



Tuesday 26 March 2024

**Dr Helen Rufus-Ward
Bringing India to Britain:
Queen Victoria's Indian Portraits and the Durbar Hall**

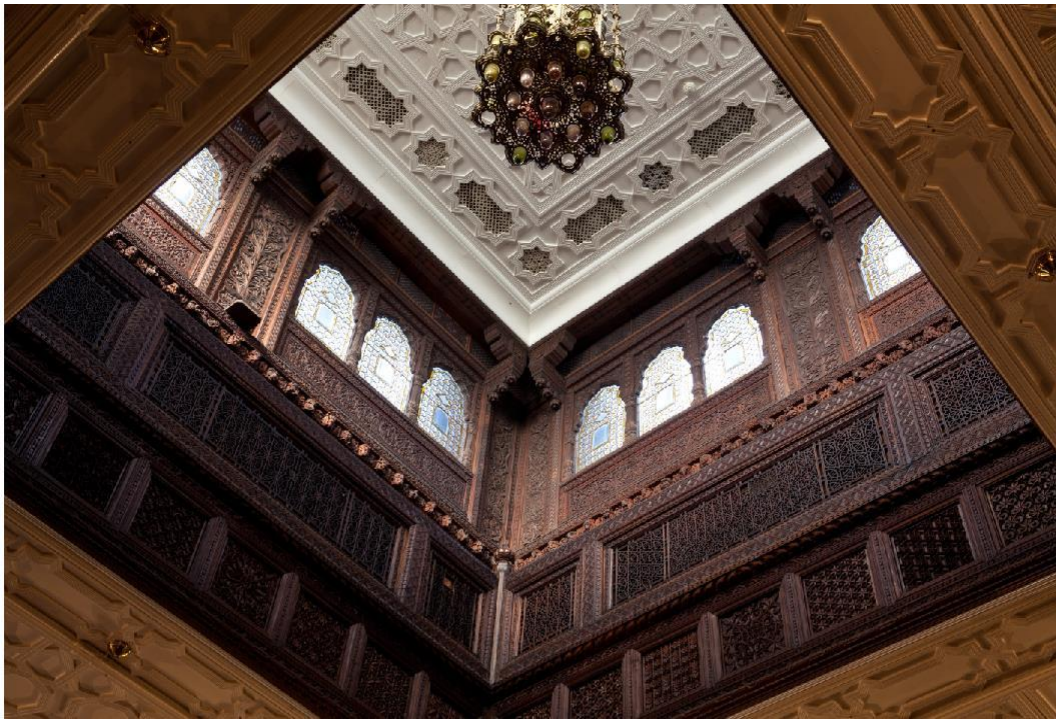
This lecture will focus on Victorian encounters with India beginning by focusing on the Indian portraits decorating the corridors of Queen Victoria's favourite palace, Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Austrian artist Rudolf Swoboda was commissioned by Queen Victoria to paint authentic portraits of her Indian subjects to represent 'various types of the different nationalities' of India. Swoboda produced some extraordinary paintings during his two visits to India and the Queen was thrilled, calling them her 'Beautiful Things!' If Queen Victoria couldn't travel to India – India had to come to her! Swoboda's royal commission was inspired by the success of the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886 when Swoboda had painted the portraits of some of the Indian artisans who had been brought to London from India to be 'live exhibits' in the show. The final part of this lecture will look at an exquisitely carved Durbar Hall, created and shipped over from India to serve as a backdrop for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition. It is now the centre piece of Hastings Museum and Art Gallery having been gifted to the town by the Brassey family



Dr Helen Rufus-Ward



Rudolf Swoboda's Paintings



Durbar Hall



Durbar Room