

Dissertation Synopsis

HISTORY AND THEORY 2 - ACAA5003

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Introduction

Has anyone questioned why many of terraced housing in the UK, especially traditional buildings such as Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian, commonly exhibit black rainwater hoppers and downpipes exposed on their exterior walls? Regardless of whether the buildings are of light or dark colours, it is not uncommon to observe that the majority of buildings have “black” downpipes. Upon seeing black hoppers and downpipes installed on buildings, irrespective of the colour of the façade (though occasionally matching or painted in the same colour as the façade), I have come to realise that this imparts a distinctly "British" ambiance. Through research, I aim to investigate and compile correlations, histories, pattern, and other pertinent information to understand how this black guttering contributes to the portrayal of British vernacularity and the creation of a British character.

Main

Methodology

In the process of conducting the dissertation project, the primary methodologies to be utilised include field studies, literature review, online data exploration, historical maps and interviews. Throughout the summer vacation of 2024, I am planning to visit various major cities across the UK,

engaging in activities such as photography, sketching, and data collection, focusing particularly on listed buildings and buildings built during Victorian era.

Aim and Objective

In planning my dissertation, I had two primary questions: "Why do the majority of buildings in the UK have exposed rainwater downpipes coloured in black?" and "How does the presence of black pipes contribute to imbuing buildings with a British aesthetic?"

The objective of my dissertation is to argue that the exposed black guttering system is a significant ornamental detail in imparting a British character to buildings. Through collection of data and research, I aim to provide supporting data for the hypothesis that my exposition is valid.

Literature Review

The literature I plan to investigate includes the following:

- The history and application of outdoor paint
- Documents covering 19th to 20th-century public health legislation
- The history of sanitation and architecture
- The history of guttering system
- Newspapers and magazines
- Architectural pattern books

Limitation

Due to the nature of my dissertation topic being focused on traditional buildings, it is not feasible to interview individuals who were involved in designing and constructing these buildings. Furthermore, relying on remaining sources means that the investigation may diverge from the original intentions of the designers.

Timeframe

Summer June, July, August	Field study, literature (history) review
October	Literature review in more in depth, outline overall dissertation (divide chapters)
November	Plan out what to research for each chapter and conduct the research
December	Write draft for main part of dissertation
January	Write draft for Introduction and conclusion
February	Involve peer review and finish whole dissertation
March	Continue editing
April	Get final feedback and do final revision

Conclusion

I believe that there has yet to be research or inquiry into the question of why many buildings in the UK possess black coloured guttering systems, which may be perceived as unattractive and outdated feature of building by some. As a person with a keen interest in the regional characteristics and uniqueness of vernacular architecture, I hope to take this opportunity to elucidate the significance of small black downpipes detail in British architecture.