The users of lace: a socio-political case study

Jillian Carman

Visiting Research Associate, Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand

jillianc@bellatrix.co.za

ABSTRACT

Florence Phillips (1863-1940), wife of Randlord Lionel Phillips, is remembered for founding the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) in 1910. The British social activist Emily Hobhouse (1860-1925) is remembered for exposing conditions in the concentration camps for Boer women and children during the South African War (1899-1902). What is less well known is that social reconstruction initiatives using arts and crafts ideals devolved from the mother country, were started by both women in the post-war period, and that they both used lace as part of their plans. In this article, I explore the backgrounds of these two socially-diverse women, their differing perceptions of lace, and how they used lace to their own ends. Emily planned to use lace-making, along with spinning and weaving, to build up destitute farm communities by teaching handcrafts to young Boer women. Florence planned to start an educational museum with an affiliated art school, in which handcrafts like lace could serve as teaching examples. Emily's lace plans were short-lived. Florence failed to achieve an art school and her donation of lace was neglected in favour of Johannesburg Art Gallery's fine art collection. Towards the end of the twentieth century, however, its aesthetic worth began to be realised.

Keywords: Florence Phillips; Emily Hobhouse; lace; South African War; Johannesburg Art Gallery; Arts and Crafts.

During the nineteenth century and into the early 1900s, lace developed a layered and shifting nature that continues to resonate today. It became mulitivalent. More than ever before, this filigree medium became the point of departure (or meeting) of the disparate practices of maker, consumer, collector, philanthropist and craft versus fine art debater. I draw together these strands through a case study of two women, Florence Phillips (1863-1940) (Figure 1) and Emily Hobhouse (1860-1926) (Figure 2), addressing their discrete social backgrounds within the same time frames, the individual and wider social contexts that shaped their interests in lace, their differing

FIGURE **Nº 1**

Florence Phillips (1863-1940), Garden party hosted at Villa Arcadia, Johannesburg, 18 January 1913.

> [Lady Phillips was] much admired in a beautiful gown of ivory white satin ... The corsage had insertions of exquisite Irish lace" (Gutsche 1966, opposite page 228).

Photographed by T Brittain, Courtesy of Museum Africa, Johannesburg.

FIGURE **Nº 2**

Emily Hobhouse (1860-1925), London, 1 August 1902. Photographed by Henry Walter Barnett (1862-1934).

responses to historical events, and how two such different women briefly shared a similar goal in the early 1900s. This was the use of lace to reconstruct communities in the aftermath of the South African War of 1899-1902.[1] The spectrum of this study

1. Much of my material is based on an earlier article (Carman 2004).

is wide and diverse, and at times, the link with lace may seem tenuous. Lace in its object-ness is not the principal focus, but rather its socio-political contexts and uses. This is not to ignore, however, that the designs of one of the women, Florence Phillips, resulted in the ultimate celebration of lace as an aesthetic object: the inclusion in an art museum of the finest public collection of lace in South Africa.

By the early 1900s, lace-making in Europe, England and Ireland had assumed an identity beyond its more historic one of a specialist trade in beautiful, intricately-crafted and expensive items bought by the wealthy for the adornment of dress and drapery.[2] The nineteenth century had been a time of upheaval and change in society and fashion, and the production and consumption of lace were affected. There were wars in Europe and North America (a prime importer of lace), mechanisation led to new techniques, and natural disasters, like Ireland's potato famine (1840s-1850s), resulted in benevolent lace-making initiatives to assist the destitute. The United Kingdom Education Acts of 1870 and 1880 made schooling compulsory, and finally ended the long-standing exploitation of young boys and girls in lace "schools". Industrialisation saw the growth of rural and urban poverty, and a depletion of the wealth of the landed gentry. Colonial resources – diamonds, gold – saw the rapid rise towards the end of the century of a wealthy class of mine-owners in South Africa, the Randlords, who had money to aspire to the upper echelons of British society, to wear lavish fashions, to buy treasures sold by the impoverished British aristocracy, and to indulge in leisure activities like collecting *objets d'art*. Furthermore,a highly important cultural development started in 1852 with the founding of the South Kensington Museum, renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) in 1899.[3] From the V&A prototype grew the concept of the educational museum housing general collections of interest to a broad spectrum of society, with a specific agenda of guiding the leisure hours of members of the working class who migrated from rural to urban areas in ever-increasing numbers. Aligned with these ideals was the Arts and Crafts Movement (a term coined n 1886) which espoused the benefits of handwork for the greater social good. The V&A prototype had enormous influence on the growth of museums throughout Britain, Europe, North America and other parts of the world. It was the initial impulse behind the founding of the Johannesburg Art Gallery (JAG) in 1910 (Carman 2006).

Emily and Florence[4] are central to this case study of how lace was appropriated in South Africa in the early 1900s for social-benefit ends, namely, the teaching of lace-making skills in order to provide gainful employment. Their methods of achieving this goal, however, differed as widely as their backgrounds. An examination of the social circumstances that shaped them gives insight into how lace can gather multi-layered uses and interpretations within its fragile self.

2. For a general history of lace and socio-political impacts on its making see Bullock (1981), Griffiths (1993) and Levey (1983). Parker (1984), while not focussing specifically on lace, gives a history of the circumstances in which handcrafts such as lace were made. Emily Hobhouse gives a vivid account of the history of lace and current practices during her travels in England, Ireland and Europe in 1904 (Van Reenen 1984).

3. Information on the V&A and the museums that flourished in its wake is drawn chiefly from Baker and Richardson (1999), Carman (2006), Conforti (1999), Purbrick (1994), Taylor (1999) and Waterfield (1991, 1994, 1998).

4. For clarity and consistency, I use first names rather than surnames for Emily Hobhouse, Florence Phillips and Lionel Phillips.

The two women were born within a couple of years of each other into very different social contexts. Emily came from a higher class than Florence, an irony considering their later reversed positions. Florence was born in Cape Town into the relatively humble Ortlepp family and spent her childhood in Colesberg in the Eastern Cape Colony.[5] Her paternal grandfather came to South Africa from Germany as a missionary and adopted a metalworker-cum-merchant trade. Her father was a land surveyor and naturalist who collected ornithological and palaeolithic specimens for the South African Museum and other collections. Her mother, who came from 1820 colonial civil-service stock, always claimed she had married beneath her. Florence was educated at schools in Cape Town and Bloemfontein before reaching the age of waiting for a suitable marriage. By this time her family had moved to the dusty diamond fields around Kimberley where they lived in genteel poverty in Beaconsfield.

By contrast, Emily was born into a wealthy and well-connected family in the Cornish mining centre St Ive (not to be confused with the sea resort St Ives) where her father – educated at Eton and Oxford – was Rector of the local Anglican church.[6] Both parents came from noble lineage and Emily was mainly home-schooled. About the time, Florence was languishing in Beaconsfield waiting for a husband, Emily and her sister Maud were coping with their mother's death (1880), their father's chronic ill health, and parish duties among the farming and mining communities. Maud married in 1889 and Emily continued as care-giver to her father and the parish until her father's death in January 1895. Then her life took off with a missionary zeal. Within a fortnight after her father died she had left the village never to return, and by September 1895 she had crossed the Atlantic and settled in the mining town of Virginia in Minnesota, USA, home to a number of immigrant Cornish miners. This 'daughter of the late Archdeacon Hobhouse of England, a lady of means' the local Archdeacon wrote in his report to the Diocese of Minnesota in August 1895, had 'offered her services to the Bishop for missionary work among the [Cornish] miners' (Fisher 1971:28).

By September 1895 – on the other side of the Atlantic – Florence was also a lady of means but, unlike Emily, she came from a relatively poor background, was newly rich and had aspirations to upper-class wealth rather than missionary work. And she had considerably more life-experience. When Florence docked at Southampton in August 1895, her third visit to Britain, she had been married to Lionel Phillips (1855-1936)[7] for ten years, had three children, was suffering the severe after-effects of a miscarriage, andhad experienced the struggle of living in poverty. Lionel had come to Kimberley in 1875 as a diamond sorting clerk. When he met Florence in 1883 he had the fairly humble occupation of a haulage contractor, having recently been bankrupted and dropped from the inner circle of mine managers. His future did not look bright (though he was gradually regaining his lost fortune) and his background

5. Biographical details are from Carman (2006), Gutsche (1966, 1972a), Ortlepp (1966) and F Phillips (1899).

6. Biographical details are from Fisher (1971), Harrison (2006) and Van Reenen (1984).

7. Biographical details are from Carman (2006), Fraser (2006), Fraser and Jeeves (1977), Gutsche (1966, 1972b) and L Phillips (1905, 1924).

was not particularly auspicious. He was the son of a modest Jewish merchant from London's East End,[8] and by his own admission his formal education 'had been slight' (Phillips 1924:xvi).[9] But he was vivacious, came from a cultured family, spoke French, played music,was widely-read, and promised the antithesis of the dull life to which Florence seemed condemned. All three of his sisters, one of whom was a music teacher, in due course took Florence's cultural education in hand during her first visit to London. They introduced her to the V&A, which was later to play a role in forming her lace collection.

After their marriage in August 1885, Lionel and Florence settled in a corrugated iron cottage in Beaconsfield.Within a few months, with a baby on the way, Lionel was bankrupted again, owing to the diamond-market crash. This difficult period could not have been more unlike the financially-stable, though arduous, life Emily was leading in Cornwall. Then Lionel's fortunes turned. The mineowner Alfred Beit appointed him in 1888 to manage the successful amalgamation of De Beers Consolidated Mines in Kimberley, and then promoted him in October 1889 to the position ofmining consultant to H Eckstein & Co in Johannesburg.

By mid-1895, Florence and Lionel's wealth had grown to such an extent that they were known as the uncrowned queen and king of Johannesburg because of their lavish lifestyle. Florence was reinventing herself as a high society lady, dressed by Parisian *couturiers* in lace-embellished gowns.[10] Emily, by contrast, was divesting herself of the type of upper-class origins that Florence desired. Lace had no attraction as an item of apparel, if one takes photographs of her as evidence (see, for example, the images in Van Reenen 1984, between pages 122 and 123). She lived sparsely in the cold and rough mining town of Virginia, where she was engaged in social welfare work among the miners and their families, without much success it seems. The next couple of years for both women were extraordinarily disruptive and life-changing.

Florence experienced near-widowhood in 1896 when Lionel was sentenced to death for his role in the Jameson Raid of29 December 1895 to 2 January 1896, a failed attempt to wrest control of the mines from the South African Republic and one of the major causes of the subsequent South African War.[11] Lionel, one of the plotters, was found guilty of treason, but subsequently had his death sentence commuted to a fine and banishment. He left for Britain in June 1896 and did not return to Johannesburg until February 1905, thus spending the duration of the War with his family in England and Europe.

8. Crook (1999:154) describes him as 'the Randlord son of an Aldgate pawnbroker', but his origins are more respectably middle class than that.

9. He did, however, have an exceptional natural ability in mining matters and qualified, by private study, as a member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (Gutsche 1972b).

10. She was introduced to Worth (her couturier of choice), Lanvin and Creed in Paris in 1888 (Gutsche 1966:55). Photographs and descriptions of Florence's outfits show her penchant for lace.

11. For a comprehensive analysis of the Jameson Raid and its consequences see Carruthers (1996).

Emily in the USA also experienced trauma. From 1896 to 1898 she was engaged to a Virginian businessman who appears to have exploited and betrayed her, and to have had a hand in aspeculative venture that cost her most of her money.[12] She returned to England and, probably as a result of her recent experience, joined the struggle for women's rights. In November 1898 she was elected to the executive of the Women's Industrial Council, on whose behalf she investigated child labour. In 1900, she became involved in a scheme to provide housing for 'educated working women' in London (Harrison 2006, citing *Women's Industrial News,* December 1900). Poignantly, she kept her unused lace wedding veil[13] for about ten years after her broken engagement before giving itto the first women's welfare organisation in the Orange Free State, the *Oranje Vroueverenigingg* (Orange Women's Society), founded in 1908 in Bloemfontein.[14] Her gift was supposedly 'a symbol of her commitment to the uplifting of women' (National Women's Memorial, Bloemfontein [sa]), an oft-repeated phrase on popular websites, with various inflections. Is it a symbolof a remarkable woman, or a call to cast aside marriage in the interests of female independence, or an example of spurning luxury, or a gift of great value and beauty celebrating the worth of women's work, or a prototype for women to study in the gainful occupation of lace-making? How intriguing if the latter were the case, if she donated her veil for educational purposes similar to those of Florence, who later gave lace exemplars to JAG.

In exile abroad, from 1896 to 1905, Florence and Lionel relentlessly pursued entry into English high society. Florence was presented at court, wearing a gown with a long lace train (Gutsche 1966:145), and they bought homes in London and the country. Florence directed the lavish refurbishment of both, with the guidance of architects, interior decorators, and art and antique dealers. She and Lionel acquired a large art collection, mainly of eighteenth-century English landscapes and portraits, in addition to French and Italian works of the same period and earlier. None of these were donated to a South African public collection, and most were sold at auction in England by Christies's in 1913 (Gutshce 1966:143; Stevenson 1997, Appendix 3; Stevenson 2002:63-74).They appear to have been merely fashionable accoutrements for giving an illusion of "old money", and to have held little sentimental value for their owners.

Apart from creating an "Old Master" collection, Florence adopted a more personal means of reinventing herself as a lady of substance. She adopted a pastime of the wealthy, 'collecting beautiful and interesting old things' (Burton 1999:181), and she probably started a lace collection in this way. There was an astonishing growth in private collections of *objets d'art* and antiques in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Burton (1999:181-182) attributes this to the selling of items by the impoverished nobility, whose great treasures were bought by 'American millionaires', while 'their

12. Both Fisher (1971) and Van Reenen (1984) suggest this interpretation, drawn from scant surviving details and Emily's subsequent embracing of women's rights.

13. I have not established whether Emily bought or inherited it, or what type of lace it is, although (as was usual for veils and shawls at that time) it is likely to be needle-run lace on machine-made net or muslin, such as that made in Limerick (Ireland) and Nottingham (UK). See Griffiths (1993: 98-101) for illustrated examples.

14. Founded 25 March 1908 on Onze Rust, farm of former President MT Steyn in the district of Bloemfontein (South African History Online [Sa]).

lesser possessions floated on to a rising bourgeois collectors' market'.[15] He acknowledges that there is little empirical evidence about these collections and that one has to rely on anecdotal observations, like the increasing number of guides, books and journals on collecting and identifying "applied arts" objects, or memoirs such as Lady Dorothy Nevill's 1902 reflections on her collection of *objets d'art* in the journal *Connoisseur* (Burton 1999:182-183). With regard to lace, Emily's memoirs and letters of 1904 provide important first-hand evidence. While preparing herself to teach lace to Boer girls, she records:

> I became a plague to every lady I knew who possessed old lace, and many exquisite collections were shewn to me. I studied exhibits in the museums and haunted antique lace-shops. I procured introductions to the principal lace-shops, asking advice upon my scheme (Van Reenen 1984:323).

Current fashion and specialist antique lace shops suggest that Florence probably had a lace collection, or at least had the opportunity to create one, before she returned to South Africa. But there are no records of it, written or photographic,[16] until she lent a collection of lace and other textiles to the *South African National Union Arts and Crafts Exhibition*, Johannesburg, in early 1910.

Florence and Lionel settled back in Johannesburg in 1905-1906, and Florence's attitude to private collections began to change from a pastime of the wealthy to a desire to donate and create teaching collections for the greater public good. She was following the path of the British educational museum and the Arts and Crafts Movement, the latter formally named in 1886. Around the time Florence started pursuing her plans in South Africa, the Arts and Crafts Movement was diverting from its original purpose of providing viable employment to something more akin to a women's institute, where occupation for idle hands predominated over the need to generate funds to feed a family.[17] This diluted version meant that a wealthy woman like Florence could subscribe to the idea of crafted items and gainful handwork without allying herself with the socialism of John Ruskin (1819-1900) or William Morris (1834-1896) that initially informed the movement. Although there is no evidence that Florence read Ruskin or Morris, she seems to have been familiar with Ruskin's (1862) precept that, along with government training schools, there should be established 'manufactories and workshops for the production and sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art' and Morris's (1882) popular aphorism 'Art made by the people and for the people as a joy to the maker and the user'.[18]

15. In this way, fortunately, the collections of many private country estates were preserved for posterity (Bryant 2002; Stevenson 2002).

16. Two photograph albums of Tylney Hall (Johannesburg Art Gallery archives) show an upright display cabinet with fans and a flat cabinet with objets d'art in the reception rooms, but no evidence of lace. According to Stevenson (182 note 42), the albums were prepared for publication in the Architectural Review in 1904. A brochure prepared c1909 for the sale of Tylney Hall has no photographic evidence of a lace collection (Johannesburg Art Gallery archives).

17. Background on the Arts and Crafts Movement and the diversion from its original purpose comes principally from Comino (1980), Greenhalgh (1997) and Harrod (1999).

18. William Morris repeats this aphorism at least four times in his lecture, "The beauty of life", delivered to the Birmingham Society of Arts and School of Design, 19 February 1880, and later published in a book of his lectures (Morris 1882), which was 'readily accessible to the general reading public in Morris's lifetime' (Faulkner1994:v). The phrase seems to have entered common currency by the early twentieth century.

Emily quotes Morris's aphorism in her memoirs (Van Reenen 1984:331-332). Unlike Florence, however, she came from an environment where the socialist ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement prevailed, having more empathy with Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel, one of the community enterprises of Samuel and Henrietta Barnett,[19] than with the Phillipses' Arts and Crafts decorations at their country estate, Tylney Hall. Around the time Florence was refurbishing Tylney Hall, Emily was concerned with civilian suffering in war-time South Africa and, with fellow supporters like the Barnetts, formed the South African Women and Children Distress Fund in 1900 'to feed, clothe, shelter and rescue women and children, Boer, British or others who had been rendered destitute and homeless by the destruction of property, deportation, or other incidents of the military operations' (Van Reenen 1984:27-28). She set sail for South Africa in December 1900 to assist the destitute. Because of her critical reports on the conditions in British concentration camps in the Orange River and Cape Colonies, she was denied a second visit and was only able to return to South Africa after the end of the War in 1903. She was sharply critical of Alfred Milner's post-war reconstruction initiatives of 1902-1905,[20] the unsatisfactory type of British settler he had introduced ('Milner's especial pets'), the move to import Chinese mine labour, and the 'gold combine' capitalists in whose hands Milner was merely a tool – in other words, the social set of the Phillipses (Van Reenen 1984:323).[21] It was during this visit that Emily conceived plans for 'suitable house or cottage industries' for the Boer girls confined to farms with ruined homesteads, where 'every means of occupation had been destroyed' (Van Reenen 1984:323).

After her return to England in early 1904, Emily decided that lace-making, particularly needlepoint, would be the most suitable occupation for Boer farm girls as 'they had skill with the needle and I had detected here and there a latent sense of art' (Van Reenen 1984:323). They were devoted to their homes and family life and had time on their hands, the light from the 'brilliant skies' was excellent, what little material that was needed was easily available by post, and the finished items could just as easily be sent away for selling. Furthermore, lace-work had excellent moral qualities in that it was 'refining and educative' and encouraged production 'in hours that are otherwise often only idle awork of art which, though not a livelihood, will bring pocket-money' (Van Reenen 1984:323, 325).[22]

In order to equip herself to teach lace-making, Emily set out during 1904 to acquire these skills herself (Van Reenen 1984:323-330). In this she fundamentally differed from Florence who, some years later, sought to impart skills through exhibition displays, and seems never to have practised needlework crafts herself in order to educate others. Emily's investigations took her to Europe, England and Ireland, where Alice Stopford Green, an activist in the Irish Nationalist movement, tried to persuade

19. For detail on the Barnetts and their initiatives in Whitechapel (an impoverished area in East London) and Hampstead see Koven (1994), Miller (2007), Miller and Gray (1992) and Steyn (1994).

20. Milner, governor of the Transvaal and Orange River Colony 1902-1905, was charged with the post-war reconstruction of the mines and surrounding communities. He was responsible for making Johannesburg (not Pretoria) the capital of the Transvaal, for importing elite young British graduates to work in his administration, and for encouraging English-speaking settlers (Davenport & Saunders 2000:236-239; Marks & Trapido 1981).

21. Letters to Lady Hobhouse, in particular one written from Warm Baths about July 1903 (Van Reenen 1984:248-249).

22. The idea of teaching craft as a morally-uplifting livelihood for the indigent was by no means new. See Levey (1983: 92) and Parker (1984, chapter 7) for various reconstruction initiatives using needlework.

her to switch her allegiance from lace ('a "luxury"… that only wealthy Johannesburgers would be able to purchase') to spinning and weaving, which were considered more practical and, furthermore, would make use of South Africa's staple product, wool (Van Reenen 1984:328).[23]

At the end of 1904, the war-time South African Women and Children Distress Fund was transformed into the Boer Home Industries and Aid Society, and in January 1905, Emily and her assistant, Margaret Clark, armed with the skills of lace-making, spinning and weaving, went out to South Africa in order to set up the first cottage industry in Philippolis. Knitting, weaving and dyeing lessons started in Philippolis in March 1905 – lace-making seems to have been abandoned fairly early on, only being established at Koppies four years later by one of Emily's protégés, Johanna Rood.[24] By August 1905, Emily had established a second spinning and weaving school in Johannesburg.[25] Florence possibly visited this school the following year in the company of her cousin Dora Poultney.[26]

Emily returned briefly to England from April to early July 1907, when she visited a handcraft exhibition at the Albert Hall which included some items from her schools. Thereafter, with the formalisation of industrial education under a new education ministry, it was considered advisable to move the Johannesburg headquarters to Pretoria. When Emily left South Africa in October 1908,[27] she handed over to the Orange Free State and Transvaal education authorities weaving and spinning schools in about 25 urban and rural centres, with the prospect of more schools being established.[28] By late 1912, one of the last documented South African National Union (SANU) arts and crafts exhibitions included items from the Home Industries Boards established by Emily in the Cape, Transvaal and Orange Free State.[29] The catalogue describes seven training schools and confidently states that, with the introduction at the Pretoria headquarters of machinery capable of supplying carded wool to all other schools, laborious toil in the country districts would now be alleviated and production would become more effective. But unfortunately, with increased mechanisation in other spheres, the absorption of the schools into government structures (where their ethos changed), and the migration of the rural poor to urban areas, the ideal of income-generating craftwork eventually vanished (Fisher 1971:227). There is no mention of lace or lace-making, which appears to have already been discarded as a craftwork industry.

By the time Emily returned to Europe in 1908, Florence was becoming increasingly involved in local arts and crafts initiatives. But this was on a grand scale that would have been totally alien to Emily's ethos, even if the general aims were similar. Florence never showed more than a perfunctory interest in the more humble activities of social welfare.[30] She was more concerned with the larger social picture. Her interests centred

23. 'She [Green] felt, perhaps rather romantically, that such handicrafts would help the formation of your [Mrs Steyn's] national life, while making use of your staple product – wool' (Van Reenen 1984:328). A similar ideal – the use of local resources to further national interests – was at the heart of the South African National Union, established late 1907.

24. Although Emily records a lace lesson in her diary, 4 April 1905 (Van Reenen 1984:350), she never established lace-making in South Africa. She took Johanna Rood, sister of one of the Philippolis pupils, with her to Europe in 1908 to study lace-making with a view to establishing lace schools on her return to South Africa. Johanna established the first lace-making school, assisted by Lucia Starace from Italy, at Koppies in the Orange River Colony in 1909 (Van Reenen 1984:6, 501 note 6).

25. At the Langlaagte orphanage in Johannesburg. Further schools were later established in Vrededorp and Bellevue (Van Reenen 1984:356-386).

26. Dora, whose husband helped Emily find premises in 1906 (Van Reenen 1984: 363,508 note 8), was president of the Johannesburg branch of the Federation of South African Women, founded in 1905 to help the destitute. She took a particular interest in Emily's schools and was likely to have been her supporter during the South African War when the Poultneys, then living in Bloemfontein, sided with the Boers. There was a temporary coolness in Phillips-Poultney relations during the war, but the former ties were re-established afterwards. Although Florence did not join Dora in her work for the Federation of South African Women, she appears to have approved of Emily's school (Gutsche 1966:194). For information on the Poultney-Phillips connections see Gutsche (1966) and Poultney (1936).

27. She never returned to the Transvaal. Ill health prevented her travelling beyond Beaufort West in the Karoo on her next, and final, visit to South Africa for the unveiling of the women's memorial in Bloemfontein on 16 December 1913. Her speech was read on her behalf and distributed at the ceremony (Van Reenen 1984:6).

on ambitious fund-raising events, lending her name to committees on which her input ranged from organising balls to contributing funds, hosting "At Homes" for children of the Rand Mines group, accommodating white miners' wives and children in her Dorothea Clubs when they visited Johannesburg, planning ambitious arts and crafts initiatives, and organising others in the implementation of her ideas.

Florence's interest in local manufacture and home industries grew in a largely imperialist atmosphere of reconstruction and political change in the aftermath of the South African War and the run-up to Union (1910). Employment opportunities, investment in South African goods and the encouragement of a settled community on the Witwatersrand were priority concerns, particularly for the Randlord class, which depended on such favourable conditions to service its mines. These concerns were central to Milner's eugenics-driven initiatives to anglicise the former South African Republic by attracting large numbers of British settlers.[31] To Florence's credit, however, she went beyond Milner's jingoist aims, even though her post-war reconstruction plans were framed by the benevolent English tradition of wanting to regulate the leisure time of the urban working and middle classes.

Arts and crafts employment initiatives that used local talent and produce were seen as important agents in encouraging stable communities. Florence became actively involved in the SANU, established late 1907, of which the principal object was 'To promote the spirit of patriotism and the sense of partnership throughout British South Africa in the development of our country, its products and its industries'.[32] She was elected to the SANU executive council and, in early 1909, proposed one of its first and most important projects: a permanent exhibition of South African products, allied to a temporary loan exhibition of South African arts and crafts (*The Star* 1909).

Florence pursued plans for this exhibition during her sojourn in Europe and Britain from March to November 1909.But she dramatically widened its range – with unintended consequences – when she met Hugh Lane in April 1909 and was persuaded to change the "permanent exhibition of South African products"into a permanent collection of modern fine art. Evidently she understood this to mean that the fine art part of the project would not be subsumed into a general museum project (as is the case with the fine art collection in the V&A) but would be of equal importance to the Museum of Industrial Art, and that the two projects would be developed in parallel. She continued planning the temporary exhibition side, resulting in the highly successful *South African National Union Arts and Crafts Exhibition* in Johannesburg (28 March-23 April 1910), to which she lent 'a collection of old lace, needlework, embroideries, and tissues'.[33] During the exhibition she offered to donate this collection to the Johannesburg Town Council, provided it would be properly housed, cared for

28. Details given in a letter to Lady Charlotte Graham Toler, 21 October 1908, reprinted in the final report of the Boer Home Industries Committee (Van Reenen 1984:386).

29. Held at "Niagara", Johannesburg, 30 October to 9 November 1912 (South African National Union 1912:29).

30. Gutsche (1966:194-195) specifically draws attention to the fact that she was never directly concerned with social welfare work throughout her long life.

31. For a discussion of Milner's eugenics see Marks & Trapido (1981).

32. South African National Union ([1908]: object (2) a & e) and Beirne (1910:82-83).

33. For a discussion of this exhibition and its national significance see Carman (2006:100-107 & Appendix A) and Gutsche (1966:243-252).

and ‘used as a nucleus of a School of Design in this town, for the use of the public’ (F Phillips 1910). The“Draft Deed of Trust”, subsequently adopted by the Council, refers to ‘an Art Gallery and Museum of Industrial Art’ and the items already acquired for it: ‘pictures, statues and other works of art, furniture, lace and the like’ (Johannesburg Town Council 1910b). Her lace collection was meant to be an integral part of JAG’s collection, but it came to be side-lined to the point of exclusion.

One could say that the opening of JAG’s collection on 29 November 1910 was the point when its craft-fine art rift and debate started, and the seeds for subsequent wider debates were sown. Lane objected to including cases of Florence’s lace and fabrics in the opening exhibition.[34] The ‘antique lace and embroideries’, briefly mentioned in Lane’s Prefatory Notice to the accompanying catalogue, are not included in the comprehensive illustrated listing of paintings, sculpture and drawings (Carman 2006:xix, Appendix D).The special display cases that were to be designed in 1915 by Edwin Lutyens and Joseph Solomon, in consultation with JAG’s London-based director Robert Ross, were never made. The ‘School of Design’, for which the lace collection was intended (Johannesburg Town Council 1910a), was never realised, despite a short-lived attempt (1912-1916) to create an art school.[35] Florence’s lace and textile collection was not considered appropriate for display in a fine art museum and spent most of the twentieth century in storage.

Neither Emily nor Florence succeeded in the long-term training of lace-makers. This was probably of little concern to Emily, for whom lace was merely a means to an end, to be discarded in favour of spinning and weaving when no longer useful. Florence, however, had a passion for the material far beyond its usefulness as an educational tool, its luxury status as a fashion accessory, or its occupational qualities as a lady’s pastime, whether making or collecting. Her appreciation of the medium, its aesthetic object-ness, was remarkable, as was her wish to create a quality collection that would be housed and properly cared for in a public museum. As a clear sign of her passion, she continued to maintain a private collection after her donation to JAG, a collection of sufficient importance to be lent to the Iziko South African National Gallery when its new premises opened in November 1930 (Gutsche 1966:382).[36] And she was sufficiently concerned about the quality of her gift to JAG that she removed it twice for upgrading after she presented it in 1910. She took the collection to London in 1911-1912 to have it valued, mounted and framed by A Blackborne & Co, and during 1916-1917 she had the collection upgraded under the guidance of AF Kendrick of the V&A. It was highly regarded in London and was displayed at both the V&A and the Goupil Gallery before being shipped to JAG in 1919. Again it was neglected, and Florence threatened to withdraw it in 1921 (Carman 1993:8-9, 2006:80-83). The collection spent most of the twentieth century in storage boxes.

34. The day before the collection was opened, Florence and her secretary ‘arranged the fabrics in cases; all was done hurriedly, Sir Hugh objecting and Mrs. Phillips insisting on the added interest to womenfolk by their inclusion’ (Gyngell 1911).

35. See Brink (2006:162), Carman (2006: 65, 278), Engel (1963:282-284) and Gutsche (1966:308, 322). The art school which is today part of the University of Johannesburg was founded in 1926 (Brink 2006).

36. Her granddaughter Elizabeth Banks inherited the collection after Florence’s death in 1940 and sold it in 1978 (Banks 1998). The current owner is not known, nor whether the collection was kept in its entirety or dispersed.

Florence's gift constitutes the finest public collection of lace in South Africa and is unparalleled in its pedagogic potential. It consists of nearly 100 items covering the history of lace-making,the range extending from fore-runners of lace, such as reticella (made in Venice c1480-1620), through to the nineteenth century, with a wide representation of designs and regional styles within the categories of needle, bobbin, tape and embroidered lace. Lace-related techniques are also represented, such as Irish crochet. The depth of the collection was only fully appreciated when it was "discovered" around 1990 by the Johannesburg Lace Guild, which helped reassess and document the pieces comprehensively, create purpose-designed display and storage facilities, and produce a fully-illustrated catalogue (Griffiths 1993). Fortunately, Florence's gift survived neglect and art historical hierarchy. A century after its donation, it is now recognised as an integral part of the Johannesburg Art Gallery collection.

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