‘With Glory, Rather Than Gore’: V&A Bomb Damage and the Shaping of British War Memory

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the evolution in appearance and meaning of the bomb-damaged Victoria and Albert Museum Exhibition Road façade. It tracks and analyzes changes made to the site between its initial damaging in 1941 through its current appearance in 2019. Drawing upon conceptual frameworks of memory work and banal nationalism from James E. Young and Michael Billig, this dissertation argues that through the implementation of various design elements the V&A's site of bomb damage takes a heritage-based approach to crafting a narrative of the Second World War.

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List of Abbreviations

Council of Industrial Design (CoID)

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

High Explosive (HE)

Ministry of Works (MoW)

Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A)

Victory in Europe (VE)

'The glare of war can illuminate darkness just as the flash of lightning at night can reveal a white image of the surrounding landscape. When the darkness sets in again and the thunder rolls on, those who love the spectacle will talk about the lightning.'[1]

[1] Anthony Barnett, *Iron Britannia: Time to Take the Great out of Britain*, 2nd edn (London: Faber & Faber, 2012), p. 2.

Introduction

This paper was started with the intention of exploring how the Victoria and Albert Museum's (V&A) internal decision making processes affected the development of the museum's blitz-damaged exterior. The subject matter of war damage was chosen to compare museum motivations and motivations of the British far-right's usage of World War Two memory. An almost complete lack of archival material relating to the V&A's internal decision making process during crucial periods stopped this line of inquiry almost before it began. Despite this setback, secondary research around British memory of the war and blitz lead to a more fruitful line of questioning: *How* do we remember the Second World War and *what* about the war are we remembering?

Motivated by Gabriel Moshenska's assertion that 'The London Blitz is approaching the cusp of living memory; there is no better or more important time to re-evaluate past approaches to its commemoration and to consider future needs and possibilities', this paper seeks to discover what the V&A's bomb damage site communicates about the Second World War, and which techniques are used to communicate this narrative.[2] To answer these questions the subsequent chapters examine developments to the V&A's bomb-damaged façade on Exhibition Road from 1939 to 2017.

0.1 Bomb Damage as Historical Record

It is hard to imagine the bombed-out landscape of London following the Second World War. The images so often shown, of collapsed buildings, streets full of debris, and cheerful Londoners going about their day-to-day business seem to have taken place in another city, another country; someplace far away from the London we know today. Outside of images which include London landmarks (such as iconic scenes of St. Paul's Cathedral during the

[2] Gabriel Moshenska, 'Charred Churches or Iron Harvests? Counter-Monumentality and the Commemoration of the London Blitz', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 10.1, (2010), 5-27, p. 7.

blitz), the city is almost unrecognizable. We can recognize intellectually that scenes such as Fig. 1, of a milkman making his deliveries surrounded by piles of rubble, take place in London. However it is difficult, if not impossible, to connect these scenes with their corresponding London streets today.

The blitz may survive ‘as a vivid cultural memory, literally burnt into our minds by the staggering number of visual records it created’, but the memory created by these images is partial and grows ever more distant as the city and the people who once lived in it change and pass away.[3]

Figure 1, Photo of milkman delivering his wares amidst a pile of rubble in blitzed London. Firefighters work to extinguish flames in the background. As with many images of the blitz, it is almost impossible to connect this scene with its location in present-day London.

We can sympathize with the individuals in these images, making do as their city crumbled around them, as their neighbors lost their possessions, livelihoods, and lives in nightly air raids. But photographic history of the blitz lacks a physical connection to the contemporary

[3] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 153.

city.[4] The smooth pavement, clean facades, and orderliness of contemporary London seem out of sync with blitz images, failing to foster an emotional connection between the two. Without a clear connection between contemporary and blitztime London it is easy to be swept away by the 'myth of the blitz'; the meta-narrative of feelings, experiences, and memories which encompass so much of shared British memory related to World War Two.[5] The cheerful demeanors, the 'keep calm and carry ons', the 'make do and mends' are remembered. As are the war propaganda films, war literature, and art. Forgotten are the experiences of the destruction, of despair, of just getting by, and the terror of nightly (and by 1944, daily) bombings of civilians and their homes, businesses and places of leisure.[6] When we begin to forget the hardships of war and the realities of living under siege, the memory of the Second World War itself begins to warp and deform, from a human tragedy to a moment of nationalistic triumph.[7]

Unpacking the way material remnants of London under bombardment were created, preserved, and altered can facilitate deeper understanding of the experience of the war and how this experience is mobilized today. In many ways, experiencing these ruined spaces is as close as we can come to encountering a devastated post-war London.[8] Spaces, places, and buildings which still maintain their battle-scars add depth, quite literally, to our understanding of the war and the war myth.[9]

[4] Connelly, p. 129 and 136.
[5] Mark Pohland, 'The Appreciation of Ruins in Blitz-era London', *London Journal*, 30.2, (2005), 1-24, p. 7.
[6] Natural History Museum Archives, London, WW2 DF1201/1-6, *Diary of the Flying Bomb Epoch*, p. 1-58.
[7] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 5.
[8] Rebecca Arnold, 'Fashion in Ruins: Photography, Luxury and Dereliction in 1940s London', *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture*, 21.4, (2017), 341-363, p. 343.
[9] Neil Matheson, 'National Identity and the 'Melancholy of Ruins': Cecil Beaton's Photographs of the London Blitz', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1.3, (2008), 261-274, p. 263.

Much like human beings, and unlike photography, architecture has the unique ability to live through and 'give testimony' to the experience of bombing.[10] Like humans beings, pieces of architecture can be damaged in explosions, and like humans, can be destroyed by these events as well.[11] The tactile, physical, and metaphysical interaction between person and architecture, person and space, presents the possibility of a 'texture of memory' - a deepened understanding of history.[12]

0.2 Two Approaches to Second World War Memory

As the title suggests, this dissertation situates the changes made to the V&A's bomb damage site within two competing approaches to memorialization and memory creation of the Second World War - one based around heritage and glory, the other based around history and gore. These will be respectively referred to as the heritage and history approaches to memorialization.

While both grapple with the same violent subject matter, each approach to the creation of war memory places emphasis on different material realities, and through them different aspects of the past. The heritage approach seeks to highlight positive aspects of the war and tie them into the greater scope of British heritage. Concepts put to the forefront within this approach include the values of the British people and their perseverance under fire, the communal spirit, and the make-do-and-mend attitude.[13] In contrast, a historical approach seeks to recover details of the past and through these create a *new* understanding of the past and its impact on the present. A history approach might detail the events of battle, the harsh realities of everyday life such as food shortages, destroyed infrastructure, exhaustingly-long working days, and the general distress of death and destruction. Both approaches utilize visual and designed components to create their respective narratives.

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[10] Liliane Weissberg, 'Memory Confined' in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, ed. by Dan Ben Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 62.
[11] Matheson, p. 270.
[12] Young, p. ix.
[13] Connelly, p. 5.

The merits of these two approaches to creating war memories began to be debated even before the conclusion of the Second World War. A series of *The Times* letters to the editor from 1944 to 1945 illustrate the competing methodologies.

Director of the National Galleries Kenneth Clark, T.S. Eliot, and J.M. Keynes (among others) started this exchange by calling for ruined churches across England to be left in their damaged states and repurposed as war memorials. These cultural leaders suggested that because the Second World War had taken place in Britain, involving civilians, it only made sense to transform the 'fragments of the battleground' (ruined churches) into perpetual reminders of the fight.[14] With remarkable foresight, these men predicted the decay of war memory which was to occur forty years later;

> *'The time will come - much sooner than most of us to-day can visualize when no trace of death from the air will be left in the streets of rebuilt London. At such a time the story of the blitz may begin to seem unreal not only to visiting tourists but to a new generation of Londoners. It is the purpose of war memorials to remind posterity of the reality of the sacrifices upon which its apparent security has been built. These church ruins, we suggest, would do this with realism and gravity.'*[15]

Through 'realism' and 'gravity', Kenneth Clark et. al. put forward the idea that war memories, and the memorials which carry them, must be specifically made for purpose and geared toward a particular audience. These letter writers suggest that memorials should be made not just for those living in the present, but also for those in the significant future. They suggest that the latter group should be the primary target of Second World War memorials, and that the focus of these sites should be the successful communication of the horrible reality of the war to future generations without personal experience of the conflict.

[14] Majory Allen of Hurtwood, David Cecil, Kenneth Clark, F.A. Cockin et. al., 'Letter to the Editor: Ruined City Churches: Preservation as Memorials', *The Times*, 15 August 1944, p. 5.
[15] Ibid.

In order to transmit the full experience of the war, the signatories suggest that 'work on the selected ruins themselves should be confined to the minimum essential to preserve them from further decay'.[16] This approach to creating war memories suggests that ruined churches be left fully as ruins. Kenneth Clark et al postulated that the destroyed nature of once-holy spaces would be able, especially when enhanced with the names of war dead, to communicate the true destruction wrought by the war.[17] Such an approach falls into the historical sphere because it highlights the events of the war itself - the destruction of particular places and the deaths of particular individuals. It seeks to create a memory of the difficulties, sacrifices, and gore of the war through 'realism' and 'gravity'.

The multitude of subsequent letters debating and debasing Clark's proposal encapsulate the alternative path; establishment of war memorials which focus on the glory of war and on British values which lead to victory. This approach was well summarized in *The Times* by W.L. Munday, who in his rebutting letter to the editor deemed the suggestion of preserving ruined churches to be 'highly objectionable', and put forth a differing course of action regarding ruined church sites;

> *'Surely, wherever it may be impracticable to restore a bombed church, its melancholy ruins should be altogether removed and a plain stone cross erected on the cleared site, which, after all, is consecrated ground. This would symbolize the eventual triumph, through suffering, of right over devilish might, the cause for which we are professing to be at war.'* [18]

The wartime triumph of Britain lies at the center of Munday's alterative proposal for memorializing the Second World War. The proposed memorialization is accomplished by clearing ruined church sites of their damage and rubble, and replacing this war damage with new, more positive symbolism. Through interventions such as this, the memories contained

[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] W. L.Munday, W.L., 'Letter to the Editor: Ruins of Bombed Churches', *The Times*, 19 August 1944, p. 5.

in the damaged and broken fabric of the bombed building are replaced with pristine new objects and memories. With the insertion of an undamaged cross, the loci of memory on the site is transferred from the horrors of bombardment and destruction to the power and positivity of British Christianity.

Heritage approaches like Munday's categorize the 'melancholy' of ruined building as being a 'morbid commemoration of a successful assault by the forces of evil upon the Christian faith'.[19] Such approaches demand that the memories of the war be replaced with memories of Britain's inevitable triumph.[20] It is worthwhile to note that when this letter to the editor was written, *Britain had not yet won the war*. Munday's espousal of the British values that would lead to Britain's victory is the ultimate rejection of history and embracing of heritage. Unlike a historical approach, no details of the war, including its end date, are necessary to create memories of the conflict that hinge upon British values.[21] Because Munday's heritage approach is rooted in abstract conceptions of British values, it does not need the mundane details of political and historical realities to fuel its conception.[22]

0.3 Methodology

This paper relies on primary documentation stemming from the V&A to illuminate the design decisions regarding the V&A damage and the motivations behind these decisions. Much of this material has been carefully curated by the V&A to reflect a particular understanding of what is worthy of the archive and what the public facing values of the museum should appear to be. In this paper such institutional bias has been dealt with by significant investigation of alterative primary documentation of the time periods in question, such as

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 182.
[22] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 135.

newspaper, film, and diary sources, as well a thorough critical analysis of the physical designed elements of the site themselves.

Research on this topic has also been affected by a severe shortage of archival material from the years of the Second World War. Due to both a shortage of paper and a lack of man-hours to produce documentation, the war years are frequently underrepresented in archives.[23] The wealth of primary circumstantial documentation, including diaries, films, and newspaper accounts, alongside archival material cross-referenced between several different London museum archives has allowed for a substantial reconstruction of events not covered by the scant governmental and official documentation.

0.4 Historiography

As the Second World War is one of the foundational global events of the twentieth century, there are few aspects not covered extensively by existing scholarship. In contrast, little scholarship has been done regarding war damage to architecture, and no scholarship has been undertaken on the V&A's damaged façade.

An explosion of literature exploring the British homefront during the war took place in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Lead by Angus Calder's seminal text *The Myth of the Blitz* (1991) which outlined the scope of the homefront myth, this field was later explored by Mark Connelly (*We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War,* 2004), Joshua Levine (*The Secret History of the Blitz*, 2015) and Maureen Walker (*London 1945: Life in the Debris of War*, 2004), among many others. Each author has staked out their own ground regarding the veracity of the myth of the blitz and war. These comprehensive studies from different disciplines all rely heavily on diaries, photos, newspapers, film, radio and propaganda art to explore the time period. While painting detailed and nuanced scenes of

[23] National Archives, London, WORK 22/294, *DRAFT - The Supplies Division at War 1938-46*.

the experience of the blitz and its contemporary understanding, these volumes infrequently, if ever, turn to 3D source material like damaged architecture to support their claims.

Despite a wealth of published material regarding the post-war planning of Britain's cities, little to no scholarship has been produced regarding the rebuilding process. Books and articles with titles suggesting an exploration of rebuilding, including Nicholas Bullock's *Building the Post-war World: Modern Architecture and Reconstruction in Britain* (2002), *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities* (1990) and John Stevenson's 'The Jerusalem that Failed? The Rebuilding of Post-War Britain' (Published in *Britain Since 1945,* 1991) all devote the majority of their pages to the post-war wholesale re-planning of British cities. While not as glamorous as the planning process, and much more difficult to research due to a deficit of primary documentation, the postwar rebuilding of damaged buildings remains an important area of investigation vis-à-vis the war.

Parallel to this dearth of scholarship, damage dealt to architecture also remains a 'relatively under-studied feature of the Second World War', especially in comparison to scholarship and popular interest in the recovery of fine art objects such as paintings and sculpture.[24] This lack of research is highlighted by Nicola Lambourne in *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments during the Second World War* (2001), the only comprehensive book on the subject. Lambourne argues that damage to historic architectural sites has not only been overlooked since the end of the war, but was also not even considered by bombing nations during the war itself.[25] Compounding the lack of scholarship on war damage to architecture is a tendency in the wider field of architectural history to focus on the 'normal' life of buildings, 'instead of abnormal episodes of their ruin and disappearance'.[26] Such myopia is exhibited in scholarship on the V&A itself; while much

[24] Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 2.
[25] Lambourne, p. 3.
[26] Ibid.

writing exists about the initial design and construction of the V&A, little has been written about the museum's architecture during abnormal periods, such as its wartime damage, or state of disrepair in the 1970s and 1980s.

As the dichotomy set up in this paper lies between history and heritage, this paper delves into scholarship on heritage, particularly David Lowenthal's *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History (1998)* and Patrick Wright's *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (1985). Wright and Lowenthal both outline and critique the rise of the concept of heritage in Britain. In their respective books both men define heritage as 'a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes.'[27] Shaped and written during the height of the heritage boom, Wright and Lowenthal seek to distinguish what is openly acknowledged as an imperfect practice of historical inquiry from a by-definition politically motivated practice of heritage. While there are many competing definitions of heritage, this paper exclusively uses the term to discuss a top-down retelling of the past, not what could be termed folk history, or bottom-up retellings.

This paper seeks to fill the aforementioned gaps in extant scholarship through an object-oriented interrogation of the repair and rebuilding process of the bombed V&A façade, and the effects this treatment has had on war understanding and memory. It positions the V&A's extant damage not as 'mere stones in the landscape', but rather 'as part of a nation's rites or...a people's national pilgrimage...invested with national soul and memory.'[28] The scarred Exhibition Road façade serves as a palimpsest, through which becomes visible the greater story of the forces shaping the current understanding of Britain's role and experience during the Second World War.

[27] Lowenthal, p. x.
[28] Young, p. 2.

0.5 Bomb Damage to the Victoria and Albert Museum: Brief Object Description

The Western façade of the V&A on Exhibition Road sustained damage from a high explosive (HE) bomb during the war. This damage is still visible to passers-by, with sizeable chunks missing from the facade, starting at ground level, and extending as high as 15 feet (See Appendix A for complete illustrations of bomb-damaged site). As illustrated in Fig. 2, the craters range in size from a few inches to over a foot wide. Pock-marks are incised into all parts of V&A architecture, from windowsills and guardrails to the stone of the building itself.

Figure 2, Photo of blitz damage to Exhibition Road facade of V&A. Bomb impact marks can be seen as varying in size and shape.

After passing two large wooden doors on Exhibition Road, one encounters pairs of metal gates installed as part of the 2017 AL_A Sackler Courtyard project. Designed to represent and reflect wartime bomb damage, these gates lead visitors into the pristinely white ceramic-tiled Sackler Courtyard. When the gates are closed, it is possible to see through the shrapnel-damage inspired holes into the courtyard, illuminated at night from light emanating from the museum (See Fig. 3).

Figure 3, Photo of entrance to V&A Sackler Courtyard including bomb damage, perforated metal gates, and engravings. Royal Crest is visible on the left-most gate.

After passing five pairs of metal gates, one encounters two engravings, placed one on top of the other, which provide written clarity to the site, also visible in Fig. 3. These engravings have been carved directly onto the stone of the Aston Webb Screen itself. Immediately to the left of these engravings sits a central gateway to the courtyard, with its own set of larger perforated metal gates depicting the Royal Crest. Further North on Exhibition Road, one encounters five more sets of metal gates, with the amount of bomb damage visible decreasing with every step.

This site attracts attention both from museum-goers and passers-by on Exhibition Road. Individuals stop to read the inscription, and search for the most impressive impact craters. Parents and grandparents can be observed stopping in front of these inscriptions and reading the engravings to their children and grandchildren before entering the museum or resuming their day (Fig. 4). The content of these conversations, and the way the war is

explained from the museum, to visitors, and on to their children forms the basis of inquiry for this paper.

Figure 4, Photo of family viewing V&A bomb damage engravings.

0.6 Outline of Paper

Through an in-depth analysis of the V&A bomb damage site at three moments in history (1939-1946, 1982-1987 and 1995-2017) this paper details the transformation of the V&A's bomb damage from an accurate reflection of a historical event to a heritage-styled memorial site. This paper argues that the V&A has consistently made design decisions regarding its bomb damage that have created a heritage narrative of the war centered around British values.

Following the life of the bomb damage to the V&A, chapter 1 begins with an analysis of the causes of, and reception to, the initial damage to the museum's façade during the Spring of 1941. This chapter argues that contrary to the prevailing assumption, blitz damage to the V&A was *not* intentionally preserved following the war. This argument is rooted in primary evidence of attitudes towards the war at the time, the museum's own approach to the post-war world, and visual evidence related to the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition. Further, chapter 1 suggests that the lack of documentation of process and intention during this period gave rise to the modern understanding of intentional preservation, which facilitated all subsequent interventions to the damaged space.

Chapter 2 describes and analyzes the addition of a memorial engraving to the site in the late 1980s. This chapter positions the engraving by David Kindersley within the changing demographics of Britain and a fading memory of the war experience. The damaged facade is interrogated using a framework incorporating James E. Young's concept of 'Memory Work', Michael Billig's understanding of 'Banal Nationalism', and an increased British interest in heritage. This chapter concludes by suggesting that through a lack of memory work in the 1980s the engraving and the bomb damage site developed into a heritage-based memorialization of the Second World War.

Spanning two architectural design competitions from 1996-2017, chapter 3 analyzes the selection and demise of Daniel Libeskind's 'Spiral' project and the design of the recently completed AL_A Sackler Courtyard. This chapter contrasts the impacts of these two designs in terms of the creation of war memory, and suggests that the realized design for the Sackler Courtyard cements the position of the site as a heritage interpretation of the war. Relative positioning of historic architectural elements, materials choices, design of new elements, and verbiage of an additional engraving are considered for the impact they have on the memories brought to light by the space.

Threaded throughout each chapter is a tension between the two opposing schools of thought on formation of war memory; historic and heritage. During each period of time the V&A has faced a choice of *how* the blitz and war should be remembered, and *what* about the conflict should be at the forefront of commemoration. The conclusion to this dissertation reiterates these two differing paths and lays out what is at stake in the V&A's design decisions surrounding its damaged façade.

Chapter 1: A Question of Repair (1939-46)

Introduction

This chapter argues that contrary to contemporary understandings, bomb damage to the V&A was not intentionally preserved as a memorial to the museum under fire. Circumstantial and material evidence strongly suggest that repairs were planned but never carried out. The institutional culture at the V&A surrounding the war, the overall societal need to move past the war, post-war constraints on materials and labour, and the unique position of the damage to the V&A within the landscape of bombed-out London make it more likely that there was no intentionality behind the preservation of the Exhibition Road bomb damage.

1.1 The V&A Gets Blitzed

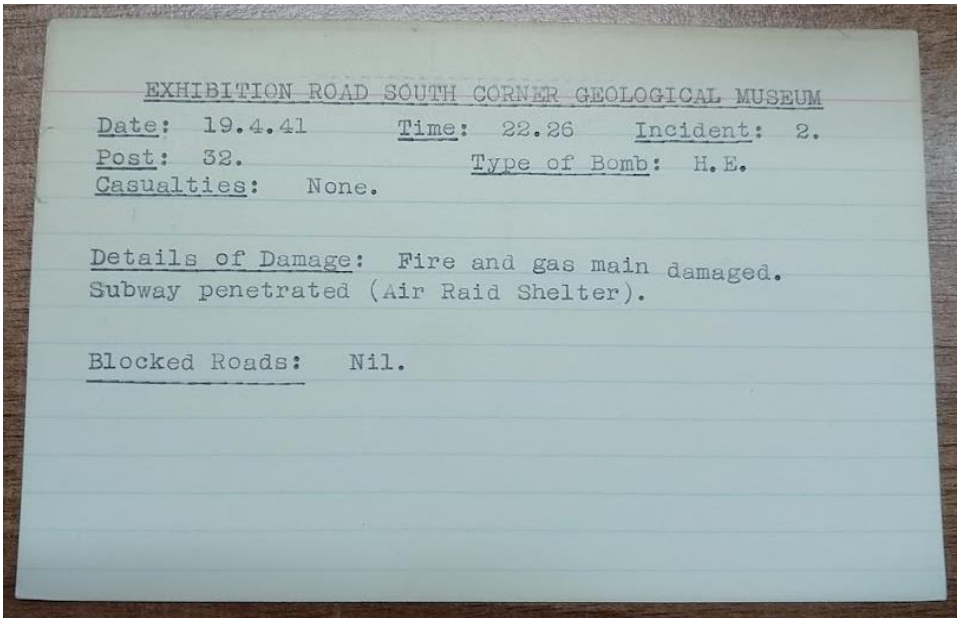
On April 19, 1941 at 10:26 pm a 250 kilogram HE bomb was dropped on Exhibition Road between Cromwell Road and Princess Gate Mews. This bomb created a 'very heavy blast' and 10 foot wide crater, but caused no casualties.[1] The blast 'pretty well wrecked the West facade' of the V&A Exhibition Road exterior, blowing in the doors, 'practically all the windows', and shattering glass roofing.[2] When news of this event was communicated to the V&A's Advisory Council, the governing body which preceded the museum's Board of Trustees, it was described as 'considerable damage', which was 'confined to the structure'.[3] Despite significant superficial damage to the V&A, few museum objects were damaged, although the entirety of a room of furniture was shifted over 18 inches by sound waves.[4] This would be the last and worst of the 6 bombing incidents experienced by the museum.[5]

[1] National Archives, London, HO 198/26, *National Bomb Registry*.
[2] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, ED 84/264, *21 April 1941 Letter from Eric Maclagan to Maurice Holmes*.
[3] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, MA/46/1/3, *Brief Report on the Victoria and Albert Museum During the Year 1941*.
[4] V&A ED 84/264, *Bomb Damage: Department of Woodwor*k.
[5] N.J. McCamley, *Saving Britain's Art Treasures* (London: Leo Cooper/Pen and Sword Books, 2003), p. 2.

While impressive sounding, the 19 April bomb caused relatively little disruption in the day-to-day operations of the museum. Areas near the locus of the damage had been closed to the public at the outbreak of war, and since they remained closed until cessation of the conflict were minimally affected by the explosion. Nevertheless, the museum was closed the day immediately following the blast to allow cleanup and possible immediate repairs to be made.[6] This closure was not to last long. Following the blast, Director Eric Maclagan expressed a strong desire to reopen the museum as soon as possible, asserting that 'I think it is important to do this as soon as possible since the damage looks worse from the outside than it really is.'[7]

News of the damage to the V&A was not confined to the museum employees - Maclagan was also obliged to inform the Air Raid Precaution wardens of the Kensington Council of any damage sustained.[8] Because of this, record of the 19 April blast and its impact are also found within the Kensington and Chelsea Library Archive in the local bomb registry. As illustrated in Fig. 5, the index card for the 19 April 1941 incident highlights that the blast incurred no casualties and also blocked no roads. Notably, this card does not mention the V&A in any capacity - not in the title describing the location affected by the bomb, nor in the details of the damage. The absence of the V&A in this description (and the presence of the Geological Museum in its place) highlights the relatively minimal way the museum was affected by the blast.

[6] V&A ED 84/264, *21 April 1941 Letter from Eric Maclagan to Maurice Holmes*.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, ED 84/266, *24 March 1941 Note to A.R.P. Officers.*


EXHIBITION ROAD SOUTH CORNER GEOLOGICAL MUSEUM
Date: 19.4.41 Time: 22.26 Incident: 2.
Post: 32. Type of Bomb: H.E.
Casualties: None.

Details of Damage: Fire and gas main damaged.
Subway penetrated (Air Raid Shelter).

Blocked Roads: Nil.

Figure 5, Photo of Kensington Council Bomb Incident Card for 19 April 1941 Exhibition Road incident. Very little damage is described here, suggesting that the impact of the explosion was comparatively mild.

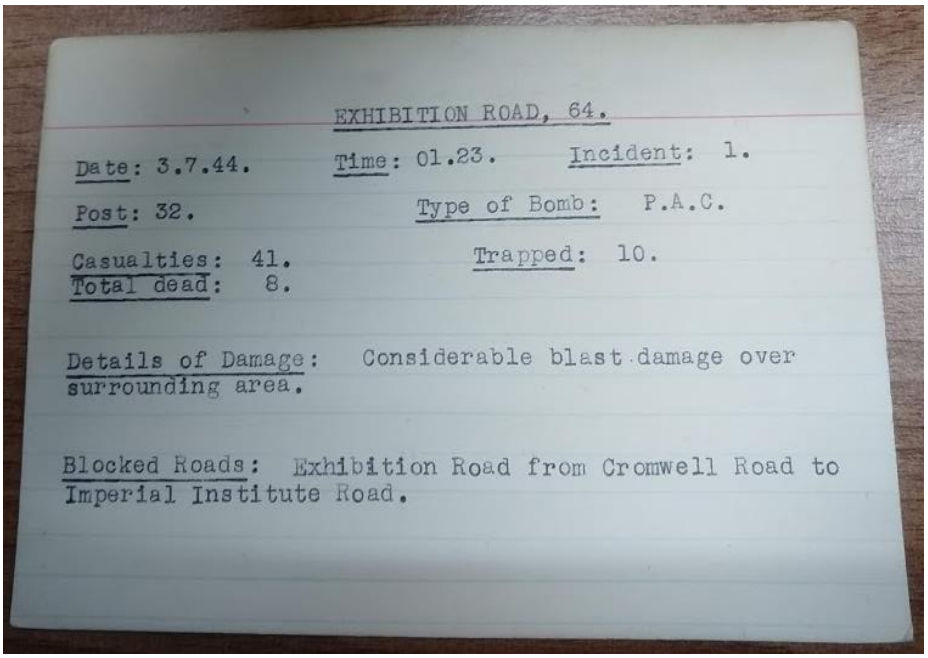
1.2 V&A Damage in Context

While the April 19 blast left a lasting mark on the V&A, this damage was minor in comparison with the devastation dealt to London's other prominent museums. The V&A's shattered glazing and superficial façade damage paled in comparison to the complete destruction of the British Museum Library and Numismatic galleries, the damage which rendered the entirety of the Tate Britain unusable, the ruination of an entire wing of the National Gallery, and significant structural damage wrought by 'doodle bug' unmanned bombs to the Natural History Museum.[9] In fact, the V&A the only major museum in London to be able to keep its galleries open throughout the entirety of the war.[10]

[9] Thomas Hockenhull, 'The British Museum and the Blitz: The Department of Coins and Medals in Wartime', *British Numismatic Journal*, 82, (2012), 192-202, p. 195.
Tate Britain Archives, London, *TA 2/7/1/28,* 24 September 1940 Letter to Rt. Hon. Earl of Crawford.
National Gallery Archives, London, *NG 25/20 Board Papers 1948*, The National Gallery 1938-48 Report to the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries.
'The Museum in the First and Second World Wars', *Natural History Museum*, <https://www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/departments-and-staff/library-and-archives/collections/world-wars.html> [accessed 28 May 2019].

[10] Katrina Royale, 'The V&A at War: 1939 - 45', *V&A Museum* <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/v-and-a-at-war-1939-45/> [accessed 12 June 2019], paragraph 2. Also made clear in Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, MA/46/1/3, *Brief Report on the Victoria and Albert Museum During the Year 1941*.

Within the city, within the neighborhood, and even within its own block, the V&A would have appeared in relatively good condition in the midst of and immediately following the war. Less than a city block north from the V&A's superficial bomb damage on Exhibition Road lay the crater of an apartment building reduced by a V1 'doodlebug' to mere rubble, illustrated by *The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps* (See Fig. 7). The V&A's nicks and bruises would have appeared relatively mild in comparison with the 'complete destruction' of 64 Exhibition Road.[11] The Kensington and Chelsea Council Bomb Registry card (Fig. 6) for the 64 Exhibition Road incident illustrates documentation for a significant bombing incident. This record highlights 41 casualties, 8 dead, 10 trapped within the ruined building, and 'Considerable blast damage' over the surrounding area, not to mention the blockage of Exhibition Road itself. The additional information recorded on this card contrasts significantly the dearth of detail on the 19 April card, highlighting the differing severity of the two blasts.



EXHIBITION ROAD, 64.

Date: 3.7.44. Time: 01.23. Incident: 1.

Post: 32. Type of Bomb: P.A.C.

Casualties: 41. Trapped: 10.
Total dead: 8.

Details of Damage: Considerable blast damage over surrounding area.

Blocked Roads: Exhibition Road from Cromwell Road to Imperial Institute Road.

Figure 6, Kensington Council Bomb Incident Card for 3 July 1944 Exhibition Road incident. A significant amount of detail is contained in this card, including casualties and total dead, suggesting that the explosion was comparatively large and impactful.

[11] Laurence Ward, *The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps, 1939-45* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2015).

Figure 7, Scan of South Kensington section from The London County Council Bomb Damage Maps, 1939-45. The circle in the center of the image represents the 3 July 1944 V bomb which fell on 64 Exhibition Road. The darker the coloration of buildings, the more damage they suffered. The section surrounding 64 Exhibition Road is black.

Perceptions of damage to the V&A during and immediately following the war can be inferred through comparison with the spectacular and unique color video taken by civilian Rosie Newman throughout the conflict. Newman's film *Britain at War* contains striking full-color depictions of London during the blitz, with collapsed buildings, roads and parks full of debris, and Londoners, in full living color, interacting with the landscape (Figures 8 and 9). From this footage of Londoners navigating the heavily damaged streets of their city with a degree of nonchalance we can begin to see the extent of blitz damage to the city. In comparison with Newman's images of the bombed-out husks of buildings, parks filled with architectural rubble, and streets closed off due to oversized impact craters visible in Figures 8 and 9, the V&A's scratches (Fig. 10) seem hardly worth noticing.

Figure 8, Still from Britain at War

Figure 9, Still from Britain at War

Figure 10, Photo of V&A bomb damage on Exhibition Road, significantly less serious and dramatic in comparison with the previous two depictions of blitztime London in Figures 8 and 9.

This diminutive status of the V&A's damage was echoed by wartime Londoners in their own words. In her accounts of wandering blitzed London, diarist Vere Hodgson described many scenes of architectural carnage. Following a walk on Sunday, 27th October 1940 Vere stated that she:

> *'Walked along Bond St - a lot of damage. A shop called Gieve's was a complete ruin. In Piccadilly found St James' Church - it is just standing, nothing more. The Water-Colour Painters is badly damaged. The Fifty Shilling Tailor is a mess - just a heap of rubble....Scarcely a business premises that is habitable...'* [12]

Given this level of destruction and the experience of seeing and living in a damaged space day after day, it is hardly surprising that upon visiting the V&A in July of 1944, all Vere had to

[12] Vere Hodgson, *Few Eggs and No Oranges* (London: Persephone Books, 1999), p. 75.

say about the site was that the 'V. and A. windows looked a mess.' So 'I hurried on.'[13] Vere did not pause to look at the damage to the V&A - it was just simply part of the routine of living in blitzed London. This lack of attention does not seem to have stemmed from Vere becoming desensitized to the architectural carnage of war. Just days before her trip to the V&A, Vere graphically described other blitz damage, writing that she 'Walked along Bayswater Road and saw the Coburg Court Hotel...it is still there, but all the rooms are scooped out - just like an egg when all the goodness has gone and the shell alone remains.'[14] Given this continued emotive response, it is likely that the relatively minimal damage Vere witnessed on the V&A's facade was simply not noteworthy enough to detail.

1.3 The Question of Repair

Contrary to the V&A's current assertion that 'The signs of (bomb) impact were preserved as a reminder of the Museum's survival', circumstantial and primary evidence indicate that this is not the case.[15] Indicated by initial repair plans, a prevailing social desire to move on from wartime memories, the Museum's own eagerness to reopen and redecorate immediately following the war, and the state of the V&A during the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition, it is probable that plans were made, but never carried through for the repair of the Exhibition Road damage.

1.31 Ministry of Works Documentation

From the final days of the war in Europe through to the first peacetime months plans existed for the full repair of the V&A façade. While few records remain to prove or disprove this claim regarding the repair of the V&A during or after the war, one post-war Ministry of Works (MoW) document suggests that full repair of the façade was planned. A detailed table of costs for repair of all the nation's first tier museums enumerates planned repairs to be completed with £80,000 allocated to the V&A. These repairs include replacement of

[13] Hodgson, p. 496.
[14] Ibid.
[15] *The V&A Story Told Through Its Buildings* [pamphlet] (London: V&A Publishing, 2019), p 8.

destroyed glazing, repairs to the Octagonal Court, deferred maintenance and, importantly, 'repair of damage to stonework on Exhibition Road elevation'.[16] This one line illustrates that at least at one point in time the MoW, and likely the directorate of the V&A, planned and expected for the museum's damaged façade to be fully repaired.

A general lack of documentation from the MoW and V&A during and immediately following the war makes it difficult to ascertain precisely why this planned and budgeted work did not take place.[17] What is clear is that after the V&A's missing windows were replaced, and its galleries refurbished and redecorated, the Exhibition Road facade lay in roughly the same condition as it did the morning of April 20, 1941.[18]

1.32 Popular Attitudes

Emerging from six long years of rationing and war, Londoners were ready to put the nightmares of war behind them and turned with eagerness and anticipation towards the promises of a better tomorrow. American journalist Drew Middleton is frequently cited to explain this sentiment; 'To the survivors of the blitz that second autumn of the war is a dark memory to be locked away at the back of the mind.'[19] The intentional preservation of the V&A's damaged facade contradicts such a strong desire for closure.

Distaste at reminders of war is reflected in the reaction among the museum-going public to the V&A's 1945 exhibit *Picasso, Matisse*. While the Matisse section of the show was widely appreciated and praised, the Picasso pieces caused a significant negative stir. Regarding the Picassos on display, 'The general assumption was that the paintings stirred up unresolved feelings occasioned by the war', and thus the show as a whole was disliked

[16] National Archives, London, WORK 17/283, *Museums and Galleries Table of Repairs and Costs*.
[17] National Archives, London, WORK 22/294, *DRAFT - Ministry of Works - The Supplies Division at War 1938-46*.
[18] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *Application CON/13/0229*, p. 4. One mention of grouting in this application file seems to suggest that minimal structural work might have been undertaken in the 1940s or 50s.
[19] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 252.

because of the terrible memories it resurfaced.[20] This aversion seems rational given the experiences of civilians during the war, such as the following memorable account: 'Walking back to Fleet Street from Simpson's after lunch that day, Ronald Hyde, the news editor of the *Evening Standard*, noticed that the trees had lost their leaves and were adorned instead with human flesh.'[21] Only a small jump must be made from the chaos and discongruity of Picasso's paintings to the remembrance of sites of carnage like those described by Hyde (See Appendix B). With wartime nightmares like this experienced by many Londoners, it is no surprise that the general consensus was a desire to leave the past in the past.

Britain's desire to move on, or perhaps even to forget was mirrored by the belief that visible bomb damage was considered bad for civilian morale.[22] In an atmosphere where husks of buildings were demolished 'as soon as the valuer had done his work', it is unlikely that there would be great interest in actively preserving the demoralizing reminders of conflict.[23] While a select few members of the cultural elite, such as director of the National Gallery Kenneth Clark argued for the preservation of architectural ruins after the war, these men were in a significant minority, as illustrated by the many subsequent impassioned rebuttals of their proposal published in *The Times*.[24] Even those in support of preserving wartime damage only went so far as suggesting that the romantic ruination of Britain's historic churches be

[20] Hanned Swaffer, 'Museum Storm Over Picasso', *Daily Herald,* 17 December 1945, pg 2. Also noted in Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publishing, 1999), p. 204.
[21] Maureen Waller, London 1945: Life in the Debris of War (London: John Murray, 2004), p. 25.
[22] Waller, p. 45.
[23] Waller, p. 140.
[24] Rebuttals include:
Herbert Baker, 'Letter to the Editor: Ruined Churches as Memorials', *The Times*, 22 August 1944, pg. 2.
Gilbert Leward, 'Letter to the Editor: Ruined City Churches', *The Times*, 24 August 1944, pg. 5.
W.L. Munday, 'Letter to the Editor: Ruins of Bombed Churches', *The Times*, 19 August 1944, pg. 5.
Herbert Syrett, 'Letter to the Editor: Bombed City Churches', *The Times*, 31 August 1944, pg. 8.
Everett Turner, 'Letter to the Editor', *The Times*, 24 August 1944, pg. 4.

selected for preservation, not the mundane damage done to other more pedestrian buildings, like museums.[25]

Not only were Londoners averse to material remains which reminded them of the experience of war, they were also actively looking forward to the future. During the war the civilian population had been promised a 'New Jerusalem' in Britain as reward for their sacrifices during the war years.[26] So desperate was the city for a return to beauty that Londoners expressed glee at the return to normalcy and beauty which the restoration of the National Gallery's treasures brought. Upon the reopening of National Gallery rooms which were physically fit to be used, 'Visitors to the gallery, led by the King and Queen, said that it was like greeting old friends, startled anew by their beauty.' [27] With a city full of citizens ready for the 'better tomorrow' they had just finished sacrificing and fighting for, any decision to forgo these improvements in favor of rehashing the tumultuous, traumatic past through actions such as the preservation of war damage on the V&A's façade seems difficult to believe.[28]

Such an effort to bring art back to a war torn city was echoed by both of the V&A's wartime directors, Eric Maclagan and Leigh Ashton, as well as the museum's Advisory Council. Throughout the war these leading figures in the museum continually expressed a strong desire to re-organize, re-decorate, and re-open the museum as soon as possible upon cessation of the conflict.[29] So strong was the museum's commitment to returning to normalcy as quickly as possible that even in the midst of the war itself, when London was under heavy fire from *Vergeltungswaffen*, or V weapons, the Advisory Committee turned an eye toward

[25] Majory Allen of Hurtwood, David Cecil, Kenneth Clark, F.A. Cockin et. al., 'Letter to the Editor: Ruined City Churches: Preservation as Memorials', *The Times*, 15 August 1944, p. 5.
[26] John Stevenson, 'The Jerusalem that Failed? The Rebuilding of Post-War Britain', in *Britain Since 1945*, ed. by Terry Gourvish and Alan O'Day (London: Macmillan, 1991), 89-110, p. 90.
[27] Waller, p. 310.
[28] Stevenson, p. 96.
[29] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, MA/46/6/11, *Minutes of the Sixty-Seventh Meeting of the Advisory Council Held on Thursday, The 30th March, 1944*.
Also discussed in John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The History of its Building* (London: V&A Publications, 1982), p. 271.

removing its wartime R.A.F. occupants, declaring 'arrangements for the removal of R.A.F. personnel from the Museum should be set to foot immediately after the war is over…'[30] Such a strong desire to return the museum to its normal, pre-war operations conflicts with the suggestion that the V&A intentionally preserved its damaged façade, as the damaged façade would serve as a daily reminder of the war to all those working at, and visiting the V&A.

1.34 Britain Can Make It

A desire for normal museum operations is further visible in the lengths to which Director Leigh Ashton went to secure the V&A a hastened repair timetable. Despite shortages of labour, materials, and an urgent need to alleviate the post-war housing crisis, repairs began on the V&A almost immediately following cessation of the conflict.[31] These rapid repairs were made possible through the role the V&A played in hosting the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition of 1946, organized by the British Council of Industrial Design (CoID) to highlight post-war products of British manufacturing.

Finding a suitable site for what was to be the first large post-war exhibit in bombed-out London proved to be difficult for the CoID. The most suitable venues such as Olympia and Earls Court were still in use by wartime occupants, and materials shortages meant that erection of a temporary structure was impossible.[32] Despite initial statements from the CoID that 'The Victoria and Albert would not be able to offer the necessary space, and its site leaves much to be desired…'[33] the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition committee (of which Ashton was Vice-Chair), agreed to tour the museum as a possible venue.[34] The committee's

[30] V&A MA/46/6/11, *Memorandum of the First Meeting of the Subcommittee on Museum Rearrangement, June 1944*.
[31] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, MA/46/6/4, *Minutes of the Seventy First Meeting of the Advisory Council Held on Tuesday, the 5th of February 1946*.
[32] Victoria and Albert Museum, London, AAD 4/12-1977, 17 *August 1945 Council on Industrial Design Proposal to President of the Board of Trade*.
[33] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, London, AAD 4/12-1977, *The British Exhibition of 1946, A Proposal to the Board of Trade*.
[34] V&A AAD 4/12-1977, *Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Exhibitions Committee, Thursday, 13 September 1945*.

visit must have been a success, as the press was informed of the exhibition, and its location at the V&A, six months later in February of 1946.[35]

The Advisory Council of the V&A was told a slightly different story regarding how the V&A came to host *Britain Can Make It.* During the group's meeting on 5 February 1946 'the Director (Ashton) expressed his regret that it had not been possible to put the proposal to host *Britain Can Make It* before the Advisory Council until after a public announcement had been made.'[36] Ashton continued, elaborating to the Council that he was approached by the CoID, and was only told of the outcome a week prior to the meeting, so he hoped that the Council would approve of his decision.[37] Finally, Ashton added that the chief gain of hosting *Britain Can Make It* would be the expedited repair of the museum by the Ministry of Works, pushing the completion of works forward 18 months.[38] Whatever the process through which the V&A was selected to host of *Britain Can Make It*, the result is inarguable. This partnership secured additional funding and labour for repairs to the V&A, allowing the museum to be made useable ahead of *Britain Can Make It*. [39]

The extra attention devoted to the V&A in order to prepare it for its role as host to the biggest exhibit since the outbreak of war allowed for repairs to the museum to be made much faster than other institutions. However, these speedy repairs which allowed the museum to be essentially up and running at pre-war capacity in under a year may have also led to the continued *disrepair* of the Exhibition Road Facade. Facing a continued and severe shortage of capital, labour, and building materials from 1940 through well into the 1950's,

[35] V&A AAD 4/12-1977, *Notes for the Information of the Press, February 1946*.
[36] V&A MA/46/6/4, *Minutes of the Seventy First Meeting of the Advisory Council Held on Tuesday, the 5th of February 1946*.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ruth Adams, 'Gentlemen and Players: The Victoria and Albert Museum: An Institutional Case Study of the Culture and Society Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, 2006), p. 174.

reconstruction work across Britain was prolonged and difficult to complete.[40] Much of the available resources had to be devoted to the construction or repair of housing, even leading in Coventry to the decision to leave the famous Cathedral in ruins to assist in the erecting of 'essential housing.' [41]

Whereas other London museums had repair programmes carried out over a period up to ten years, with work done when cash, labour and materials were available, this was not the case with the V&A.[42] In order to repair the museum in the year following the end of the war when materials were in shortest supply, it is likely that only the most urgent projects were undertaken. Unlike other damaged elements of the V&A's architecture like its shattered glazing, and interior galleries damaged by the wartime presence of an R.A.F. kitchen and canteen, the pitted façade would not have interfered with basic functions of the museum. Given this, the façade was most likely pushed to the bottom of the V&A's list of repair priorities. Repairs to ensure the V&A was in decent physical shape for *Britain Can Make* It would be the only significant works done on the building after the war.

[40] Jeffry Diefendorf, 'Introduction' in *Rebuilding Europe's Bombed Cities*, ed. by J. Dieffendorf (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 11.
[41] Nicola Lambourne, *War Damage in Western Europe: The Destruction of Historic Monuments During the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 171.
[42] V&A MA/46/6/4, *Minutes of the Seventy First Meeting of the Advisory Council Held on Tuesday, the 5th of February, 1946*.
Thomas Hockenhull, 'The British Museum and the Blitz: The Department of Coins and Medals in Wartime', *British Numismatic Journal*, 82, (2012), 192-202, p. 201.
Karl Baedeker, *Baedeker's London: London and its Environs* , 20th edn (London: Allen and Unwin, 1951), p. 20-21, 201, 218, 242.

Figure 11, Photo of schoolchildren waiting to enter Britain Can Make It exhibition alongside Exhibition Road façade. Repaired wooden doors, scaffolding, and bomb damage to stonework are all visible in this image.

Although the repairs done to the V&A are not explicitly discussed in any available archival material, they can be observed through photographs of queues forming outside *Britain Can Make It*. Alongside damage to the stone façade (also depicted in Fig. 2), Fig. 11 illustrates that the doors blasted away by bomb impacts were replaced before the start of the exhibition. Scaffolding is still present along Exhibition Road, indicating ongoing repairs.

Figure 12, Photo of queue outside Britain Can Make It exhibition. White panes of glass on the upper right left hand side of the image are most likely panes of wartime 'R' glass, coarser and more opaque than traditional glass panes.

Figure 13, Closeup of Fig. 12. White panes on the left hand side are most likely panes of wartime 'R' glass, coarser and more opaque than traditional glass panes.

Despite such visual evidence that the bomb-blasted doors were repaired, it is clear from additional photographic evidence of *Britain Can Make It* that not all slated repairs were similarly completed. Fig. 12 illustrates that while windows on the Cromwell Road face of the V&A were no longer boarded up, replacements to these ground-floor panes were made with coarse and opaque 'R' glass, a standard product in post-war Britain, still experiencing severe materials shortages.[43] While this 'R' glass would have succeeded in keeping the elements out of the museum, it was less than ideal repair. 'R' glass let in little light, and, as demonstrated in Fig. 12, left a rather incongruous appearance to the facades of the buildings whose windows it graced.[44] The presence of 'R' glass makes clear that not all planned repairs were completed by the time of *Britain Can Make It*. The presence of incomplete repairs, combined with the MoW line item for repair of the V&A's façade provide a strong argument that façade repairs were slated, but never completed, instead of being *intentionally* left unrepaired.

Adding to the suggestion that repairs to the V&A façade were planned but never implemented is the layout and design of the *Britain Can Make It* exhibition itself. As illustrated in Fig. 14, entrance to the show was only allowed through the Exhibition Road V&A entrance. Additionally, the entire flow of the exhibition was planned to stem from this one entrance. In Fig. 14 a series of arrows can be seen depicting the planned route of visitors through the various rooms of the show. Given the previously described distaste for the presence of war damage in public, it is unlikely that the show would be planned to generate a queue of visitors standing outside a bomb-damaged façade. This entrance placement suggests that at the point in time when the exhibition was planned and laid out, V&A and CoID planners anticipated not only that repairs to the façade would be undertaken, but that they would be completed in time for the show's opening.

[43] Waller, p. 129.
[44] Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain: 1939-1945* (London: Headline, 2004), p. 649.

Figure 14, Floor plan of Britain Can Make It exhibition. The entrance along Exhibition Road is indicated by a rightward facing arrow on the upper right corner of the plan. Further arrows dictating visitor progression are visible throughout the plan.

1.4 The V&A's Relationship with War Memory

Unlike the Natural History Museum, which succeeded in erecting a memorial plaque for employees killed during the war quickly after peace was declared, the same process at the V&A took until 1952, and was completed only with considerable difficulty.[45][46]

The V&A began its war memorialization by launching what would turn out to be an unsuccessful fundraising campaign. After over a year of fundraising, only a small fraction of the total cost had been collected from V&A staff.[47] Asked in a staff meeting why contributions were so minimal,

> *'Mr. Mussard (a warder) stated that one reason for the lack of response among Warders was the fact that the one-time annual ceremony of assembling at the old Memorial on Armistice Day and holding a kind of*

[45] Victoria and Albert Museum Archives, MA/2/W2, *5th August, 1952 Letter from the Accountant General to Leigh Ashton*.
[46] Natural History Museum Archives, London, *Case and Policy Files DF 1004/750-757*.
[47] V&A MA/2/W2, Meeting *of the Committee of the 1939-45 War Memorial Fund, Thursday, 5 April 1951*.

> *service has been abandoned. Many felt, he declared, that had this annual service continued, then they would be more enthusiastic about donating money to the 1939/45 stone."*[48]

Mussard's comment suggests that not only was war memorialization not a priority within the museum in the 1940s and 1950s, it was also something with which the museum had already struggled. This suggests a broader V&A institutional culture not interested in the open and blatant memorialization and remembrance of war deaths and details.

Following the failure of its fundraising campaign, the museum commissioned and acquired a plaque engraved by Reynolds Stone as an example of exemplary contemporary engraving, rather than as a war memorial in its own right. This plaque, museum object A.39-1952, can be viewed off the Grand Entrance in room 60 (See Fig. 18). Even after the process of getting a plaque conceived, drafted, paid for, and installed was completed, memorial services seem only to have been held at the plaque twice - once in 1953 and again in 1954, further demonstrating an institutional difficulty with war memory and mourning.[49] In this environment in which there was so little enthusiasm for memorializing fallen colleagues its seems highly unlikely that there would be enthusiasm for memorializing the damage to the building through deliberate preservation.

1.5 The Real Story

It is most likely that the Exhibition Road facade was not repaired during the post-war years simply because the V&A ran out of money and influence with the MoW. Perhaps because the museum did not have the same intense, structural damage as other museums, it could not secure the same long, sustained rebuilding programs which resulted (some after almost a decade) in complete repairs.[50] Or, perhaps the V&A chose to spend its MoW funds on the

[48] Ibid.
[49] V&A MA/2/W2, various files.
[50] Lambourne, p. 176. By 1948 nothing beyond structural repairs had been undertaken at London's other museums.

restructuring of its galleries, which were modernized and redecorated immediately following the war.[51]

1.6 Impact of the Myth of Deliberate Preservation

The purpose of this chapter has been dual fold: to tell the story of the formation of the damage which will be analyzed over the following chapters, and to highlight that the understanding which underpins the more recent developments to the site is itself grounded in a myth. Without this mythic (and, as argued in this dissertation, false) understanding of the historical treatment of the damaged façade, the subsequent interventions, and the presentation of the war which they put forward, would not have been possible.

Since the end of the Second World War, a pervasive understanding has coalesced that the V&A intentionally preserved its wartime damage. This understanding has been etched into the wall of the museum, written in a V&A brochure, and even highlighted in the Imperial War Museum's 2019 *Culture Under Attack* exhibit.[52]

Of course, no subsequent additions to the site could have been possible if the initial plans to repair the V&A's bomb damage were actually carried out. However, the site alterations detailed in chapters 2 and 3 also would not have been possible if the prevailing understanding of the V&A's damage was that it was a sign of post-war austerity, or a failure of museum administrators. These perhaps more truthful understandings of the initial treatment of the bomb damage lack the spark of glory necessary for subsequent heritage-styled memorialization.

The myth of the damage's continued existence created a positive understanding of the war; the idea that even immediately after the war the V&A was proud enough of its 'values during

[51] Burton, p. 198.
[52] *Culture Under Attack* [exhibition] (Imperial War Museum, London 5 July 2019 - 5 January 2020).

conflict' to want to create a lasting, physical reflection of these values. Such an understanding formed a necessary prerequisite for future heritage-based alterations to the site – it provided the seedling of glory for later generations to tap into and expand upon. [53]

[53] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 149.

Chapter 2: The Kindersley Engraving (1982-87)

Introduction

The 1980's heralded the V&A's first significant interaction with its wartime scars. Between 1985 and 1987 an engraving was conceived, designed, and carved directly into the stone of the Aston Webb Screen on Exhibition Road. The impetus for the engraving seems to have stemmed from the request of a wealthy, unnamed Canadian visitor to the V&A who suggested that a plaque be installed, at his expense, explaining the condition of the museum's pitted Exhibition Road facade.[1]

Executed by engraver David Kindersley, the finished piece (See Fig. 15) states 'THE DAMAGE TO THESE WALLS IS THE RESULT OF ENEMY BOMBING DURING THE BLITZ OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45 AND IS LEFT AS A MEMORIAL TO THE ENDURING VALUES OF THIS GREAT MUSEUM IN A TIME OF CONFLICT'.

Coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the Allied Victory in Europe, the 1980s witnessed a global rise in war interest, as well decreasing numbers of Second World War veterans.[2] Simultaneously, the heritage turn in the late 1970s and early 1980s also shaped the tone and tenor of the V&A's intervention towards its wartime damage.

This chapter argues that the addition of Kindersley's engraving to the bombed façade transforms the site from an object of history to an object of heritage, and that further, the resulting memory site serves as an item of 'banal nationalism'. This 'heritagization' of the

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[1] Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London, MA/15/35, *Copies of correspondence and photographs relating to the plaque commemorating bomb damage to the VA buildings*.
Also, Montague Shaw, *David Kindersley: His Work and Workshop* (Cambridge: Cardozo Kindersley Editions, 1989), p 29.

[2] T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, 'Contexts, Structures and Dynamics' in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 3.

V&A's Exhibition Road bomb is illustrated through an interrogation of the physical design of the engraving and archival communication between the V&A and the Kensington Council.

2.1 Description of the Engraving

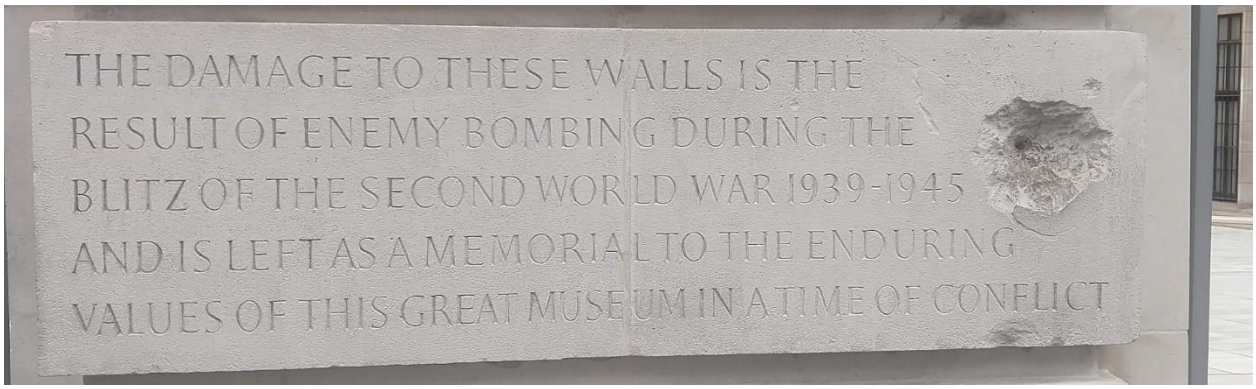

Figure 15, Photo of 1987 engraving on V&A Aston Webb Screen. The text of the engraving was designed to sit perfectly around the large impact crater on the right hand side of the stone.

As depicted in Fig. 15, the 1987 engraving features a traditional font of engraved text carved directly into the Portland Stone of the V&A's Aston Webb Screen. The 5 line engraving covers most of the surface of the stone, running from one end of the pillar to the other.

This engraving has been designed so that the text immediately abuts, and partially surrounds, a particularly deep impact mark from bomb shrapnel (See Fig. 15).[3] This placement of the engraving ties the engraved words into the damaged façade, creating a cohesive presentation of damage and explanation.

Kindersley's engraving sits on the right-hand pillar of the central entrance of the Aston Webb Screen. At the time of its carving, the engraving would have been situated within the complete Aston Webb Screen, exhibiting significant war damage, as depicted in Fig. 20.

As a whole the visuality of the engraving evokes many of the same visual forms as the tombstone or memorial. This similarity is not altogether surprising considering that David

[3] Montague Shaw, *David Kindersley: His Work and Workshop* (Cambridge: Cardozo Kindersley Editions, 1989), p. 18 and 56.

Kindersley is and was primarily known for his engraving work on tombstones and other memorial sites, including other war memorials (Figs 16 and 17).[4]

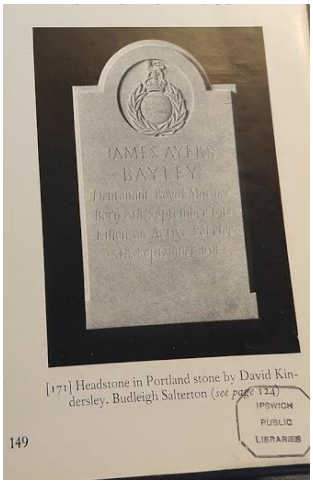

Figure 16, Example of David Kindersley's tombstone engraving work. This headstone shares a visual language with the 1987 V&A engraving, also by Kindersley.

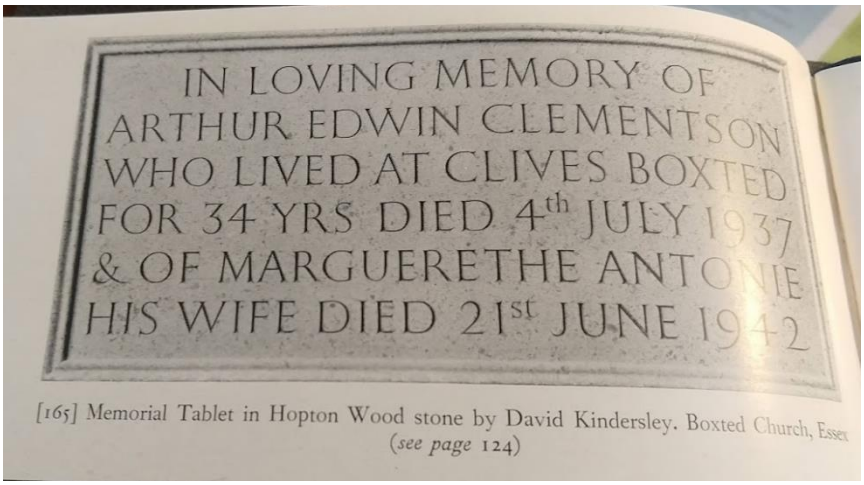

Figure 17, Example of David Kindersley's tombstone engraving work. This memorial tablet shares a visual language with the 1987 V&A engraving, also by Kindersley.

2.2 Historical Framework

The 1987 engraving must be seen as a reflection of, and addition to, the cultural and political obsessions and preoccupations of its time.[5] Ignited by the 40th anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) day in 1985, the 1980s witnessed increased thought about, and

[4] Arnold Whittick, *War Memorials* (London: Country Life Limited, 1946), p. 149.
[5] Gabriel Moshenska, 'Charred Churches or Iron Harvests? Counter-Monumentality and the Commemoration of the London Blitz', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 10.1, (2010), 5-27, p. 8.

commemoration of, the Second World War.[6] 40th Anniversary events were planned, sometimes the first commemorative events held in any given locality since VE day itself, and a wave of scholarship and journalism regarding war events occurred.[7] In addition the events and values of the Second World War was invoked by politicians, most notably Margaret Thatcher, both leading up to and following the 1982 Falklands war.[8]

Underlying this increased focus on the Second World War was an unavoidable generational change occurring in Britain. 40 years after the end of World War Two, many of the British soldier and civilian survivors of the Second World War reached geriatric age and began to pass away. The average lifespan for a British man born in 1921 was 55.6 years old.[9] When initial discussions around adding an inscription to the V&A's Exhibition Road facade began in 1985, a soldier born in 1921 would have just turned 64, making 1980s a tipping point for survivors of the Second World War.[10] Without living memory a crucial link to Britain's past was at danger of being lost.

Loss of living links to the past means that any surviving physical sites of memory must each carry a larger 'weight' of remembrance in order for a society to maintain a strong and constant connection to its history.[11] In order to ensure that the memory of, for example, the Second World War stayed present in the British psyche, the work which the presence of

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[6] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 276-81.
[7] Connelly, p. 2- 4.
Also discussed in *The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration*, ed. by T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 3.
[8] Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940: History, Myth and Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 125.
Also James Aulich, 'Introduction' in *Framing the Falklands War: Nationhood, Culture and Identity*, ed. by James Aulich (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1992), p. 1-5.
[9] Office for National Statistics, *How has life expectancy changed over time?* (9 September 2015) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/articles/howhaslifeexpectancychangedovertime/2015-09-09> [accessed 18 July 2019].
[10] Office for National Statistics, *National life tables, UK: 2015 to 2017* (2017) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/lifeexpectancies/bulletins/nationallifetablesunitedkingdom/2015to2017> [accessed 18 July 2019].
[11] James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 127.

survivors once did must be replaced with other memory-invoking elements, such as memorials and monuments. Put most simply by James E. Young, 'The further events of World War II recede into time, the more prominent its memorials become.'[12] As firsthand memory of the War decreased in 1980s Britain, the role which the damage to the V&A, one such tangible link to the memory of the war, could and must play in remembering began to dramatically increase.

As wartime memory faded, and as bomb damage in London was increasingly repaired, the pock-marked state of the V&A façade began to stand out within the cityscape. No longer was there the profusion of damaged buildings illustrated in chapter 1. Postwar materials shortages over, construction began on London bomb sites - houses were built and rebuilt, ruined churches repaired, and the once-gaping hole at 64 Exhibition Road was replaced with the current Church of Latter Day Saints. Instead of being seen as one of many bombed out buildings, one of many reminders of the horrors of war, the V&A's damaged façade in the 1980s became one of the few remaining physical embodiments of Britain's violent past.

2.3 The Heritage Turn

Coinciding with the dwindling of war memory in the late 1970s and 1980s in Britain was a process referred to in this dissertation as the 'heritage turn' of art and culture.

Spearheaded in part by Roy Strong, director of the V&A from 1974 to 1987, the late 1970s and 1980s experienced an increased interest in heritage.[13] The concept of heritage can most succinctly be described as Britain's (and more frequently, England's) mythical past, not to be confused with the country's *actual* past.[14] The difference between the two is explained

[12] Young, p. 1.
[13] Patrick Wright, *On Living in an Old Country: The National Past in Contemporary Britain* (London: Verso, 1985), p. 42-3.
[14] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. x-xvii.

succinctly by Historian and Geographer David Lowenthal; '...heritage is not history at all; while it borrows from and enlivens historical study, heritage is not an inquiry into the past but a celebration of it, not an effort to know what actually happened but a profession of faith in a past tailored to present-day purposes.'[15] While history is an honest exploration and coming to grips with the actual events of the past, heritage is a celebration of what a society believes its values and past to be.[16]

Heritage's entrance as a concept is generally tied to the contraction of the British economy, culminating in the International Monetary Fund bailout in 1976 and the diminishing position of Britain in global politics.[17] Much like aims of the neo-conservative governments at the time, the heritage turn sought to revive great traditions and strengths of Britain's past.[18] A focus on British heritage, on the most triumphant elements of British history, provided comfort in an era of industrial decline and increasingly tenuous British power on the world stage.[19] As explored by David Lowenthal and Patrick Wright, heritage is at its core a quasi-elite concept - the ties between the heritage turn and the social and political elite of Britain were, and continue to be, plentiful. Since country houses, castles, and other elite physical remnants of Britain's proud past rest in the hands of the wealthy elite, it is no surprise that this same group was actively involved in advocating for their preservation and increased societal prominence.[20]

Also Tony Kushner, 'Belsen for Beginners: The Holocaust in British Heritage', in *The Lasting War: Society and Identity in Britain, France, and Germany after 1945*, ed. by Monica Riera and Gavin Schaffer (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p.244.

[15] Lowenthal, p. x.

[16] Lowenthal, p. x-11.

[17] David Sables, 'Industry, Heritage, the Media, and the Formation of a British National Cultural Memory', *International Journal of Historical Archeology*, 21.4, (2017), 978-1010, p. 984.
Also Ruth Adams, 'Gentlemen and Players: The Victoria and Albert Museum: An Institutional Case Study of the Culture and Society Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, 2006), p. 199-200.

[18] Sables, p. 984.

[19] Wright, p. 49.

[20] Wright, p. 47. Also Adams, p. 22.

Guided by Strong, the V&A was substantially involved in the heritage project, exhibiting the *Destruction of the Country House* show in 1974, and continuing to highlight the need for changes to Britain's heritage and death tax policies throughout the period.[21] Many, including Strong himself, believed that the *Destruction of the Country House* exhibit had a hand in changing popular opinion on estate and death taxes, which resulted in subsequent legal changes.[22] During, and perhaps related to this crusade, the V&A became both symbolically and administratively aligned with the Thatcher government. On this topic Strong triumphantly wrote in his *Diaries* that 'In fact there were only two people in the (Thatcher) Cabinet we didn't know…'[23]

Beyond its continued reliance on government whims to provide funding, the V&A had additional impetus to align itself with heritage and the Thatcher government. The V&A existed as a natural partner of the heritage movement not only because its staff members were frequently elite members, but also because the museum's standard approach to telling the stories of its objects was very similar to that presented by the heritage project.[24] [25] Full of objects resulting from the spoils of Britain's imperial past, the V&A frequently ignores the dark and dirty details of these objects and instead focuses on their aesthetic and technical merits.[26] This is the exact approach favored by heritage. With staff and object histories standing to gain from additional interest in heritage, it is unsurprising that the V&A so fully aligned itself with the Thatcher government and heritage project.

[21] Marcus Binney, John Harris and Roy Strong, *The Destruction of the Country House: 1875-1975* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 184.
[22] Roy Strong, *The Roy Strong Diaries: 1967-1987* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), p. 121 and 158.
[23] Strong, p. 248.
[24] Adams, p. 200-220. Also Lowenthal, p. 90.
[25] Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publishing, 1999), p. 178.
[26] Adams, p. 22.

2.4 Permission Process and Related Correspondence

Because the V&A is comprised of two listed buildings, all proposed changes to both the exterior and interior space the V&A must be authorized by the Kensington and Chelsea Council and English Heritage.[27] This process was started in the summer of 1986 when David R. Coachworth, Deputy Keeper for the V&A's Museum Services Department, wrote to the Director of Planning and Transportation at the Kensington Council requesting approval to add an engraving to the Exhibition Road façade.[28] The resulting correspondence provides insight into the public reaction to the bomb damage in the 1980s and the rationale behind the museum's engraved intervention.

Perhaps unintentionally Coachworth's letter summarizes the change in relative impact of the V&A's war damage from 1945 to 1986. As detailed in chapter 1, the damage to the V&A during the war was barely noticeable to war-weary Londoners. However by 1986 the same damage must have appeared out of place enough not just enough to be noteworthy, but to be described by Coachworth as '*badly* pitted and scarred.' (author's emphasis) [29] Clearly, the damage which had been considered pedestrian in the 1940s had become a significant feature by the 1980s.

In the same letter Coachworth highlights that 'many people are surprised to see this damage on such an important public building'.[30] In addition to attracting more attention, this phrasing suggest that the *type* of attention the museum's pitted façade received had also changed. Instead of reading the pitted façade as war damage, it seems visitors to the V&A in the 1980s began to assume that the damage was due to other issues, including, perhaps, poor building maintenance. From the inclusion of this phrasing it is clear that Coachworth was

[27] 'VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM', *Historic England*, https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1190187 [accessed 22 October 2019].
[28] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office, *21 July 1986 Letter from David Coachworth to Kensington Director of Planning and Transportation.*
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid

requesting an engraving to clarify that the visible damage was of historic importance, and not due to faulty museum upkeep.

Coachworth additionally reveals that a private benefactor offered to 'pay for the creation of a panel of text which would explain the condition of the walls to the passing public'.[31] The desire to 'explain the condition of the walls' to the public echoes Coachworth's assertion of V&A visitor's surprise at seeing the damage. Combined these two elements suggest that the engraving and the clarity it would provide was not intended to explain the war, or to bring visitors closer to the traumatic blitz experience. Instead, the engraving seems to have been framed from the start as a way to make respectable an otherwise visually unpleasant feature of the V&A's façade. Such framing in turn begins to suggest why phrasing within engraving is so vague, and why details of the V&A's experience are not highlighted in the text. While such details would be necessary in a proper memorial, they are not necessary for an engraving explaining away the less-than pristine state of V&A architecture.

Two months after making his inquiry Coachworth received word from the Council that the engraving could proceed as the 'proposal as shown on the drawing and photograph enclosed with your letter requires neither planning permission nor listed building consent.'[32] This response indicates that the engraving was not seen either by the V&A or by the Council as creating meaningful change to the building either aesthetically or in terms of historical understanding and legibility.[33] While this was an acceptable approach to conservation, restoration, and treatment of historic buildings in the mid to late 1980's, it is unlikely that such a recommendation (unprompted and unneeded permanent alteration of a historic

[31] Ibid.
[32] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office, *24 September 1986 Letter from E.A. Sanders to David Coachworth*.
[33] *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*, (London: The Stationery Office, 2010), p. 10.

building's façade) would be allowed today.[34] By contemporary standards this engraving not only changes the aesthetics of the building, but also changes the 'read' of the building, the line between what is 'authentic' and what is imitation.

Just as the understanding that the V&A's bomb damage was intentionally preserved after the war allowed for the engraving of the Kindersley statement, the addition of the Kindersley engraving also provided precedent for similar future projects to be carried out.

2.5 'Memory Work' into 'Banal Nationalism'

In his book *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993) James E. Young highlights the importance of what he terms 'memory work' in unpacking and understanding historical events which have begun to, or have already, faded into distant memory. Young, the leading scholar on theories and meanings behind memorials and monuments, developed his understandings of these forms vis-à-vis Holocaust memorials. Despite this initial inspiration, Young asserts that his analyses 'also heighten critical awareness of all memorials, of the potential uses and abuses of officially cast memory, and ultimately of the contemporary consequences that past events hold for us in their memorial representations.'[35] Because of their universality among all memorials, Young's theories translate well to the V&A's damage site and shed light on the site's creation, alterations, and meaning.

Young's concept of memory work encompasses the labour necessary to unpack not only what past events have entailed, but how we understand, relate to, and are in turn shaped by these events.[36] Memory work not only assists in keeping memories alive, but also ensures that events are remembered in a healthy and productive way.

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[34] *Making Changes to Heritage Assets - Historic England Advice Note 2*, (London: Historic England/English Heritage, 2016 Edition), p.1.
[35] Young, p. xii.
[36] Young, p. x-xi.

Young suggests that it is a frequent function of memorials to 'do our memory work for us', holding the memories of the past in such a way that viewers do not have to come to grasp with the events being memorialized.[37] To explain this, Young refers to Pierre Nora's understanding that 'The less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs.'[38] When this occurs, when human memory is not interrogated and the burden of memory is placed on monuments, these architectural objects can eventually displace human memories altogether - forever changing understanding of past events.[39] This process of shifting memory burden from people to stone, Young argues, makes it easier for 'national myths and explanations' to take over the memory and the understanding of traumatic past events, warping their truths and their lessons into something altogether different than was initially understood.[40]

Young's understanding that the *process* of creating a memorial has significant impact upon the meaning of memorials and monuments lays important groundwork for further theories about the *impact* of such objects. Of these further studies, academic Michael Billig's concept of *Banal Nationalism* (1995) looms large over the V&A's memorialization process and site. While Young unpacks how ideas of 'isms' are produced, Billig explains the functional impacts of such items, highlighting how they are seen (or not seen) on a day to day basis, and how they influence our understanding of ourselves, our nations, and our place in the world.

The concept of banal nationalism was 'introduced to cover the ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced.'[41] Billig explains banal

[37] Young, p. 5.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 6.

nationalism as a process in which 'Daily, the nation is indicated, or "flagged" in the lives of its citizenry', asserting that 'Nationalism, far from being an intermittent mood in established nations, is the endemic condition.'[42] The concept of banal nationalism dictates that items and processes which are a part of our everyday lives, so normal that they fade into the background, importantly serve as near constant reminders of the nation and national myths. An American flag hanging in front of a post office is Billig's favoured object to explain the concept, as such objects are intimately tied to the formation of national understandings, but are also overlooked on a day-to-day basis.[43]

Billig argues that although items of banal nationalism are not highly visible in daily life, these items create a tremendous impact on national understandings, and not always in peaceful, positive ways.[44] Banal nationalism, in Billig's framework, provides the necessary 'discursive foundation' for its sister 'hot nationalism'.[45] The daily, unseen reminders and flaggings of banal nationalism serve as a societal undercurrent necessary for more 'extreme' expressions of the same nation to take place. Because objects of banal nationalism are unseen, they cannot be easily tied to the more violent, 'hot' expressions of the same nationalisms. As Billig neatly summarizes, 'Having no name, it cannot be identified as a problem.' [46]

Pulling these two concepts together, it becomes clear that when memory work is not carried out, when the past is not investigated and interrogated during the memorializing process, the message of the finished product is co-opted. Objects with less memory work behind them are more likely to mimic larger cultural themes and understandings, and less likely to reflect more nuanced understandings of past events. Objects without memory work by default tell a

[42] Ibid.
[43] Billig, 38-40.
[44] Billig, p. 57-8.
[45] Billig, p. 6.
[46] Ibid.

heritage-based story of the past, while those with significant work behind them are able to craft a more nuanced historical version of the same events.

2.6 V&A Damage Site as Object of 'Banal Nationalism'

From a lack of memory work in its formulation, to its function as an expression of greater British war understanding, the V&A's bomb damage and memorial engraving serve as a strong example of banal nationalism.

Through the processes in which the V&A damage was memorialized, the site acts much like Billig's example of a flag hanging outside a courthouse in the United States, attracting no special attention, and belonging to 'no special, sociological genus'.[47] The memorial site does not stick out as an immediate indicator of nation or an expression of British national identity, but upon close scholarly inspection, this role becomes clear. The process through which this engraving was conceptualized and made solid in stone, the content which is included in the engraving, and the phrasing of the engraving itself all highlight the lack of memory work put into the V&A's bomb damage site.

From the beginning of the project the V&A appears to have distanced itself from the design and execution of the engraving. While the designs for many public buildings and memorials, including all late twentieth and early twenty-first century additions to the V&A, were chosen through competitions, this process was not followed for the bomb damage engraving. Instead, the project was given from its inception to just one man, David Kindersley, who appears to have had both artistic and content-based control over the project. [48] Abdicating responsibility for the design and content of the engraving, the V&A was unable to put any memory work into the project.

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[47] Ibid.

[48] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office, *21 July 1986 Letter from David Coachworth to Kensington Director of Planning and Transportation*.
Also Montague Shaw, *David Kindersley: His Work and Workshop* (Cambridge: Cardozo Kindersley Editions, 1989), p. 39.

Kindersley himself seems not to have undertaken a process of memory work during the execution of the engraving. This is evidenced by a clear glossing over of the details of the museum during wartime and overlooking of details of the bombing which caused the damage. If Kindersley had undertaken memory work his engraving would have reflected additional details about the damage and the museum at war. These details were and are easily accessible in the V&A's archive, and bring to life the brutal realities of war in the story of the V&A's damaged façade. Incorporation of such details would have allowed for a historical, rather than heritage approach to wartime memory making, and would have prevented the banal nationality of the finished project.

One such anecdote of the V&A at war is the inhospitability shown by Director Eric Maclagan to wartime occupants of the museum. With a shortage of buildings, and an urgent need for space, the V&A was ordered to cede several rooms to provide a temporary school building for a group of child refugees from Gibraltar.[49] These children were given use of the relatively well-protected basement-level rooms facing Exhibition Road, pushing museum object storage up a level to the more exposed ground floor rooms.[50] After these storage rooms were damaged in the April 19th 1941 bombing, Maclagan commented 'It was precisely in view of such a contingency that I so much regretted the abandonment of our front basement galleries (which are quite undamaged) for the benefit of the Gibraltar children.'[51] Such a willingness to allow children over objects to be damaged by bomb blast seems to be in diametric opposition to the 'values' of the war; of self-sacrifice, communality, and togetherness.

[49] Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London, ED 84/264, *April 20 1941 Letter to Sir Maurice Holmes*.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

Once the Gibraltan refugees no longer required space in the museum, the V&A was approached by local clergymen asking for use of the space for local children's religious education, as their church had been destroyed by a bomb.[52] Maclagan declined this request, stating 'if any part of our building received a direct hit we should almost certainly have to use these rooms for works of art'.[53] In this example Maclagan once again prioritized the potential need to store art over the use of the otherwise empty space for children's education. Again, such actions do not embody or reflect the values of war glorified by the verbiage in Kindersley's engraving.

Neither of these events, nor any details of the explosion itself, are mentioned in the Kindersley engraving. Rather than exploring and highlighting the details of the past, the engraving instead suggests that the museum fully embodied the noble values of the myth of the blitz; that it supported the war efforts with all its might, and was fully committed to the community, nation, and cause. This omission of historical detail and absence of any attempt to explore the details of a highly traumatic past provides the groundwork for the V&A's damage to become a site of banal nationalism.

2.7 Returning to the Heritage Turn

By ignoring the details and difficult realities of the blitz and V&A at war, Kindersley and the V&A created not just an item of banal nationalism, but also a memorial which approached memory of the war through a heritage lens.

The V&A engraving does not engage with specificities because the heritage approach itself cannot, by definition, engage deeply with particular historical events or personal stories. Within a heritage framework attention is pulled away from the deaths, damage, suffering and destruction caused by German bombardment in the blitz. In place of these grim details,

[52] Victoria and Albert Museum Archive, London, ED 84/263, *21 July 1944 Letter to the Secretary*.
[53] Ibid.

focus is placed on the more nebulous values which allowed the British people to withstand bombardment and win the war. This follows the pattern of heritagization which David Lowenthal lays out in *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (1996), wherein 'heritage clarifies pasts so as to infuse them with present purposes.'[54] Within a heritage approach the traumatic past is drawn through a lens of British values and character in order to make the events of the blitz relevant to the present, and to glorify the same British values.

Focus on intangible and frankly unprovable values provides one of the crucial building blocks of heritage, and also forms one of the key elements of the V&A bomb damage engraving.[55] In the engraving, it is 'values', and only 'values' which are memorialized. The term 'values' is intimately linked with the values which brought the British people successfully through the war.[56] Through this language choice the values of the museum during the conflict are tied to the broader British values of the bulldog spirit, of 'taking it', of 'keeping calm and carrying on.' This invocation elevates the damage beyond simple connotations of violence and destruction to concepts of great national heroism. Under this framework the V&A was able to withstand the bombing it suffered during the war because it accepted and modeled ideal British values. This is a prime example of the heritage approach to memorialization of the war, where an item or building is highlighted in terms of its connections and contributions to large scale, aggrandizing historical themes, instead of smaller-scale historical events and realities.[57]

Through the addition of Kindersley's engraving damage to the V&A is tied to a well-known national story of the war, simultaneously reinforcing the British understanding of the blitz story, and also legitimizing it through physical display.

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[54] Lowenthal, p. xv.
[55] Kevin Walsh, *The Representation of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 182.
[56] Calder, p. 4.
[57] Lowenthal, p. 135.

2.8 Hidden in Plain Sight

Billig's conceptualization of nationalisms specifies that the signs of the nation in the everyday are subtle; by definition they are banal and not immediately noticeable.[58] With regards to the V&A's damaged façade, these signs of nation are obscured not only through chosen verbiage, but also through the choice of materials and techniques used.

Unlike the V&A's interior plaques commemorating staff lives lost during the First and Second World Wars, the Kindersley engraving was made directly onto the stone wall of the Aston Webb Screen.

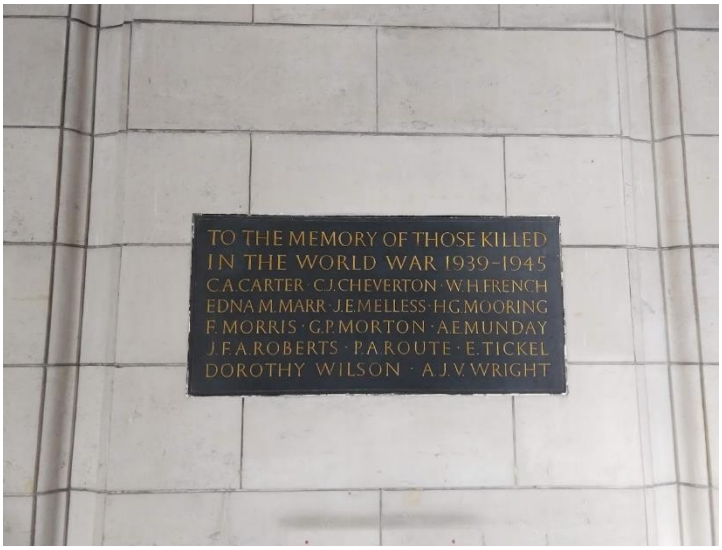

Figure 18, Photo of V&A World War Two staff memorial plaque. The material of the memorial contrasts with the material of the V&A architecture around it.

[58] Billig, p. 14.

Figure 19, Photo of V&A World War One staff memorial plaque. The material of the memorial contrasts with the material of the V&A architecture behind and around it.

The museum's plaques commemorating staff killed in combat (Figures 18 and 19) were executed along the lines of traditional memorials. First, a piece of stone was chosen based on its material qualities.[59] Text which was approved and reworked internally within the museum was then engraved into the stone, which was then inserted into or on top of the museum's internal walls. This process of inserting a foreign block of stone into an already-constructed wall of a different material signals to viewers that the memorial, the stone which is different, has been added in a process separate from the building's construction. The immediately identifiable difference in materials makes clear that a design intervention has been made to the fabric of the building with the intention of remembering a certain event and group of individuals.

Because the Exhibition Road engraving was executed directly onto the wall of the museum, this sense of intervention and intentionality is less explicit. Instead of the damage and memorial engraving existing as separate entities with the engraving clearly added to explain the original damage, the two elements instead combine into a single memorial site. The

[59] Hoptonwood Stone for WWI (V&A MA/2/W2, *July 20 1948 Letter from the V&A Superintendent to Arthur Green and Earp & Hobbs Ltd*.) and cheaper slate for the WWII memorial (V&A MA/2/W2, *22 November 1951 Letter to A. Wheen*.)

words of the engraving exude from the architecture of the museum, permanently connected to it. The resulting lack of material difference erodes the distance between event and memorialization, making it less clear when the drive to remember was made, and suggesting that the drive to remember the 'values of the museum' was made immediately after the damage was wrought, and with intentionality. This is exacerbated by a lack of any creation date within the memorial engraving itself.

As with any item of banal nationalism, the meaning immersed in the V&A's engraving is 'simultaneously obvious and obscure.'[60] Obvious in that this invocation of the war spirit is clearly discernible. Obscure in that it is difficult to discern that the war memory conveyed is perhaps untruthful or exaggerated, *and* an invocation of nationhood and national myth. To those fluent with the myth of the war, the V&A's damage and engraving serve as a reinforcement of what is already known, the 'messages of defiance, solidarity and togetherness, and improvisation in the face of a powerful enemy'.[61] However, this is not all the engraving is communicating.

The unobtrusive execution of the memorial engraving hides the flagging of nation and nationalism of the text. The national flagging and heritage approach to the war fade into the background and naturalize the messages of nation contained in the text. This embodies the purpose of items of banal nationalism - to communicate national myths and understandings in such a way that they are not noticeable in day to day experience. Put simply, the banality of the V&A's memorial engraving confirms its identity as an item of banal nationalism.

2.9 With Glory, Rather Than Gore

Nowhere does the Kindersley engraving address the events of the war. The date of the explosion which caused the damage is not mentioned, nor are the details of this particular

[60] Ibid.
[61] Connelly, p. 129.

bombing incident. The engraving does not discuss or highlight the human impact of the blitz, the lives which were lost, and the hardships that were suffered. By not interrogating and displaying the lived realities of the wartime experience, the death, the destruction, the shortages, the injuries, the constant state of fear and uncertainty, the engraving feeds nationalist conceptions of the war, and becomes a piece of banal nationalism.

The events concerning the V&A's bomb damage site during this period are illustrative of the proposal made by Munday in his 1944 *Times* letter to the editor - the heritage approach to crafting memories of the Second World War. In this approach, damage resulting from the war itself is minimized in favor of new components to the site, added to shift focus from the negative lived experience of the war to the positive values behind the conflict and Britain's inevitable victory. In the approach taken by the V&A from 1982-87 the details of the blast, and through it the details of the war, are obstructed. The addition of the Kindersley engraving moves the focus of the site as a whole away from the impact of the bomb damage, and from the actual memory of the war. Instead, a new focus is placed on the engraving and through it a set of new, positive invocations of the British 'values' held by the museum during the war. This replacement of values operates just the same as the cross suggested by Munday in his *Times* letter, replacing gore with glory.

Kindersley's engraving, carved in the 1980s when the regulations surrounding the treatment and modification of historic buildings and sites were more relaxed, would set the stage for the V&A's next projects on the site.

Chapter 3: The Spiral and Sackler Courtyard (1995-2017)

Introduction

Alterations to the V&A's bomb damaged façade continued past the 1987 Kindersley engraving. Two proposals, a planned, but ultimately aborted design for a Daniel Libeskind building and the currently visible AL_A Sackler Courtyard both involved re-interpretations of the V&A's blitz damage and the museum's wartime experience. These designs embody two radically different ways architecture and design relate to and explore the past. Despite a plan for the site which incorporated memory work into its foundation, the V&A eventually constructed a design which bridged the past and present, thus continuing the heritage approach discussed in chapter 2.

This chapter begins with a historical overview of developments to the site of the current Sackler Courtyard and a summary of the socio-political context of the creation of both winning designs for the site. Following this is an analysis of the integration of memory work in Daniel Libeskind's design for the Spiral and a suggestion of how this design interrogated the museum's relationship to the war. Libeskind's building is then compared to AL_A design for the same space. In tackling AL_A's design, three primary elements; the courtyard's metal gates, replacement stone facade, and textual explanation of the site are unpacked in terms of the heritage approach to war memory. Finally, the two designs are contrasted as mobilizations of the two differing approaches to Second World War memorialization; heritage and history.

3.1 Overview of Site Developments

Both the Libeskind and AL_A designs were created to replace temporary buildings which once lay behind the war-damaged Aston Webb screen on Exhibition Road. This site was originally designed by Aston Webb in 1890 as a garden to sit atop subterranean boiler rooms. Subsequent financial constraints necessitated that the still unbuilt boilers be pushed

aboveground on the site.[1] The resulting unsightly maintenance buildings prompted a redesign of the screen so that it would obscure the otherwise visible buildings. A 'solid stone plinth' was added to the design, on top of which the originally planned colonnade was placed (See Fig. 20).[2] Despite these changes which turned a space designed for public leisure into a restricted behind-the-scenes series of buildings, the planned central entrance archway was retained, grating access not to visitors seeking a relaxing garden stroll, but to coal wagons supplying the boilers with fuel.[3]

Figure 20, Photo of V&A Aston Webb Screen after addition of 1987 engraving, but before construction of 2017 Sackler Courtyard. The full extent of damage to the Screen is visible in this image.

From 1904 to 1995 the boiler buildings underwent a series of changes including the removal of the boilers themselves, the construction of temporary office spaces, the short lived Boiler House project, and the erection of a visitor entrance on the site through the Webb Screen's

[1] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *CON/13/02297*, p. 6.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.

central archway.[4] After almost a century of growth, an acute lack of space at the V&A became a pressing issue and museum leadership decided that the boilerhouse site could better be utilized as gallery space. To this end an international competition was launched in 1995, and won by Daniel Libeskind. After 8 years of effort, Libeskind's Spiral design failed to garner enough financial support and the project was scrapped. The site continued to operate as an entrance and office space until demolition began for the winning design of the V&A's next international competition in 2011.

Architecture firm AL_A's winning design necessitated a series of significant architectural changes be made to the site. Before demolition began, the Aston Webb Screen was dismantled and placed into storage.[5] The buildings behind the Aston Webb Screen were then demolished.[6] Construction of a new underground gallery began, and the roof of this new space was converted into a courtyard covered with bespoke porcelain tiles and a café (See Fig. 21). To accommodate an increased number of visitors, three of the existing windows on the Western Range of the V&A were converted into glass doorways.[7] The Webb Screen was then reinstalled, with much of its paneling replaced with custom-made metal gates. Finally, an additional inscription, directly below the 1987 text, was added to the site. As a whole this design is illustrated in Appendix A.

[4] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *Application PP/12/00923, p.* 28-34.
[5] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923, p.* 77.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923, p.*141.

Figure 21, Aerial photo of completed AL_A Sackler Courtyard with gates open. The café sits to the left within the porcelain tiled courtyard. Three incisions made into the museum's Western range are visible towards the back of the image.

3.2 Socio-Political Context of the Spiral and Sackler Courtyard

This chapter covers a period of time during which Britain was engaged in global military conflicts, described by some as an almost perpetual state of war.[8] These conflicts were varied; while some such as those in Kosovo were fought primarily through aerial bombardment, others such as the Gulf War and the invasion of Iraq necessitated deployment of troops. All were fought outside of British territory. While these wars created tangible consequences in the injury and death of British armed service members, their impacts rarely encroached on daily British civilian life. Both Libeskind's Spiral and AL_A's Sackler Courtyard were designed and executed amidst these never-ending conflicts.

[8] Ewen MacAskill and Ian Cobain, 'British forces' century of unbroken warfare set to end with Afghanistan exit', *The Guardian,* (11 February 2014) < https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/feb/11/british-forces-century-warfare-end> [accessed 17 October 2019], paragraph 2.

The twenty-first century also witnessed a continued blooming of new and renovated sites of memory surrounding the Holocaust and Second World War. Projects included large-scale endeavours like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum started in the 1980s, which due to their immense size were still under construction, but also smaller-scale projects such as the renovation of the Imperial War Museum in London. The atmosphere of continuing revisitation of wartime past during active military campaigns forms the societal framework in which the Spiral Sackler Courtyard were designed. While significantly less overt in their addressal of war themes, the Courtyard and Spiral should be seen in the context of these war-memory related endeavours.

3.3 Daniel Libeskind's Spiral

Facing a shortage of display space the V&A launched a design competition in 1995 for a new building to be constructed on the boilerhouse site. This addition to the museum, the first fully visible new building to be constructed since the Aston Webb buildings in the 1910s, was intended to house the museum's ever-growing collection and to host special exhibitions.[9] Further, it was hoped that this new building would help propel the museum into the 21st century and add relevance to the museum's brand.[10]

The winning design was submitted by the then relatively unknown architect Daniel Libeskind. Libeskind, a Polish-American Jew and child of two Holocaust survivors, would become a well-known name in the architectural world for his designs for the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Imperial War Museum North, and most notably his role as lead architect for One World Trade Center.[11] Libeskind's design is of significant importance for two particular reasons: the design's foundation upon memory work, and the rationale behind the eventual demise of the project at the hands of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

[9] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923,* p. 66.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Daniel Libeskind, *Daniel Libeskind: The Space of Encounter* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), p. 25.

Libeskind's radical design for the Spiral featured a single contemporary glass and metal building tightly sandwiched between the Henry Cole Wing and the V&A's Western Range. Despite being situated on a relatively small plot of land, the Spiral was designed to give the impression of towering over its surrounding V&A buildings.[12] The Spiral itself was to be comprised of futuristic sharp angles of modernist metal and glass, with large, uncovered walls of windows exposing the inner workings of the café and galleries inside to the public.[13] As illustrated in Fig. 22, the Spiral featured a textured and uneven facade. In contrast to the matte finish of the surrounding buildings, the Spiral would have glistened in the sun, with light reflected off both its metal and glass panes.

Figure 22, Rendered image of Daniel Libeskind's Spiral building sitting in between original V&A building and Henry Cole wing. The textured metallic surface of the Spiral is visible at the center of this image.

The Spiral presented a significant departure in design from its surrounding buildings. Its placement within the Queensgate conservation area has been described even by friendly critics as a 'violent insertion' which envisioned a 'rupture in the fabric of space and time'.[14]

[12] Libeskind, p. 151.
[13] Libeskind, p. 156.
[14] David Langdon, 'AD Classics: V&A Spiral / Daniel Libeskind + Cecil Balmond', *Arch Daily*, (29 June 2015) <https://www.archdaily.com/768565/ad-classics-v-and-a-spiral-daniel-libeskind-plus-cecil-balmond> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 1.

Such a cacophony of modernist architecture in a neighborhood full of stately Victorian and Edwardian elegance generated vociferous public response, both for and against its installation. While those in support of the design saw it as a natural architectural progression for the area that accepted modernism in all its complexity, the building's detractors saw the structure as an 'ostentatious...carbuncle, far more suited to the Millennium site than South Kensington'.[15] The Spiral's sharp edges and new conceptualization of museum space was even seen by some as dysfunctional space, 'simply geared to surprise and shock the viewers.' [16]

Libeskind's design called for the displacement of the Aston Webb Screen, and its resurrection a floor below, 'becoming the frame for an outdoor exhibition space visible from the lower levels of the new extension.'[17] Illustrated in Fig. 23, Libeskind planned for the Aston Webb Screen to serve almost as the support for the street-level sidewalk above it. The large windows on the Spiral would have allowed visitors to look down on the screen while browsing the museum, as well as enter and exit through the screen via the museum's subway.[18] Such a transference of gaze would have transformed the Screen and war damage into a museum piece, on display to the public and no longer a functional piece of architecture.

[15] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *Application TP/98/01064,* p. 206.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Libeskind, p. 159.
[18] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923 – Appendix: Understanding the Asset,* p. 75.

Figure 23, Photo of a model of Daniel Libeskind's Spiral building, including recessed Aston Webb Screen.

Libeskind's design clearly and openly tampers with the historic fabric of the museum through its displacement of the Webb Screen. Such tampering meant that the 1987 engraving would also have been shifted down from street level, separating Kindersley's engraving from the damage it sought to explain. While much of the damage located on the Screen itself would have also been submerged below ground floor level, the damage on the V&A building proper would have remained without any explanatory text, and in direct contrast with a strikingly modern building.

3.4 The Spiral as an Embodiment of Memory Work

Rooted in 'memory work', Libeskind's design embodies the historical approach to memorialization where the practice of memory work is mobilized to interrogate the history and memory of the Second World War.

As an architect Libeskind had, and continues to have, a clearly articulated understanding of the relationship between the past, the present, and his architectural designs and

responsibilities; ‘For this history is not over. It is not, in my view, a story to be told with a happy or an unhappy ending, but a story that continues over irreversible events, in which every participant and visitor is implicated and made aware.’[19] Libeskind’s desire to ‘implicate’ and make ‘aware’ the visitors to his buildings reflects a desire promote interrogation of the past and its effects on the present. Such a practice is an incorporation of memory work on a fundamental level.

Libeskind’s practice of interrogating history and its relationship to the present is embodied in his design for the Berlin Jewish Museum. Here Libeskind designed an ‘elongated, sharply angled and folded building’ whose ‘zigzag contours’ were derived in part from ‘imaginary lines on the city which connect the site with the street addresses of great figures in Berlin Jewish cultural history…’[20] The building featured 49 columns in the garden, 48 of which were filled with soil from Berlin (representing the year of 1948 and the formation of the state of Israel) and the final column filled with soil from Jerusalem.[21] Through the design, Libeskind forces visitors to come face to face with a material representation of the difficulty in reconciling the Holocaust and the present state of Berlin. It has been remarked that on the whole ‘The museum is pervaded by this absence’ of Jewish residents of Berlin, with even the smallest of details tying the building back to its purpose and contents.[22] Libeskind would apply a similar process to the conceptualization and design of the Spiral.

Beyond his general approach to designing buildings, Libeskind also consciously and explicitly grappled with the V&A’s war damage in his approach to the design of the Spiral, despite such direction not being included in the brief for the project.[23] In a 1998 lecture on the Spiral and Imperial War Museum North, Libeskind highlighted the role of space and land

[19] Libeskind, p. 28.
[20] Bernhard Schneider and Daniel Libeskind, *Jewish Museum Berlin* (London: Prestel, 1999), p. 36.
[21] Schneider and Libeskind, p. 40.
[22] Schneider and Libeskind, p. 53.
[23] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923 – Appendix: Understanding the Asset,* p. 75.

in communicating the history of war, stating; 'The idea is rather stark, which is to show that conflict is not something abstract, but it has to do with space, it as to do with the fact that people never fought on a piece of paper, but on land.'[24] Such questioning of the war memories held within the V&A site is a clear historical approach to war memorialization. Libeskind's assertion later in the same lecture that the twenty-first century will be about 'losing ourselves much deeper in the history that created the future' reinforces this approach.[25]

Libeskind's interest in revisiting the Second World War was shared by Alan Borg, Director of the V&A from 1995 to 2001 and perpetual champion of the Spiral project.[26] Before serving as Director Borg oversaw the Imperial War Museum during its complete renovation, including the introduction of new Second World War galleries with added information on the social impact of the war.[27] Borg also 'wrote the book' on memorials as physical objects, authoring *War Memorials: From Antiquity to Present* (1991), which explores the changing design of memorial sites throughout human history.[28] The professional background and shared interest in the relevance of the Second World War between Libeskind and Borg resulted in a project which interrogates the V&A's wartime history, and the relationship of these events to the present.

3.5 Death of the Spiral

As the Spiral project proceeded, it became apparent that the qualities which made the design desirable to both Borg and Libeskind, and which explicitly interrogated the museum's wartime past, also made the addition unfundable by heritage-oriented funding bodies.

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[24] Libeskind, p. 148.
[25] Libeksind, p. 151.
[26] Ruth Adams, 'Gentlemen and Players: The Victoria and Albert Museum: An Institutional Case Study of the Culture and Society Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, 2006), p. 286.
[27] Adams, 285.
[28] Alan Borg, *War Memorials: From Antiquity to Present* (London: Leo Cooper, 1991).

Despite the aesthetic appeal of Libeskind's designs, the enthusiastic support of Borg, and surprising approval from English Heritage and the Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning office, the Spiral encountered significant obstacles in its fundraising phase. Two years after its public debut the Spiral was denied funding by both the Millennium Commission and the Arts Council, both refusing even to consider grant proposals.[29] In 2004, 8 years after the design's initial selection, the project received its final financial rejection by the HLF.[30] The HLF defended its decision, arguing that 'Daniel Libeskind's vision for the V&A's Spiral was imaginative but did not deliver well against our key requirements of conservation, education and enjoyment of the UK's heritage'. HLF further stated that the design 'would not be able to deliver the major heritage benefits that we expect to see for such a large request.' [31] HLF's rejection would ultimately be the Spiral's death knell.

The rejection of the Spiral by so many of Britain's significant funding bodies highlights an important aspect of the design - the building's rejection of a heritage approach to the V&A space. Libeskind's contemporary design functioned as an amplifier of the historical nature of the museum by calling attention to the different architectural approaches between it and the museum's original buildings. By burying the Aston Webb Screen, it raised questions about the relationship between the past and the present. And by separating the bomb-damaged exterior from its 1987 explanation, it returned the damaged façade to its original unexplained state. All these elements raised questions about the museum's past, rather than answering them. The design presented lines of inquiry for visitors to follow (a history approach), rather than highlighting one consistent narrative (a heritage approach). While still related to the

[29] Jay Merrick, 'V&A hopes to leave the past behind as it plans extension', *The Independent*, (14 July 2010) <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/va-hopes-to-leave-the-past-behind-as-it-plans-extension-2025996.html> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 6.
[30] 'V&A ditches spiral plans', *Attractions Management*, (20 September 2004) <https://www.attractionsmanagement.com/index.cfm?pagetype=news&codeID=9075> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 2.
[31] 'V&A ditches spiral plans', *Attractions Management*, paragraphs 3 and 6.

past, these were clearly not the same ‘heritage benefits’ which HLF, the Millennium Commission, and the Arts Council expected and necessitated in such a project.

The V&A’s next attempt to fill the boilerhouse site would noticeably avoid these pitfalls.

3.6 AL_A’s Sackler Courtyard Project

Following a mourning period after the Spiral’s demise, the V&A undertook a second international competition to fill the still-underutilized boilerhouse space.[32] This competition presented applicants with a substantially different project brief, albeit one that still does not seem to have requested explicit refence made to the V&A’s bomb damage.[33] Unlike its predecessor, the 2010 brief called for the creation of usable ‘public’ space alongside the revamped Exhibition Road and a large subterranean gallery in which to host special exhibitions.[34] This change in brief is likely due both to a desire for a less controversial planning process, and for a less costly building project, seeking to avoid the issues of the Spiral.

While AL_A’s winning design differed significantly from the Spiral, it necessitated many of the same modifications to the site; the entirety of the existing temporary buildings would need to be demolished, and the Aston Webb Screen carefully de- and re-constructed. Unlike the Spiral, the AL_A design called for the permanent removal of much of the Screen, and the replacement of a significant amount of the bomb-damaged stone with new fronting.

The AL_A courtyard (See Fig. 21) is a cornucopia of glimmering white surfaces with custom-made porcelain tiles covering the entire floor and much of the outside of the café. The Courtyard has been described by critics as a ‘soaring achievement’ which ‘connects the new

[32] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923, p.* 69.
[33] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923, p.* 63.
[34] Ibid.

world with the old'.[35] The white porcelain tiles which cover the courtyard glitter in the sunlight.[36] After passing through the newly opened Aston Webb Screen, and walking by the porcelain-tilled café, visitors descend a large central set of stairs. As they do so, they pass by 'the oculus', a window into the Sainsbury Gallery hidden below the courtyard itself. Finally, visitors enter the museum through a series of large glass doors, cut into the now-exposed facade of the original Western Range of the V&A (See Appendix A for complete visuals).

3.7 Heritage Components of the Sackler Courtyard

Several of the alterations stemming from AL_A's design are of particular interest as they illustrate a sidelining of the story of the museum at war in favor of a broader heritage interpretation of the conflict. These alterations include the replacement of segments of the Aston Webb Screen with metal perforated gates, the refurbishing of segments of the screen with new stone, and the verbiage of the second memorial engraving.

Part 1 – Metal Gates

The most immediately noticeable alteration to the V&A's damaged façade is the replacement of panels of the Aston Webb Screen with perforated metal gates (See Figs. 26 and 27 for comparison). The AL_A designed gates are composed of large, thick metal panels, bolted into the Webb Screen on each side of every opening. Circles have been punched out of the gates at regular intervals, creating the impression of waves (See Fig 24). The edges of each gate are rimmed with a thin line of a bright red coating. These gates are opened in the morning slightly ahead of the museum's opening hours, and closed in the evening before closure of the museum.[37] When closed, the courtyard is still visible through the holes.

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[35] Robert Bevan, 'A first look at the V&A's new underground gallery and entrance courtyard', *Evening Standard*, (29 June 2017) <https://www.standard.co.uk/lifestyle/design/a-first-look-at-the-vas-new-underground-gallery-and-entrance-courtyard-a3575966.html> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 1.
[36] Bevan, 'A first look at the V&A's new underground gallery and entrance courtyard', paragraph 8.
[37] Kensington and Chelsea, *Application PP/12/00923, p.* 7.

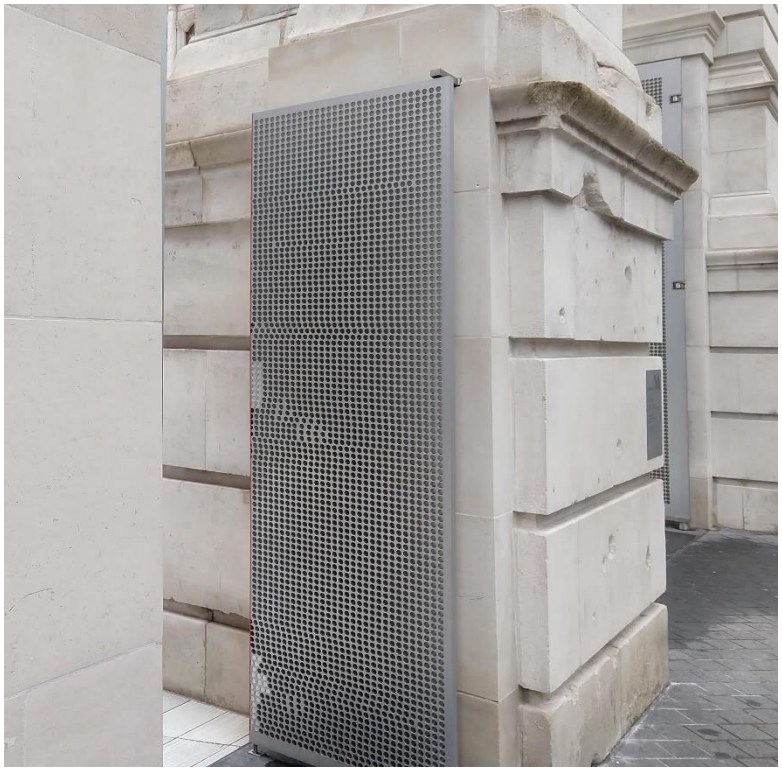

Figure 24, Photo of perforated metal gate attached to Aston Webb Screen.

The V&A describes the substitution of damaged stone for new metal in its planning documents for the site; 'The proposed designs for the gates seek to preserve the memory of the war damage inflicted on the Screen, echoing the location and impact that the blast made on the V&A.'[38] While these perforated gates unquestionably make a strong design statement, it is difficult to extrapolate the relationship between the professionally and immaculately created even perforations of the metal gates, and the uneven and imperfect marks left from the 1941 explosion.[39]

Unlike the gates, the bomb damage conveys a sense of irrationality of war, an uneven and illogical splattering of holes across almost an entire facade. As illustrated in Fig. 25, these damage marks are uneven, some barley the size of a small fingernail, some as large as an

[38] Kensington and Chelsea, *PP/12/00923*, p. 112.
[39] Herbert Wright, 'Buried Treasure: V&A Exhibition Road Quarter by AL_A', *Design Curial,* (9 August 2017) <http://www.designcurial.com/news/buried-treasure-va-exhibition-quarter-by-amanda-levete-architects-5895664/> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 10.

outspread palm. These unpredictable impressions into the stone of the museum reflect the chaotic unpredictability of the war itself and the messiness of bombardment.

Figure 25, Photo of war damage to Aston Webb Screen alongside perforated metal gates.

The regularity and evenness of the perfectly circular cut-outs in the metal gates reflects none of the random chaos of the memory from which the gates claim to be derived. The predictability of the pattern, the sparkle of the material, and the evenness of the incisions indicates none of the reality of war which the V&A and its staff members witnessed.

The abstraction of war impact from the stone wall to the metal gates is acknowledged by the V&A; 'The gathering together and spreading out (of the pattern embedded in the metal gates) is informed by the shrapnel damage on the existing screen, with the perforations becoming an abstract referent to the memory of the bomb damage.' [40] The V&A's use of the term 'abstraction' seems to be a too-generous summary of the relationship between the subject matter of the gates and original damage. A key part of abstraction is the retention of the aura, the essence, of the original subject matter. While this is present in many of the best

[40] Kensington and Chelsea, *PP/12/00923*, p. 7.

works of abstract art - the transmittance of the terror of aerial warfare in Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) or the revolutionary fervor in El Lisitsky's *Beat the Whites with the Red Wedge* (1919) - none of the original urgency and horror is communicated by the abstraction of message and form in the AL_A the gates.

The gates and their sanitized reflection of war damage are evidence of a heritage approach to the creation of war memory; the process of regularizing the gritty, real, damage to the V&A, and turning what was a traumatic moment in the museum's history into a gleaming, highly designed selling point.[41] Just like the engraving carved in 1987 and the cross suggested by Munday in his 1944 letter to *The Times*, these gates spin the damage to the V&A so that it is acceptable and easy, rather than challenging, to interact with. Just like Munday's ideal church memorial, they present a more positive, more *clean* version of the Second World War.

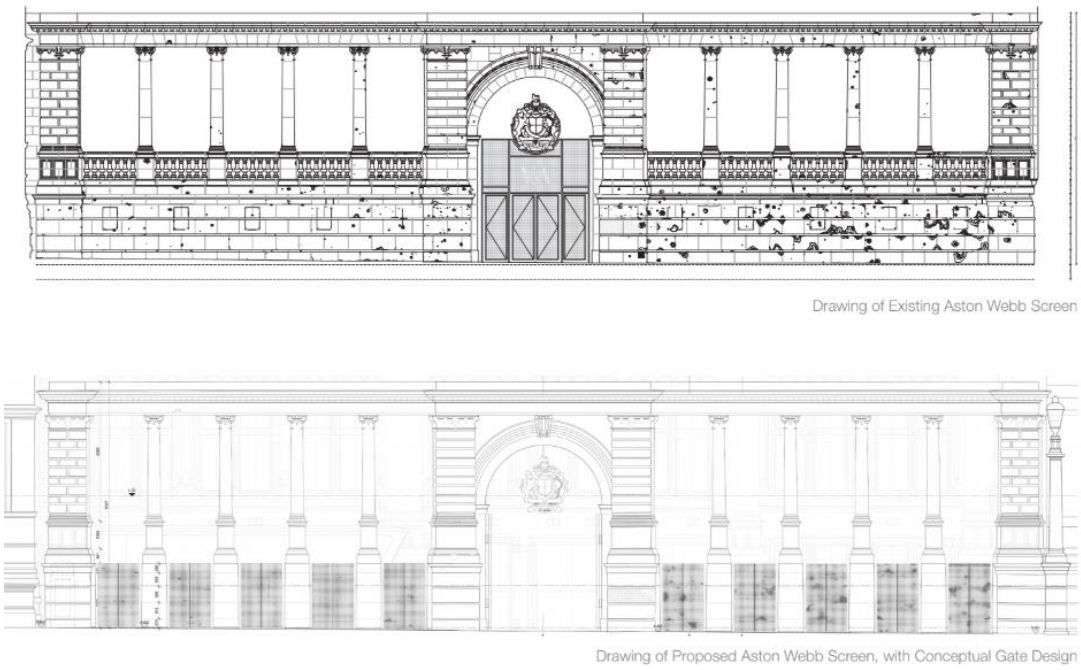

Figure 26, Drawing depicting damage to Aston Webb Screen (top) and Aston Webb Screen after addition of proposed perforated metal gates (bottom).

[41] *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, Volume 1: History and Politics*, ed. by Raphael Samuel (London: Routledge, 1989), p. i.

Figure 27, Drawing of Aston Webb Screen before (top) and after (bottom) removal of material and addition of perforated metal gates.

Part 2 – Replacement of Stone on Webb Screen

The refacing of the pillars of the Aston Webb Screen with new stone also diminishes the war impact of the V&A damage site. While planning documents suggest a large visual difference between the new and old material, this differentiation is not reflected in the physical damage site. Much like the concealment of the 1987 engraving through its placement directly on the stone of the Screen, this material usage hides the design interventions made to the site and minimizes the amount and impact of war damage on display.

Proposal materials submitted to the Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office lay out a definitive materials scheme for replacing the Webb Screen stonework. In this proposal the V&A suggested the use of a stone for the screen which, while complementary to the existing structure in color and texture, would be visually dissimilar enough as to make clear to viewers that work and alterations had been done to the site. In the pages of the planning application the proposed Perryfield Shelly Whitbed stone has much more texture and pigmentation than the smooth, original Portland Sone of the existing elements of the screen

(See Fig. 28).[42] While the existing stone is milky and smooth in texture, the proposed modern replacement exhibits a wider array of colors, and features significantly more veining.

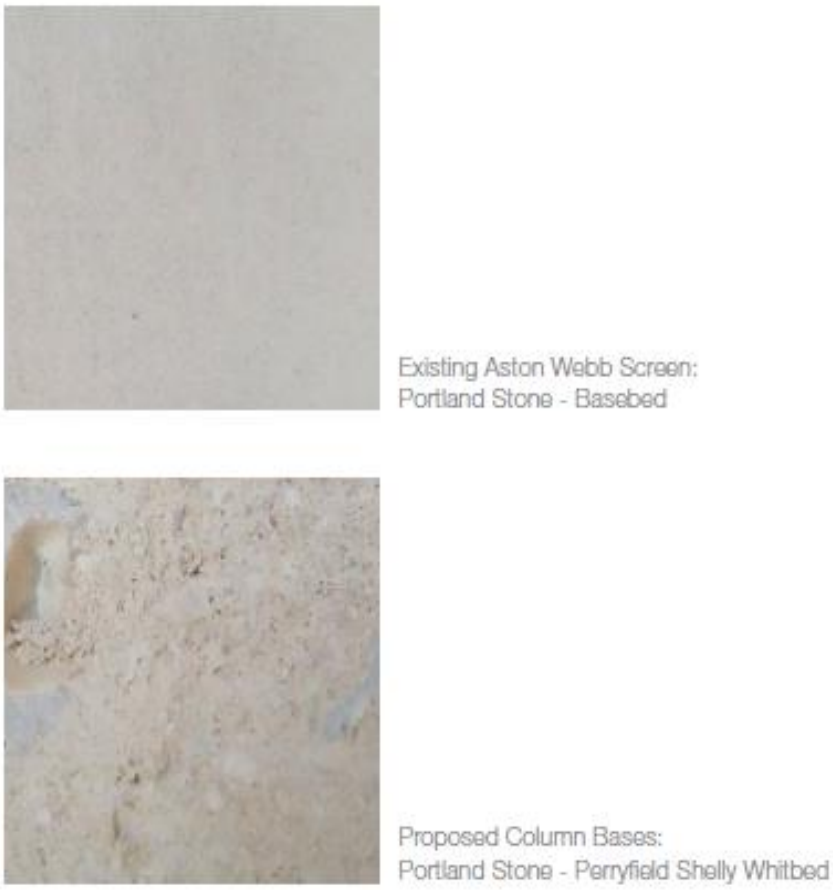

Figure 28, Selection from V&A/AL_A planning documents highlighting material difference between existing (top) and proposed replacement (bottom) stone for Aston Webb Screen. Original in colour.

It is unclear from research undertaken whether or not the proposed Perryfield Shelly Whitbed Portland Stone was the material actually used. It is clear, however, that the visual difference so apparent on paper is, as of 2019, significantly less apparent when viewing the site in person. Whether because of a difference in material, or due to two years of exposure to weather, the new Perryfield Shelly Whitbed stone now appears remarkably similar to the original material. As illustrated in Figures 29 and 30, the colour and texture of the original and replacement stones share more than a passing resemblance, with none of the veining present in the material sample on paper present.

[42] Kensington and Chelsea, *PP/12/00923*, p. 108.

Figure 29, Photo depicting both original (top) and replacement (bottom) stone on Aston Webb Screen. Original in colour.

Figure 30, Photo depicting original (right pillar) and replacement (left pillar) stone on Aston Webb Screen. Original in colour.

The difference between the stone of the resurfaced portions of the screen and the original sections is so minute that until well into primary research on the Sackler Courtyard, the presence of two different types of stone was not apparent. Until reading the V&A's planning proposal for the site, I believed that these stone pillars were original, and had simply escaped the bomb's blast. If a Design Historian interrogating the structure was not able to easily notice what was supposed to be a clear signal of tampering with a historical building, it

is highly unlikely that a member of the public casually passing through the space would notice that changes had been made.

This choice of material furthers the idea put forward initially by the 1987 engraving, discussed in chapter 2, that the contemporary appearance of the screen and façade is an authentic representation of the site immediately following the war. Alterations such as the replacement of damaged stone with modern material obscure the alterations made to the site and pass off 21st century interventions as original.

Replacing the Aston Webb Screen's damaged stones with new material decreases the raw impact of the damage, making the museum's wartime experience seem less intense. Together the impact of the gates and the insertion of undamaged replacement stone again mirrors the heritage-style treatment of ruined churches in Munday's *Times* letter. In both instances, damage to the site is cleared away and replaced with pristine new material, invoking more positive memories in viewers to the site; in Munday's case those of British Christianity, in the case of the V&A, the values of exceptional craftsmanship and modern design.

Part 3 - The 2017 Engraving

The heritage narrative put forward by Sackler Courtyard is further supported the exclusion of the 2017 engraving in initial planning materials produced for the site, and by the phrasing eventually inscribed.

The site's second inscription, carved in the style of the 1987 engraving reads 'IN 2017 PARTS OF THE WALL WERE REMOVED AND NEW GATES DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE WAR DAMAGE' (See Fig. 31).

Figure 31, Photo of 1987 (top) and 2017 (bottom) engravings on Aston Webb Screen.

Despite being the only acknowledgement of the modifications made to the site in the 21st century, the engraving does was not included in initial planning documents for the Sackler Courtyard.[43] The lack of a plan for a 21st century engraving is clearly illustrated in Fig 32. Taken from a larger illustration of the proposed site in the V&A's initial and largest planning application, Fig. 32 illustrates Kindersley's 1987 engraving in situ. There, however, is no indication of the second engraving made underneath the 1987 original in this image.

[43] Kensington and Chelsea, *PP/12/00923*.

Figure 32, Illustration of proposed AL_A Sackler Courtyard modification of Aston Webb Screen. This mock-up of the proposed design features the 1987 Kindersley engraving, but not the more recent engraving immediately below.

The only reference made to the 2017 engraving in the entirety of the V&A's planning applications was made in 2013, over a year after the initial application.[44] In this application the engraving itself is never discussed, but the text appears in a mockup of the planned metal gates. Even in a subsequent application regarding two additional plaques for the site (one to honor the Sackler family, the other the Duchess of Cambridge) which references the precedent for engravings set by Kindersley in 1987, the 2017 engraving is not mentioned.[45] Such continued absence of reference to the later engraving suggests that making clear that alterations to the fabric of the V&A had been done was not an urgent priority for AL_A and the V&A in the design of the Sackler Courtyard.

[44] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *CON/13/01901*, p. 9.
[45] Kensington and Chelsea Council Planning Office Archive, London, *Application LB/17/02426*

Figure 33, Illustration of proposed Sackler Courtyard metal gates. The 2017 engraving is visible on the left hand side, below the 1987 Kindersley addition. This image is the only reference made to the 2017 engraving in the V&A's planning applications.

The phrasing of the 2017 inscription makes no indication of which changes were made during the addition of Sackler Courtyard, further confirming the heritage slant of the site. No mention is made of which segments of the Aston Webb Screen were removed. Nor does the engraving attempt to communicate that beyond this, portions of the façade had been replaced with more modern material. Such phrasing means that the newly added inscription is less than helpful to a casual visitor or passer-by in their attempt to discern which elements of the wall have been altered, when, and by whom.

The presence of an inscription which highlights *some*, but not *all* of the alterations made to the site further obscures the changes not discussed. As visitors reading the text would expect that an engraving enumerating alterations made to a façade comprises a complete list of the changes made, any changes not listed are hidden in the process. Through this, the engraving cements the changes to the Aston Webb Screen as being thoroughly unreadable. The lack of readability in turn highlights the site's heritage approach to the war, as only a heritage approach to war memory can discard facts and details in favor of overall

impression, as evidenced by Munday's proposal to memorialize British victory before the conclusion of the war.[46]

3.8 Two Projects, Two Approaches

AL_A and Libeskind's designs embody the two radically different approaches to architectural and design treatment of war memory. While Daniel Libeskind's Spiral disrupts a feeling of temporal continuity through its contemporary design and dramatic alterations to the fabric of the historical V&A architecture, the AL_A Sackler Center brings the past and present together through architectural compromises to both periods, producing an intimate relationship between the two epochs. These contrasting impacts likely stem from differing methodologies in the two design studios.[47] While Libeskind incorporates memory work as a key technique in his approach to architecture and design, AL_A seem to prefer an approach steeped in heritage tradition and ideology.

In his radical design which challenged the contemporary understanding of the past, Libeskind answered one of James E. Young's key questions for the designers of memorials: ''How do we respond to the current moment in light of our remembered past?'[48] Through his design Libeskind put forward a bold, personal answer to this question, suggesting that we innovate and push forward with new ideas and new approaches to the world, and situate these in the middle of the history we must grapple with every day. Through the Spiral Libeskind proved that in some ways, a break with the past, and a rejection of its values, or at least a reinterpretation of them, is possible, and is beautiful. This is a historical approach to

[46] David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 135.
[47] James E.Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 59. James Young describes this as a link between pedagogy and memory, how the way in which we work and the theories which lead our practice shape the way in which memory is treated in the final product.
[48] Young, p. 15.

war memory – an acknowledgement that the relationship between the past and present is complex and difficult, and must be worked out on a personal level. [49]

By creating dissonance between the past and the present, and boldly making alterations to the fabric of the past, Libeskind preserved 'the complex texture of memory - its many inconsistencies, faces, and shapes' which sustain 'the difficulty of our memory-work, not its easy resolution.'[50] The unclear relationship between the Spiral building itself, the Victorian main body of the V&A, and the pock-marked, bomb-damaged facade raise historical questions about what the events of the museum's historical past are. This technique guides visitors to truly think through, and think through for *themselves* how the Victorian founding of the museum, and the museum's experience during the war have influenced what the V&A, and through it Britain, are today.[51] There are no easy answers, no clear narrative connecting the shiny hyper-modernity of the Spiral to the battered façade of the museum in Libeskind's design - just a plethora of contrasts asking more questions of the viewers, and leading to more interrogation of the past, present, and future of the site.

In contrast, the design of the Sackler Courtyard creates a bridge between the past and the present, and tells a cohesive story connecting the two. Through design interventions, AL_A brought the visual experience of the old courtyard closer to that of a contemporary space. As described in initial reviews, the courtyard as a whole takes a 'subtle' approach to its relationship with the original architecture, which makes 'the museum more approachable' and binds it 'into the 21st-century city.'[52] Just like Munday's cross, by masking the fact that

[49] Young p. 340-45.
[50] Young, p. xi.
[51] James E. Young, 'The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today', *Critical Inquiry*, 18.2, (1992), 267-296, p. 270.
[52] Ellis Woodman, 'The V&A's new £48m Exhibition Road Quarter is a triumph - review', *The Telegraph*, (28 June 2017) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/art/what-to-see/vas-new-48m-exhibition-road-quarter-triumph-review/> [accessed 18 May 2019], paragraph 17.

these alterations were made the line between the past and present is further blurred and a new tale of the past is created.[53]

While Libeskind's past projects for Synagogues located in areas depleted of Jews in the Holocaust, the Imperial War Museum North, and the Jewish Museum in Berlin provided him with a background rich with historical interrogation, AL_A's projects for shopping centers and commercial buildings lack this historical heft. AL_A projects which more intimately address issues of nation and heritage, such as the firm's design for the Lord's Media Centre at the Marylebone Cricket Club, seem to be conceived as modern interpretations of heritage concepts. The Lord's Media Centre design is described as respecting and savoring the 'essential nature' of Lord's, while bringing the design up to date.[54] Treatments of the past which revolve around 'essential natures', rather than concrete realities are firmly heritage-based, picking up on meta-narratives of the past and attempting to seamlessly bridge them into the present. Because of this, these approaches require no memory work.

AL_A's explicit aim to connect the new to the old within the site further connects the Sackler Courtyard to the heritage approach.[55] On their website, AL_A highlight a quote from current V&A Director Tristram Hunt that the Sackler Courtyard design 'is much more attractive to non-traditional museumgoers (than the Spiral)… It is less, frankly, scary.'[56] These are not the markers of a practice which is particularly interested in creating tensions or asking difficult questions of viewers of its designs. The Second World War was a 'scary' event, and its impacts on the present are not easy to explain or digest. In order to do such an event justice, designs for spaces of Second World War memories must be similarly powerful and must

[53] Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 176.
[54] 'Lords Media Centre, London, UK' , *AL_A* <https://www.ala.uk.com/projects/lords-media-centre-2/> [accessed 17 October 2019].
[55] 'V&A Museum London, UK', *AL_A*, <https://www.ala.uk.com/projects/va-exhibition-road/> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 2.
[56] 'V&A Museum London, UK', *AL_A*, <https://www.ala.uk.com/projects/va-exhibition-road/> [accessed 15 September 2019], paragraph 6.

inspire personal, and difficult, interrogation by viewers and visitors.[57] The AL_A design, seemingly *by* design, rejects such historical approaches in favor of a more streamlined and palatable approach to the past, thus taking a heritage approach to the site.

Through such a neat and easy summation of the past, the AL_A design glosses over the horrible realities of war, and the complicated way in which those realities have impacted the present. Returning to James Young, this interpretation of the past overlooks 'the consequences of memory', rejecting a clear narrative of how those memories have been formed, by whom, and to what end.[58]

[57] Young, p. 5.
[58] Young, p. ix.

'We can no longer afford to take that which was good in the past and simply call it our heritage, to discard the bad and simply think of it as a dead load which by itself time will bury in oblivion. The subterranean stream of Western history has finally come to the surface and usurped the dignity of our tradition.' – Hannah Arendt[1]

[1] Quoted in Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), p. 184.

Conclusion

This dissertation has explored the development of British blitz and war memory through the V&A's bomb damaged facade from its creation in 1941 through to its most recent changes in the twenty-first century. It has suggested that across this period the V&A has implemented designs which reject exploration of the events of the blitz and war. Instead, approaches to the site have been built around a heritage-styled approach to the creation of war memory. These designs have created a site which highlights the glory of British involvement in the war and celebrates what is framed as an inevitable British triumph.

This paper began with the debunking of the conception of the damaged facade as an intentional feature in chapter 1. Chapter 2 built upon this foundation, arguing that the design and execution of the 1987 engraving on the site displayed a lack of memory work, and therefore moved the site into an object of banal nationalism. The banal nationality of the V&A's bomb damage site was expounded in chapter 3, with a comparison of the relative techniques and approaches of the Spiral and the Sackler Courtyard.

4.1 The Myth of the Blitz/War

The treatment of the V&A bomb damage site is an important area of study because it is simultaneously a manifestation and reinforcement of the British myth of the blitz and understanding of the war.[2] These myths and understandings have real and significant consequences on contemporary British socio-political realities.

While taken alone, the glory of war presented by sites such as the V&A have relatively minimal impact on national discourses. However, such sites are not consumed as singular entities - they exist within a wider 'myth of the blitz'. The myth of the blitz and war sets the

[2] Ruth Adams, 'Gentlemen and Players: The Victoria and Albert Museum: An Institutional Case Study of the Culture and Society Tradition' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, Birkbeck College, 2006), p. 302.

experiences of Britain under fire apart from the experiences of other bombed civilian populations and places a heavy emphasis on the positives of the war years, especially the character and values of the British people.[3] Just like the heritage approach to the memory of the war, the myth presents a gloss to the days of the blitz.[4] In a mythic framework, despite bombs reigning down nightly, '1940 seems a golden age, a time when all were united, when Britain had a mission, when there was a great cause worthy of great sacrifices.'[5]

The British myth of the blitz and war puts to the forefront of popular war memory the triumphs of the British people under fire. It details the communal spirit during the days of the blitz, the make-do-and-mend attitudes in the face of shortages, the determination of women entering the workforce to support the war effort, and the triumphs of Britain's fighting forces.[6]

The survival of this myth necessitates the downplaying of elements of history which do not fit within its remit. Much like the design of the V&A's bomb damage, the design of the myth of the war excludes gore; it does not address the harm brought to the British people by the war; the trauma of relocating thousands of children outside their homes, the fissures in families caused by sending troops abroad, the devastation that over 400,000 deaths wrought on British society.[7] The exclusion of the negative details of the war, from the overarching unpleasantness, to the intimate personal stories of hardship, like those experienced by the staff at the V&A, trying desperately to maintain the museum under very difficult circumstances, means that the general public conception of the war is incomplete. An understanding of the difficult details of the war, the gore, is severely lacking.

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[3] The myth as a whole is summarized throughout Angus Calder's *The Myth of the Blitz* and Mark Connelly's *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War*.
[4] Tom Harrisson, *Living Through the Blitz* (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 23.
[5] Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the Memory of the Second World War* (London: Routledge, 2004) p. 78.
[6] Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991), p. 90.
Luck Noakes, 'Making Histories: Experiencing the Blitz in London's Museums in the 1990s' in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 90.
[7] Calder, p. 101, 119

4.2 Effects of A Heritage Approach

When groups of people face and understand the terrible realities of war a bulwark against future violent conflicts is created. Experiencing war firsthand facilitates an intimate knowledge of the brutal realities of war, which in turn triggers empathy and a desire to prevent one's own traumatic experiences from being experienced by others.[8] This phenomenon is prevalent among former members of the armed services - both in Britain and beyond - where ex soldiers frequently oppose future military incursions.[9] After having lived through and seen what war is first-hand, these former soldiers argue that the costs of war are too high for what gained through violence.[10] Such anti-war sentiments were shared by blitzed Londoners, who rejected plans for British bombardment of Axis cities, and also later rejected military action in the Falklands, arguing that after experiencing the blitz they could not wish these experiences even on their worst enemies.[11]

In order for anti-war sentiments to be developed within a population, powerful and tangible reminders of the realities of conflicts must not only remain, but be given prominence and proper treatment. Without living reminders or physical sites which bear the scars of war a population is 'denied a context for subsequent generations to activate historical empathy and imagination', and less likely to develop these crucial anti-war sentiments.[12] As the human carriers of British wartime memory passed away, and the physical remnants of the conflict

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[8] Per B. Nekdal, 'Peace is Never Neutral' in *Museums and Truth*, ed. by Annette Fromm, Viv Golding and Per B. Rekdal (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. 29.
Also Andy Pearce, *Holocaust Consciousness in Contemporary Britain* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 125-8.

[9] Joe Glenton, 'I fought in an unjust war. Let me tell you what that feels like', *The Guardian*, (7 July 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/07/unjust-war-soldiers-iraq-afghanistan-vietnam> [accessed 2 October 2019].

[10] Adam Weinstein, 'Most Veterans Say America's Wars Are a Waste. No One's Listening to Them.', *The New Republic*, (12 July 2019) <https://newrepublic.com/article/154471/veterans-say-americas-wars-waste-no-ones-listening-them> [accessed 2 October 2019].

[11] Noble Frankland, *Bomber Offensive: The Devastation of Europe* (London: Macdonald and Co., 1969), p. 152.
Martin Shaw, 'Past Wars and Present Conflicts: From the Second World War to the Gulf' in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 197.

[12] Mark Clapson, 'Commemoration and Controversy: Remembering Air Raids and Their Victims Since 1945', in *The Blitz Companion: Aerial Warfare, Civilians and the City since 1911* (London: University of Westminster, 2019), p. 176.

were built over and covered up, less of this necessary exposure to the true reality of war remained.

Like the increasingly small group of Britons who lived through World War Two, the façade of the V&A looked war in the face, felt the blast of Nazi bombs, and has borne scars ever since. The stones of the V&A's Exhibition Road facade themselves have an important story to tell about the tragic experience of war.[13] But despite the important story it holds, the blitz damage to the V&A does not convey this reality. With its current heritage approach and focus on the values of the V&A and British people during the war, the museum's damage site is unable to fulfill its societally necessary function. The treatment of the damage since its creation does not contain any 'gore'; no names of the fallen museum workers, no details of the blast itself, no acknowledgement of the difficult repair process. Only the glory, the values of the museum, the beauty of the Western range, and the sanitized whiff of war which the metal gates evoke, remains.

4.3 How Heritage Does This

While it would be naïve to suggest that the V&A's bomb damage site is responsible for the drumbeats for war, the heritage approach applied to the site is undoubtedly related to such phenomena. As a site which implements a heritage approach to memorialization, the V&A's damage on Exhibition Road provides a discursive base of nationalism and national identity which help incubate more radical expressions of nation.[14]

When the concepts of British values, character, and glory are the foundation of public war memory, it is much easier to invoke the Second World War in contemporary political debate. And invoke the war British politicians have - relying on the glory and triumphs of the Second

[13] Roert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 9.
Also Liliane Weissberg, 'Memory Confined' in *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity*, ed. by Dan Ben Amos and Liliane Weissberg (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999), p. 62.
[14] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 93

World War in the drive to separate Britain from the rest of Europe, in comments about sport, and as a barometer of contemporary character.[15] One recent example of such an invocation is the assertion by former Brexit Secretary David Davis that if 'our civil service can cope with world war II it can easily cope with this (Brexit)'.[16] In this instance Davis relied on the memory of the War as a time when Briton banded together, and because of their strength and values were able to accomplish anything, in order to suggest the ability of Britons to deliver a successful exit from the European Union.

While not impossible, such comparisons are made much more difficult by a generalized war memory rooted in the historical approach, focusing on the gore of the war, the deaths incurred, the destruction to infrastructure, the food and materials shortages, and the weariness of an overworked and overstressed civilian population.

Statements made by Mark Francois, leave-backing MP for Rayleigh and Wickford help to clarify this point. Francois' invocation of the war in relation to potential closing of Airbus factories in the event of a no-deal Brexit that 'My father, Reginald Francois, was a D-Day veteran. He never submitted to bullying by any German and neither will his son' is a reasonable statement to make when the generalized British memory of the war is the banding together of the British people in support of a noble cause.[17] However, if war memory was anchored in the grimmer aspect of the war, this comparison suddenly becomes preposterous - the loss of 43,000 civilian lives, and the destruction of large swaths of British architecture and infrastructure having almost nothing to do with contemporary 'bullying' by German industry.[18]

[15] Amy Walker, 'Do mention the war: the politicians comparing Brexit to WWII', *The Guardian,* (4 February 2019) <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/04/do-mention-the-war-the-politicians-comparing-brexit-to-wwii> [accessed 1 October 2019].
[16] Walker, paragraphs 9-11.
[17] Walker paragraphs 4-5.
[18] Ibid.

While the Second World War is frequently invoked in Britain regarding a wide variety of causes, from UK-Germany football matches, to the Falklands war and Brexit, it is a rare occurrence when *specifics of the war* are invoked.[19] As in the German industrial bullying example detailed above, describing the details of the War brings history to the forefront, and makes more trivial contemporary comparisons of heritage approaches to the past difficult to argue. Utterances with such a lack of historical detail highlight the presence of a heritage approach. While values are the bread and butter of the heritage approach, details are the core of the historical approach, and their invocation shifts attention towards the messy *reality* of the war experience.

Large invocations of the war like those referenced above are impossible to disentangle from the smaller flaggings of the same war-values sentiments showcased in sites such as the V&A. 'We cannot disentangle the flags being waved by Republicans or Brexiteers from those hanging limply on buildings. They may be analytically distinct...but they both belong to the same discursive formation..'[20] Put simply, the everyday, subtle, representation of nationalism and the importance of British values highlighted by the V&A's bomb damage site is a necessary precursor to more 'dramatic moments of mobilization'.[21] While the V&A's treatment of its damage alone has not, and will not, radicalize anyone, it is the continuous repetition of such approaches that allow radical movements to take hold and grow.[22]

4.4 Moving Forward

As a museum which is 'one of the principal means by which people can gain access to the past', and an institution which confers 'a special historic legitimacy' on the events and

[19] Jeremy Paxman, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 244.
[20] Michael Skey and Marco Antonsich, 'Conclusion: The Present and Future of Nationalism' in *Everyday Nationhood: Theorizing Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*, ed. by Marco Antonsich and Michael Skey (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 324.
[21] Craig Calhoun, 'The Rhetoric of Nationalism' in *Everyday Nationhood: Theorizing Culture, Identity and Belonging after Banal Nationalism*, ed. by Marco Antonsich and Michael Skey (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 19.
[22] Antonsich and Skey, p. 324.

objects which it collects and presents', the V&A has a moral obligation to oppose harmful mobilizations of its damaged façade.[23] As has been discussed extensively in this dissertation, the damaged façade has the ability to be a site 'where moral questions are posed, questions inevitably raised about war, questions about sacrifice, suffering, brotherhood, courage, love, recovery, transcendence.'[24] And as a publicly-funded source of knowledge, the V&A has a responsibility upon its shoulders to make this into reality.[25]

The V&A itself has shown that heritage is not the only way the site could be handled, not the only way in which memory of the war could be treated by the museum. In Daniel Libeskind's Spiral, the interrogating of memory was put forward; an unflinchingly difficult space which forces the viewer or visitor to come face to face with the reality of the museum's wartime history.

There are a multitude of other ways the V&A could interrogate its own history - starting with applying the same degree of meticulous research undertaken for items in its collection and the Victorian designs of the building to its wartime activities.[26] Once known, this information could be passed along to the public openly and honestly, in publications which already discuss the war damage, such as the V&A's pamphlet *The V&A Story Told Through its Buildings* (2019), which currently only mentions the half-truth that 'The signs of impact were preserved as a reminder of the Museum's survival.'[27] Making such changes would provide

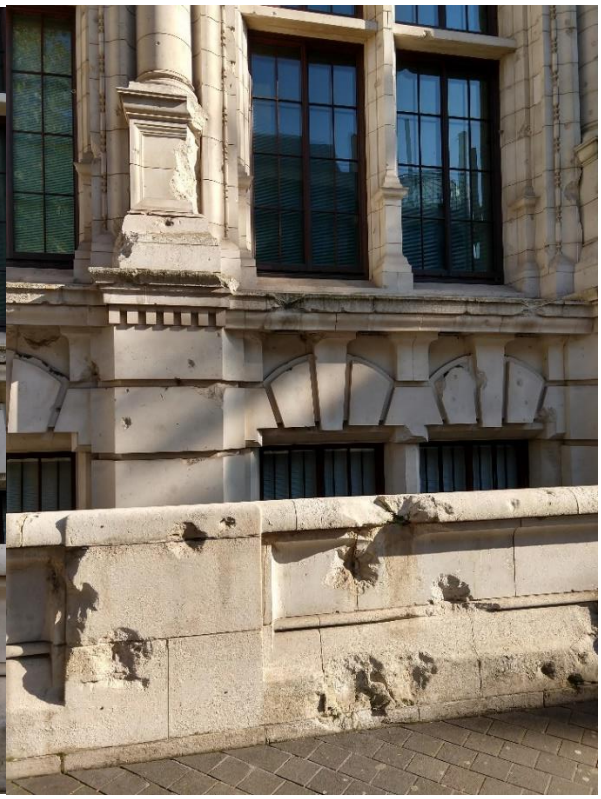
[23] Lucy Noakes, 'Making Histories: Experiencing the Blitz in London's Museums in the 1990s' in *War and Memory in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Martin Evans and Ken Lunn (Oxford: Berg, 1997), p. 93.
[24] Jay Winter, 'Museums and the Representation of War', *Museum and Society*, 10.3, (2012), 150-163, p. 150.
[25] Per. B. Rekdal, 'Why a Book on Museums and Truth?', in *Museums and Truth*, ed. ed. Annette B. Fromm, Viv Golding and Per B. Rekdal (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), p. xxi – xxiv.
[26] Examples include John Physick, *The Victoria and Albert Museum: The History of its Building* (London: V&A Publications, 1982).
Also Anthony Burton, *Vision and Accident: The Story of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London: V&A Publishing, 1999).
And *The V&A Story Told Through Its Buildings* [pamphlet] (London: V&A Publishing, 2019).
[27] *The V&A Story Told Through Its Buildings*, p. 8.

space for the damaged stones of the V&A to tell their own history and story, and reflect the trauma of war which they experienced. With a more authentic story being told, the space would hopefully contribute to a more realistic understanding of war - gore and all.

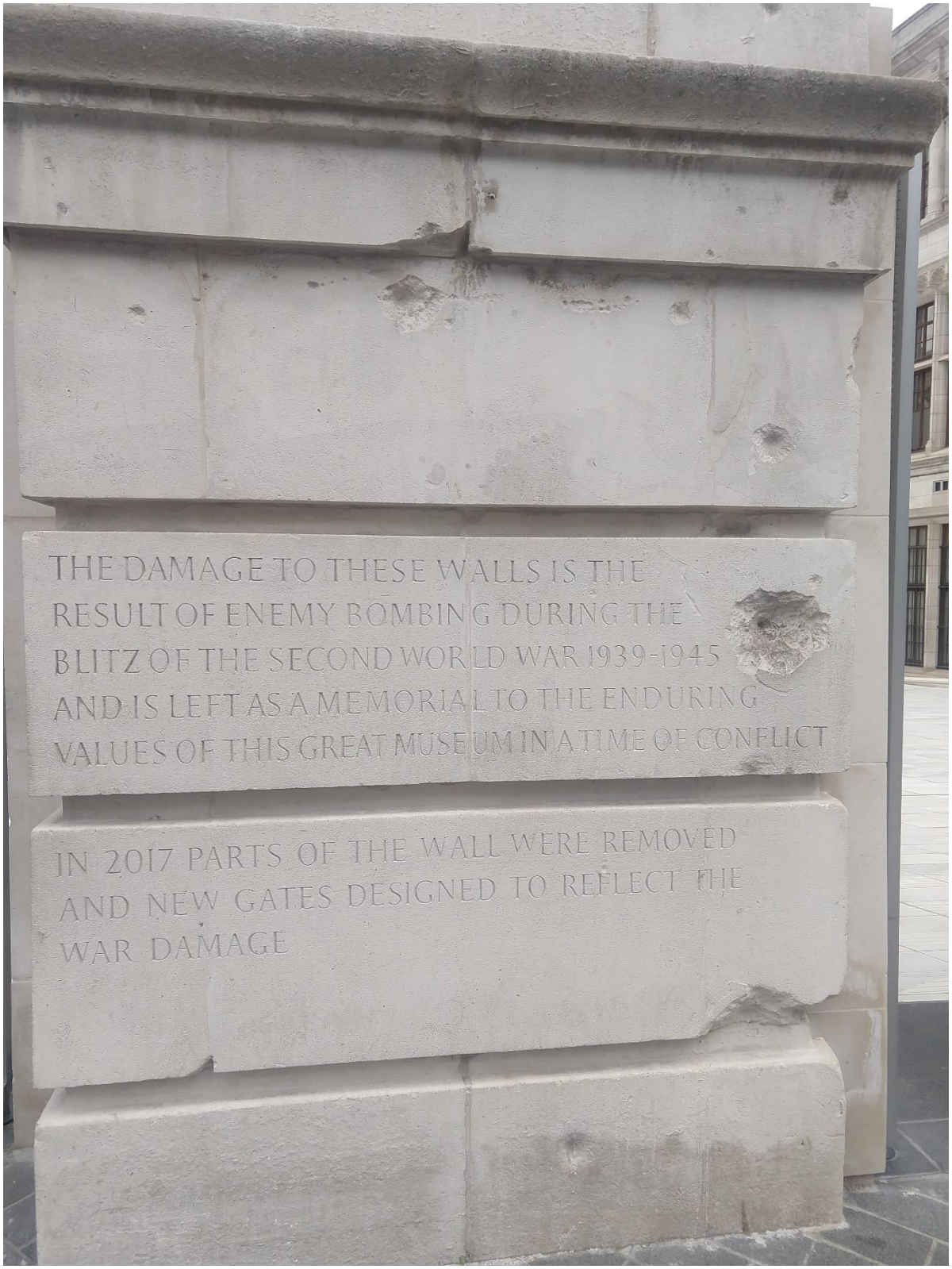
The V&A has a tremendous history and story to tell of its wartime activities - both good (keeping the museum open almost constantly during the war) and bad (refusing the use of the space to children in need). These stories, as well as a better understanding of what war itself entails, could and should be told through the V&A's bomb damage - the space just needs the right design to let these meanings shine through.

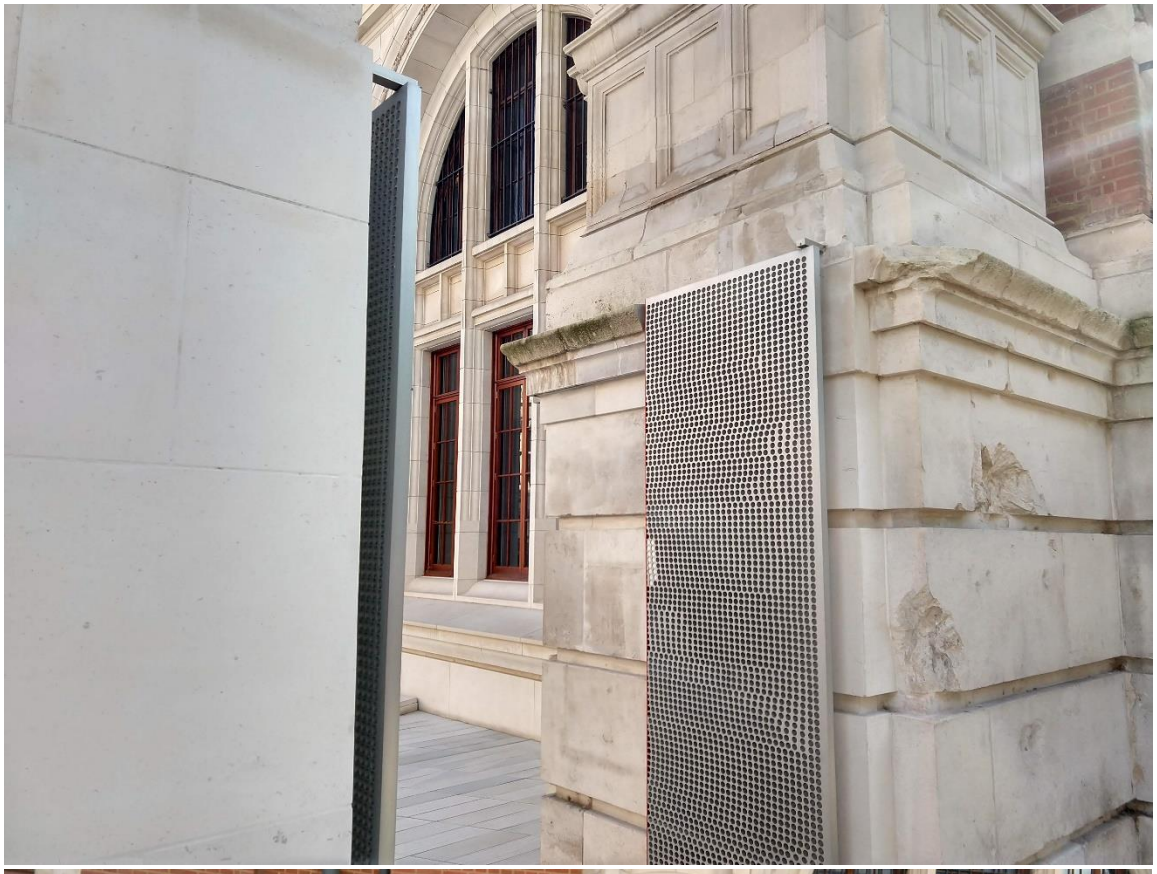
Appendix A

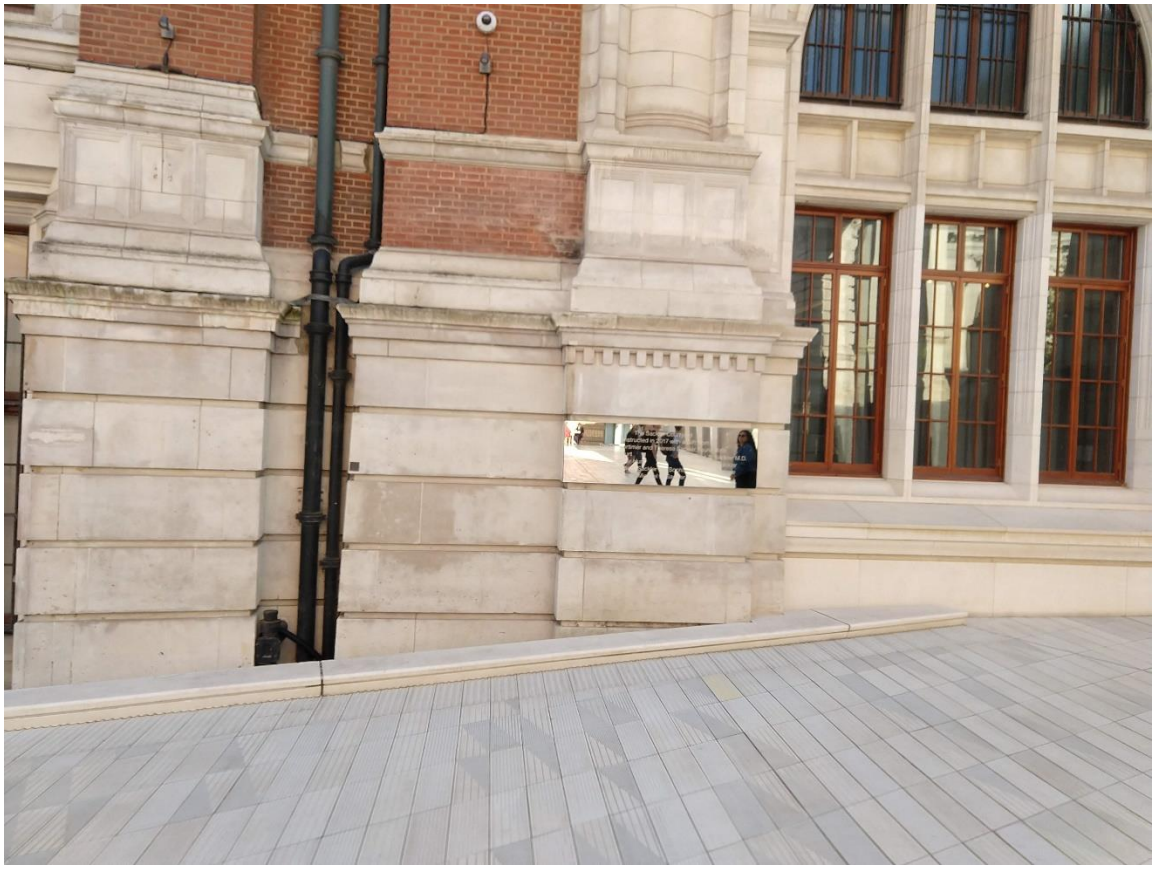
Photo essay of V&A bomb damage and related architecture, moving through site from South to North.


VICTORIA
&
ALBERT
MUSEUM


THE DAMAGE TO THESE WALLS IS THE
RESULT OF ENEMY BOMBING DURING THE
BLITZ OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945
AND IS LEFT AS A MEMORIAL TO THE ENDURING
VALUES OF THIS GREAT MUSEUM IN A TIME OF CONFLICT
IN 2017 PARTS OF THE WALL WERE REMOVED
AND NEW GATES DESIGNED TO REFLECT THE
WAR DAMAGE

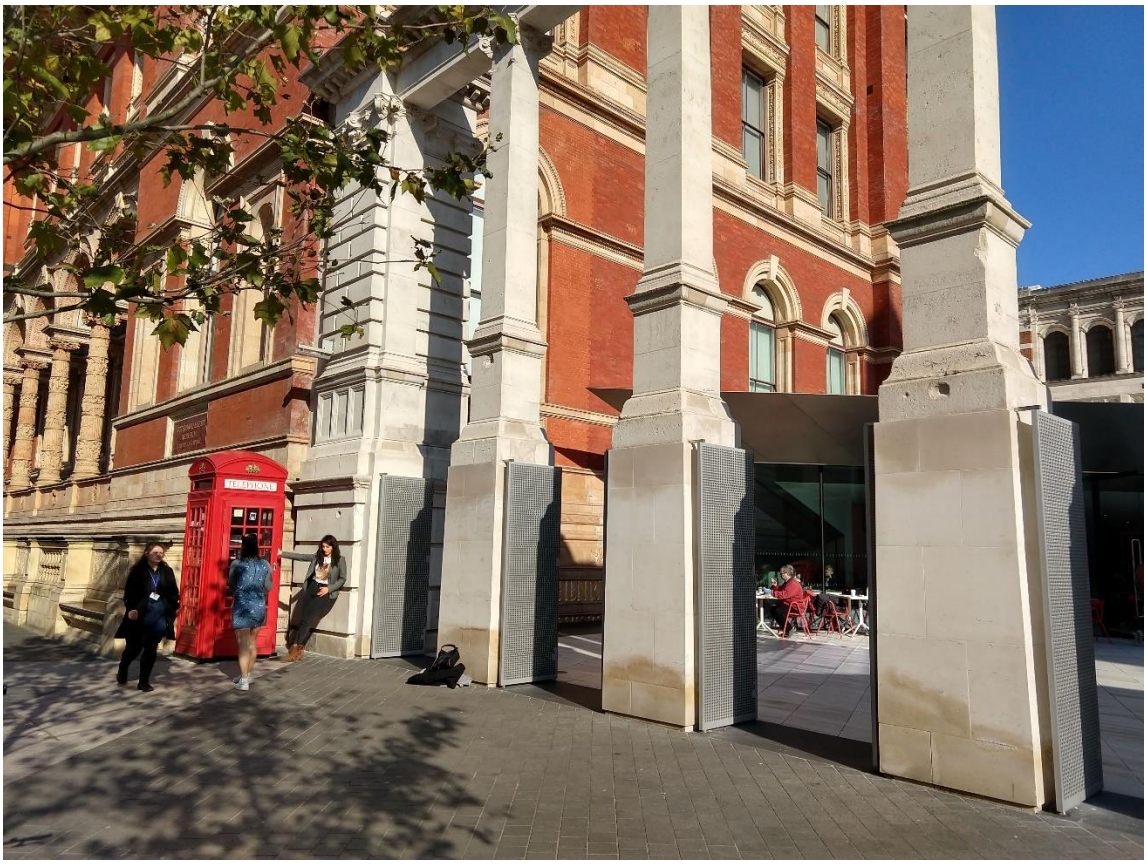





FOOD


VICTORIA
MUSEUM


FOOD

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Appendix B

Photos of 1945 V&A show *Picasso, Matisse* via story in *The Illustrated London News.*

PICASSO AND MATISSE PICTURES EXHIBITED AT THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT.

A VIEW OF THE CURRENT VICTORIA AND ALBERT EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY PICASSO AND MATISSE: (RIGHT) "WOMAN IN A ROCKING-CHAIR"; BY PABLO PICASSO.

A LARGE PICASSO—"NIGHT FISHING AT ANTIBES (AUGUST 1939)"—DOMINATING OTHER PAINTINGS IN A CONTROVERSIAL EXHIBITION AT SOUTH KENSINGTON.

"READING WOMAN ON A BLACK BACKGROUND"; BY HENRI MATISSE.

"DECORATIVE FIGURE"; BY HENRI MATISSE.

"TWO YOUNG GIRLS"; BY HENRI MATISSE.

"STILL LIFE WITH SKULL AND LEEKS"; BY PABLO PICASSO.

"STILL LIFE WITH LEMONS AND MIMOSA"; BY HENRI MATISSE.

Any accusations that museums are dull are disproved by the exhibition which was opened by his Excellency the French Ambassador at the Victoria and Albert Museum on December 5. This is devoted to works by Picasso and Matisse. The Matisse paintings form a series illustrating every phase of his work; but the Picassos have all been painted since the war. It will be recalled that in October of last year, when Picasso was exhibiting eighty works in the Salon d'Automne, vigorous demonstrations were made against them by members of the public and fifteen of the pictures were taken from the walls by the demonstrators. The pictures were not damaged, however, and the demonstrators fled when the police appeared. While it is not expected that the present exhibition—from which our illustrations are taken—will arouse quite so lively a demonstration in the calmer air of South Kensington, the paintings are distinctly provocative and, while not to everybody's taste, certainly testify to the enterprise of the Museum authorities and the Direction Générale des Relations Culturelles in Paris and the British Council, by whom the exhibition has been arranged.

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