

Temple of Science: The Pre-Raphaelites and Oxford University Museum of Natural History by John Holmes. Oxford: Bodleian Library Publishing, 2020. 184 pp. + 100 colour plates. ISBN 9781851245567. \$55.00.

“A good claim to be the greatest single work of Pre-Raphaelite art”: thus does John Holmes describe Oxford’s Museum of Natural History in the introduction to his *Temple of Science: The Pre-Raphaelites and Oxford University Museum of Natural History*. Over the course of seven chapters, Holmes succeeds not only in recovering the story behind this boldly original building, but also in advancing a persuasive argument about collaboration and fellowship between the arts and sciences in nineteenth-century Britain. As his opening pages outline, the Museum was conceived by its initial proponents as an expression of scientific thought wrought in stone, iron, brick, and glass. Combining Gothic aesthetics with modern engineering, the project drew together scientists working in a variety of fields and involved nearly all of the artists associated with the early years of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. John Ruskin also lent his support to the project in the form of watercolour designs for its capitals and windows. Interdisciplinary in its scope, the book offers a satisfying follow-up to the author’s 2018 monograph *The Pre-Raphaelites and Science* (Yale UP), which illuminated the depths of exchange between its two eponymous subjects. Holmes’s study also joins a growing body of scholarship on Victorian art and science, including Anne Helmreich’s *Nature’s Truth: Photography, Painting, and Science in Victorian Britain* (2016) and Nancy Rose Marshall’s edited volume *Victorian Science and Imagery: Representation and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture* (2021). By placing architecture at its intellectual heart, *Temple of Science* takes these conversations in a fresh direction while also turning over new stones on the well-trodden ground of Pre-Raphaelite studies.

Though by no means overlooked, the significance of architecture to the Pre-Raphaelite movement has often taken a backseat to pictorial art in surveys of its heyday. The sculptural program that the Pre-Raphaelites contributed to Oxford’s Museum of Natural History, for example, has seldom received the same level of critical attention as their simultaneous work on the murals for the Oxford Union. Holmes’s decision to investigate Pre-Raphaelite art through the lens of a single building is therefore one of his book’s most compelling interventions.

Chapter one begins in the 1840s by summarizing various efforts (and struggles) at Oxford to establish a degree program in the hard sciences. The picture Holmes proceeds to paint – of a quartet of academics headed by Henry Wentworth Acland, tirelessly campaigning to update Oxford’s curriculum – dovetails neatly with more familiar narratives about the founding of the Pre-