



Victorian values: the roles of
reception theory in the
construction of taste in the
context of regeneration
practice

Christine Atha

University of the Arts London, UK
<c.atha@csm.arts.ac.uk>

volume 4 content
journal home pag
conference home pag
copyright

abstract ° full page

to cite this journal article

Atha, C. (2006) Victorian values: the role
of reception theory in the construction o
taste in the context of regeneratio
practice. *Working Papers in Art and
Design* 4

Retrieved <date> from URI

http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research_papers/wpades_vol4/cafull.htm
ISSN 1466-4917

The Museum as the context for the 'correct' interpretation of the artefact poses unique problems for the researcher and for the visitor. Every museum has its own particular approach to the curation of its artefacts and differing ambitions for the visiting public.

This paper sets out to examine aesthetics and reception theory in relation to some of the principles of Victorian philanthropy and the part they play in the development of the museum's system of research, interpretation and education. In addition the paper seeks to place this in the specific context of regeneration practice and interrogate it in relation to capacity building.

The Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) is used as an example within this discussion as it is distinguished by its concentration on the purpose of the museum, both at its outset and today, as an instrument of public aesthetic growth. At its inception the V&A expressed its intention to concentrate on: 'The improvement of public taste in design' and 'The application of fine art to objects of utility.'

The museum as context for the understanding, interpretation and dissemination of culture enabled a specific research culture and amplified the importance of such institutions as the authors of the 'correct' understanding and aesthetic certainty. The dynamic tension between the visitor and the museum, between the curator and the curated, relies on the understanding of the object offered through research and interpretation.

Contemporary museum practice and the regeneration context are connected through the specific activity of capacity building. Museums have found a new and significant role here, and understand the contribution they can make quite clearly. The ambition of the museum is to elaborate the subjective response of the individual to the collections into action. Thus educated they may go on to better appreciate the resource and themselves.