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The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond, Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi



Introduction: The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond

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Why should Lawrence Alma-Tadema give the title *In My Studio* to one of his three contributions to the Royal Academy exhibition of 1893 (Fig. 1)? Without the title, casual viewers might interpret the painting as one of the artist's well-known scenes of everyday life in classical antiquity, although they would soon start to wonder about some of the details—particularly the sumptuous textile that occupies centre stage, in fact a rose-red velvet cloth from India, perhaps part of the trappings for a ceremonial elephant, with extravagant borders embroidered in silver and gold.¹ In one sense, the title clears up the mystery: everything we see in the painting is plausible decoration for a London artist's studio at the end of the nineteenth century. Admittedly, this is rather a grand studio, which might be one reason for the title. The artist is letting us know that he is successful enough to afford luxuries from around the world and across history—not only Indian textiles but also Chinese paintings, Byzantine glassware,² and Mexican onyx in the elaborate, Roman-style window. At the same time, though, he is introducing viewers to the fantasy world, or dreamland, within which his paintings are imagined. The female figure in classical drapery can easily be explained as one of Alma-Tadema's models, pausing from her labours to enjoy the scent of the roses in the glass vase—a bravura display from the painter of *The Roses of Heliogabalus*. Yet in this magical environment, light can transform appearances as it modulates across the onyx window, glints in gold thread or on the burnished brass step, and models the fragility of a rose-petal or a girl's flesh. Who can say that she is not a ghost or revenant from the ancient world of the artist's pictures, come to life in modernity like Arria Marcella in Théophile Gautier's Pompeian ghost story, or Gradiva in the tale made famous by Sigmund Freud?³



Figure 1.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *In My Studio*, 1893, oil on canvas, 59.8 x 44.5 cm. Collection of Ann and Gordon Getty. Digital image courtesy of Ann and Gordon Getty.

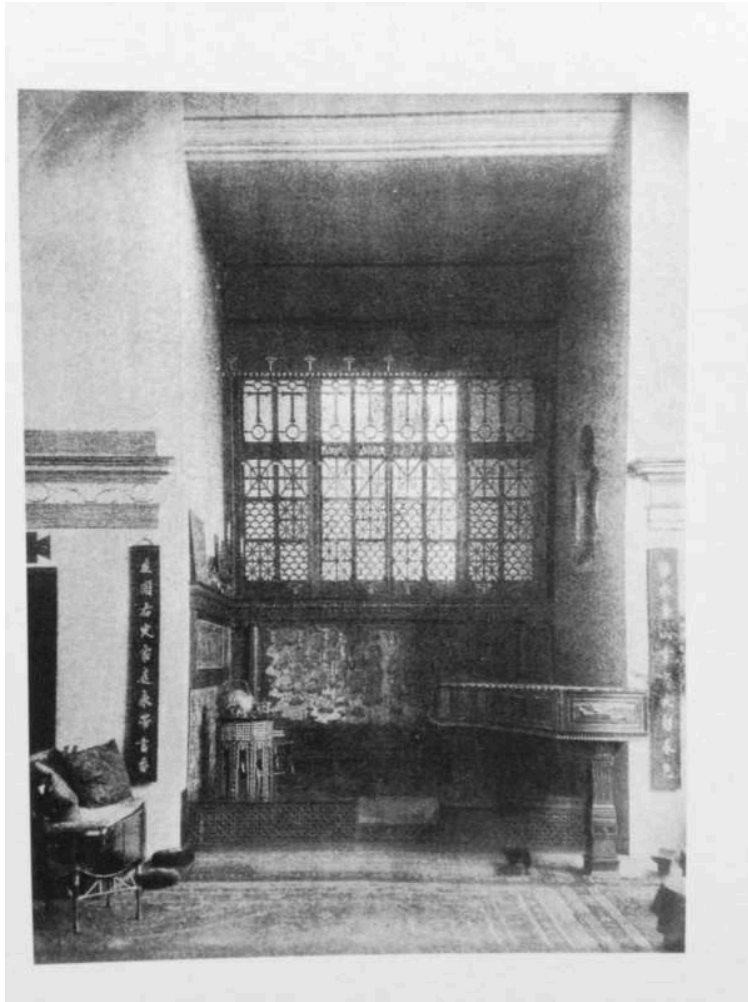


Figure 2.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema's studio alcove, 17 Grove End Road, reproduced in *The Architect*, 31 May 1889.

Without the title, there is no particular indication that the painting represents an artist's studio. Unlike the photographs of studio interiors that were proliferating in the illustrated magazines of the period (many of which are reproduced in the contributions to this group of articles and features in *British Art Studies*), there are no obvious signs of artistic work: no easels, palettes, or newly completed pictures on display for sale. This studio is clearly part of a house, the artist's domestic as well as working space, and an aspect of the painting's fascination is the sense of penetrating a secret or private enclave, "in my studio". It is true that photographs of the studio alcove, within which the scene is set, had already appeared in the press (Fig. 2). Someone who had visited the house might know that the alcove provided a platform for the distinguished musicians who played in the Alma-Tadema family's celebrated musical evenings, and that the Indian cloth conceals a piano, the leg of which emerges somewhat incongruously beneath the shimmering folds. If they knew the house well, they might guess that the

classically draped and coiffed figure has just emerged from the models' dressing room, accessed by a door immediately to the left of the scene we see. Magical as this environment appears, it is also a scrupulously exact record of a real London interior, as accurate in circumstantial detail as Alma-Tadema's archaeologically exact reconstructions of ancient interiors were reputed to be.

We begin with *In My Studio* because it adumbrates many of the ideas we wish to explore in this group of contributions on the artist's studio-house. Distinctive as the interior of a highly successful artist at the peak of Victorian prosperity and power, the scene also hints at the guises or roles that the studio-house might assume at any number of times and places: living space as well as workplace, experimental laboratory, spur to creativity, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*. No wonder, then, that this painting served as a key or signature image for the exhibition project and symposium that gave rise to this online publication.

The exhibition, *Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, was initiated by the Fries Museum in Leeuwarden, the capital of the Dutch province of Friesland, in the far north of the Netherlands, and Lawrence Alma-Tadema's home town. From its genesis in 2013, the project began to grow in scope and ambition under the guidance of the museum's head of collections, Frank van der Velden, and its curator, Marlies Stoter. They aimed to celebrate their local artist, but they also wanted to tell a new story about him. Thanks to a generous benefactor, the Fries Museum—Friesland's largest museum of art and history—had a brand-new building with glamorous cinema facilities; thus the staff were particularly interested in exploring the influence that Alma-Tadema's paintings were known to have had on depictions of antiquity in both European and Hollywood cinema, but which had never been properly researched. Alma-Tadema is best-known as “the archaeologist of artists”,⁴ the painter of scenes from ancient everyday life informed by new data from the vast archaeological excavations of the second half of the nineteenth century. This approach had been thoroughly explored in the first modern exhibition devoted to Alma-Tadema, organized by Edwin Becker, Elizabeth Prettejohn, and Julian Treuherz for the Van Gogh Museum (Amsterdam) and the Walker Art Gallery (Liverpool) in 1996–1997. While we did not wish to neglect that story in the new exhibition, we were also determined to avoid a simplistic presentation of Alma-Tadema's pictures as merely “Victorians in Togas”.

The Fries Museum had a distinctive angle on the subject: in 1935, it had received a bequest from Alma-Tadema's daughter, Laurence, which included numerous items from the family's two London studio-houses. That chimed with our own interests, as curators and art historians, in the artist's studio as an environment or laboratory for art-making. Once the museum had

engaged the two of us as guest curators, it became clear that our team needed a third guest curator familiar with the films and film-makers inspired by Alma-Tadema's "deep staging" and meticulous research of settings, costumes, and props: Ivo L. Blom, a film scholar at Amsterdam's Vrije Universiteit.

Thus, we started with germs of ideas that at first seemed rather random and oddly assorted. The investigation of the studio-houses also called attention to the artist's family. While it had always been known that Alma-Tadema's second wife, Laura Theresa Epps, was a practising artist in her own right, it was only with the rise of feminist art history that this started to seem important. Moreover, Alma-Tadema's younger daughter, Anna, as well as two of Laura's sisters and several cousins of Lawrence's, were also artists, while the elder daughter Laurence was a widely published author; with other friends, they were collaborators in creating the Alma-Tademas' studio-houses. From these disparate germs, some intriguing questions started to emerge. What if the studio-houses were not just signs of the wealth and success of the male artist, Lawrence Alma-Tadema? What if they could be described, more intriguingly, as collaborations between Laura and Lawrence Alma-Tadema that resulted not so much in luxury houses as in Total Works of Art—three-dimensional spaces for art-making and artistic experience? And what if it was such an approach to lived experience—being surrounded by, moving through, and living in an artistic space—that was inspirational for the creators of early cinema?

We had the sense, then, that there was a new story to tell—but how to realise it in the exhibition space? In fact we were soon working with three very different spaces, as plans developed for the exhibition's tour. It began in Leeuwarden in a purpose-built museum building just three years old (on view there 1 October 2016–7 February 2017), then travelled to the Belvedere, a Viennese royal palace of the early eighteenth century (23 February–18 June 2017). The final venue was a historic house, Leighton House Museum in London (7 July–29 October 2017). While this studio-house belonged not to the Alma-Tademas, but rather to their contemporary and friend Frederic Leighton, we felt that the exhibition had itself come home: the domestic scale and nineteenth-century interiors suited the works exhibited and the ideas about the artist's studio-house that we were exploring.

The exhibition came to an end in October 2017, yet the wider questions and issues it raised were beginning to display ramifications. That month, the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art generously hosted *Alma-Tadema: Antiquity at Home and on Screen*, a two-and-a-half-day symposium that allowed further discussion and debate, focused on the idea of the artist's studio-house. It was convened by the Centre's Deputy Director for Research, Dr Sarah Victoria Turner, and ourselves. On the first half-day (Thursday, 19 October 2017), we invited curators, scholars, and students to share their

research and ideas in an afternoon workshop. So many colleagues accepted our invitation that we were obliged to limit each speaker to a mere five minutes and one slide. The result was an exhilarating sequence of images and ideas that ranged far and wide, both intellectually and geographically. In this issue of *British Art Studies*, we aim to recapture the sense of discovery that made that workshop so exciting, and also to make the speakers' contributions available to wider audiences. We are delighted that twenty-four of our fellow workshop contributors have agreed to take part here in the form of a *Conversation Piece*.

The Paul Mellon Centre welcomed an even larger group the next day for a programme of nine talks by scholars from around the world. Launching that event was a plenary lecture by Prof. Christopher Reed (Pennsylvania State University) posing the question "What Do We Want from Artists' Houses?" In the afternoon, came a plenary lecture by Prof. Mary Roberts (University of Sydney) about the "resistant materiality" of Leighton's Arab Hall. Reed and Roberts have contributed extended essays on these topics for this issue of *British Art Studies*. The keynote papers served as ideal "bookends" for what proved to be a stimulating day of fresh research and spirited discussion, and so we are pleased to publish both of them in this issue. In addition, video recordings of all of the papers presented that Friday are available to [watch online](#). The symposium continued on Saturday, 21 October at the Birkbeck Institute for the Moving Image, where Ian Christie (Birkbeck) and Maria Wyke (University College London) convened a programme of eight papers focused on the theatre and film productions inspired by Alma-Tadema's vision. We are currently exploring opportunities to publish elsewhere the remaining papers delivered on 20 and 21 October, all of which would enhance the global dialogue which we hope this group of articles and features in *British Art Studies* will spark.

Readers may of course choose to read the twenty-six contributions here in any order they like, but we have arranged them in geographical sequence, starting in London and then moving farther afield. We have begun that ordering with the focus of the exhibition itself: the studio-houses of Laura and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, their family and friends. ⁵

The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses

As many of the contributions here demonstrate, the illustrated interviews with artists that proliferated in the later Victorian press provide the modern scholar with treasure troves of information about particular studio-houses, including images. More importantly, these articles document the centrality of the studio-house to art world customs, artistic practice, and the lives of artists. When Lawrence Alma-Tadema was interviewed at home in 1899, he explained how important his studio interiors were to his practice as an artist:

I have always found that the light and colour in a studio had a great influence upon me in my work. I first painted in a studio with panels of black decoration. Then in my studio in Brussels I was surrounded by bright red, and in London—at Townshend House, Regent's Park—I worked under the influence of a light green tint. During the winter I spent in Rome in 1875-76—when I was obliged to leave my London house by the destructive effect of the Regent's Canal explosion—I tried the effect of a white studio. Now, as you see, the prevailing hue is silvery white, and that, I think, best agrees with my present temperament, artistically speaking. ⁶

The convention in such interviews—dramatically unlike their equivalents today—was to avoid reference to the artist's personal life. Thus, the family was off-limits and Alma-Tadema speaks of himself alone, but that is misleading: from the start, the studio-houses were places for social interaction with family and friends, and there is abundant evidence that their design was a collaborative effort.

Thus, the story begins with Alma-Tadema's first wife, Marie Pauline Gressin Dumoulin de Boissard; on their honeymoon trip to Pompeii, in 1863, Alma-Tadema became fascinated by the everyday life, the domestic environments and household possessions, of the ancient Romans. When the couple moved to Brussels in 1865, they painted the studio walls red, the characteristic colour of Pompeian wall painting. The only record of the studio itself is a painting of Pauline with her mother and first daughter, Laurence, in the red interior ([Fig. 3](#)); Pauline is pregnant with the second daughter, Anna. However, the pictures Alma-Tadema painted there were obviously inspired by the frescoed interiors of Pompeii. Here there is a relatively straightforward relationship among the colour scheme of the paintings, the colour and light in the studio, and the historicism of the pictures as recreations of domestic life in Roman antiquity.



Figure 3.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *My Studio*, 1867, oil on panel, 42.1 x 54 cm. Collection of Groninger Museum, Groningen (1903.0002). Digital image courtesy of Groninger Museum.

Then tragedy struck: Pauline died in 1869. There was a total change of environment when Alma-Tadema moved to London with his two daughters and fell in love again, with the seventeen-year-old Laura Theresa Epps; they married in the summer of 1871. Together, Laura and Lawrence created not just a studio, as in Brussels, but a whole studio-house: Townshend House, at the north gate of Regent's Park. Laura's role in the design and decoration has been forgotten (until now) by art historians, but it was specifically acknowledged in early articles on the house.⁷

At Townshend House, there was a new colour key: a light silvery green. The impact of this colour-scheme on Alma-Tadema's paintings was striking: they are still set in Roman antiquity, but they abandon the Pompeian red, and with it the small-scale domestic interior—to go outdoors and upscale, or into public and urban spaces such as the Roman baths and Forum. The paintings were made in a studio that is now known only through illustrations, paintings, and photographs. In a painting by Laura's sister Emily Epps Williams, a view into Lawrence's studio (Fig. 4), up a short flight of steps, captures the sense of moving through the narrow corridor into the light space of the studio beyond. The wall and ceiling decorations of the studio, by the artist himself, were historicizing, based on Pompeian wall paintings, and the studio was adorned with numerous ancient artefacts.

Laura's studio was downstairs and it was composed of a sequence of compartments, opening one from the next and into the conservatory; its decorations were much wider-ranging than those of Lawrence's studio and included Japanese fans, Spanish leather, Dutch furniture and tiles, tatami matting, flowering trees and plants, a Roman fountain, Chinese lanterns, and an Indian grass hammock.⁸ Perhaps this should be described as a woman's space, where Laura's work as an artist and household manager intersected and interpenetrated with one another. That also made it architecturally innovative in its open plan and fluid movement through space.

It seems to have been Laura, too, who made a crucial breakthrough. Lawrence sometimes represented the house interiors as backdrops for portraits—see, for example, Fig. 5, in which he depicts his daughter Anna entering the library at Townshend House. As we have seen, the colour key



Figure 4.
Emily Epps Williams ,
The Studio,
Townshend House,
1883, oil on panel,
81.28 x 16.51 cm.
Collection of J.J.
Fitzpatrick. Digital
image courtesy of J.J.
Fitzpatrick.

and light effects of the house had an influence on the general appearance of his subject pictures, but the interiors were not actually represented in those pictures. In Laura's paintings, however, there is a new idea: the house interiors generate ideas for narrative scenes that take place within them. An example is the watercolour of 1881, *May I Come In?* (Fig. 6). The figure is in historical costume, so we are seeing an imaginary scene from the Dutch seventeenth century, but the interior is derived from Townshend House, the pale colours of which are evident in the tatami matting and the woodwork; a distinctive innovation was the practice of setting tall thin paintings into the vertical panels of the doors. Many of Laura's works display an interest in doorways and thresholds—liminal spaces, or spaces one moves through: these begin to develop ideas about movement *through* space that become increasingly important in the Alma-Tademas' later work.

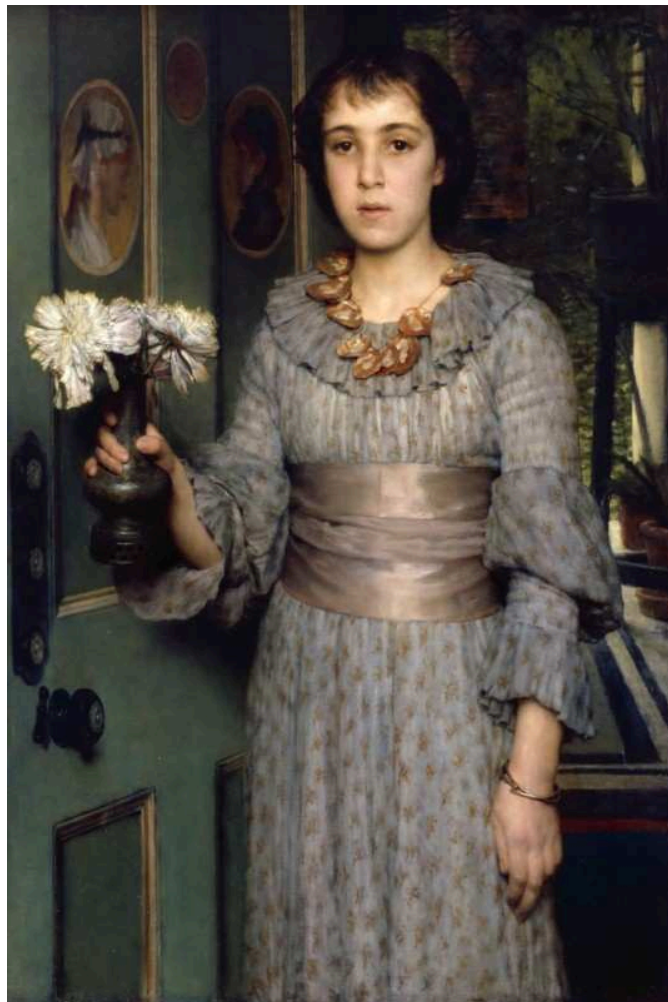


Figure 5.

Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *Miss Anna Alma-Tadema*, 1883, oil on canvas, 113 x 78.5 cm. Collection of Royal Academy of Arts, London (03.908). Digital image courtesy of Royal Academy of Arts, London.



Figure 6.

Laura Alma-Tadema , May I Come In?, 1881,
watercolour with pencil, gum arabic, and scratching out
on paper, 25.1 x 16.8 cm. Private collection, England.
Digital image courtesy of Private Collection.

The interiors were designed to provide vistas from room to room and to encourage movement from space to space, as seen in three extraordinary watercolours made by the teenaged Anna Alma-Tadema: of the study, the drawing room, and the magnificent “Gold Room” (Figs [7](#), [8](#), and [9](#)). In the Gold Room, for example, a double arched opening entices the visitor to cross the threshold, marked by a magnificent Chinese silk curtain and a bust of Antinous (probably a replica of an ancient object); beyond are a Byzantine-style piano and an earlier version of the Mexican onyx window that we have already seen in the alcove of *In My Studio*. This is not a period room: the profusion of objects emanates from a dizzying variety of historical and geographical origins.



Figure 7.

Anna Alma-Tadema, Interior of the Gold Room, Townshend House, ca. 1883, watercolour with scraping over graphite on paper, 53 x 35.9 cm. Collection of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri (81-30/86). Digital image courtesy of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art.



Figure 8.

Anna Alma-Tadema, Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's Study in Townshend House, London, 1884, brush and watercolour, pen and brown and black ink, graphite on paper, 33 × 45 cm. Thaw Collection, Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum, New York (2007-27-72). Digital image courtesy of Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.



Figure 9.

Anna Alma-Tadema, *The Drawing Room, Townshend House*, 1885, watercolour over pencil and pen and ink on card, 27.2 x 18.7 cm. Collection of Royal Academy of Arts, London (08/3530). Digital image courtesy of Royal Academy of Arts, London.

It is likely that Anna's watercolours and the tall thin panels representing Townshend House interiors, by Emily Williams and others, were made when the family already knew they were moving to another house. They commemorate the interiors that the family gave up, voluntarily, so they could create a new studio-house, with enhanced possibilities for the exploration of space, light, and movement: "Casa Tadema", as it soon became known, at 17 (now 44) Grove End Road, St John's Wood. Indeed the panels were given a space of their own, as though to embed the memory of the previous house in the new one. Their format derives from the idea of painting on door panels first tried at Townshend House, and also from the narrowness of Asian scroll paintings (the Alma-Tademas collected Asian artworks assiduously). The right panel seen in Laura's watercolour, *May I Come In?*, is by Alma-Tadema's artist-cousin Sientje Mesdag, who with her

husband Hendrik Willem Mesdag were also creating a studio-house in The Hague (now the Museum Mesdag). Sientje's panel and the white-painted settle with a black spherical ball-finial, seen to the left of the watercolour, were reinstalled in the Hall of Panels at Grove End Road (Fig. 10). Other artist-friends were asked to add to the array, which eventually numbered forty-five (seventeen of which we were able to trace for the exhibition; twenty-eight remain to be discovered). Thus the Hall of Panels, explored in Arnika Groenewald-Schmidt's contribution to the Conversation Piece, embeds the memory of an entire circle of working artist-friends.



Figure 10.

Rudolph De Cordova, *The Hall of Panels*, 1902, in "The Panels in Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's Hall" by Rudolph De Cordova, *The Strand Magazine* (December 1902): 615.



Figure 11.

Chair, adorned with the intermingled initials “LAT” and “LTAT”, after 1886, wood and cane, 83 x 43.5 cm. Private Collection, England.

Even more than the first studio-house, Casa Tadema was “signed” all over, and in various ways, by the artist-couple who created it—including by inserting their initials on every conceivable surface throughout the house and garden. Previous scholars have often noticed the initials—“LAT”—and commented on how insistently they inscribe the identity of “Lawrence Alma-Tadema” on the surfaces of the house. Amazingly, no one noticed (until now) that “Laura Alma-Tadema” had the same initials: visitors who deciphered the initials were seeing *both* artists, intertwined (Fig. 11). The garden, inherited from the previous owner of the house, James Tissot, was also a space for art-making; both Tissot and Alma-Tadema took inspiration from their gardens in creating paintings, much as Claude Monet would do at Giverny from 1890 onwards. For insights on the similarities and distinctions between Alma-

Tadema and Tissot (both of these émigré artists were trained in Antwerp), see the contributions from Melissa Buron, Krystyna Matyjaszkiewicz, and Charles Martindale.

There may have been four artist's studios in Casa Tadema: studios for Anna Alma-Tadema and Emily Williams, by then widowed, as well as the two better documented studios of Lawrence and Laura. His studio was a double-height space reminiscent of a Byzantine basilica or a Roman bath, with round vaults and a semi-dome clad in shimmering aluminium (Figs [12](#) and [13](#)); hers, a recreated Dutch interior or perhaps more like an antique shop filled with historic panelling, glass, furniture, and bric-a-brac (Figs [14](#) and [15](#)). In this studio, Laura painted her fascinating responses to the Dutch seventeenth-century artist Johannes Vermeer—an artist just being “rediscovered” in her generation; Laura was one of the first to explore his art through her own work.

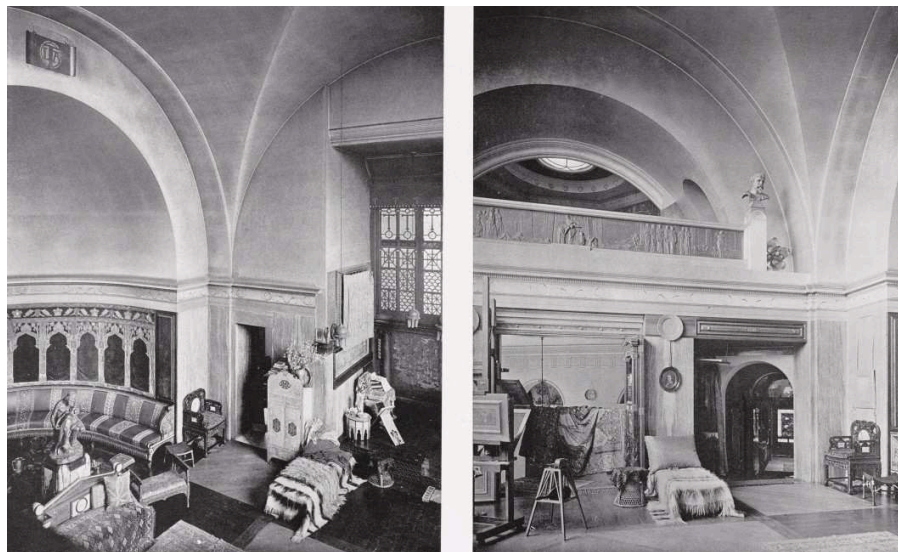


Figure 12.

“The Studio from the Balcony” and “The Studio” from Rudolf Dircks, “The Later Work of Sir L. Alma-Tadema O.M., R.A., R.W.S.”, in *The Art Annual* (supplement to *The Art-Journal*), London, 1910. Collection of University of Amsterdam, Bijzondere Collection (UBM: Z 1101). Digital image courtesy of University of Amsterdam,.



Figure 13.

Nicolaas van der Waay, Lawrence Alma-Tadema's Studio at 17, Grove End Road, ca. 1890-1891, brush and grey ink, grey wash, heightened with white on paper, 25 x 35 cm. Collection of Museum of Friesland, Leeuwarden (PTII-1482). Digital image courtesy of Museum of Friesland, Leeuwarden / Collection Het Koninklijk Fries Genootschap / Conserved with support of the Wassenbergh-Clarijs-Fontein Foundation.



Figure 14.

Laura Alma-Tadema's Studio at 17, Grove End Road, *The Architect*, 31 May 1889.



Figure 15.

Nicolaas van der Waay, *The Studio of Mrs Laura Alma Tadema (with view to the boudoir)*, ca. 1890–1891, brush and grey ink, grey wash, heightened with white on paper, 38 x 25.5 cm. Collection of Museum of Friesland, Leeuwarden (PTII-1485). Digital image courtesy of Museum of Friesland, Leeuwarden / Collection Het Koninklijk Fries Genootschap / Conserved with support of the Wassenbergh-Clarijs-Fontein Foundation.

Now, and apparently under Laura’s influence, Alma-Tadema was beginning to use the spaces of the house, not merely as backdrops, but to generate ideas for composition, lighting, movement through space, and dramatic action in his pictures—the “look” that would have such an influence on the development of cinema. In views of the new studio can be seen the sheen of the semi-dome, as well as the different levels and light sources that create views and vistas, constantly changing as the visitor moves around them.

That brings us back to the painting with which we began: *In My Studio*, which shows a corner of the studio space quite literally. The Mexican onyx window has been transported from the Gold Room at Townshend House and enlarged to suit its new surroundings; the piano from the Gold Room is under the gold-embroidered textile. This painting also moves the story beyond the Alma-Tadema household. Alma-Tadema gave *In My Studio* to Frederic Leighton in return for Leighton's contribution to his Hall of Panels, a tall, thin composition with a subject both classical and romantic: Psyche preparing to take her bath in Cupid's palace (Fig. 16).⁹ The paintings exchanged by Leighton and Alma-Tadema are records of a friendship and of a shared interest in classical antiquity. They were also embedded concretely in the artists' studio-houses. Leighton's *Bath of Psyche* became part of the physical fabric of Casa Tadema, while the corner of Alma-Tadema's studio, represented in his painting, was transported into Leighton's house, where it can be seen in photographs of Leighton's Silk Room (Fig. 17).



Figure 16. Frederic Leighton, *The Bath of Psyche*, ca. 1887, oil on canvas, 81.3 x 16.5 cm. Collection of Ann and Gordon Getty. Digital image courtesy of Ann and Gordon Getty.



Figure 17.

Frederic Leighton's Silk Room with, *In My Studio*, hanging above the sofa's right arm

The Studio-House in Wider Perspectives

Research into the Alma-Tadema studio-houses could expand almost infinitely. Not only are there abundant visual records and verbal accounts of the houses and the life within them; their interiors influenced works of art in a variety of media by the Alma-Tadema family and many other artists. The 1913 sale catalogue enumerates 1,511 objects from the house, many of which have fascinating stories of their own. By drilling deep, research on artists' studio-houses (the Alma-Tademas' and others) can reveal a great deal about taste-making, collecting, artists' lives, and of course studio practice, including the roles of models and assistants; for example, an article published just last year by Lara Perry examined the census records for twenty-one artistic London households ranging in date from 1861 to 1901.¹⁰ Perhaps it should not surprise us that Laura Alma-Tadema was never described as an artist in the census, despite the fact that she was conducting a successful career from the same address as her more famous husband.

One key inspiration for our project was the exhibition curated in 2013–2014 by Margot Th. Brandlhuber at another of the great studio-houses of the late nineteenth century, that of Franz von Stuck in Munich.¹¹ Her show centred on the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, using twenty different sites in Europe,

the USA, and North Africa as examples of this international phenomenon. Explored alongside the Villa Stuck were Casa Tadema and Leighton House, as well as the studio-houses of such disparate figures as John Soane, Claude Monet, Gustave Moreau, Fernand Khnopff, Kurt Schwitters, and Georgia O’Keeffe. In the catalogue that accompanied *In the Temple of the Self: The Artist’s Residence as a Total Work of Art*, Brandlhuber and her fellow contributors address a range of issues that shed light on the Alma-Tademas’ homes. One key feature is cosmopolitanism: through their extensive travels, wide-ranging artworld contacts, and close reading of art periodicals distributed internationally, the Alma-Tademas knew exactly how other leading artists were designing and promoting their studio-homes throughout the Western world. The competition for prestige, and thus sales, among Europe’s leading artists was fierce, so it made sense that such figures as Hans Makart (Vienna) and Mihály Munkácsy (Paris) created luxurious studio-houses exhaustively covered in the press and visited by the “right” people. Lawrence caught the bug quite young, in fact: the *Conversation Piece* contains a contribution by Jan Dirk Baetens documenting the Dutchman’s first-hand experience in the 1850s and early 1860s with the extraordinary studio-house of his teacher in Antwerp, the history painter Henri Leys. Even less opulent sites attracted attention, including the Paris houses of Eugène Delacroix and Ary Scheffer (the latter is now the Musée de la Vie Romantique). Another contributor here is Caroline van Eck, who explains how the fading painter Antoine Wiertz managed to receive, from the Belgian government, a large house and studio in Brussels in which to live and work.

Brandlhuber highlights another crucial aspect of the leading studio-houses—their suitability for seeing and being seen. Particularly apposite is a description of Gabriele d’Annunzio’s famous house overlooking Lake Garda, the *Vittoriale degli italiani*, which he occupied from 1922 until his death in 1938. (The writer openly admired Lawrence Alma-Tadema, particularly in the 1880s and 1890s).¹² The scholar Jens Malte Fischer observed that a visitor to this extraordinary villa:

moves like a flaneur on the “stage”, perambulating different styles, periods, cultural spheres and military events ... bombarded with ever-changing impressions, he turns into the actual performer who moves in shifting reflections and positions around this total work of art, thereby becoming part of it.¹³

Quite rightly, scholars have long emphasized the performative aspect of the leading artist—such as Lawrence Alma-Tadema or Frederic Leighton—welcoming rich and influential guests to his studio-house to admire the art, often accompanied by an entertainment or meal. Yet perhaps too little scholarly attention has been paid to the way such visits made the

visitor feel, to how he or she might have behaved differently in this setting towards the host, other visitors, or the “outside” world after returning home. Fortunately, many accounts of visits to Townshend House and Casa Tadema exist in both published articles and private correspondence, yet these have not been systematically examined and would surely reward such an effort. Taking such an approach would also enhance our understanding of how the Alma-Tademas’ immersive decors—not just their immersive artworks—inspired leading theatre artists (and ultimately film-makers) to “borrow” their *mises en scène*.

Cosmopolitan as they were, the Alma-Tademas were completely invested in the lively world of British contemporary art centred on London. Thus, at least ten of the twenty-six contributions in this group of articles and features highlight aspects of London studio-house life, ranging from the expected (e.g., Tissot, Leighton, Rossetti) to the surprising (J.M.W. Turner, William Goscombe John, Briton Riviere). We are especially pleased that Jo Banham focused her attention on a mysterious watercolour by Dewey Bates, showing a notably self-possessed woman admiring a portrait that may well depict herself; such an image underscores the agency of the female eye that must have been so palpable in the Alma-Tademas’ homes. Here, Banham notes, “his sitter is the social equal—perhaps the superior—of the artist, her face is turned away, and it is she who is engaged in looking at—maybe judging—the artist’s skills.” ¹⁴

Finally, it is a sign of how robust studio-house scholarship is today that this issue contains two pieces pointing clearly towards the future. Daniel Robbins, Senior Curator at Leighton House Museum, brings us up-to-date on an imminent redevelopment scheme that will allow that institution to serve and educate visitors and researchers even more effectively. The significance of Leighton House as a rare survival of a leading artist’s vision is underscored by Mary Roberts’ investigation of its Arab Hall, and now we are excited to imagine other topics that will be explored once the museum facility has been improved. Ranging beyond England, Nicholas Tromans (until recently, Curator at the Watts Gallery in Surrey) introduces the Artist’s Studio Museum Network, which now encompasses more than 150 European single-artist museums. ¹⁵ Many of these sites are enjoying growing audiences not only because the artists highlighted there were talented, but also because the public increasingly values their special status as places where creativity happened. In our era of logo-emblazoned mediocrity, ever more people yearn to encounter authenticity and the making of art by hand, to enhance their own life experience by standing where a unique individual conceived and executed artworks that continue to inspire today’s artists and audiences. Encouragingly, the European network now has a counterpart in the United States—Historic Artists’ Homes and Studios. ¹⁶ Already the members of these

organizations are sharing their research, strategies, and collection highlights. We hope that the papers published here will inspire further collaboration in this rapidly evolving area of both art history and the museum profession.

Footnotes

- 1 No. 1238 in Hampton & Sons, *Catalogue of the well-known and interesting collection of Antique Furniture and Objets d'Art formed by the Late Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, O.M., R.A.*, 1913. We are grateful to Charlotte Gere for noting the cloth's similarity to Indian objects on display at the V&A and therefore likely to be familiar to the audiences of the period. For the identification of this and other objects, see the entry on the painting by Julian Treuherz in Edwin Becker and others, *Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema*, exhibition catalogue (Amsterdam: Van Gogh Museum and Liverpool: Walker Art Gallery, 1996), 250.
- 2 The bowl with blue rim and gold centre, at top right, is actually a copy of a Byzantine object (no. 178 in Hampton & Sons, *Catalogue*).
- 3 Both Théophile Gautier's short story, "Arria Marcella: Souvenir de Pompéi" (1852) and Wilhelm Jensen's novel *Gradiva* (1902) revolve around the modern reappearance (real or imagined) of a female figure from ancient Pompeii. Freud analysed Jensen's story, inspired by a bas-relief of a striding female figure, in his famous essay "Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's *Gradiva*" (first published in German as "Der Wahn und die Traüme in W. Jensen's *Gradiva*", 1907).
- 4 The phrase was widely used; see, for example, Georg Ebers, *Lorenz Alma-Tadema: His Life and Works*, trans. Mary J. Safford (New York: W.S. Gottsberger, 1886), 33; and "The Archaeologist of Artists", *The Nation* (New York), 16 September 1886, 237-238.
- 5 For a fuller account, see Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi (eds.), *Lawrence Alma-Tadema: At Home in Antiquity*, exhibition catalogue (Munich: Prestel, 2016).
- 6 Frederick Dolman, "Illustrated Interviews: LXVIII Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema", *Strand Magazine* 18 (1899): 612.
- 7 See, for example, Wilfrid Meynell, "Mr. Alma-Tadema Seven Years Ago and Now", *Magazine of Art* 4 (1881): 95.
- 8 See Mrs [Mary Eliza] Haweis, *Beautiful Houses; Being a Description of Certain Well-Known Artistic Houses* (New York: Scribner & Welford, 1882), 24-25.
- 9 The format of the panels in the Alma-Tademas' Hall was, then, the origin of one of Leighton's most famous compositions, *The Bath of Psyche*, later executed at large scale and now in the Tate collection.
- 10 Lara Perry, "The Artist's Household: On Gender and the Division of Artistic and Domestic Labour in Nineteenth-Century London", *Third Text* 31, no. 1 (2017): 15-29.
- 11 Margot Th. Brandlhuber and Michael Buhrs (eds.), *In the Temple of the Self: The Artist's Residence as a Total Work of Art, Europe and America 1800-1948* (Munich: Villa Stuck/Hatje Cantz, 2013).
- 12 Giuliana Pieri, "D'Annunzio and Alma-Tadema: Between Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism", *Modern Language Review* 96, no. 2 (April 2001): 361-369.
- 13 Jens Malte Fischer, *Richard Wagner und seine Wirkung* (Vienna: Zsolnay Verlag, 2013), cited in Brandlhuber and Buhrs, *In the Temple of the Self*, 10.
- 14 Jo Banham, "The Studio and Bohemia", in Elizabeth Prettejohn and Peter Trippi, "Laboratories of Creativity: The Alma-Tademas' Studio-Houses and Beyond", *British Art Studies* 9, doi:[10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/conversation](https://doi.org/10.17658/issn.2058-5462/issue-09/conversation) .
- 15 See Artist's Studio Museum Network, <http://artiststudiomuseum.org>.
- 16 See the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios program (HAHS), <https://artistshomes.org>.

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