

# Tradition and Historicism in the Remodelling of Tate Britain

## Introduction

Since the late 1870s when the first legal moves were made to protect Britain's built heritage many buildings and monuments have been set aside for special treatment. The system, devised to monitor and assess eligibility for this protection, does allow a hierarchy of value in terms of quality (from Grade 1 to grade 2) but is limited by the fact that it places buildings from radically different eras in one classification system. This strange situation has resulted two major anomalies. Firstly, some nineteenth-century buildings have now been listed alongside the buildings which, at the time, they were seen by some to undermine; and secondly, apart from technical guidance directly linked to the original construction processes, the advice on the way new work can be undertaken to protect, adapt or alter any existing structure is the same for all buildings irrespective of the period in which they were constructed. While the first anomaly is often the result of past circumstance the second, more linked to present practice, is worthy of some further investigation. Tate Britain, a Grade II\* building with its 'neo-Baroque' portico opened in 1897 is one such anomaly. Although it has been extended and adapted over the years it is only the late twentieth-century adaptations that have followed conservation advice and stylistically separated the new work in reverence to the old structure.

This situation is typical of much recent conservation work and raises the question whether contemporary preservation and adaptation of a nineteenth-century product of Eclecticism and Enlightenment Romanticism should be treated the same as the renovation of a Renaissance palace, a Baroque church or a Medieval cathedral? Is it the case that buildings produced in the nineteenth century were subject to a similar cultural situation as these earlier exemplars or were different sets of values present at the time which should be taken into consideration when they are being adapted? And if so, what might these differences be?

Writing in 1910 Adolf Loos maintained that up until the nineteenth century European culture had evolved through a continual re-evaluation of

tradition, but that aspects of contemporary bourgeois culture had led to the weakening of this fundamentally creative process. He argued that earlier, '*... the development of ... culture had remained in a state of flux. One obeyed the commands of the hour and did not look forwards or backwards*'.<sup>1</sup> For him, *fin-de-siècle* Vienna had lost sight of this continually evolving process and, as a consequence, was operating '*without culture*'. He believed contemporary Viennese opinions concentrated too much on aesthetic judgement, self consciousness and instrumental thinking by focussing on the surface beauty of things and their possible affects on the viewer rather than reflecting on more refined ideas related, amongst other things, to the skills and techniques of production handed down through tradition. However, unlike other polemical writers of the period (Ruskin or Pugin for example) he neither lamented the loss of an earlier 'golden age', nor advocated a staunch 'form and utility' modernity that should break away from the concerns of the past. He offered something between the two, and took what now seems to be a much misunderstood more ambiguous position situated in the present but linked to earlier practice. In his most famous article, *Ornament und Verbrechen* (1908), he suggested that this contemporary focus on the surface beauty of things was particularly evident in the way ornament was superficially applied to the architecture of the time. He wrote; '*Ornament is no longer a natural product of our culture, so that it is [now] a phenomenon either of backwardness or degeneration*'. But at the same time as criticising the use of ornament for aesthetic reasons he advocated its use when assisting craftsmen (who have no access to Art) in '*... attaining the high points of their existence*'. This tolerance was expanded further—and has more direct application to his own oeuvre—when he suggested that '*Ornamented things first create a truly unaesthetic effect when they have been executed in the best material and with the greatest care and have taken hours of labour*'. Here, extolling the virtue of craft, he is using the term 'unaesthetic' as a compliment, implying that anything which judged on purely aesthetic terms is by definition valueless in terms of craft and culture.

This particular discussion of ornament and its value to culture as a whole was not new and was perhaps inspired by the three years he spent in America

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<sup>1</sup> Adolf Loos 'Architecture', 1910

from 1893-96 where he came across the work and writings of Louis Sullivan, an early exponent of the re-interpretation of ornament within the new technological age. By the time Loos arrived in the United States the evolution of multi-storey buildings was well established, but even these new buildings were often decorated with Greek or Roman motifs borrowed from Renaissance culture already one step removed from their *Ursprung*. Sullivan was critical of this superficiality and suggested that:

... a building, quite devoid of ornament, may convey a noble and dignified sentiment by virtue of mass and proportion. It is not evident to me that ornament can intrinsically heighten these elemental properties ...<sup>2</sup>

But, like Loos later, he also recognised that there is value to ornament, he continued:

... the mass-composition and decorative system of a structure such as I have hinted at should be separable from each other only in theory and for purposes of analytical study ... I believe ... that a decorated structure, harmoniously conceived, well considered, cannot be stripped of its system of ornament without destroying its individuality.

For both Loos and Sullivan the use of ornament was questionable but not always wrong and although their descriptions appear to rely more on good judgment than any system of analysis they clearly lamented the lack of authenticity and meaning in contemporary architecture, contrasting their use of ornament with the decoration utilised in contemporary work designed using aspects of superficial imitation and aesthetic formalism. Karsten Harries articulated this difference more concisely by defining

‘...decoration that articulates a communal ethos *ornament* and decoration that we experience primarily as an aesthetic addition to a building *decoration*. So understood, *decoration is the aesthetic analogue to ornament*’.<sup>3</sup>

Treatises on the correct use of ornament go back to the classical world and can be traced back to Plato’s discourses on the use of rhetoric. Plato believed that true rhetoric was dialectic, but, like ornament used only in terms of its ‘aesthetic analogue’, rhetoric used to serve its own ends without recourse to ethos or

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<sup>2</sup> Sullivan, Louis, ‘Ornament in Architecture’, *The Engineering Magazine*, (August 1892)

<sup>3</sup> Harries, K. *The Ethical Function of Ornament*, (Boston: MIT Press, 1998), p. 48.

justice had no value. In the *Gorgias* he developed this argument metaphorically equating the arts that care for the body (gymnastics and medicine) with the political arts which care for the soul (legislation and justice). Then suggested that these arts can be subject to misuse:

*'Sophistic is to legislation what beautification is to gymnastics, and rhetoric to justice what cookery is to medicine' and that if the 'soul' defers decision making to the 'body' in these matters then eventually the understanding of the difference will be lost (Gorgias, 464c-465e).*

By the time Alberti wrote *De Re Aedificatoria* in 1452 a movement away from Plato's concerns was already evident, with materials, construction and decoration (*pulchritudo et ornamentum*) divided into independent chapters. It could be argued that this separation, for Alberti, was undertaken only to simplify his description of the different parts of the building process and that, for him, they were still all inextricably linked. However, the fact that these aspects could be separated at all was new and his actions inadvertently created a platform upon which later theorists and practitioners could make this division even more pronounced so that by the nineteenth century, the two could be viewed as completely separate concerns. And, it was within the landscape of this debate, transformed into questions of heritage, style and the meaning and value of ornament, that the new Tate Britain art gallery was commissioned. Architects, patrons and the public all began to question what this, and other new buildings should look like in relation to the successful buildings of the past (mostly viewed in relation to decoration and style) as well as what buildings of the past should be preserved.

### **The birth of the heritage movement**

In the conclusion to his 1862 book *History of the Modern Styles of Architecture* the architectural historian and businessman James Fergusson wrote:

*The great lesson we have yet to learn before progress is again possible is, that Archaeology is not Architecture. It is not even Art in any form, but a Science ... and till Architecture is practiced only for the sake of supplying the greatest amount of convenience attainable, combined with the most appropriate elegance, there is no hope of improvement in any direction in which Architecture has hitherto progressed.'*

Within this paragraph lays many of the prejudices—in both the positive and negative sense—which contributed to the development of the heritage movement in the United Kingdom in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Most obviously Fergusson questions whether architecture is a science or an art (whether its role is utilitarian or aesthetic); but he also expresses an attitude to history where past architectures, catalogued stylistically, can be plundered as long as they fulfil the utilitarian requirements of the present. Therefore, for him, all there was left to argue over was what historical style was most appropriate for use in new buildings constructed in contemporary settings, thus echoing the sentiments of Heinrich Hübsch's 1828 work *In welchem Style sollen wir bauen* where 'architecture must remain a process of technical and historical experimentation'.<sup>4</sup> Like many protagonists of the nineteenth century Fergusson was not arguing for a radical future disconnected from the past based on utility alone—as was proposed in the modernity of the twentieth century—because his 'preferences' still allowed for prejudices born from cultural settings—albeit understood aesthetically—to be seen as a contributory factor in the final proposals for a project. He advocated the use of what he termed the 'Italian Style', associating it with Renaissance architecture which had already reinterpreted the classical tradition within a more contemporary context because he felt that, unlike Greek or Gothic architecture, it had not reached full maturity as a style.

Although not everyone agreed with his stylistic preferences—different theorists coming to different conclusions often depending on their nationality, their faith or their own aesthetic inclinations—Ferguson's attitude to the past was not unique and was aligned with an increased interest in archaeology, ethnography and the growth of the historiography of art that occurred during the nineteenth century. But even though his use of the term '*appropriate elegance*' to cover style choice suggests some concern for historical continuity (the style in question was inevitably one of the styles of the past) the understanding of 'style' supported by this view was significantly different from the ideas embodied in the very buildings cited from earlier eras. Prior to the eighteenth century the making and adaptation of architecture had been much

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<sup>4</sup> Bergdoll, B. *European Architecture 1750-1890*, (Oxford: OUP, 2000), p. 187.

more concerned with the relationship of architecture to 'making' as well as culture as a whole rather than to the debate on which historical style was more appropriate for any given situation. Architecture was seen as a part of culture, not as an expression of it, hence choices regarding ornamental programs were not subject purely to artistic 'taste' or, for that matter, social or utilitarian reform.

In practice the working method suggested here by Fergusson initially tended towards critically evaluating the social setting—or some other identifiable condition—before assessing current utility and thence suggesting an appropriate style. At first glance this almost linear process seems to be perfectly rational; and it was. But in rationalizing the design process in such a manner, it oversimplified a complex cultural situation. So although this form of historicism appears to be engaging in a rich discourse similar to earlier eras, linking architecture with its cultural setting, in reality it was just matching some cultural issues with stylistic form; almost like an architectural phrenology, suggesting that complex social conditions could be made manifest through the simple act of making a 'space'.

Even though this process was fundamentally limiting it did at least make a link between the past and the present and allowed value to be given to buildings of the past deemed satisfactory for current utility or of value if thought to be 'elegant'. And, as a result, people became more aware of the damage that was being done to some extant architecture in the name of progress.

Out of this atmosphere emerged movements interested built heritage, particularly the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings* (SPAB) founded in 1877 by William Morris and Philip Webb, who offered advice on the protection, preservation and adaptation of historic sites, and raised issues surrounding the ownership these sites in relation to society's collective responsibility to the 'historic environment'.<sup>5</sup> Now, one hundred or so years on, the manifesto is still active and similar value is placed on buildings constructed within this era of historicism and stylistic 'pick and mix' (which Morris was criticizing) as the buildings constructed when ornamental programs embodied aspects of the

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<sup>5</sup> The term 'historic environment', with its inbuilt prejudice towards 'historicism' rather than an evolving 'historicity' is still used within the heritage movement today.

cultural ethos of the time. Therefore the question that must be asked now is whether the heritage movement is currently advocating practices which contradict principles which led to its foundation in the first place.

### **The Manifesto of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings**

Although it was more the indiscriminate demolition of landscape heritage and architecture by moneyed landowners that led to the sanctioning of the heritage movement by government in the United Kingdom when the Ancient Monuments Protection Act, introduced by John Lubbock the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Avebury, was passed in 1882, it was Morris and Webb's attitude to the 'protection' of heritage which has had the most lasting influence. The Monuments Protection Act suggested that societies were custodians of the past not its sole owner, and as a result began to save buildings of the past for the future, but it was SPAB who recommended the best way to deal with them. They suggested that the vogue for pastiche alterations and additions in the renovation of ancient buildings was misguided, but at the same time they also acknowledged that past eras seem to have had an ability to add to existing structures, increasing their value in the process, in a way that was impossible for architects of Morris's time to emulate:

*In early times this kind of forgery was impossible, because knowledge failed the builders, or perhaps because instinct held them back. If repairs were needed, if ambition or piety pricked on to change, that change was of necessity wrought in the unmistakable fashion of the time; a church of the eleventh century might be added to or altered in the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, or even the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries; but every change, whatever history it destroyed, left history in the gap, and was alive with the spirit of the deeds done midst its fashioning. The result of all this was often a building in which the many changes, though harsh and visible enough, were, by their very contrast, interesting and instructive and could by no possibility mislead.*

Perhaps the key phrase here is '*change was of necessity wrought in the fashion of the time*'. They suggest that the eclectic fashion of their time is in itself self-consciously and (recalling Plato's criticism of the Sophists) rhetorically historicist, and consequently more about re-fashioning than fashioning anew:

*It is sad to say, that in this manner most of the bigger Minsters, and a vast number of more humble buildings, both in England and on the Continent, have been dealt with by men of talent often, and worthy of better employment, but deaf to the claims of poetry and history in the highest sense of the words.*

So why, once the construction of historicist 'forgeries' was no longer fashionable, have architects remained unable to present more examples of well judged adaptations? Could it be partially due to Morris and Webb's suggestion for appropriate action in the face of heritage? They made a plea for architects to:

*... show no pretence of other art, and otherwise to resist all tampering with either the fabric or ornament of the building as it stands; if it has become inconvenient for its present use, to raise another building rather than alter or enlarge the old one; in fine to treat our ancient buildings as monuments of a bygone art, created by bygone manners, that modern art cannot meddle with without destroying.*

As a result, the very objectification of the past through the classification of styles that Morris and Webb were criticising for its ability to encourage contemporary forgeries became enshrined in their proposed advice for better practice in preservation. To paraphrase this closing sentence: If a building was deemed valuable enough to be retained, all contemporary additions should be stylistically separated from the original, thus defining all forms of 'new' architecture also as a style.

How can this attitude foster a better engagement with tradition in its broader sense if the architect is being actively encouraged to design an addition which is more linked to a theoretically abstract idea of 'what constitutes current fashion' rather than investigate the nature of the particular 'monument' and setting under review? Webb's own oeuvre, such as 1 Palace Green of 1868, or Standen of 1894, suggest that his buildings responded to both place and culture in such a way that this stark concluding statement would not result in a radical juxtaposition of old and new. However, the problems at the centre of the statement became apparent with the rise of the Modern Movement where the case against ornament and for the *expression* of functional utility became the prominent foundations of *any* aesthetic value.

That is not to say that all modern extensions to old buildings executed following this guidance is flawed, it just means that the original building and its addition are not designed to be viewed as a part of a continuing tradition, and that this prejudice has fundamentally limited the possibility of conservation work for much of the last fifty years. There are exceptions to this, such as Hans Döllgast's 1957 restoration and adaptation of Leo von Klenze's Alte Pinakothek,



München, of 1836; or more recently David Chipperfield's 2009 renovation of Friedrich August Stüler's Neues Museum (1843-55) in Berlin to name but two. But even here, where the architect has blurred some of the lines between the old and the new, the new work is ornamentally mute.

Morris and Webb's manifesto does not allow for the resolution of this problem and as a result their attitude to architecture expressed within their manifesto appears to be subject to the same misinterpretations and contradictions as historicists where judgments were made in relation to 'form' or 'function' (utility) rather than in the context of broader cultural horizons. Consequently, the question that must be asked today is whether conservation of nineteenth-century buildings should be subject to different rules or practices than buildings of different eras where architectural representation was more embodied rather than applied. The development, extension and renovation of Tate Britain offers an interesting record of some of these issues as they have been addressed—or ignored—over the past hundred or so years, beginning with the demolition of one of the largest buildings in London.

### **A short History of the buildings of Tate Britain**

At the height of the debate on historicism and preservation the vast structure of Millbank Prison, which covered over 18 acres next to the Thames in West London, was demolished to make way for the National Gallery of British Art, the Royal Army Medical College and Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital as well as the Millbank Estate, one of London's first major social housing estates. The prison, which had for a brief time fulfilled the role of the National Penitentiary, then as the holding place for prisoners awaiting deportation, was only seventy years old at the time of its demolition but had already found its way into the national consciousness described in Dickens *Bleak House* of 1869:

*It was a large prison, with many courts and passages so like one another, and so uniformly paved, that I seemed to gain a new comprehension ... of the fondness that solitary prisoners, shut up among the same staring walls from year to year, have had ... for a weed, or a stray blade of grass. In an arched room ... like a cellar up-stairs; with walls so glaringly white, that they made the massive iron window-bars and iron-bound door even more profoundly black than they were.*

Although bricks from the demolished prison were used in the construction of the military hospital, college and the housing estate, it is only the surrounding

topography, where the octagonal imprint of the prison's perimeter is still visible, that the scale of the original building is evident. Today the military college survives as Chelsea College of Art and Design but only a few of the Hospital buildings remain; the most prominent of which is the old Hospital Lodge abutting the Embankment. These red brick and stone buildings were built in the early part of the twentieth century in the 'Imperial Baroque' and 'French Renaissance'<sup>6</sup> styles deemed suitable for military institutions. The first phase of the National Gallery of British Art, later named Tate Gallery after its founder Sir Henry Tate, was designed by the Victorian architect Sidney J. Smith and opened in 1897. This initial building, constructed of Portland Stone with neo-Baroque features, comprised the main entrance, the portico, (Figure 1) and the first eight galleries—four on either side of the entrance—and was followed nine years later by another set of galleries parallel with the first also designed by Smith. This second extension doubled the capacity of the gallery but was soon augmented by a further extension of 1910, funded by the Arts dealer Sir Joseph Duveen and designed by the architect W.H. Romaine-Walker to accommodate and display some of the Turner Bequest, most of which had remained in storage since Turner's death in 1851. This smaller building added a further 7 galleries on two floors extending the façade to the south along Atterbury Street. In 1917 the role of the gallery was extended beyond its original remit to house the British collection to include the nation's modern international works and as a consequence a further extension along Atterbury Street was built, completed in 1926 also by Romaine-Walker assisted by Gilbert Jenkins. This team was employed again in 1937 to construct the central sculpture galleries (the first of their kind in England) following a further bequest from Duveen. Throughout the three phases of the building overseen by Romaine-Walker there is already visible an evolving attitude to gallery design and the display of art insofar as each new gallery, whilst being clearly a part of an overall plan, managed to deliver something that was considered 'contemporary'—albeit in an architectural milieu obsessed with the uses of style.

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<sup>6</sup> See the Millbank Conservation Area (2005) – Westminster City Council, January 2005.

By the late sixties this somewhat deferential attitude towards the older building was no longer so prevalent, at least for the commissioning authorities responsible for new additions to the building. And even though a very radical option to construct an extension in front of the existing building on the Embankment was rejected overwhelmingly by public vote, a large modern gallery and conservation suite, designed by Richard Llewelyn-Davies and John Weeks, was built in the north-east corner of the site and completed in 1979. The office's ethos of designing loose fit and 'indeterminate architecture'<sup>7</sup> flexible enough to accommodate future changes is most obvious in their new galleries which constitute a large open space for temporary exhibitions housed under a concrete vault which is capable of moderating the internal environment for the specific requirements of different exhibits.

This bold extension was followed by a more rhetorical piece of architecture in 1982-87 designed by James Stirling to re-house the Turner collection in more up to date facilities including new galleries, a lecture theatre and more conservation spaces. This building attempted to reference both the original building, which it flanked, but also the neighbouring red brick and stone Queens Hospital Lodge on the edge of the site facing the river. This extension was followed in 2001 by a restructuring of the accommodation on Attenbury Street by John Miller and Partners, including the addition of ten new galleries on the lower level and a new entrance onto the street.

Apart from the interior design of the coffee shop and restaurant by Dixon Jones from 1981-84, these works constituted the extents of the Tate Britain when Caruso St John were appointed to oversee the refurbishment and development of the building for the future. The brief opened the way to a much broader interpretation of the relationship of each of the individual parts of the building to the whole and offered an opportunity to reassess the nature of the relationship the building should have with its nineteenth and twentieth-century past going forward into its future.

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<sup>7</sup> Weeks, J. 1964. 'Indeterminate Architecture', *Transactions of the Bartlett Society*, no. 2 (1963-64), pp. 83-106

## **Caruso St John additions**

Caruso St John architects took over from John Miller and Partners as architects for the Tate in 2006 with a brief to undertake a review of the whole site. The resultant design strategy split the proposed works into several stages beginning with the refurbishment of the Sidney Smith galleries to the right of the entrance, (incorporating up to date environmental controls), substantial work to the public areas around the entrance and basement, and the relocation of the members area on the upper level of the central rotunda. As a part of these works Caruso St John have carved a grand staircase, which now dominates the main view into the rotunda from the Milbank Foyer, down into the basement. This decorative stair, and the honed terrazzo that surrounds it, builds on motifs found elsewhere in the building (notably in the Millbank foyer glazing. Figure 2) and create a new material contrast with the cleaned, rough stone columns which line the space.

This simple act of stripping back the grand entrance space to its tectonic core, then augmenting the stone and plaster detailing with the highly articulated new balustrade and pavement creates an ambiguous mix of old and new more common to work of the Novecento movement in Milan or Asplund in Stockholm than to any English precedents. The stance taken by the office in creating such a radical addition is also evident in other gestures challenging the conservation canon which, paradoxically, most visitors will assume was a part of the original building. Most notable of these features is the new fibrous plaster vaulted ceiling of the Djanogly Café which creates the illusion of a basement room in a large stone villa. The office went through much iteration of this ceiling to establish the folds, form and springing points that complemented the metre thick walls surrounding the space, thus creating a vision of the room which fits the narrative of the building as a whole.

In this approach to creating spaces that have 'spatial clarity' but blur the boundaries of tectonic authenticity and the distinctions between old and new work, the office's approach to the building as a whole begins to reveal itself as a the making of series of rooms related to the original building but shaped in a contemporary fashion. Their interventions have remodelled, re-lined and unified the works within an overarching narrative on the one hand responding to Morris' description of what should be preserved:... *anything which can be looked*

*on as artistic, picturesque, historical, antique, or substantial: any work, in short, over which educated, artistic people would think it worth while to argue at all, but also in a way more ambiguous than his original call for stylistic separation of the old and the new. The Tate Director at the time, Penelope Curtis, described her ambitions related the building, following seven years of intense collaboration with Caruso St John as; ... to display the collection as a whole, without qualitative judgments that deemed some parts to be historic and others to be contemporary. History has no real or singular ending, just as the contemporary can mean very different things to different people and in different contexts.<sup>8</sup>*

The result of this productive collaboration displays all the richness of the restoration, renovation, adaptation evident in the works by Döllgast and Chipperfield cited earlier, but it is anything but ornamentally mute.

### **History, Tradition and Ornament**

All of the various strategies for the development of Tate Modern over the years have, in their own terms, struggled with ideas of ‘authenticity’, either with respect to a particular idea or strategy, or concerns related to the identity of the building itself. But, as Fergusson’s earlier quotation suggests, the nineteenth century framed these ideas in a very particular manner that limited the extent to which engagement with the past could be seen as a creative at all. T.S. Eliot suggested in ‘*Tradition and the Individual Talent*’ of 1921 that tradition, in literary circles, cannot be made agreeable as a word *without [a] comfortable reference to the reassuring science of archaeology as a positive force*. But he argued that this is too simple an interpretation of a complex phenomenon:

*Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, “tradition” should positively be discouraged ... Tradition ... cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves ... the historical ... and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and*

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<sup>8</sup> AT 2013. Architecture Today No 243, Nov/Dec 2013. p. 62

*of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity ... No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.*

In the case of Tate Britain where the building to be adapted was originally created during a period when much of the work was limited by the scope of tradition in the first place, this sense of the traditional was absent; the building full of dead metaphor. Morris and Webb would perhaps have seen it as *'deaf to the claims of poetry and history in the highest sense of the words'*. Nevertheless, because it is now 'old' it is also viewed as 'historical' and, to a certain extent, a part of a tradition which we have inherited and as a consequence it is also offered a listing which elevates it to a level on par with buildings conceived in times much more engaged with the ideas of tradition voiced by Eliot. The use of ornament and the refashioning of the public spaces in Caruso St John's work at the Tate has revitalized the rather staid atmosphere of the gallery on its own terms, and although supplementing or adding to the ornamental program of a Florentine Renaissance palace or a South German Rococo Church in a similar manner would be problematic, here it is an improvement.

The use of ornament in the twenty-first century can always be questioned and its use continues to be difficult for many reasons, but to add to the ornamental program of a nineteenth-century art gallery is an altogether different matter. To paraphrase Eliot ... here the existing building formed an order which has been modified by the introduction of the new work. It was complete before the new work but since the addition of the new, the whole existing order has been altered; and so the relations, proportions, and values of each stage in the growth of the building toward the whole have been readjusted.

## **Conclusion**

In assessing the characteristics of the vast amounts of built heritage we have now decided to preserve, the example of Tate Britain suggests that more sophisticated understandings of the culture which underpinned each building's genesis is required so that new interventions can engage with these issues in an attempt to move the process of tradition forward. In order to really bring the richness of the past in to the present in a coherent manner, tradition must be

recast as something of the future and not of the past. Its fundamental link with the past is only the root of a much more complex set of themes which both situate and frame the possibilities of all future architectural endeavour. Schinkel suggested this in 1835:

History has never copied earlier history and if it ever had done, such an act would not be told as a part of history. The only true historical act is one that introduces in some way an extra, a new element, into the world, from which a new history is produced.<sup>9</sup>

Here Schinkel is not suggesting that the past should be discarded in order to develop a new architecture but that a better understanding of culture, change, evolution and representation in relation to tradition is required in order to *make* history. It could be argued that the most obvious place to begin this work in the twenty-first century is in relation to heritage and conservation where the past is already partially manifested.

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<sup>9</sup> Geschichte hat nie frühere Geschichte kopiert und wenn sie es gethan hat, so zählt ein solcher Act nicht in der Geschichte, die Geschichte hört gewissermaßen in ihm ganz auf. Nur das ist ein geschichtlicher Act, der auf irgend eine Weise ein Mehr, ein neues Element in die Welt einführt, aus dem sich eine neue Geschichte erzeugt und fortpinnt. (Peschken, Schinkels Lehrbuch [Anm.3], S. 149) 1835

Weeks, J. 1964. 'Indeterminate Architecture', *Transactions of the Bartlett Society*, no. 2 (1963-64), pp. 83-106.



Figure 1. Tate Britain original Portico



Figure 2. Original window in Millbank Foyer





Figure 3. View through to new staircase in the Rotunda.