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PUGIN'S "DÜRERS"

DOUGLAS BRINE

Recent decades have witnessed an extraordinary resurgence of interest in the nineteenth-century British architect, designer, and theorist Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, champion of the Gothic Revival. Thanks to a series of exhibitions, conferences, and publications, and the establishment of the Pugin Society and its journal, we are better informed than ever about his expansive oeuvre and its worldwide impact.¹ One key aspect to have received attention is Pugin's activity as a pioneering collector of medieval and Renaissance art—"antiquities of various sorts from William the Conqueror to Henry the 8," as he described them.² His collections, which included paintings, prints, sculpture, ceramics, metalwork, ivories, and stained glass, were mostly dispersed after his death in 1852, although several pieces remained with

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his descendants and some are now in museums.³ He acquired objects for various purposes—as teaching aids, to adorn the churches he built, as models for his designs—but many were intended for display at his various residences.

This article focuses on one of the key works in Pugin’s collection, a pair of panel paintings formerly attributed to Albrecht Dürer, which hung at his last home, The Grange in Ramsgate, Kent, designed and furnished by him in 1843–44 and described as “one of the most important secular buildings of the 19th century.”⁴ With its innovative pin-wheel arrangement of rooms around a central double-height staircase hall—an abbreviated paraphrase of the medieval galleried hall—The Grange’s plan became the archetype for the detached middle-class family home in Victorian Britain.⁵ After Pugin’s lifetime the house was considerably altered and lost virtually all of its contents, although the Landmark Trust’s recent restoration has done much to return it to something close to its original appearance.

The most vivid account of the house’s interior during Pugin’s lifetime is found within the memoir of his son-in-law, John Hardman Powell, who recalled the “mullioned windows, quaintly carved fireplaces and furniture” in the bedrooms “all hung with old paintings,” the dining room with its “walls wainscoted and hung with sea-pieces,” and the “picturesque” library lit with “beautiful roundlets of ancient glass.” In the drawing room adjoining the library, he described how “on either side of the Fireplace hung two large panel oil paintings by Durer which [Pugin] had seen in pieces against some picture dealers wall, painted on both sides for triptych purpose.”⁶ Clive Wainwright thought that one of these was perhaps the *Descent from the Cross* triptych, now attributed to the workshop or a follower of Rogier van der Weyden, which remained with Pugin’s descendants until it was acquired by the University of Birmingham’s Barber Institute in 1960.⁷ The *Descent* seems to have been at The Grange, though, after Pugin’s death, since it appears at the edge of a late nineteenth-century photograph of the library,⁸ whereas the “two large panel oil paintings by Du-

rer” were sold at the Sotheby and Wilkinson auction of his pictures in 1853. They were listed as “Death of the Blessed Virgin, Adoration of the Magi, Scourging of Christ, &c., by Albert Durer and Pupils, *finely painted on each side of two panels.*”⁹

These double-sided panels still exist and are today divided between two museums: the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart purchased one—*The Adoration of the Magi* and *The Flagellation*—in 1974 (figs. 1, 2); the Metropol-



Fig. 1. Hans Schäufelein and the Master of Engerda, *The Adoration of the Magi* (obverse), ca. 1510. Oil and gold on fir panel; $56 \frac{3}{8} \times 53 \frac{1}{2}$ in. (143.2 × 136 cm). Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, inv. no. 3213. Photo © Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.



Fig. 2. Hans Schüpflein and the Master of Engerda, *The Flagellation of Christ* (reverse), ca. 1510. Oil and gold on fir panel; $56 \frac{3}{8} \times 53 \frac{1}{2}$ in. (143.2 \times 136 cm). Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, inv. no. 3213. Photo © Staatsgalerie Stuttgart.

itan Museum of Art, New York, acquired the other—*The Dormition of the Virgin* and *Christ Carrying the Cross* (figs. 3, 4)—in 2011.¹⁰ Now attributed to Dürer's trusted pupil Hans Schüpflein the elder and an anonymous assistant known as the Master of Engerda, their compositions are adapted from designs by Hans Holbein the elder, in whose Augsburg workshop Schüpflein spent time after leaving Dürer's at-



Fig. 3. Hans Schäufelein and the Master of Engerda, *The Dormition of the Virgin* (obverse), ca. 1510. Oil and gold on fir panel; 56 × 53 ½ in. (142.2 × 135.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 2011.485a. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace, Karen and Mo Zukerman, Kowitz Family Foundation, Anonymous, and Hester Diamond Gifts, 2011.

lier. The panels originally formed the right wing of what would have been a large Marian-themed altarpiece, probably made for Augsburg's Heilig-Kreuz-Kirche around 1510, with scenes from the Passion on the wings' exterior and the Life of the Virgin on their interior. The sculpted centerpiece is now lost, but the left wing panels survive: *Christ in the*



Fig. 4. Hans Schäufelein and the Master of Engerda, *Christ Carrying the Cross* (reverse), ca. 1510. Oil and gold on fir panel; 56 × 53½ in. (142.2 × 135.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, acc. no. 2011.485b. Purchase, Lila Acheson Wallace, Karen and Mo Zukerman, Kowitz Family Foundation, Anonymous, and Hester Diamond Gifts, 2011.

Garden of Gethsemane and *The Nativity* is at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, and *The Mocking of Christ* and *Christ in the Temple* is at the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead.¹¹

Although both the Staatsgalerie and the Metropolitan Museum documented their panels' provenance, the reemergence of Pugin's "Dürers" has escaped scholarly attention. While Pugin's interest in Dürer was

mentioned by Wainwright and examined in depth by Jack Hinton, who focused on his rich print collection,¹² both were writing before the acquisition of the New York panel and were unaware of its counterpart in Stuttgart. Insights into the paintings' history and display can also be gleaned from Pugin's letters and the memoir of his widow. The dispersal of his collections in 1853 was necessary because he had died intestate, and so "everything we possessed had to be turned into money," according to Jane Pugin, his third wife. She lamented the low prices fetched at these sales, noting in particular that "Amongst the pictures we had two fine Albert Durers for which Augustus had given for repairing, framing & c. £500. John Hardman of Birmingham bought them for £52 the pr.!!!!."¹³ Hardman (John Hardman Powell's uncle) was Pugin's closest friend and collaborator, who specialized in manufacturing stained glass and metalwork to his designs. The British Library's annotated copy of the Sotheby's catalogue confirms that the panels were purchased by Hardman (for £56 3s. 6d., in fact), along with a choice selection of Pugin's old master prints (including several Dürers) and some other paintings. The panels remained with the Hardman family until the 1960s; from 1927 until 1969 they were on loan to Saint Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, where they were displayed in the Saint Edward the Confessor chapel.¹⁴ They were eventually sold in 1970 from the estate of Hardman's grandson.¹⁵

Given that Jane Pugin mentioned her husband's expenditure for framing the paintings, it is notable that the Metropolitan Museum panel retains its Pugin-designed frame,¹⁶ which is very similar to that found on a portrait of Pugin's father, Auguste Charles.¹⁷ Moreover, a reference to their framing can be found in a letter of October 24, 1844, to another close colleague, the London-based decorator John Gregory Crace, who produced fabrics, wallpapers, and carpentry to Pugin's designs.¹⁸ Pugin was at that time preoccupied with the decoration and furnishing of his newly built home, particularly its drawing room, for which he requested costings from Crace for various supplied items and jobs undertaken. Number eight on the list is "Small triptych—framing &

gilding” (perhaps the *Descent* triptych), followed by other pictures which evidently were likewise to be framed, including number nine, “My fathers portrait,” and number twelve, “Albert Durers pictures.”¹⁹ This last item could plausibly refer to Dürer prints that Pugin owned, rather than his two painted panels. However, he only seems to have begun framing his prints a few years later: on February 10, 1848, Pugin wrote again to Crace about “a number of prints which I want to hang up in my house,” asking that they be framed “in a very *simple* way for they are not worth going to much expense.”²⁰ In ensuing correspondence, Pugin consistently referred to these specifically as prints,²¹ suggesting that “Albert Durers pictures” mentioned in the 1844 letter are indeed the Stuttgart and New York panels.²²

No visual representation of them in situ at The Grange has yet come to light, so it is unclear which sides of the panels were displayed, but the New York picture’s frame is double-sided, meaning that Pugin designed it so that either face of the panel could be exhibited.²³ Framed pictures were an essential component of his carefully planned decorative scheme for the drawing room. On October 10, 1844, he had written to Crace about a forthcoming visit to London when “I should Like to see some of my frames &” he wrote again on October 28 requesting delivery of the frames, “for I am obliged to keep a joiner here on purpose to hang them.”²⁴ The “Dürer” frames arrived shortly, since they are absent from the list of items that Pugin was still awaiting from Crace on November 1, a letter which also reveals why Pugin was so keen to complete the decoration of his principal reception room: “I am in constant expectation of Lord Shrewsbury coming here & should be in dreadful distress” without the “remainder of my things.”²⁵ John Talbot, sixteenth Earl of Shrewsbury, was Pugin’s foremost patron and benefactor and a fellow Catholic. The Grange was “well carried out & compleat in its way” by Christmas when Pugin wrote to invite him, although Shrewsbury did not actually come until March 1847.²⁶ The earl’s reactions are unrecorded, but as a discerning art collector he was no doubt impressed with Pugin’s “Dürers” in the drawing room.²⁷ The panels are large by the standards of

surviving northern Renaissance paintings, each measuring about fifty-four inches square, and would have dominated the modestly proportioned space. Displayed flanking the fireplace against papered walls patterned with Pugin family heraldry, the two paintings, with their vivid palette and dynamic compositions (not to mention their subject matter, entirely in keeping with Pugin's religious sensibilities), must have been the most striking component of the rich visual environment within his modern Gothic home in Ramsgate.²⁸

The panels were the highlights of Pugin's collections, as the fact that they were singled out by both his widow and his son-in-law in their respective reminiscences attests. Pugin lacked the resources to amass a painting collection of the scale and scope of those of Lord Shrewsbury at Alton Towers or Karl Aders in London (from which Pugin bought four pictures);²⁹ he was not a scholar or connoisseur like his fellow Great Exhibition jurors Léon de Laborde and Gustav Friedrich Waagen. Contrary to prevailing contemporary tastes in Britain, though, Pugin was ahead of his time in owning "early" (as Dürer was then classified) German religious paintings—Sir Charles Eastlake, by contrast, was markedly disinterested in acquiring for the National Gallery any such examples during this period.³⁰ Indeed, Pugin's fascination with Dürer was lifelong. As well as collecting his work, he reportedly copied Dürer's prints in the British Museum as a young man; he visited the artist's house and tomb in Nuremberg in 1834, and even as his health deteriorated in the months before his death he was planning "an Albert Durer gallery" at The Grange.³¹ Curiously, Dürer's impact on his own designs was rather limited, although the interlinked initials "AWP" with which they were habitually inscribed surely pay tribute to Dürer's famous monogram.³²

Pugin's "Dürer" paintings may no longer be given to the German master, but their present attribution to one of his most successful assistants and their acquisition by two major museums show Pugin to have been a precocious and discriminating collector of Düreriana. Moreover, recognition of the Stuttgart and New York panels' former home

sheds additional light on The Grange's meticulously planned interiors while further illuminating Pugin's engagement with the art of the past in realizing his Gothic vision.

NOTES

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1. Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Jan De Maeyer, and Martin Bressani, "A.W.N. Pugin and His Historiography," in *Gothic Revival Worldwide: A.W.N. Pugin's Global Influence*, ed. Timothy Brittain-Catlin, Jan De Maeyer, and Martin Bressani (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016), 7–13.
2. Pugin to Edward James Willson, January 20, 1834?, in *The Collected Letters of A.W.N. Pugin*, ed. Margaret Belcher, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001–15), 1:20. All subsequent references to Pugin's correspondence are to this edition.
3. Clive Wainwright, "The Antiquary and the Collector," in *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*, ed. Paul Atterbury and Clive Wainwright (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press and Victoria & Albert Museum, 1994), 90–103, and "Pugin's Grand Passion," *Country Life*, June 9, 1994, 96–99; Kim Woods, *Imported Images: Netherlandish Late Gothic Sculpture in England c.1400–c.1550* (Donington, UK: Shaun Tyas, 2007), 153–63.
4. Rosemary Hill, "Pugin's Home Restored," *Apollo* 164, no. 534 (August 2006): 22–27, at 24.
5. Rosemary Hill, "Pugin's Small Houses," *Architectural History* 46 (2003): 147–74, esp. 164–68. On the house's pinwheel plan see Timothy Brittain-Catlin, "A.W.N. Pugin's English Residential Architecture in Its Context" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2004), 101–8, 262–63.
6. Quoted in Alexandra Wedgwood, "'Pugin in His Home': A Memoir by J. H. Powell," *Architectural History* 31 (1988): 171–205, at 175.
7. Wainwright, "Antiquary and Collector," 95. I thank Robert Wenley for his advice on this work.
8. Published in Paul Atterbury, ed., *A.W.N. Pugin: Master of the Gothic Revival* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 1995), exhibition catalogue, 181 (fig. 9–5).
9. Sotheby & Wilkinson, London, April 7, 1853 (Lugt no. 21309), lot 202.

10. Christof Metzger, *Hans Schüpfelin als Maler* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 2002), 278–90 (cat. 17); Maryan W. Ainsworth and Joshua P. Waterman, *German Paintings in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350–1600* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2013), 211–18 (cat. 50).
11. Elsbeth Wiemann, ed., *Hans Holbein d.Ä. Die Graue Passion in ihrer Zeit* (Stuttgart: Staatsgalerie, 2010), exhibition catalogue, 376–87 (cats. 122–24).
12. Jack Hinton, “A.W.N. Pugin and Dürer: Print Collecting and Inspiration,” *True Principles: The Journal of the Pugin Society* 3, no. 1 (Summer 2004): 7–17.
13. Caroline Stanford, ed., “Dearest Augustus and I”: *The Journal of Jane Pugin* (Reading, UK: Spire Books, 2004), 78. See also Rosemary Hill, *God’s Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 494–95.
14. The panels were photographed in situ in a 1961 guidebook: *A Guide to the Metropolitan Cathedral Church of Saint Chad, Birmingham* (Gloucester, UK: British Publishing Company, 1961), 22. The iron hooks from which they were suspended are still visible in the chapel.
15. Christie’s, London, June 26, 1970, lots 52–53.
16. Identified by Timothy Newbery; information kindly supplied by Maryan Ainsworth. Email, March 6, 2017.
17. Artist unknown, oil on canvas (private collection); see Atterbury and Wainwright, *Gothic Passion*, 2 (fig. 3).
18. On Crace see Paul Atterbury, “Pugin and Interior Design,” in Atterbury, *Pugin*, 177–99, at 194–97.
19. Pugin to John Gregory Crace, October 24, 1844, 2:261.
20. Pugin to Crace, February 10, 1848?, 3:429.
21. Pugin to Crace, late February, 1848?, 3:456; Pugin to Crace, March 11, 1848?, 3:482–83; Pugin to Crace, April 14, 1848?, 3:490.
22. Moreover, Powell describes “choice impressions of etchings and engravings, Durer being prominent” as being in the bedrooms rather than the drawing room. Quoted in Wedgwood, “Pugin in His Home,” 175.
23. Perhaps this somehow pertains to his instruction to Crace to “Leave the panel between the Albert Durers oak for the present. I can decorate it at Ramsgate myself.” Hinton, “Pugin and Dürer,” 14; Pugin to Crace, September 29, 1844, 2:244.
24. Pugin to Crace, October 10, 1844?, 2:251; October 28, 1844, 2:267.
25. Pugin to Crace, November 1, 1844?, 2:271. Pugin part-paid Crace for “Picture frames &c” on November 26 (2:285).

26. Pugin to Lord Shrewsbury, December 25, 1844, 2:306. For the date of the visit in Pugin's diary, see Alexandra Wedgwood, *A.W.N. Pugin and the Pugin Family: Catalogues of Architectural Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1985), 61.
27. On Shrewsbury's collection see Michael Fisher, "Gothic For Ever": *A.W.N. Pugin, Lord Shrewsbury, and the Rebuilding of Catholic England* (Reading, UK: Spire Books, 2012), 54–55.
28. For the wallpaper and its design see Hill, "Pugin's Home Restored," 26; Wedgwood, *Pugin and the Pugin Family*, 232 (no. 577). For the décor as a whole see Hill, *God's Architect*, 314–16.
29. Wainwright, "Antiquary and Collector," 95; on the Aders collection see Jenny Graham, *Inventing Van Eyck: The Remaking of an Artist for the Modern Age* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 62–79.
30. Jeanne Nuechterlein, "German Renaissance Art through the Eyes of the National Gallery," *Burlington Magazine* 156, no. 1331 (February 2014): 76–84.
31. Hinton, "Pugin and Dürer," 7, 9; Pugin to John Hardman, January 1852?, 5:563.
32. Hinton, "Pugin and Dürer," 15–16.