 – 145; J. Marsh & P. Gerrish Nunn, *Pre-Raphaelite Women Artists*, Thames & Hudson, 1997 and D. Cherry, 2000 for information about these female artists, their work and their links with the Suffrage Movement.
[98] *Englishwoman's Review*, 14th March, 1885, p.99
[99] T. A. Markus, 1993, p. 169
[100] *Englishwoman's Review*, 15th May, 1885, p. 212
[101] Ibid. 15th April, 1885, pp. 163 – 164.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Catalogue, p. 62
[104] *The Western Daily Press*, 26th February, 1885, p. 6
[105] T. A. Markus, 1993, p. 191
[106] Sir Henry Cole founded the National School of Cookery at South Kensington in 1874, which with its low fees aimed to attract and train working class women and servants. Its first Lady-Superintendent was the writer Lady Barker [Lady Broome] who recorded that when the school opened Henry Cole was unhappy because the 'pupils were by no means the class he wanted to get at. Fine Ladies of every rank, rich women, gay Americans in beautiful clothes, all thronged our kitchen, and the waiting carriages looked as if a smart party were going on within our dingy sheds'. Lady M. A. Broome, *Colonial Memories*, Smith, Elder & Co., 1904, chapter XVI "A Cooking Memory", pp. 240 - 254
[107] *The Clifton Chronicle*, 11th March 1885, p. 5
[108] P. Bartley, 1996, p. 67
[109] T. A. Markus, 1993, p. 31
[110] Ibid., p. 5