The Holland Park Circle
ARTISTS AND VICTORIAN SOCIETY

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Howard, Webb and 1 Palace Green

'No more exceptional or attractive young couple gathered about them in those days a more varied company of talents and distinctions whether in art, literature or politics.' Thus Sidney Colvin described George and Rosalind Howard (fig. 39). Theirs was a twenty-five-year partnership of art appreciation and collecting, which ended only with the breakdown of their marriage in the late 1880s.

Though 1 Palace Green was built for the heir to an earldom, Howard's involvement in contemporary art, as both painter and patron, determined its appearance inside and out. In November 1867, his painting Emilia was hung at the Dudley Gallery. The Dudley had held its first spring watercolour exhibition in 1865; it was 'a welcome exhibiting space for amateurs who were not members of either of the well-established watercolour societies, or known at the Royal Academy'. When Emilia was sold (for a modest £25), Howard was in a position to give the money 'to the distress in East London', but Rosalind also noted the significance of the Dudley's recognition (Poynter was on the selection committee, also Tom Taylor) and the sale. She commented, 'I am glad G. has sold Emilia & now he is no longer a mere amateur, for better or worse he has taken his stand amongst the artists'.

The desire of both Howard and Webb to create a modern house which challenged the conventions of the day was tested, even before the foundations were dug, in a battle between Webb and the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. The Commissioners were bitterly opposed to Webb's plan for the red-brick house. (Howard described the Commissioner Sir Charles Gore to his sister-in-law Blanche as 'a man devoid of taste in art'). Webb's design was completely different to the conservative red-brick Queen Anne style mansion which they had allowed Thackeray to build. They were supported by the establishment architects Thomas Henry Wyatt and Anthony Salvin whom they appointed to report on the proposal.

Though Webb explained to Howard, 'I had endeavoured to keep the artistic impression of the Palace neighbourhood always in mind subject always to the necessity of a modern difference', neither the Commissioners nor their architectural advisers agreed. Sir James Pennethorne found the house 'far inferior to any one on the Estate - it would look most common place - and in my opinion [would] be perfectly hideous'. Just about everything was wrong with the tall, severe-looking four-floored house.

We are unable to discover what style or period of architecture Mr Webb has sought to adopt. We think the combination of square, circular and segmental forms for the windows and pointed arches for the doors and recesses, unusual and objectionable.... We think the pilasters on the upper storey and on the chimney stacks rising from a projecting string course
39. George and Rosalind Howard.

are not satisfactory. They are thin and poor. . . . We regret the necessity . . . of so large a mass of brickwork without any relief of colour or stone work on its surface.

Webb was forced to defend his professional standing as an architect as well as his design and the materials he proposed using:

it is not customary for an architect to be forced to explain to a gentleman of the same profession what he may consider to be the merits of his own work. . . . A well chosen full coloured red brick, with pure bright red gauged brick mouldings, arches, string courses, cornices &c with the addition of white Portland stone, white sash frames, lead, and grey slates are in my opinion the very best and most harmoniously coloured materials . . . more especially in a neighbourhood so happily full of green foliage.

Webb also attacked the 'disgraceful heterogeneous forms and colours' of the houses which the Commissioners had permitted to be built in Palace Gardens.

I must express my great surprise that you should consider it worthwhile to hinder the erection of a building which — whatever may be its demerits — possesses some character and originality, tempered most certainly with reverential attention to the works of acknowledged masters of the art of architecture and as certainly formed with a wish to avoid adding another insult to this irreparably injured neighbourhood.
The Commissioners relented only after many months of wrangling, Webb finally agreeing to redesign the gable, add more Portland stone dressings and replace the parapet with a cornice. Work began in June 1868, the estimate having risen to £8,806.

Close to Kensington Palace, commissioned by a young aristocratic couple, towering above the neighbouring houses, 1 Palace Green was bound to attract attention (fig. 40). The use of red brick alone contributed to the increasing popularity of the material for town houses and to the reaction against Italianate stucco. It also contributed, together with the red-brick houses of Thackeray and Prinsep, to a wider movement, the development of the new so-called 'Queen Anne style' described by Mark Girouard:

‘Queen Anne’ came with red brick and white-painted sash windows, with curly pedimented gables and delicate brick panels of sunflowers, swags, or cherubs, with small window panes, steep roofs, and curving bay windows, with wooden balconies and little fancy orielss jutting out where one would least expect them. It was a kind of architectural cocktail, with a little genuine Queen Anne in it, a little Dutch, a little Flemish, a squeeze of Robert Adam, a generous dash of Wren, and a touch of François Ier.10

It was a style which would dominate the artists’ houses to be built in Melbury Road in the 1870s.

WR. Lethaby, Webb’s enthusiastic pupil, described his master’s work at 1 Palace Green as exhibiting ‘design at once sane and ornamental, the house astonishes me. In our modern way of work nothing so good is to be expected again, for we are not likely to get another man of Webb’s power working with his intensity of conviction.’11

The site was occupied by an old grace-and-favour house which had to be demolished. Georgiana Burne-Jones wrote to Rosalind on 5 July 1868 that she was ‘glad to...
see the old house on your piece of ground quite gone – may we soon see its successor'. By December the new house had reached the ground floor. The Howards sold more of their investments to pay for the building in February 1869; on 5 March Rosalind 'climbed up a ladder to the 2nd floor. It looks quite enchanting – such a charming view from the drawing room of Kensington Palace.' The following month she had an argument with Webb about the window frames 'wch I am not yet converted into liking rather than plate glass'.

On 24 November the Howards were able to show some of their artist friends over all of the house: 'Rossetti admired the house very much'. In December 1869 Howard wrote to his father: 'The house is well on and dry, ready to receive our goods now and us at Christmas. We go there this afternoon to meet Webb and settle about various details – and the painting of the woodwork.' They could begin to entertain the following year.

The Howards began to acquire paintings and drawings while 1 Palace Green was still on Webb’s drawing-board, always from artists whom they knew. The final internal appearance of the house not only reflected their taste but also revealed the friendships which they developed with artists over the period of time it was being built. While living in Kensington, the Howards’ circle quickly extended beyond the artists and writers they had first met at Little Holland House. Howard’s determination to be accepted as a professional artist was taken seriously by the friends who gave him lessons and encouragement. He would have hoped those who regularly attended his ‘bachelor’ parties – Burne-Jones, Morris, Rossetti, Poynter, Crane, Boyce, Leighton, Legros, Prinsep, Armstrong, Spencer Stanhope – regarded him as their equal rather than their patron.

At the same time, he and Rosalind frequently invited a slightly different list which included women: Browning and his sister Sariana, Matthew Arnold and his wife, Anne Thackeray Ritchie and her husband, Hunt and his second wife. They became particularly close to the Burne-Joneses and, to a slightly lesser degree, the Morrises and the Poynters.

Rosalind did not care for Janey Morris on their first meeting in January 1868: ‘she has a fine head with remarkable eyes but is an invalid & seems uninteresting & does not talk enthusiastically on any of Morris’ topics of interest’. Further acquaintance revealed to Rosalind the difficulties within the Morrices’ marriage, and the tortured relationship between Janey and Rossetti. The Howards entertained Morris, Burne-Jones and their families (also Leighton) at Naworth Castle in Cumbria (the first occasion in 1874), which was available for their use before they inherited it in 1880; Janey and her daughters also stayed at their villa in Italy.

Entries in Rosalind’s diary and letters to both her and Howard reveal how much the artists, their wives and children were involved in each other’s lives. Rosalind’s domain centres on the artists’ wives and children: a day in December 1867 is typical. While Howard takes his oil-painting lesson with Legros, Rosalind takes Agnes Poynter for a drive, returns to collect her husband and carries both to the Burne-Joneses in Fulham. Then the Poynters and the Burne-Joneses are whisked away to Legros’ studio, where they together proceed to look at ‘all G’s & Legros’ pictures’. A New Year’s Eve party at Palace Green, in 1875, brings together Rosalind’s mother, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces with the families of the Burne-Joneses, Poynters, Cranes and Morrices, also Rudyard Kipling, nephew of Georgiana Burne-Jones and Agnes Poynter.
When the Howards were away on their annual visits to Italy, their artist friends kept them informed as to their activities in London. A letter from Burne-Jones, written to Howard in about 1878, is typical:

This is Sunday - to breakfast came Morris, fresh from the laurels of a successful lecture last night, then came Crane & then [Sidney] Colvin and then to lunch the 2 Grosvenors [Dick and Norman] & [Lord] Stanhope & Balfour, & in the after they and many new callers made a garden party, then I went to see Crane’s picture - a really beautiful one & full of delight and one I could praise so naturally & fully.... [Spencer] Stanhope has been ill for a week & cant send his picture ... Watts’ horse’s legs are off [his sculpture], & the body cut in two to be made grander - Leighton has been very pretty to me about sending to Paris (but he’s wicked in heart & longs for blood & war & sings Rule Britannia)18

When Rosalind visited the studio of Edwin Long (who had painted her portrait before she was married) and Millais in April 1868 she was quite clear about the sort of art she valued:

It is unfortunate that english artists [i.e. Long] waste so much work & fair ability by choosing wrong subjects. They seem to have no idea of what the real aim of art is, that is beauty & they try instead to amuse the public ... [Millais’ work was] all very second rate & disappointing ... how very much more he might have done had he not allowed himself to degenerate.19

After visiting the Royal Academy exhibition six weeks later (she had a baby in between), she wrote in her diary: ‘I had seen most of the pictures in the studios - but had not seen Walker’s Gypseys or Mason’s Singing girls nor Moore’s Azalias in all the celebrated rubbish of the year of the O’Neil & Frith class - Legros’ refectory looks splendid also Leighton’s Jonathan.’ 20

The Royal Academy exhibition the following year elicited similar responses: the same artists were singled out for notice and praise:

G[eorge] & I went to the Academy at 9 a.m. & spent 2 hours there very enjoyably. The new rooms are very fine & make all the good pictures look much finer for having plenty of room - Legros Christening is the finest thing there. Walker’s Old Gate & Mason’s girls dancing are lovely pictures - Watts Orpheus is very beautiful - Leighton’s Electra looks best in the Academy - several good landscapes by Frenchmen ... Moore’s ‘Quartet’ & his Venus have great loveliness of a more delicate nature than anything else in the Gallery.

The ‘great many’ costume pictures of the St John’s Wood Clique were noticed, and Calderon’s Sighing to his Lady’s Face received faint praise: ‘a really pretty picture ... but not with any great force in it’.21 However the Howards, in common with the Airlies, the Wyndhams, the Lothians and all the other aristocrats who hovered around Little Holland House, do not appear to have bought work by the St John’s Wood Clique, nor by any of the artists who moved to Holland Park in the mid-1870s whose allegiance was to the Academy – Luke Fildes, Marcus Stone, Colin Hunter. For these aristocrats beauty always came before ‘what amuses the public’.

The Howards were on first name terms with the Burne-Joneses (figs 41, 42) by the summer of 1867, Burne-Jones addressing Howard as ‘Dearest George’ (‘Are you coming on Wednesday to work – all is ready for you to come’):22 Georgiana writing to his wife as ‘My dearest Rosalind’ (‘I am very glad to call you by your pretty name’).23 Howard studied drawing with Burne-Jones, sharing his models Alessandro de Marco
and Colorossi. He also appears to have drawn Rossetti's model and mistress Fanny Cornforth. He bought his first Burne-Jones painting, a landscape, for £6 10s. at the sale of the lawyer Anderson Rose; he commissioned Poynter to paint Georgiana for £42 and Legros to paint Burne-Jones, also for £42; he sat for Burne-Jones' painting of Theophilus. These were only the beginning of many more commissions, including the decoration of the dining-room of 1 Palace Green.

In August 1867, however, the Burne-Joneses heard they would have to move from Kensington Square: the new owner was refusing to extend their lease. They limited their house-hunting to the immediate area, Georgiana claiming the Howards were part of the reason: 'we are very anxious not to leave this neighbourhood . . . I am sure you will believe that one of our chief reasons for wishing to remain in this neighbourhood is that we may not lose sight of you at all . . . You have become part of our lives now.'

Robert Martineau (Hunt's former lodger) found a possible property: the Grange, North End Lane, Fulham. The rent was 'a third more than we had yet paid, rates were
high in Fulham, and the house was bigger than we needed'; however, the house could be subdivided (it was originally two), the garden was large, about three-quarters of an acre, with an orchard of apple trees, peaches against the walls and an old mulberry tree. Even in November, once they moved in, 'we found late-blooming monthly roses and a hedge of lavender, whose sweet scent and soft pink and grey colour are inseparably connected in memory with the place and time'. There were further attractions: it had been the home of Samuel Richardson and was some 150 years old; there was a large room on the first floor with east light which would make a suitable studio; also it was 'about a mile up the high road here — so we shall not go out of speaking distance after all'.

Burne-Jones compared it to the ancestral properties his friend would inherit:

'I have just seen the house we have taken, and it is too grand and large and splendid for us: we have no right to such a place... the studio is convenient and that conscientiously was the only reason for taking the house: for those 2 months hunting I never once saw a room so good as the one I now have except this one only... but I am frightened. It reminds me a good deal of Castle Howard — I should say rather it had the scale of that mansion combined with the more sympathetic aspect of Naworth: it is called the Grange, not moated however... there is a madhouse next door which is convenient, for I hate distant removes.'

Georgiana looked forward to the time when the Howards would finally move into their new house, when they would 'really come to be our neighbours'. She would 'make light of the distance between the two houses and hope for many a pleasant talk with you [Rosalind] and sight of you then'.

Meanwhile the Howards found themselves caught up in the painful affair between Burne-Jones and Maria Zambaco, niece of Watts' patron Alexander Ionides, which culminated in a public struggle between the two lovers on the Regent's Canal. Howard was probably introduced to members of the Ionides family by Burne-Jones; he visited their houses at least twice while Palace Green was being built and met Maria, whose portrait Burne-Jones had been commissioned to paint. If Howard had any idea that Maria and Burne-Jones were lovers during the course of their affair, he did not tell Rosalind. When she discovered the truth, in the New Year of 1869, she was horrified by 'the awful & deliberate treachery of Mme Z making use of Georgy a whole year & professing such friendship'.

Georgiana’s willingness to forgive Burne-Jones, even accepting she was partly to blame, amazed Rosalind, who could only marvel at her fortitude. Rosalind recorded Georgiana’s explanation: 'she lacked knowledge of the world & her own guilelessness & strong principle made her trust to others when she should not... she still won’t admit that Mm Z was deceitful as for E.B.J. she says he takes all the blame on himself & says Mm Z is innocence & truthfulness itself.' Georgiana was convinced ‘there is love enough between Edward & me to last out a long life if it is given us’. No wonder Rosalind could write of her: 'she is a good brave woman with such a sad sad story — Her love is the deepest I ever met with'.

The Burne-Joneses were not the only couple known to the Howards experiencing marital difficulties. The relationship between Janey Morris and Rossetti was beginning to threaten the Morrises’ marriage, and Morris was himself falling in love with Georgiana Burne-Jones. Perhaps these crises coloured Rosalind’s view of the artistic profession. In May 1869 she made a long entry in her diary, expressing grave doubts about her husband’s chosen calling:
This aftn I feel very dejected & I am afraid I have dispirited poor George. It is about his art. 
. . . I think he is getting on but I don’t know that he will ever be a really first rate painter & 
yet I see that daily he is becoming more entirely engrossed by painting. He thinks & talks of 
nothing else now. He seems to care less about politics. All the friends he seeks out & cares to 
talk to if they are not artists are people who care to talk art. . . . if I hint . . . at the study of 
some subject wch will be useful & important to him in late life when he has estates he says 
it is uninteresting & has nothing to do with art & that he must devote himself to one thing.35

Rosalind’s doubts about her husband’s talents, or her awakening to the true nature 
of her friends’ marriages, did not diminish her fondness for the Burne-Joneses or the 
Morrises. It undoubtedly strengthened her friendship with Georgiana Burne-Jones, 
who wrote to her in 1871: ‘I am very glad I came to know you when I did, for if it 
had been left till now I am sure it would never have come to pass – your life is so much 
more occupied than it was, and I am twice as indisposed to make new friends as I was 
then.’36 Perhaps her exposure to artistic infidelities provided her with the fortitude to 
bear Howard’s own infidelity with her sister-in-law Maisie Stanley (Lady Sheffield). 
She, on the other hand, was able to reject the overtures of the philanderer Wilfrid 
Scawen Blunt who tried to make love to her soon after Palace Green was completed.

When the Studio described the interior of Palace Green in October 1898, the 
original ideas of the Howards, Webb, Burne-Jones and Morris had been achieved; 
the collection of paintings, furniture and furnishings was complete.

Compared with the average Park Lane palace it looks severe and simple; but it is 
pre-eminently an artist’s home, which not only genius has enriched, but good taste has con-
trolled. . . . Even its good taste is not unduly evident, but becomes the more apparent the 
more closely you observe it. By thus avoiding emphasis of all kinds, the treasures it holds 
seem but ordinary fittings, until more curious inspection shows many of them to be unique 
masterpieces. The majority of these are modern – a singularly pleasing exception to the aver-
age ‘palace’ of to-day, which, if it holds masterpieces of any kind, is singularly careful that they 
shall be of goodly age, hall-marked as it were with official approval of their sterling value.37

The extraordinary collaboration between architect, artists and client lasted until early 
in the 1880s, when Howard inherited Naworth Castle and estate in Cumberland and 
saw a dramatic rise in his annual income to £18,000. Before 1880, the Howards’ 
income was about £3,000, interest had to be paid on the loan taken out to build 
the house, and the amount of work which could be undertaken each year was 
limited. The schoolroom which Webb added in 1874, cost £1,627 8s. 9d. in builders’ 
fees alone.

From the first year of their marriage, the Howards chose to spend a large part 
of their income every year (apart from 1870 when the Franco-Prussian War made 
European travel difficult) travelling to Italy and living there between three and seven 
months. As their family grew, they were obliged to take more servants, so the costs rose 
proportionately (fig. 43). In 1865–6, for example, their seven-month visit cost only 
£577; they had one small baby. In 1877–8, the same visit cost almost £1,000 but they 
travelled with seven children and at least six servants. Abroad and in London Rosalind 
indulged her passion for collecting furniture, Eastern carpets and rugs, exquisite 
Palampores from the Coramandel coast of South India and oriental ceramics. She also 
purchased Arts and Crafts pottery from Morris, Marshall & Faulkner (Morris and 
Company from 1875), William De Morgan and Liberty’s.38

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The most remarkable decorations were in the dining-room of 1 Palace Green (fig. 44), but they were not completed until the early 1880s, by which time the roses Webb had planted in the garden were well established, and creepers grew up the red walls.

Burne-Jones first offered on 16 November 1869 to paint a frieze illustrating the story of Cupid and Psyche (fig. 45) (based on the version in Morris's Earthly Paradise of 1868-70), to be executed on twelve canvases around the walls. Two years later the Howards bought the canvases he required, at a cost of £21 and he began work in his studio at the Grange. The Howards waited patiently (meanwhile hanging portraits on the walls), but by 1878 only parts were finished. Burne-Jones had spent much of the 1870s recovering from his affair with Maria Zambaco as well as juggling commissions from William Graham, the Liverpool collector Frederick Leyland, members of the Ionides family and Howard. Walter Crane was brought in to the project after he and his wife stayed in Palace Green with their baby for a week or two in 1878. He later recalled how he tackled the work:

The canvases - in various stages, some blank, some just commenced, some, in parts, considerably advanced - were all sent to my new studio [formerly Poynter's] at Beaumont Lodge... In the treatment I allowed myself considerable freedom, especially in the subjects not already commenced or carried far, though I endeavoured to preserve the spirit and feeling of the original designs. When I had carried the painting of the frieze as far as I could in the studio, the canvases went back to Palace Green, and were put up in position on the wall. Burne-Jones then joined me, and we both worked on the frieze, in situ, from trestles.

Burne-Jones also worked with Crane in his studio. 'Jones has been over twice & he has devised a new background for the Gods & goddesses. He made a rough sketch, which...
I have carried out, of a palace roof & pillars behind the figures, which gives one valuable level & perpendicular lines & works into the pointed form much better than the landscape would have done."41

Morris was engaged to provide further decorations on the walls and ceiling, work which dragged on until 1881. He wrote in December 1879:

I am bound to ask your pardon for having neglected this job; but I did not quite understand what was to be done except the writing [lettering around the walls] (which by the way is a very difficult business): I am now going to set to work to design ornaments for the mouldings round the pictures, the curved braces of ceiling, and the upper part of the panelling."42

He was finally paid £267 in 1882. Meanwhile Burne-Jones realised that the frieze which he and Crane had virtually completed no longer matched Morris’ work. He was also unhappy with some of Crane’s painting. He engaged Thomas Rooke (the Howards paid Rooke £50), explaining to Howard:

I am painting all the figures myself – have redesigned bits of background all over & the result is good I think – at least it matches Mr Morris’s ceiling now! – they are all much lighter, all the pictures – Rooke has worked between 7 & 8 weeks almost everyday – and some aftns I have worked & most Sundays. I hope Crane wont be hurt – I have had to alter much – I think they were painted in too dry a material for some of the colour wipes off with a dry duster – I think you will think it a very very great improvement. The room looks lighter in every way & some fair colour I have put into the dresses here & there tells mightily.

The room has been dismantled, and black-and-white photographs convey little impression of what must have been a sumptuous interior. The Howards’ dinner guests, most of whom already liked and owned work by Burne-Jones and William Morris, surely would have found difficulty directing their attention away from the walls and ceiling to the pleasures of the table. The Studio reported that the room glowed ‘like a page of an illuminated missal’. Lethaby, on the other hand, who admired the architecture of 1 Palace Green, wrote of Burne-Jones’ work, ‘there was no call for national epic, and the artist had to turn himself into a provider of dining-room pictures for men of money’.

The staircase leading up to the first floor was covered with a crimson carpet (manila matting covered the front hall floor); portraits by Watts of Howard and his grandfather Lord Wensleydale hung on the wall. On the landing of the first floor stood an organ. The case was designed by Webb to incorporate a painting by Burne-Jones (fig. 46). Webb explained to Howard on 14 August 1871, 'I took the measurements of the organ-case opening the other day & will order the canvas to be sent to the Grange [Burne-Jones's house].' Rosalind was delighted with the finished painting. Burne-Jones 'has done a beautiful picture for me in my organ. How good & dear he is, to do that for me. It is most lovely in colour & composition & sentiment. It is a man in red drapery playing an organ.' Moncure Conway, 'the able American who preaches a transcendental theism at the quondam Unitarian Chapel in Finsbury,' was impressed by the concept although he identified the subject of the painting incorrectly:

a charming picture of St. Cecilia playing on her keys. This picture sheds light and beauty around, and shows how much may be done in a house by having such objects brought into the general system of ornamentation adopted in the house. It is hardly enough to bring into the house furniture of a color which is vaguely harmonising with the wall-paper; by a little decoration even the piano, the cabinet, the book-case, may be made to repeat the theme to which the walls have risen.

Georgiana was allowed to play the organ while the Howards were away. In February 1875 she took Frances, daughter of Burne-Jones' patron William Graham, to see it: 'we went to Palace Green the other day, to show the organ to Miss Graham – feeling sure you would have no objection – & oh, how deserted the place looked. The organ was not at all out of tune though.' The same year Burne-Jones began to work on designs of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice for the decorated piano which Graham commissioned and which was completed in 1880, a gift for Frances.

In the drawing-room (on the first floor) the Howards began by hanging Poynter's portrait of Georgiana Burne-Jones, completed in 1869. When Georgiana began to sit to Poynter, Rosalind was disappointed to discover she had changed her hair style. Georgiana was suitably contrite:

Such had been my incredible promptness, united with my brother-in-laws - that the portrait was already begun, & the hair arranged in curly [sic] wise by the time I got your request about it. However Mr Poynter has managed to effect a compromise & I hope you will like it. It is very dear of you to care for my likeness, & it gives me great pleasure to sit for it for you. I have stipulated that your little locket shall be distinctly visible in it, & though no one will know what that means when we are dead & gone, you & I shall while we live.

Rossetti's striking drawing of Rosalind of 1870 also hung in the drawing-room, together with an oil by Legros, Psyche (1868) and two oils by Giovanni Costa, including Pinewood outside Pisa (1865). Webb provided careful instructions about the hanging of the pictures in 1869 before the decorations were complete:

With regard to the hanging of pictures in the drawing room – I should prefer for appearance that they should be hung from simple nails driven in just underneath the frieze – and any very large picture with fine cord from the top of room over the frieze – it is probable that there would not be many large enough to require this height as the bottom of the frieze is 8 feet from the floor – but at all events you need not hesitate to hang pictures over this line and without rods.
The ceiling was painted 'in a simple manner in yellow & white' with a Morris willow pattern frieze. This was kept when, in 1881, Morris' blue Chinese damask was used for curtains and chair covers after his poplin proved unsuitable. He wrote: 'I am sorry that the poplin didn't do. If you should at any time want a damask (that is the weaving makes the pattern not a change of colour) for hanging: I am doing a good one now for St. James Palace, which might suit you'; and a week later, 'the damask can be any colour you choose'. The walls were covered at the same time (1881) with Morris' African marigold chintz. This was chosen after the Howards had decided to hang one of their later Burne-Jones', Dies Domini (fig. 47), in the room. Morris and Burne-Jones were both involved in the selection of the appropriate background, Morris writing to Rosalind:

May I ask what you are going to do about the drawing room at Palace Green? Ned tells me that you are going to keep the Dies Domini there, & want to hang the room accordingly: we don't like to do anything there till the ceiling is made safe: what do you think of hanging a piece of stuff behind it; I could get a colour better suited to it I believe.

Rosalind's boudoir was also on the first floor. To begin with she chose to hang a selection of works by Walter Crane, including Hunting Moon and Mere in Cheshire. There was a watercolour sketch by Burne-Jones for his early painting The Merciful Knight (1863), some of his chalk sketches, and, in 1879, his large painting The Annunciation (fig. 48) was added. Like Dies Domini in the drawing-room, this painting dictated the final decorations of the room.

The discussions between Burne-Jones, Morris, Rosalind and George Howard reveal a shared interest in 'getting it right'; all believed the painting must dictate the decoration of the entire room. Rosalind's choice of paper, gold sunflowers, was first tried, but the artists realised it was 'fatal' to the picture. Morris wrote to her on 13 December 1879:

He wrote again after visiting with Burne-Jones:

Burne-Jones agreed:

I went this morning to see the room where Morris has hung up a piece of red hanging by the picture – it seemed to go – but of course we cannot tell if you would like it – Georgie told you from me how fatal the gold was to the picture, though it was a pretty paper and...
would have brightened your room merrily — still it did destroy with its glitter all the quiet of
the picture & took the colour out of it somehow — it looks best when you can see no sur-
rrounding at all, but catch a glimpse of it through the doorway, and then it looks like a vision
— but I should hate your spirits sacrificed to a pompous & fine effect and there is no need —
some colour that will not fight with the tones of the picture is all that is needed — and you
will have those cabinets to go one on each side of it, & that will help — the red is a good red
— a sort of Indian red colour with no sheen upon it, and it looks rich & handsome — & blue
things upon it look lovely — I think you could soon make the room sparkle & gleam bright-
ly — though red takes & would give back much light. There is no red in the picture to be hurt
by it. The green tree looks all the greener, and the blue of the wings bluer — and the flesh isn’t
hurt — nor the white dress turned gray — as the gold paper did for it . . . one day I might paint
two solemn single figures to stand one on each side of it and then it would look very nice —
as it is, no picture I have ever done will be so kindly placed.'

The wall-covering selected was Morris’ red iris chintz (total cost £20 13s.). The chairs
were covered with Morris’ red honeysuckle chintz (54 yards at 6 shillings a yard, 1s.
4d. for the lining). Mrs Root received £3 16s. 6d. for making up the covers. Old English
embroidered material covered a table and sofa and formed portieres over the doors. A
white bearskin rug lay in front of the fireplace, which was hidden by Indian silk cur-
tains in the summer.

Even before the decorations were completed Rosalind was discussing extending
the house with Webb. As if designing a palace of art for aesthetes was not enough,
Webb was to be asked to transform 1 Palace Green into a house fit for parliamentarians.
Rosalind wrote to him on 3 January 1880 about the possibility of making the house ‘a
thoroughly good one for the radical party to assemble in for dances & other diversions.
Please bear in mind also that I should like the big room to be good for music if there are
any special means of securing this end.’ She desired more bedrooms, a gymnasi-

47. Edward Burne-Jones, pastel
sketch for Die Domini. Lady Lever
Art Gallery. The painting’s
location is unknown. The
composition was taken from a
stained glass window design for
St Michael and St Mary
Magdalene, East Hampstead,
1874

48. (facing page) Edward
Burne-Jones, The
Annunciation, 1876—9. Lady
Lever Art Gallery. The
model for the Virgin was
Julia Stephen (née
Jackson), wife of Sir
Leslie Stephen and niece
of Sara Primep. She gave
birth to Vanessa (later the
artist Vanessa Bell) on 13
May 1879.
All the quiet
see no sur-
take a vision
no need —
and you
a good red
e & blue
re bright
be hurt
flesh isn't
ight paint
very nice —

The chairs
yard, 1s.
and English
doors. A
silk cur-

extending

enough,
entarians.
house 'a
versions.
if there

Park Circle
urn, a dining-room 45 feet long and a ballroom 60 feet by 25 feet, writing, 'I do not suppose that this addition would be more than was the original cost.' 60

Webb may have decided her plans were impossible to carry out on the limited site. By November 1881 the Howards were discussing the acquisition of the 'White House', a property behind theirs. Webb was dubious: 'It seems to me that there would be some risk in connecting your house with the “white house” without the Woods & Forests knowing.' 61 However, he inspected the property the following January: 'I went with Neave into the “white house” and found the shell a good substantial building. The tenants – of wh there are a crowd – looked on us as agents of a bloody landlord; and if any of them are Irish, you may expect to have to billet a bullet.' 62

The Howards dithered throughout 1882 and 1883, looking at other properties in London, including the land on which Baron Grant, the dubious financial speculator, had built his fanciful Kensington Palace: 'a lovely site covered with trees – where a beautiful house & garden could be made on.' 63 But the asking price was £60,000.

It is difficult to believe that Howard would have wanted to abandon Palace Green: was the desire for a larger, grander house linked to Rosalind’s political ambitions for her husband? He, meanwhile, was concentrating on the development of a personal style of landscape painting and enjoying participation with Costa, Richmond and Leighton in the founding of the Etruscan School of painting. 64

Webb continued to work on plans for incorporating the White House (he was also repairing the drawing-room ceiling through much of 1882) but finally lost patience: 'I shd be glad if you would get another genius than myself to add to Pale Green as I’m sure there are many who would give you more satisfaction than I shall..... Don’t lose the drawings or I’ll strike you.' 65

Burne-Jones comforted Rosalind:

he has rebuffed me lately too... I can’t help thinking that if I had what he has, some one utterly devoted to me and caring enough about me to live solitary for my sake that I shouldn’t be so very doleful – at least I should like to try – but I am very heartily vexed for both of your sakes – for indeed his work is good – and you have been so faithful about him, both of you that it must hurt. 66

Further decisions about Palace Green were postponed as the Howards’ own relationship deteriorated. Rosalind’s violent opposition to Howard’s position over Home Rule for Ireland (he opposed Gladstone’s 1886 Home Rule Bill) finally drove them to separate establishments. Her mother suggested at the time that she ‘should be taken away from your family and placed on a high mountain’ 67 Howard’s financial position was also weakening as the agricultural depression affected his newly inherited estates. Throughout the 1880s, his income appeared to be rising: he had been spending large amounts on building works, furniture and paintings for Naworth but he had also been borrowing substantial sums from Coutts Bank. When he inherited the earldom and Castle Howard in 1889 his income rose from almost £33,000 per annum to almost £56,000. However, he had to pay off a debt to Coutts of £10,000 and pay for his daughter Mary’s wedding; his expenditure at the end of 1890 was £55,000. The pattern remained the same: though his income was high, his expenses had soared. He was responsible for extensive estates in the north of England, Naworth Castle and the massive pile of Castle Howard, as well as Rosalind’s numerous philanthropic concerns. Between 1893 and 1895 his income was £90,000 but his expenditure was £85,000; for the first time he sold family paintings, raising £8,000. The
amount spent on contemporary paintings, furniture and furnishings fell dramatically to only a few hundred pounds.

It was perhaps fortunate that Burne-Jones and Morris died long before George Howard, though they would have been aware of the breakdown of his marriage. When Howard died in 1911, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt commented: 'He was one of the best of men, as well as one of the most domestically tried.' Rosalind sold Palace Green in 1920, moving to 13 Kensington Palace Gardens, 'the most hideous huge gothic mansion on the opposite side, but much higher up than her old house.' Her professed passion for contemporary art and architecture had evaporated along with her friendships with the artists and her affection for her husband.