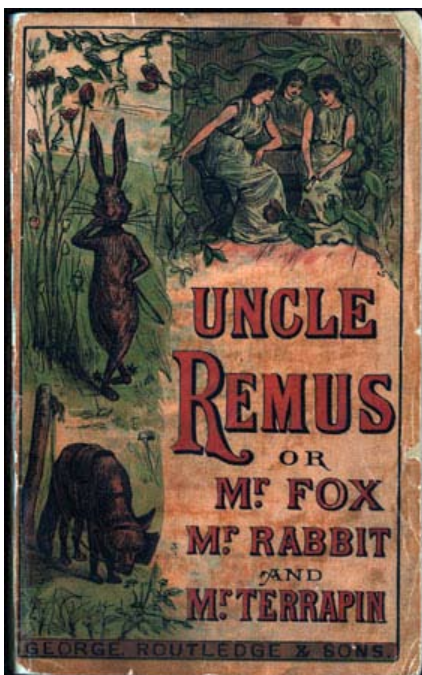


WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES
NEWSLETTER

January 2011



Drawn by Lisa Romana Stillman. WILLIAM MORRIS. Engraved by J. H. E. White.



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On the cover: From the “Useful & Beautiful” conference: Lisa Stillman, drawing of William Morris, from Emma Lazarus, “A Day in Surrey with William Morris, *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, July 1886 (Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library); Ethel Reed, *Poster for the Novel Miss Traumerei*, color lithograph, 1895 (Thomas G. Boss Collection); Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus: or, Mr. Fox, Mr. Rabbit, and Mr. Terrapin*. Third Edition. London, New York: George Routledge, 1881 (Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library); G. C. Beresford, *May Morris*, photograph, ca. 1909 (Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library).

This newsletter is published by the William Morris Society in the United States, P.O. Box 53263, Washington, DC 20009. *Editorial committee:* Florence S. Boos, Fran Durako, Mark Samuels Lasner, B.J. Robinson. Please submit articles and items of interest to us@morrissociety.org.

Website: www.morrissociety.org.

Blog: <http://morrissociety.blogspot.com>.

A LETTER TO MEMBERS

USEFUL & BEAUTIFUL CONFERENCE

It is with great pleasure that I can report that our October conference, “Useful & Beautiful: The Transatlantic Arts of William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites,” was a resounding success! It was well attended by people from not just the United States, but also from Canada and England. The sessions covered an amazing range

of topics—from Socialism to stained glass to Steampunk. It was a treat to tour the Delaware Art Museum’s renowned collection of Pre-Raphaelite art, visit Winterthur, and see the exhibitions at the University of Delaware Library. There were also related events including a concert, a performance of Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and craft demonstrations. We had also many opportunities to meet and to socialize with others who are interested in and knowledgeable about Morris and his influence on both sides of the Atlantic. This issue of the newsletter provides a detailed report on the conference. I would also like to note here the enormous contribution of Mark Samuels Lasner and his committees to the success of this major event. It required literally years of planning to arrange and organize a conference like this.

MORRIS EVENTS AT THE MLA CONVENTION

The annual Modern Language Association convention will be the first to be held at the beginning of January rather than the end of December, and is scheduled for 6–9 January 2011 in Los Angeles. This year the Society is sponsoring one session (Thursday, 6 January) on “William Morris and the Arts.” We are also co-sponsoring a session (Friday, 7 January) with the Arthurian Society of America, on “The Pre-Raphaelites and the Medieval Past.” Please visit the events section of our website for more details (www.morrissociety.org).

JANUARY TOUR OF THE PRE-RAPHAELITE LENS EXHIBIT AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART

On Saturday, 15 January, there will be a specially-arranged tour of the National Gallery’s splendid and groundbreaking exhibition, *The Pre-Raphaelite Lens: British Photography and Painting, 1848–1875*. Our host will be the show’s curator, Diane Waggoner. The exhibition comprises about 100 photographs and 20 paintings and watercolors. See the announcement overleaf for more details; members in the Northeast will have already received notice (via mail and by email) of this event in case the newsletter arrives after the fact. A “dutch treat” lunch will follow the tour.

REPORT ON THE KELMSCOTT PRESS EXHIBIT AT THE BUFFALO-ERIE COUNTY LIBRARY

Susannah Horrom, manager of the Kelmscott Bookshop, and I were fortunate to be able to visit *The Ideal Book: William Morris and the Kelmscott Press*, which is on display until 30 January 2011 in the Rare Book Room of the Buffalo-Erie County Library. The exhibition showcases works of the Kelmscott Press from the library’s collection, including the great Kelmscott *Chaucer*. There are twenty-six Kelmscott titles on display as well as books from presses such as the Doves

Press and Ashendene Press which were influenced by Morris. The story of the Kelmscott Press, Morris, and people like Edward Burne-Jones who were involved with the press, is nicely presented as a background to the stunning books.

THE HISTORY OF KELMSCOTT HOUSE

—A BEST SELLER!

The recent UK publication of *The History of Kelmscott House* by Helen Elletson has been a big success with US members and we have sold many copies. If you are interested in learning about the book and how to obtain it, please visit our website for details. We had the pleasure of meeting Helen (the curator at Kelmscott House Museum) and her husband at the “Useful & Beautiful” conference. It was her first visit to the United States and she was enjoying it very much.

GOVERNING COMMITTEE RETIREMENT

We are sorry to have to announce that Hartley Spatt, who has so well served the Society and the governing committee for about thirty years, has decided to retire in order to turn his attention to other activities. The committee would like to express its thanks and appreciation for Hartley’s long service on behalf of the Society.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Our governing committee held a meeting via conference call on 29 November and will follow it up with another call on 13 December. The committee has much to discuss and consider, with the most important issue being the current level of membership. I wish I could report better news, but our numbers have not increased over the past year. We are seeking ways to improve the situation and would welcome any suggestions from current members. We would also like to remind everyone to renew their membership for 2011. We would also urge you to try to interest like-minded colleagues and friends who are not members in joining. We also hope that you will participate in the activities of the Society wherever possible, be it writing for the newsletter, sending in items for our *News from Anywhere* blog or Facebook page, or offering suggestions for programs and events.

In fellowship, *Fran Durako*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

UK Morris Society Website Launched!

The Morris Society UK is now represented by a handsome website at www.williammorrissociety.org.

uk. Among its other contents, this site emphasizes Morris Society activities at Kelmscott House (now the Kelmscott House Museum) and throughout Great Britain, and permits UK residents to join and purchase books online.

Our website at www.morrissociety.org will continue to publicize US and some international events, and to provide access to US membership and publications. In addition we will continue our mission of providing the *Journal of William Morris Studies* and US newsletter, research materials relating to Morris, and translations of Morris’s works into several languages.

Redesigned US Society Website Coming Soon!

We too are remaking our website, to be launched in February 2011. Among other improvements, the new design should provide:

- More and better images of Morris’s artwork in several media
- Opportunity to purchase Morris Society books, donate or buy tickets to events online
- A clearer organization and search engine
- More direct access to research materials

Suggestions for additions and improvements are always welcome. Please send these to Mark Samuels Lasner, marks1@udel.edu or Florence Boos, florence-boos@uiowa.edu.

Recession Woes:

Like many individuals and cultural organizations, the William Morris Society in the United States has suffered from the recession as well as exchange rates (printing our publications must be paid for in pounds). Please encourage your friends to join, and if you can, please consider a donation. For those who prefer to contribute on line, this may now be done on our website. Books and other gifts in kind are also gratefully accepted. (Remember that all contributions may be deducted from US income tax to the fullest extent allowed by law.) With your help we will survive this downturn and ensure continued solvency.

MORRIS SOCIETY SESSIONS AT THE MLA 2012

The January 2012 convention of the Modern Language Association will be held in Seattle, WA from 5–8 January 2012. We will have one guaranteed session of papers, but according to new MLA rules, we must compete for the second.

The guaranteed session will be on “Morris’s Artistic Descendants: Women Writers, Artists and Designers,” with the following talks and speakers:

Lynn R. Wilkinson, University of Texas-Austin, "Staging Morris: Anne Charlotte Leffler's *How to Do Good* and William Morris's Critique of Philanthropy"

Heidi Pierce, University of Delaware, "Politicizing the Arts and Crafts Movement: Mary De Morgan's 'Bread of Discontent'"

Christine Elaine Ericsson, University of Southampton, "Symmetry and Symbolism in the Embroidery Designs of May Morris"

Papers are also sought for a second proposed 2012 session on "Pre-Raphaelite Audiences: Artists, Critics, Readers," co-sponsored by the William Morris Society and SHARP (Society for the History of Authorship, Readers and Publishing). Abstracts or proposals (250 words maximum) should be sent by 1 March 2011 to Florence Boos at florence-boos@uiowa.edu and Gregory Barnhisel at barnhiselg@duq.edu.

The January 2013 convention will be held in Boston. The Society will organize a visit to Boston-area Arts and Crafts sights, and proposals will in due course be sought for a panel on "Morris on the East Coast."

EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

Craftsman Farms Centenary Events

Last October, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms (located in Morris Plains, NJ) kicked off a year-long celebration of the 100th anniversary of Stickley's Log House. Of the various special events planned for 2011, the most interesting are a "Symposium for Emerging Scholars," announced for 15 April, and a celebratory weekend scheduled for October. Organized in partnership with the American Fine and Decorative Art Program at Sotheby's Institute of Art, the "Symposium for Emerging Scholars" will be dedicated to the work of up-and-coming scholars working on the Arts and Crafts movement. For a copy of the Call for Papers or additional program details, please contact the museum at (973) 540-0311. Although program information for the October "Symposium and Gala Weekend" is not yet available, the three-day event is expected to include a tour and opening reception, a full-day symposium on the theme of "Living the Arts and Crafts Lifestyle 2011," and a black tie evening party. More information will be found in due course on the Stickley Museum website, www.stickleymuseum.org.

Chinamania: Whistler and the Victorian Craze for Blue-and-White

Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, until 31 Aug 2011. Blue-and-white Chinese porcelain became a hot item in London in the 1870s, a craze the British press mockingly dubbed

"Chinamania." James McNeill Whistler, an early collector of Chinese porcelain, helped stimulate this fad by depicting such wares in his paintings. The Chinamania exhibition at the Freer explores Chinese porcelain in Whistler's England, where it was first valued as aesthetic inspiration but soon proliferated as a commodity. Featured are twenty-three works of art: blue-and-white porcelain objects from the Peacock Room; eight wash drawings of Kangxi porcelain that Whistler produced for a collector's catalogue; and paintings, pastels, and etchings inspired by the artist's interest in porcelain. Also on view: *Freer and Whistler*, about the painter's most important patron, and, of course, the famous Peacock Room. www.asia.si.edu.

The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Pacific Northwest

Whatcom Museum at the Lightcatcher, Bellingham, WA, until 15 May 2011. Organized by the Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, this major new exhibition brings to light exceptional work from the Arts and Crafts movement in the Northwest during the early twentieth century. The exhibition showcases significant buildings and interiors, furniture, glass, metalwork, ceramics, textiles, graphics and book arts, and photography with over one hundred objects drawn from public and private collections. www.seattlehistory.org.

Gustav Stickley and the American Arts and Crafts Movement

Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX, 13 February–8 March 2011. *Gustav Stickley and the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (which opened last fall at the Newark Museum in New Jersey) offers the first comprehensive examination of the life and work of the recognized patriarch of the American Arts and Crafts movement. The exhibition explores Stickley as a business leader and design proselytizer, whose body of work included furnishings, architectural and interior designs, and the *Craftsman* magazine, which became synonymous with the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the twentieth century. This exhibition includes more than 100 masterworks produced by Stickley's designers and workshops: furniture, textiles, metalwork and lamps, as well as drawings. From Stickley's earliest progressive furniture of 1900 to designs created around the time of his ill-fated expansion of 1913, the exhibition provides a perspective on the aesthetics, craftsmanship, and identity of the works of Stickley's Craftsman Workshops and their role in creating the ideal home of the era. <http://dallasmuseumofart.org>.

SPECIAL WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY EXHIBITION TOUR

The Pre-Raphaelite Lens: British Photography and Painting, 1848–1875

National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Saturday, 15 January 2011

11.30 a.m. (meet at entrance to the East Building)

Members and friends are invited to a special tour with the exhibition's curator, Diane Waggoner. Join us for lunch after. RSVP to Mark Samuels Lasner, marks@udel.edu, (302) 831-3250.

The Pre-Raphaelite Lens is the first survey of British art photography focusing on the 1850s and 1860s. With 100 photographs and 20 paintings and watercolors the exhibition examines the roles photography and Pre-Raphaelite art played in changing concepts of vision and truth in representation. Photography's ability to quickly translate



the material world into an image challenged painters to find alternate versions of realism. Photographers, in turn, looked to Pre-Raphaelite subject matter and visual strategies in order to legitimize photography's status as a fine art. Lewis Carroll, Julia Margaret Cameron, Roger Fenton, Oscar Gustave Rejlander, and many lesser known photographers had much in common with such painters as John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and John William Inchbold, who all wrestled with the question of how to observe and represent the natural world and the human face and figure. This rich dialogue is examined in thematic sections on landscape, portraiture, literary and historical narratives, and modern-life subjects.

Diane Waggoner is associate curator in the department of photographs at the National Gallery of Art. She received a PhD in art history

from Yale University. Prior to joining the department, she held positions at the Yale University Art Gallery and at the Huntington Library, where she was the curator of *The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design* (2003). Since joining the NGA, she has co-curated many exhibitions. Her co-authored catalogue for *The Art of the American Snapshot* was the 2008 winner of the College Art Association's Alfred H. Barr, Jr., Award for distinguished museum publication. A specialist in the nineteenth century, she has also published on the photographs of Lewis Carroll.

USEFUL & BEAUTIFUL

“Useful & Beautiful: The Transatlantic Arts of William Morris & the Pre-Raphaelites” was held at the University of Delaware, Winterthur Museum & Country Estate, and the Delaware Art Museum from 7 to 9 October 2010. “Useful and Beautiful,” the first international conference on Morris to be sponsored by the William Morris Society in the United States (previous ones were held in the UK in 1996 and 2005 and in Canada in 2000), was the largest gathering in the Society’s forty-year history. Its 230 attendees included 46 members of the Canadian William Morris Society and several from the UK Morris Society, along with representatives of many occupations, academic specialties and private interests. With a focus on transatlantic connections, the conference drew speakers on an array of American and British Pre-Raphaelite, Aesthetism, and Arts and Crafts-related topics: socialist activism, prose romances, interior design, handicraft, architecture, periodical literature, book making, and Arts and Crafts principles and ideals. Some of the topics were quite new—e. g., “Living Up to My China: Morris and the . . . American Pre-Raphaelite Interior” or “William Morris and the Turn-of-the-Century Greeting Card”—while others gave impressive evidence of the wide influence of Morris, his friends, associates, and followers on literary, cultural, and artistic life throughout North America (“Interpreting the Craftsman Ideal in the Seattle Public Schools,” “The Impact of William Morris . . . and the Pre-Raphaelites on the San Francisco Bay Region,” “Art and Anarchy: Walter Crane in Chicago”).

An unusual feature of the conference was the opportunity to see craftspeople at work. On Saturday morning, 9 October, attendees watched as Laura Wilder, a printmaker, and Ron Van Ostrand, a metalsmith, created their respective artworks while they discussed the difficulties and challenges of each task, the details of which could be seen clearly on a large projection screen. Another special pleasure was the opportunity to attend two related events. On Thursday, 7 October, participants listened to a fine concert of music revived by Arnold Dolmetsch: “Kindred Spirits: William Morris, Arnold Dolmetsch and Music.” Karen Flint (harpsichord) and Laura Heims (soprano) performed the lovely early Renaissance works by William Dowland and others popularized by Dolmetsch, and John Burkhalter (recorder) recounted Morris’s love of early English music and his own memories of training with one of Dolmetsch’s pupils. The next night, Friday, 8 October, participants enjoyed an amusing performance of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* by the University of Delaware Resident Ensemble Players, with a memorably hilarious performance

of Lady Bracknell. On view during the conference were no fewer than six related exhibitions, four of which are described below (the others were *Ethel Reed and American Graphic Arts of the 1890s, From the Thomas G. Boss Collection*, at the University of Delaware’s Old College Gallery, and a selection of Aesthetic movement fashion, drawn from the University’s Historic Costume and Textiles Collection, displayed in one of the classroom buildings.)

The Society not only helped organize the conference but also contributed financial support for two associated lectures, both held at the University of Delaware and open to the public: a talk on Charles Rennie Mackintosh by architectural historian James Macaulay and a presentation by artist David Mabb, whose conceptual work, *The Morris Kitsch Archive*, was on exhibit at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts. A generous grant from the UK Morris Society provided travel funds (or “bursaries,” to use the British term) that enabled five speakers to attend who could not come otherwise. Additional support for “Useful & Beautiful” came from the Delaware Art Museum; Winterthur Museum & Country Estate; Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts; The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation; Greater Wilmington Convention and Visitors Bureau; Oak Knoll Books and Oak Knoll Press; Routledge Visual Art Journals; University of Delaware Library Associates; the University of Delaware’s Faculty Senate Committee on Cultural Activities and Public Events; and the following University of Delaware units, departments and programs: College of Arts and Sciences, University of Delaware Library, Art, Art Conservation, Art History, English, Fashion and Apparel Studies, History, Institute for Global Studies, Frank and Yetta Chaiken Center for Jewish Studies, Center for Material Culture Studies, Music, Office of Equity and Inclusion, Resident Ensemble Players/Professional Theatre Training Program, University Museums, and Women’s Studies.

A review of all the “Useful & Beautiful” events and presentations (there were more than fifty speakers) would consume several newsletters, and so here we will only mention two keynote talks, three of the exhibitions associated with the conference, and one panel.

Lectures by Fred Kaplan and Susan Casteras

In his Thursday afternoon keynote lecture at the University of Delaware Library, Fred Kaplan, noted biographer and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of English at Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, spoke on “The Useful and the Beautiful: Henry James and Mark Twain.” In describing and conceptualizing the transatlantic context in which Mark Twain and Henry James wrote he reminded us that for most, if not all, of the

great writers of the nineteenth century the useful and beautiful were inseparable, that figures as different as Henry James and Mark Twain, each in his distinct way, and like William Morris, embraced an aesthetic and a moral ethic in which usefulness and beauty merge into a single entity. Kaplan pointed out some of the connections between James and the Pre-Raphaelites and Aesthetes and brought forward the unexpectedly complex views Twain held regarding British society and culture. The conference concluded, at the Delaware Art Museum on Saturday, with a lecture by Susan Casteras, Professor of Art History, University of Washington. In “Commodification in the 21st Century: Pre-Raphaelitism and Merchandise, Comic Books and Mysteries,” Casteras examined the popularity of the Pre-Raphaelites in contemporary culture. She referred to graphic novels, comics, and advertising, as well as to films, television, blogs and websites, finding references to the group’s aesthetic in all these media manifestations. Some of the images Casteras displayed (to humorous effect) showed the direct appropriation of particular paintings by Rossetti and Burne-Jones. There is also a surprising amount of current fiction in which Pre-Raphaelite elements appear; members of the group populate historical fiction; heroines (rarely heroes) look like “stunners”; mysteries revolve around a lost or stolen artwork. Just why this is happening is unclear, but Casteras saw connections to Neo-Victorianism, a love of beauty and objects from the past in a technological age, personal obsessions and, perhaps, a strange kind of feminism.

London Bound and The Multifaceted Mr. Morris

Attendees at “Useful & Beautiful” were able to see two exhibitions in the University of Delaware Library. *London Bound; American Writers in Britain, 1870–1916*, the larger of the displays, was curated by Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner, and continued in the second floor Special Collections Gallery until 17 December 2010.

The seventy fully annotated exhibits in *London Bound* were probably more than a visitor could fully absorb at one viewing, but fortunately images and text are now available at www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/exhibits/londonbound/index.html. The introduction to the exhibition explains the importance of transatlantic ties in the late nineteenth century:

More important than . . . literal connections were the transatlantic ties of spiritual affinity and allegiance. American authors with causes to champion—racial justice, gender equality, sexual freedom, the abolition of class distinctions, or new ideals of literary form and expression—sought and found support among sympathizers in Britain. Their links were particularly strong with the anti-imperialists, feminists, socialists, and

Arts-and-Crafts practitioners who congregated around the designer and poet William Morris, as well as with the Aesthetes and Decadents associated with Oscar Wilde. Countless Americans were, in turn, inspired to write, and to write in particular ways, by direct or indirect contact with radical artistic developments in nineteenth-century Britain, especially Pre-Raphaelitism and Aestheticism. These two Victorian movements, both of which centered on notions of Beauty (with a capital “B”) in art and in life, continued to be powerful influences on American writing into the twentieth century and bound the new generation of modernists to London.

The exhibition’s ten sections were prefaced by a visual representation (found in the display and website alike) of the transatlantic connection—a William Morris design influenced by an American text (Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus*, 1881), *Brother Rabbit*, originally produced for a textile in 1883. Successive sections of the exhibition contained printed works, letters, manuscripts, and images of American literary visitors with Morris and Pre-Raphaelite connections who visited England, such as Bret Harte, Henry James, Emma Lazarus, Joaquin Miller, and Louise Chandler Moulton; Anglo-Americans who lived much of their lives in the UK, such as J. M. Whistler, Frances Hodgson Burnett, John Oliver Hobbes (Pearl Richards Craigie), and Elizabeth Robins Pennell; and authors admired in England, such as Joel Chandler Harris and Walt Whitman. Among many rare items were a manuscript poem by Vincent O’Sullivan on *Discords*, a volume of stories by the 1890s writer George Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne); an 1897 letter from African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar to his future wife Alice Moore written while visiting London; W. M. Rossetti’s copy of Whitman’s *Two Rivulets*; and comic drawings of Frank Harris and Henry James by Max Beerbohm. Morris himself was represented in several ways. Moncure Conway’s *Travels in South Kensington* referred to his life and work, as did Elbert Hubbard’s *Little Journey to the Home of William Morris* (the latter recording a meeting between Hubbard and Morris which did not, in fact, take place). The Kelmscott Press invitation to the unveiling of the 1894 Keats memorial in Hampstead—an event organized by the Boston publisher, photographer, and aesthete, F. Holland Day—was shown. Nearby were a Morris letter to an American journalist (in which the busy poet-designer declines to be interviewed) and a copy of the *Century Illustrated Magazine* for July 1886, open to Emma Lazarus’s article, “A Day in Surrey with William Morris.”

Morris and his family and close associates were the focus of the second show in the University of Delaware Library. On view during the conference and for the rest of October by appointment, *The Multifaceted*

Useful & Beautiful

THE TRANSATLANTIC ARTS OF WILLIAM MORRIS & THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

7–9 October 2010

Thursday, 7 October

4.30 p.m. **Keynote Lecture**, University of Delaware Library:

“The Useful and the Beautiful: Henry James and Mark Twain,” Fred Kaplan, biographer and Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Graduate Center, CUNY

5.30–7 p.m. **Reception and Viewing**, University of Delaware Library: *London Bound: American Writers in Britain, 1870–1916* and *The Multifaceted Mr. Morris* exhibitions

7.30 p.m. **Concert**, Bayard Sharp Hall: “Kindred Spirits: William Morris, Arnold Dolmetsch and Music,” Karen Flint (harpichord), Laura Heimes (soprano), John Burkhalter (recorders)

Friday, 8 October

9 a.m.–3.30 p.m. **Conference Sessions**, Clayton Hall, University of Delaware

Session 1

LITERARY CONNECTIONS

“Transatlantic Confrontation: A Study of Utopian Dreamers, Edward Bellamy and William Morris,” Annette M. Magid, Professor of English, SUNY-Erie Community Coll.

“Disenchanted William Morris’s *The Wood Beyond the World*: James Branch Cabell’s *The Cream of the Jest* (1917),” Kathleen O’Neill Sims, independent scholar, Manchester, NH

“Walt Whitman—‘Poet of the Revolution,’” David Taylor, Honorary Research Fellow, Roehampton U. and Royal Holloway Coll.

INTERIORS AND IDEAS

“Living Up To My China: Morris and the Palette of the American Pre-Raphaelite Interior,” John Burrows, J. R. Burrows & Company, Rockland, MA

“‘Boston has an aestheticism of its own’: A. H. Davenport Co. and Bostonian Influence on the Furnishings of Iolani Palace, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1882,” Deborah Kraak, curatorial consultant, Wilmington, DE

“Gustav Stickley’s Debt to England: The Influences of Ruskin, Morris, Ashbee, Voysey and Baillie Scott,” David Lowden, lawyer (Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP) and book collector

“Candace Wheeler and the Woman’s Building Library of the World’s Columbian Exposition,” Sarah Wadsworth, Associate Professor of English, Marquette U.

MAKING

“A Suitable Handicraft for a Woman?: William Morris and Newcomb Pottery,” Meghan Freeman, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English, Tulane U.

“Towards ‘A Cultural History of the Morris Chair’: Some Preliminary Observations,” Alan T. Gaylord, Winkley Professor Emeritus, Dartmouth Coll.; Senior Scholar, English, Princeton U.

“With Paper and Glue: Building the Success of an Arts and Crafts Toy,” Christie Jackson, Ruby Winslow Linn Curator, Old Colony Historical Society

“William Morris and the Turn-of-the-Century American Greeting Card,” Anne Stewart O’Donnell, independent scholar, College Park, MD

INTO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

“Design Only By Heaven: Ernest Batchelder’s Invocation of Ruskin and Emerson in his *Design in Theory and Practice* (1927),” Lisa Banu, Assistant Professor of Design History, Purdue U.

“Interpreting the Craftsman Ideal in Seattle Public Schools, 1900–1920,” M. Helen Burnham, PhD candidate in Art History, Graduate Center, CUNY

“The Production of Beautiful Labor: William Morris’s Influence on the Small Press Today,” Michael Desjardins, Sessional faculty at OCAD U., Faculty of Design and master’s student at the U. of Toronto, Faculty of Information

Session 2

SOCIALISM

“William Morris and the Making of American Socialism,” Jason Martinek, Assistant Professor of History, New Jersey City U.

“Guest and Comrade: *News from Nowhere* in the American Socialist Press,” Elizabeth C. Miller, Associate Professor of English, U. of California Davis

“Art and Anarchy: Walter Crane in Chicago,” Morna O’Neill, Asst. Professor of Art History, Wake Forest U.

THE RELIGION OF STAINED GLASS

“Made to the order of H. Holiday Esq. To be sent to Mr Frank Furness, Philadelphia,” George Bryant, AIA Senior Associate, WRT LLC, Philadelphia, PA

“The Anglo-American Tradition in Stained Glass,” Judy Neiswander, independent art historian, Boston, MA

“The Gospel of Beauty: Early Examples of Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass in America,” Judy Oberhausen, independent art historian, San Mateo, CA

“Religion and Design at Morris & Co. and Tiffany Studios,” Josh Probert, PhD candidate in History, U. of Delaware

ARCHITECTS

“The Impact of William Morris, John Ruskin, Oscar Wilde and the Pre-Raphaelites on the Architecture, Furniture and Art of the San Francisco Bay Region, 1878–1910,” Leslie M. Freudenheim, Adjunct Scholar, Swedenborgian House of Studies, Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, CA

“Direct Descendants: From Morris, to Richardson, to Andrews, Longfellow, and Warren,” Maureen Meister, architectural historian, Winchester, MA

“Charles Donagh Maginnis Brings Arts and Crafts to Catholic Art,” Milda Richardson, Lecturer, Art and Design Department, Northeastern U. and Fine Arts Department, Emmanuel Coll.

“Transatlantic Sons of Morris: A. J. Penty and Ralph Adams Cram, from Architecture to Medievalist Anti-Capitalism,” John Sharpe, Hagley Fellow, U. of Delaware

PRE-RAPHAELITE LITERATURE AND ART

“Serving the Pre-Raphaelites on Blue China: America’s Thomas Bird Mosher Phenomena,” Philip R. Bishop, Mosher Books, Ephrata, PA

“Poaching Pre-Raphaelitism in *Harper’s Weekly*,” Linda K. Hughes, Addie Levy Professor of Literature, Texas Christian U.

“Frederick Judd Waugh: The New World and the American Galahad.” Kyle Stoneman, PhD candidate in Art History, U. of Washington, Seattle

“Edwin Austin Abbey’s ‘Quest for the Holy Grail’: Murals for the Boston Public Library Made in the Cotswolds,” Linda R. Zieper, Art Librarian, U. of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Session 3

BOOKMAKING

“Kelmescott Meets Deepdene: The Influence of William Morris on Frederic Goudy,” Frank Felsenstein, Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Ball State U.

“T. J. Cobden-Sanderson’s Trip to the United States and Pittsburgh in Particular and Two Binders Trained in the Doves Bindery Way,” Mary Catharine Johnsen, Special Collection Librarian, Carnegie Mellon U. Libraries

“Book Cloth and Book Aesthetics in the Work of Sarah Wyman Whitman,” Allison Jai O’Dell, Corcoran Coll. of Art + Design

“Art Printing in 1890s Indianapolis: J. M. Bowles, Bruce Rogers and the Kelmescott Aesthetic,” Casey Smith, Assistant Professor, Corcoran Coll. of Art + Design

LOCATION, LOCATION

“Cross-Pollination and the ‘Three Fates’: Bringing Arts and Crafts to Detroit,” Leslie S. Edwards, Interim Director, Cranbrook Archives

“Ruskin, Morris, and the Utopian Dream of Ralph Whitehead,” Nancy E. Green, Gale and Ira Drukier Curator of Prints, Drawings, and Photographs, Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell U.

“William Morris in the Land of the Lotos-Eaters,” Anne Mallek, Curator, The Gamble House

“Transmission of ‘Morris’ in Chicago,” Monica Obniski, Research Associate, American Decorative Arts, Art Institute of Chicago

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC: WHISTLER AND WILDE

“Much in Little Space: Whistler’s White and Yellow Exhibition as an Aesthetic Movement Bellwether,” David Park Curry, Senior Curator, Decorative Arts, American Painting & Sculpture, Baltimore Museum of Art

“An Ultra-poetical, Super-aesthetical, Out-of-the-Way Young Man’: Staging Oscar Wilde’s American Tour,” Regina Oost, Professor of English, Wesleyan Coll.

“An American Artist in Japanist London: James McNeill Whistler’s Interior Design at No. 2 Lindsey Row,” Ellen E. Roberts, Associate Curator, Department of American Art, Art Institute of Chicago

COLLECTING THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

“Americans Collecting Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites: John I. Perkins (1863–1942) Collects the Kelmescott Press for Los Angeles,” Susan M. Allen Associate Director and Chief Librarian for Development and Collaborative Initiatives, Getty Research Institute

“Purveyors of ‘Art Produce’: Sources for Morris & Co. and Other Arts-and-Crafts Wares in Boston, 1880 to 1920,” Beverly K. Brandt, Professor, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts, Arizona State U.

“The Transatlantic History of a Morris & Co Stained-Glass Window,” Margaret Laster, PhD candidate in Art History, CUNY

3–4.30 p.m. **Viewing**, University of Delaware Library: *London Bound: American Writers in Britain, 1870–1916* and *The Multifaceted Mr. Morris* exhibitions

4.30 p.m. **Gallery Talk**, Old College Gallery: “Ethel Reed and Poster Art of the 1890s,” Thomas G. Boss, collector and book historian

5–6.30 p.m. **Reception and Viewing**, Old College Gallery: *Ethel Reed and American Graphic Design of the 1890s, From the Thomas G. Boss Collection* exhibition

7.30 p.m. **Play**, Roselle Center for the Arts, University of Delaware: *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, production by University of Delaware Resident Ensemble Players

Saturday, 9 October

9.30–11.15 a.m. **Presentations by Arts and Crafts Practitioners**, Winterthur Museum & Country Estate: Laura Wilder, printmaker and artist; Ron Van Ostrand, metalsmith, Van Ostrand Studios

“Arts and Crafts Resources in the Winterthur Library,” E. Richard McKinstry, Library Director and Andrew W. Mellon Senior Librarian, The Winterthur Library

12–6 p.m. **Viewing**, Delaware Art Museum: *A Belief in the Power of Beauty: A Selection of Work by May Morris (1862–1938)*; *On Assignment: American Illustration 1850–1950*, and *Leonard Baskin: Art from the Gift of Alfred Appel, Jr.* exhibitions, also permanent display of the Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art

2.30–4.30 p.m. **Symposium**, Delaware Art Museum “The Art of Craft and the Craft of Art: The Neo-Victorian Aesthetics and Production of Steampunk,” Panel with Kathryn Crowther, Marion L. Brittain Postdoctoral Fellow, Georgia Institute of Technology; Lisa Hager, Assistant Professor of English, U. of Wisconsin-Waukesha; Thomas Willeford, Steampunk designer and maker, Brute Force Studios and Fallen Angel Fashions

“Commodification in the 21st Century: Pre-Raphaelitism and Merchandise, Comic Books and Mysteries,” Susan P. Casteras, Professor of Art History, U. of Washington

4.30–6 p.m. **Closing Reception**, Delaware Art Museum



Reception at the Delaware Art Museum. At left: Frank Sharp and Fran Durako

Mr. Morris in the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection encompassed books, letters, and other materials drawn from Samuels Lasner's private collection and from the library's Special Collections. The first editions included a set of *The Earthly Paradise* presented to William Michael Rossetti, the large paper issue of *The Roots of the Mountains* inscribed by Morris to his daughter Jenny, and a presentation copy of *A Dream of John Ball* given to E. Belfort Bax. Of the several volumes from Morris's library the most notable was *Nouvelles françaises en prose du XIIIe siècle* (1856); Morris translated several of these medieval romances and printed three of them at the Kelmscott Press (the Library's copy of *Of the Friendship of Amis and Amile* was adjacent).

The exhibition featured letters from Morris (on the relative merits of alcohol and tobacco), Jane Morris (thanking H. Buxton Forman for his *The Books of William Morris*), May Morris (a long missive to her one-time lover, the American lawyer John Quinn), and George Bernard Shaw (to Hall Caine, about Morris, Rossetti, and Swinburne). Morris's socialist side was represented by several pamphlets and by a rare 1896 handbill announcing lectures at Kelmscott House sponsored by the Hammersmith Socialist Society. Graphics included a Rossetti pencil drawing of Jane Morris and a sheet of sketches of heads of the Pre-Raphaelite group made

by Max Beerbohm when he was working on his book, *Rossetti and his Circle*. Morris's calligraphic manuscript catalogue of his Kelmscott House library (ca. 1890) was there too, along with a splendid copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (from Special Collections). But for many the real highlight was the exquisitely crafted and imaginative miniature version of Morris and Burne-Jones's studio at Red Lion Square made by local artist and Morris Society member, Wanda Simons. Readers who recall Simons's illustrated article in a past *Newsletter* ("17 Red Lion Square Comes to Life at the Delaware Art Museum," July 2009) will like to know that the miniature room has since been augmented with additional details (such as Morris's discarded trousers) and is now illuminated with flickering candles and a fire burning in the fireplace grate. *The Multifaceted Mr. Morris* was curated by Mark Samuels Lasner and by Jane Marguerite Tippet, a University of Delaware graduate student in art history.

A Belief in the Power of Beauty: May Morris at the Delaware Art Museum

Collected in one gallery, *A Belief in the Power of Beauty: A Selection of Works by May Morris* was a jewel box of an exhibition made up of twenty-five artworks, primarily landscapes, but also embroidery and book-



Mark Samuels Lasner in *The Multifaceted Mr. Morris* exhibition

bindings by the woman who is better known as William Morris's daughter than as a wonderfully talented creative artist. It displayed May Morris's abilities in drawing, watercolor, textile making and design, and book arts. That nature is her inspiration particularly appears throughout, from her watercolor landscapes to her drawing of herbacious peonies—that suggest rather than copy the originals—to her table cover design comprising plant material like briony.

Apparent, too, is her interest in the history of various crafts, particularly in women's "place" in such history. The exhibition's press release states:

May Morris [early on] developed an interest in embroidery. She trained in this art at the South Kensington School of Design, and was appointed manager of the embroidery department at Morris and Company at the young age of 23. She studied the history of embroidery and published a series of articles on the craft, culminating in the book *Decorative Needlework* (1893).¹

Her book on decorative needlework (which, incidentally, has a cover designed by the author), drew inspiration from medieval needlework; at the same time it served to teach the reader practical techniques as well in what was, ostensibly, a woman's art, since needlework was a craft traditionally associated with women.

May Morris's graphic skills are reflected in the spine

decoration of *Fabian Essays in Socialism* edited by George Bernard Shaw (a possible lover) and the Celtic design on the binding of *Irish Minstrelsy*, edited by Henry Halliday Sparling (her future husband). Her interesting literary work was seen in two original plays, *Lady Griselda's Dream* and *White Lies*, and in her introductions to *The Collected Works of William Morris*, which she edited in twenty-four volumes.

Besides her art and writing, May Morris's life and interests were traced in such "ephemera" as a letter to Delaware Pre-Raphaelite collector Samuel Bancroft; a Christmas card; landscape watercolors of places she loved in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, and the countryside around Kelmscott Manor; an autograph notebook with sketches of vistas and images as well as notes referring to works of art in various collections; the photograph by George Beresford used to promote her American lecture tour; and an albumen photograph of the Hammersmith Socialist League showing May, her sister Jenny, and her father.

The image and motto "from the branch to the flower" found on the bookplate Walter Crane designed for May Morris (also on display) suggests William Morris's enduring influence on his daughter's life, activities, and artistry. This influence can be seen in May Morris's Arts and Crafts work, in her studies in medievalism,

and in the very landscapes she chose to record. Yet, as this exhibition shows, this influence did not make her a shadow or echo of her father but an individual in her own right with her own organic roots and growth. That May Morris was her own person is clear from her writing and art, her friendships, her travels, and her life-experiences.

In *Decorative Needlework* May Morris gave her version of the importance of good design—which is reflected in the title of this exhibition: “a belief in the power of beauty is a wholesome thing, and I make no apology for preaching it.” When, in 1909–10, she embarked on a lecture tour of the United States her goal was to spread this gospel “as well as an understanding of the rich British tradition of embroidery.” May Morris made no apologies for preaching—even preaching about beauty—a bold statement for a woman to make in her own right. This exhibition comprises a strong statement about her life and art.

1. This report is indebted to the museum’s excellent and informative press release, dated 16 August 2010 (www.delart.org/about/pressroom/current_PR/pdf/20100816_DAMPR_may_morris.pdf). *A Belief in the Power of Beauty* was on view from 28 August 2010 through 2 January 2011.

The Art of Craft and the Craft of Art: Neo-Victorian Aesthetics and the Production of Steampunk

Although most of the “Useful & Beautiful” conference was devoted to the past—the period from 1850 to 1920—the panel “The Art of Craft and the Craft of Art: The Neo-Victorian Aesthetics and Production of Steampunk,” which took place on the third day (9 October) at the Delaware Art Museum, dealt unhesitatingly with today’s culture. The speakers, Kathryn Crowther (Georgia Institute of Technology), Lisa Hager (University of Wisconsin-Waukesha) and Thomas Willeford (Brute Force Studios and Fallen Angel Fashions), made the claim that William Morris’s influence on futuristic visions appears in Neo-Victorianism and Steampunk. Steampunk, for those who are not yet aware of it, is “an approach to contemporary design that looks to the Victorian period for its inspiration and aesthetics.” Steampunk harks back to the “nineteenth-century’s Industrial Revolution, i.e. steam engines, and punks, i.e. plays, often with great irony, with its conventions, inventions, and obsessions.”

According to its admirers, how Morris confronted, fought against, and transformed the effects of the industrial revolution seems to comprise his especial appeal to those involved with Steampunk. Also appealing is the way that Morris’s originality and artistry ranged across high art and popular culture, a range that parallels Steampunk’s similar cultural presence:

Neo-Victorianism and Steampunk are much more than literary genres. They have become cultural phenomena,

showing up in almost all areas of high art and popular culture. Television series such as *The Wild, Wild West* (1965–69) and *Sanctuary* (currently airing on Sci-Fi), anime films like the 2004 *Steamboy* (Katsuhiro Otomo of *Akira* fame) and *Howl’s Moving Castle* (2004), and the recent Hollywood film *Sherlock Holmes* (2010) are all very much neo-Victorian and Steampunk cultural artifacts.

In her presentation, Lisa Hager considered the scholarly legacies of Morris, finding that “the work of William Morris provides a key lens through which to contextualize Steampunk and consider its impact on Victorian Studies as a field.” She related Morris’s relationship with history and discourse to Steampunk’s interest in changing, mixing, intermingling, and reviving discourse, just as Morris did with medievalism. Some of the Steampunk examples Hager referred to in this regard are the Babbage Regatta on Second Life and the Outland Armor worn at the 2009 DragonCon.

Kathryn Crowther talked about print culture, and how Steampunk and Morris’s Arts and Crafts rose out of a similar moment in history, with the shared desire of placing the artist back at the center of individual expression: Morris’s “desire to return to older techniques of production, which prioritize the individual craftsman and emphasize the craft itself, resonates with the ostensible goals of today’s Steampunk movement.” As an example, Crowther pointed to an everyday object of use, the iPod, showing how a one-of-a-kind Steampunk manipulation opens the device up, revealing how it—and technology like it—works. Steampunk resists the uniformity of modern technology, the loss of the consumer’s immediate contact with the means of production. In these ways, to Crowther, Steampunk resembles Morris’s work:

In a type of protest against the minimalistic, sealed-off aesthetics of artifacts such as iPhones or MacBooks, the artistic work of Steampunkers reinvoles the very concerns of Morris and his contemporaries, asking the question—what is lost, or, what do we as consumers of art lose, when industrialization and mass-production render the individual craftsman obsolete.

Thomas Willeford displayed Steampunked objects from his website Brute Force Studios and Fallen Angel Fashions (www.bruteforceleather.com). He spoke of how Steampunk enhances visuals and interiors and likened Steampunk’s widespread reinvention of technological products to Morris’s own reclaiming of older methods for artistic purposes. Willeford describes his own style as “filigree and gingerbread.” He reports that he begins his filigree work by looking at Morris wallpaper designs and then layering on other designs and making his own modifications.



The Morris Kitsch Archive at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts

The effect of mechanization and mass-production on the artisan invokes the moral component of Morris's Arts and Crafts activities. Willeford responds to this component, too; he

knows where and under what conditions the materials for his creations are produced, purchasing fabrics made in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts and metal closures from England rather than cheaper versions made in sweatshops.

Audience members expressed varying responses to the visual objects presented, however. Some noted the un-Morrisian absence of a critique of the technological culture in which these objects were embedded, while others argued that the sexist implications of extremely gendered role-playing and fetishized garments violated Arts and Crafts ideals of social reform, gender equality and natural clothing.

The Morris Kitsch Archive

The Morris Kitsch Archive, an installation by David Mabb, was held at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, 15 August–5 December 2010, and occasioned a lecture by the artist on Sunday, 10 October, following the "Useful & Beautiful" conference. Mabb is well known to Morris Society members from his talk

at the "Morris in the 21st Century" conference held in London in 2005, and from articles in the *Journal*, *US Newsletter*, and elsewhere. *The Morris Kitsch Archive* contains over 720 images, largely drawn from shopping pages on the Internet, of commercially produced domestic objects, including tote bags, clothes, cushions, mugs, sofas, stationery, tea cozies and tools decorated with the textile and wallpaper designs of William Morris. Since Morris was a fierce opponent of capitalism, he might well have been shocked to see the many money-making projects that his designs have inspired since his death. According to Mabb,

The archive illustrates how Morris' designs have been appropriated for a mass consumer society. The designs have become widely available at the expense of the qualities and values inherent to Morris' original utopian project, which offered in its vision of the fecundity of nature the hope of alternative ways of living in the world.

Individually laminated in A4 sheets and displayed in 12 blocks of 60 images each, the images form an imposing and—despite their appropriation—attractive array. For more information about David Mabb's work, go to www.gold.ac.uk/art/research/staff/dm/01.

WHOSE BOOK IS THIS, ANYWAY? EDITING AT THE KELMSCOTT AND HOGARTH PRESSES

Joshua Davidson

In the great tradition of private presses, William Morris's Kelmscott Press and Leonard and Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press are two of the most notable. Aside from the fame of their founders, they are remarkable for challenging the pervading literary, cultural and publishing mores of their times, and for the unique results they achieved. But as familiarity with Kelmscott and early Hogarth books (1917–1922) has expanded, so has the enigma of their publication. The standard publishing houses of their times stood confounded by Morris's and the Woolfs' blurring of the distinctions between author, editor, printer and publisher; today it is the mechanism of textual scholarship that stands confounded.

What are some of the unique editing issues that Kelmscott and Hogarth books present, and how can current textual theory and editing practice, with their bias for linguistic and bibliographic coding, do them justice in a theoretical critical edition? Some answers lie in investigating the unusual mix of contextual and human codings implicit in the history of the Presses and their founders which seem to point to a new classification of textual analysis: "manufactural coding."

The Kelmscott and Hogarth presses operated in chronologically close but otherwise contrasting eras; the former printed books from 1891 to 1898 and the latter issued handprinted books from 1917 to 1932. When he started Kelmscott Morris was fifty-six, and had spent the better part of his life and a good part of his fortune pursuing, perfecting, and producing his version of the Pre-Raphaelite ideal of artfully rendered beauty. At Hogarth's founding in 1917 Leonard and Virginia Woolf were thirty-seven and thirty-five, obscure and undecided upon the course their lives would take. She had led an intellectual, upper middle-class life; he came from modest means to Cambridge, and afterward worked for seven years as a colonial civil servant. As central members of the Bloomsbury Group, they circled close to the center of Modernist thought and expression. Both had published novels by 1915 (Leonard, *The Village in the Jungle* [1913], Virginia, *The Voyage Out* [1915]), but success in their careers as writers seemed remote and the conduct of the Great War had profoundly affected them. This generation gap was widened by the contrast between Morris's devotion to the medieval past and the Woolfs' Modernist allegiances.

These vast differences in place, age, and time translate into very different forces being at work in the found-

ings of Kelmscott and Hogarth. Morris's "typographical adventure" emerged from the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society's 1888 exhibition. Among the exhibitors, Morris and Co. was well represented by a host of craft-made decorative products, exemplifying his kindly admonition to "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful." Notably absent, however, were any of his commercially published books. Printers had tried to accommodate Morris's aesthetic specifications for his own works of poetry and fiction, even going so far as to acquire special type and papers. But his iconic demands strained the stylistic conventions to which printing had limited itself in becoming the efficient handmaiden of the orderly Victorian publishing machine.

At the root of the disagreement was Morris's notion of a made thing's "value." This had nothing to do with money; rather it was the valuation of the craft that had gone into the thing's making—not the thing, but the effort of its making. Within the application of craft, Morris found a different system of values where deliberation, artisanship, and participation in a physical/spiritual endeavor were a person's chief joys. His own criteria could only be met by the application of his own ethos: that the artisanship in the creation of each part of any thing has merit, and the arrangement and assembly of those crafts into a beautiful and useful whole bespeaks their true individual value as realized concepts. He had applied these ideas successfully to his decorative products, incorporating the resistance of their component materials in *causing* them to become artistic expressions of craft. But for Morris, the richest material was the book. It embodied the ability to linguistically invoke and aesthetically evoke; to connect literary and aesthetic crafts across a yet higher and broader dimension of his ideal where the conception of the work could coincide with the conception of the form it is to take.

Hogarth and every other private press started in the decades following Kelmscott owe much to William Morris's adventurism. The Woolfs were no disciples of Morris's aesthetic legacy, and they actively disdained the thought of Hogarth falling into the fine printing tradition, whose "books . . . are meant not to be read, but to be looked at."¹ However, their idea of printing their own works at home derives inescapably from Kelmscott's aura. Hogarth's debt to Kelmscott does not diminish it in any way, and in many indirect ways the Woolfs appreciated and guided Hogarth by what they took to be Morris's failures and successes.

The Hogarth Press was first located in the dining room of the Woolfs' leased Richmond home, Hogarth House. Virginia Woolf had been dissatisfied with her first publisher, her half-brother Gerald Duckworth, and her recent mental breakdown suggested the need

for a therapeutic alternative activity. Thus their own printing press seemed to address this duality: Virginia could experiment with short, unusual works for publication (literally in a room of her own), and take up an intricately soothing manual occupation which Leonard felt might consume some of her excess mental energy.

In becoming printers, Morris and the Woolfs became publishers and editors as well. These roles fell upon them in due course, and were taken up with varying degrees of acuity and relish. This wearing of multiple hats affected the conduct and direction of the Presses, balancing artistic and writerly concerns.

William Morris never intended to be a publisher, just a printer. He originally did not even plan to own a printing press. But his investment in Kelmscott all but demanded that he act as more than just its operator, and he never shied away from full control of a book. Throughout the life of the press Morris kept control of the printing—of the book as job and the text as artifact—by charging only for materials and not his services. His disaffection for conventional publishing allowed him to grant himself near-omniscience in the role of editor. Integral to Morris's craft-based ideals was the allocation of tasks among fellow-craftsmen. Among the monkish artisans of Morris's theorized Gothic era, no management level existed to oversee the communal work being done. Each craftsman fulfilled an occupation near the center of his being rather than a job. To Morris this held multiple implications: first, that the craftsman, solely responsible for his work, felt its spiritual resistance in his heart just as he felt its material resistance in his hands; second, that the practice of his occupation in effect placed himself in his own hands as a thing to be crafted; third, that the artisan's improvements in skill and spirit augmented the community of which he was a part; and fourth, that the made object of their collective craft benefitted from the consideration of many minds and the touch of many hands. The conventional role of 19th century publisher ran counter to these facets of Morris's ideal. Authors write, editors edit, printers print—these were occupations that appealed to him as ennobling, involving a singular purpose of the hands and/or mind; the publisher was guilty at once of contributing no discrete craft work to a text, and of bearing off most of the responsibility and profit.

The Woolfs were intrigued by the tasks of printing and unimpressed by the arrangements of publishing. The nature of their initial undertaking was small and so were the projects they applied to it. In effect they became small publishers the moment they started printing Hogarth's first publication, *Two Stories*, in 1917. But the ease of that transformation is deceiving, because the expansion of the Woolfs' roles from authors-printers to publishers brought the job of editor along with it.

Whether an author can bypass the editor and effectively edit his/her own work, or indeed whether editing is a detriment to authorial vision are questions implicit in nearly any study of textual theory; editors are the restrainers of authors and abettors of transmissional error. Yet in the Woolfs' time, as now, editors occupied the center of the literary world, connecting the private writer to the reading public. By 1917 both Woolfs were established literary critics and published novelists. The editor exists in the middle of author and critic, at odds with both. The Woolfs, in the publishing of their own texts, were all three. Leonard states that "the development of the Hogarth Press was bound up with the development of Virginia as a writer and with her literary and creative psychology."² Writers are naturally sympathetic to other writers and it is not hard to imagine an author/editor allowing a beautiful but perhaps useless bit of prose to slip past her editor's pencil. And while it is possible that Virginia indulged other writers, it is probable that Leonard indulged her, since she "was terribly—even morbidly—sensitive to criticism of any kind."³

Hogarth house formed yet another layer of this identity. The Woolfs' centrality to Bloomsbury meant that they had access to some of the best literary minds of the time. The Hogarth Press attracted a spectacular stable of writers with its little handmade books. The most famous of their friends were no doubt attracted by the Woolfs' pluck and the honesty of their hand-printed books with their cheery wrappers. While Hogarth published a number of eminent originals, most notably T. S. Eliot's *Poems* and *The Waste Land*, many of the texts they received from established friends were cast-aways that had been rejected elsewhere, and on which the authors may largely have given up. The Woolfs also made an extraordinary number of "discoveries." This is owing in part to their good taste and the extensions of their circle, but mostly it derives from their critical work; reviewing enabled them to notice the beginning of many careers, and to help those careers once they gained a toe-hold. Thus an unusual mixture of sensitive editing, friendship, and a unique connectedness to the avant-garde propelled the early Hogarth Press.

While Kelmscott existed for only eight years, it personified the ultimate development of William Morris's complex yet elegant aesthetic ideal. To understand that ideal's application to Kelmscott books, it is valuable to recall the idea that the conception of the work must coincide with the conception of the form it is to take. Morris recognized that for this permeation to develop in a book, it had to occur at a text's essential level, the letter—the minutest element of print in which linguistic and aesthetic expression intersect; in a sense the root icon in a system of iconography he undertook to develop in theory and practice. The letter's

further merit was to fit his ideal of parts. The expense of effort perfecting a letter's shape augmented its cohort—the perfect “p” lent itself to the perfection of the “q” and became ultimately an alphabet of letters “pure in form; severe, without needless excrescences; solid, without the thickening and thinning of line, and not compressed laterally.”⁴ Calligraphically, this was arduous work, and typographically too; but for Morris that was precisely the joy and essential value of the work in the deliberate creation of each letter where he found the “resistance in the material”; explaining that “the very slowness with which the pen or the brush moves over the paper, or the graver goes through the wood, has its value.”⁵

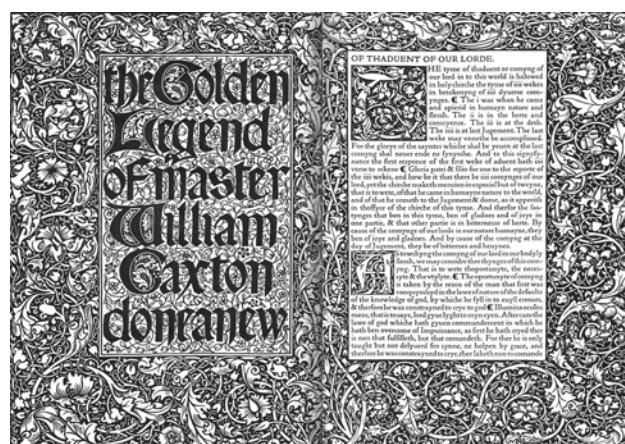
“I began printing books with the hope of producing some which would have a definite claim to beauty,”⁶ Morris wrote in “A Note on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press.” In this he discussed paper and typography, going into great detail about spacing, proportion, and position: within a letter itself, between letters, between words, between lines and columns, and the precise placement of the copy on the page. He also goes into some detail about ornamentation, and by the epistle's end the reader has a quite good understanding of every element of a well-considered page of type except one, the text. Apart from a few objectified references to “the Chaucer” there is no reference to the literary work to which all this exacting consideration is to be applied.

Did it matter? When it came to the page, Morris the writer seemed to disappear behind Morris the artist. When the original Reeves and Turner edition (printed by the Chiswick Press) of Morris's *A Tale of the House of the Wolfings* (1889) was headed to press with a half-blank title page, Morris submitted sixteen lines of verse along with an alteration of the title, the appearance of whose fourth and fifth lines he didn't like. When the press manager protested Morris's mere aesthetic reasons, Morris gently rebuked him, adding, “now what would you say if I told you that the verses on the title page were written just to fill up the great lower half? Well, that was what happened!”⁷ The verses were by no means bad, but clearly words, and by extension text, like the letters of which they are built, were for Morris similarly available for aesthetic duty.

Morris raised the resistance by forcing words, and text, to do what they are not apparently purposed for. By crafting words to ornamental purposes Morris created a new morphic entity (artext?), drawn out of and beyond the iconic letters of which they are made into a still more robust matching of linguistic invocation with aesthetic evocation. In doing so, he makes these words count double: visually as well as aurally.

In order to illustrate the primacy of the publisher's intent and its claim to authority, let us look at books

produced by the Kelmscott and Hogarth Presses, but with which Morris and the Woolfs had no direct authorial connection: *The Golden Legend* (Kelmscott, 1892) and *The Story of the Siren* (Hogarth, 1923).



THE GOLDEN LEGEND

The Golden Legend is a compilation of saints' lives originally written in the latter half of the fifteenth century in Latin by Jacobus de Voragine, Archbishop of Milan. England's first great printer, William Caxton, issued at least two English language editions in 1483 and 1487. As an admirer of early printing, Morris was more enamored of continental printers' aesthetic sense, but was a devotee of Caxton as an Englishman and printer. *The Golden Legend* was explicitly the sort of book to which Morris sought to fit his type, but it was only because Caxton's edition existed to emulate that he undertook the project. *The Golden Legend* was to be the first book issued by the Kelmscott Press, and the namesake of the Morris-designed Golden typeface. The book was delayed because the first batch of special-order paper was unsatisfactory.

The Kelmscott *Golden Legend* is a large quarto in three volumes, each approximately three inches thick at the spine, 1298 pages (xii+1286). The edition examined had a standard cloth binding.

The first printed item one encounters upon opening the *Golden Legend* is a loosely-inserted slip in front of the first page reading,

IF this book be bound the edges of the leaves should only be TRIMMED, not cut. In no case should the book be pressed, as that would destroy the “impression” of the type and thus injure the appearance of the printing.
W. MORRIS.

These instructions are nothing if not possessive. The initial directive concerning the trimming of the leaves constitutes a conversation between a printer and the prospective binder, though it gently implies that the binder may not know his craft, and in capitalizing the word “trimmed,” that he could be careless as well.

The second item about pressing is a general admonition for perpetuity whose edge is slightly dulled by the brief fatherly explanation. Thus the book begins with Morris exerting a stern instruction for the next craftsman likely to touch the book to mind his craft, and a yet more powerful claim over the book's owner(s) to protect it and the craft invested in it by Morris. An important secondary inference is that craft exists at the mercy of carelessness.

After Morris's terse counsel, the next recto page seems like another world. The reader is drawn to it by Morris's ornament. The vine's tips are tulips, but whereas the gutter-side tulip hangs down from the ornament the top one curls back in from the end to droop lamp-like over the illuminated "T" where the letter's arm reaches for the "HE" to form "THE." Thus the reader is drawn into an invocation by an invisible speaker who immediately enlists several saints to suggest, "Do alweye somme good werke, to thende that the deuyll fynde the not ydle," which chance is immediately dashed by the "werke" entailed in translating the language. Strange non-parallels occur ("books" and "works" translate into "bookes" and "werkys") which challenge the reader's assumptions about his own language. Progressively, the reading becomes easier, but never easy; the reader is developing a craft at which proficiency marks the ability to gain more of it.

At the same time, the invocation turns to the origins of the edition. The invoker/translator cites various editions for their qualities, faults, and differences. He discusses another "englysshe" edition as incomplete enough in his mind to warrant this new translation, which will be a synthesis of all the books in his possession without any deference to dates of publication or guarantees of authenticity. Amid this blurring of transmission, there is nowhere mention of an originary author. The text's origin is not only actively ignored, but actively obscured in the encouragement of anyone to emend it with promises that in so doing the emender "shal deserue a synguler lawde and meryte." Thus the translator has assumed the mantle of the text's keeper, and by granting the authority for others to author, implicitly claims it for himself. In all, the book appears in the invocation already to be an orphan raised since infancy in the continual care of indulgent strangers—its origin trivial, forgotten, and impossible to trace.

Caxton makes himself plain in the "acknowledgement" paragraph following the invocation, but again makes no explicit claim to the text (though he identifies "lord willyam, erle of arondel" as the "chyef causer" of the book's achievement by his sponsorship). Indeed, if anything, he explicates the text's own claim, as an immortal tale and object, upon himself, its sponsor, and the reader.

Turning to the title opening is a sensation. The com-

plexity of the ornamental border causes a quantum magnification of the "another world" impression of progressing from the instruction slip to the invocation. Framed within the dense border of the verso is a title box, but the first impression is of the lighter foliage within, rather than the title itself. The airier ornament stands out like a path for the reader the way a gap between bushes does for an experienced hiker. The position of the title frame mirrors that of the text frame on the recto, indicating that closed, they "meet," and in stack, form a kind of tunnel or path through the book. The path is bulldozed clear on the recto by the text, except for the ornamented capitals. The verso title is in a single type size, indicating that the title of this work is not the *Golden Legend*, but *the Golden Legend of Master William Caxton done anew*. This adds several layers of meaning to the original title, the first being to reiterate the obscurity of authority which exists as a synthesis of author/transmitter; the second is to expand this synthesis to yet another transmitter who has "done it anew," and remains anonymous, though hugely present all around the title, and more lightly within it, as the ornamentor; thirdly, the title text is slightly askew in the geometry of its frame, i.e., while three of the lines fill the lateral constraints of the frame, the three others are loose, floating unjustified left or right, inferring perhaps the text's raffish origin, transmission, and attitude as outside the institutionally ordained religious canon; it belongs to the average man.

Beyond the title opening, there are no more full-page borders in the book, but ornamental capitals mark the beginning of each paragraph. These indicate to the reader the edges of the path he is on, but also serve as windows beyond those edges, for in lieu of a specific destination, a path is defined by its surroundings. Furthermore they remind the reader of the anonymous "done anew" author/transmitter's presence, while their variety (five "a"s, four "t"s) implies that he is clearing the path just ahead, taking these words where they have not gone before.

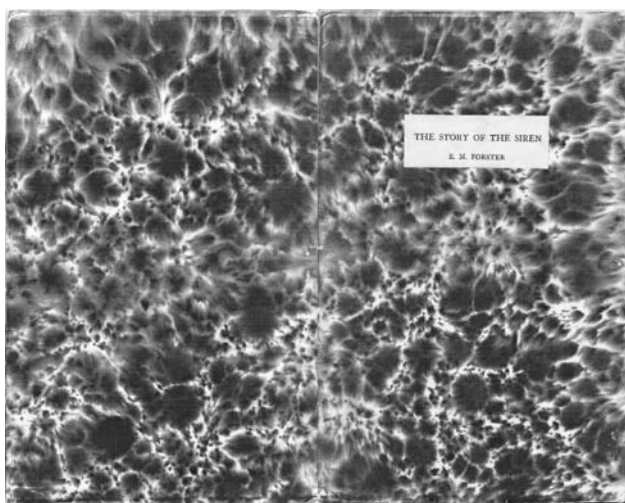
At the end of it all is the Kelmscott colophon, an oddly declarative statement:

HERE ends this new edition of William Caxton's golden Legend; in which there is no change from the original, except for the correction of errors of the press, & some few other amendments thought necessary for the understanding of the text. It is edited by Frederick S. Ellis, & printed by me, William Morris at the Kelmscott Press, Upper Mall, Hammersmith, in the County of Middlesex, and finished on the 12th day of September of the year 1892. Sold by Bernard Quaritch, 15 Piccadilly, London. [emphasis added]

Thus the book closes as it opened: with the claim of distinct production authority by William Morris.

Morris “speaks” at the beginning and end of the book, sentrying the entrances to it as its manufacturer, its material source. But he also inserts himself into the text, shedding his name tag and illuminating the invocation’s magnanimous abdication of authority, greeting his host with a compelling formation of letters and words like a bottle of wine. By the title opening it is he who opens the path “anew,” and marks its course with freshness throughout the text. At the end, the hand in the “Memorandum” is Ellis’s, but the words are Morris’s, and as usual is more than it appears to be. The editorial rigor discovers and explains much about the book, but it also displays the application of craft and cooperation; the transmissional enquiry clarifies the text’s history, but it also at once establishes new authority (in establishing the book’s pedigree) and reclaims some authority lost (in reestablishing the notion of an identifiable trail of transmission and leading it to this edition).

Morris thus rushed into the void of authority, and captured the text by the addition of an aesthetic dimension, the resuscitation of the contextual/historical coding, the augmentation of the linguistic coding and the outright seizure of the bibliographic coding. In making this edition of *The Golden Legend*, Morris has taken an orphaned text to his bosom and improved it by his art.



THE STORY OF THE SIREN

The Story of the Siren was written by E. M. Forster between 1904 and 1909, and printed and published by the Woolfs at the Hogarth Press in 1920. The volume strikes the reader immediately by its slenderness; it is not so much a book as a pamphlet. Stacked on a shelf it would disappear, and thus its sale probably depended upon its being specifically displayed. This thinness combines with the overlap of the covers over the page trim to make the volume look more than anything like a piece of mail. The billowing blue marbled cover is

an almost pulsing study in color saturation and variety of a single hue. To the reader it suggests itself as many things other than a book: an impressionist painting, perhaps of the sky or the sea, or again, an unusual piece of mail. The first hint of its true nature shows by the unevenness of the covers, which don’t quite match, and therefore indicate that the piece can be opened.

Opening the cover displays the book’s construction. The cover paper is inexactly cut and wrapped around a thicker sheet, and the wrapper’s corners which are cut to join do not, leaving gaps and at least one exposed corner and exposed glue. Near the middle of the spine is a staple through the text which holds the two signatures, and the stitching is loose enough to be visible, though tight enough to hold the leaves snugly in place. The quarter-inch overlap of the covers seems at first to be poor fitting, but reflects upon the edges of the text pages, which have been well-protected. This is the first indication that the volume is anything more than an amateur endeavor, signifying that the cover has a dual conception as both the attractive convention of any book and a packaging device.

The title page itself is a simple, but well-arranged piece of printing. The title is prominent, but not well-spaced, and the “T” in “STORY” is crooked, which fact acquires significance when reading the colophon, which names the printer, and which, printed in italics, draws the eye straight to the bottom of the page. The printers’ full names and address beg an intimacy to the reader (they must be a nice couple—and printers!) From there the eye is caught by the heavy black flower ornament in the very middle of the page, thus in a sense “completing” the page for the reader (in which he has seen the top, bottom, and middle of the page). It is really only then that the author’s name is found in its odd place somewhere above the middle, struck in a small, standard typeface, whose thin letters seem almost disconnected in the generous spacing. The author’s name is quite small, considering his own prominence. This offers many speculative meanings regarding the author’s relation to the story, but it has the certain effect of enlarging the printer/publishers’ names in relation to that of the author. Leafing through the book one is aware of the uneven impression of the printing, with particularly poor inking on page 8. Some leaves are wrinkled from when they went through the press askew, further reminders of the Woolfs’ inexperience and the amateur quality of their work.

The Story of the Siren takes place literally in the Mediterranean, in a boat and among the grottoes of the Italian coastline. The narrator mentions the water on nearly every page, so taken is he by it. He evokes an image of deep blue water surging in and out of the scalloped grottoes, washing around the rocks and filtering through the sand. A text’s evocation of its cover is not

that unusual, but the cover's invocation of the story is a much more difficult feat to achieve, particularly without a purpose-made image. This is the printer/publisher's domain, and their clever choice has indeed become part of the story, and they with it.

Much like Morris and *The Golden Legend*, the Woolfs have taken a cast-off story, wrapped it in the swaddling of their cleverness and nourished it with their diligence. Virginia Woolf's ability to burrow into her own characters' streams of consciousness seems to be a transitive talent which has, in *The Story of the Siren* energized a good story, adding a sensory level and a layer of meaning to the story that the text alone did not have. This new layer comes at some expense to the author. But without it, the text might well have remained unpublished, and certainly much less remarkable. That remarkableness is the Woolfs' addition.

Kelmscott and Hogarth books possess qualities and meaning which course through the linguistic and bibliographical codings to establish new levels of meaning. They accomplish this by applying their sensibilities to the books in the course of their printing, often aggressively, and in the examples here, with a transparency that so enriches the book that it is transformed beyond the sum of its text and cover.

To then force these books into an editing paradigm that emphasizes the text first and the materiality distantly second would erase the very essence that makes these books, and by extension the printers/publishers who produced them, prized today. While their texts bear scrutiny, they are neither claimed by any strong authority, nor do they comprise the primary element of the books, nor do the materials. Instead both are made a function of the "manufactural" codes, and therefore any critical edition must approach those codes' re-creation as the object of their work.

Kelmscott and Hogarth books were primitive each in their own way, but in that primitiveness inspiration resides. Making new "old" books would be even more painful to today's publishers than it was to Morris's. But the equipment and materials exist, and an editor/printer dedicated to the essence of these books could do that, one page at a time.

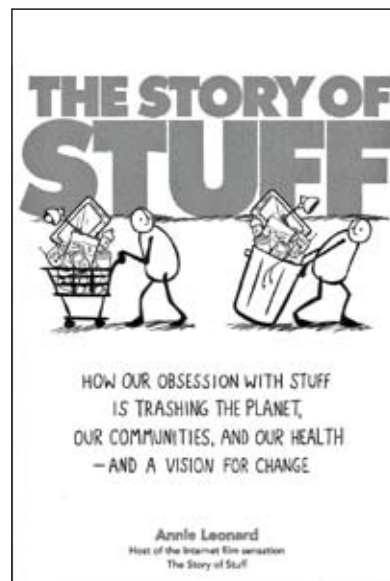
Joshua Davidson lives in Newton, MA. He is a writer and publisher who dabbles in various antiquities with special interest in books, the Arts and Crafts movement, and automobiles.

1. Leonard Woolf, *Downhill All the Way: An Autobiography of the Years 1919 to 1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1967), 80.
2. *Ibid.*, 64.
3. *Ibid.*, 56.
4. William Morris, "A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press," in *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Arts of the Book*, ed. William S. Peterson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 75–6.
5. William Morris, quoted in H. Halliday Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris Master-Craftsman* (London: Macmillan, 1924), 14.
6. Morris, "Note," 75.

IN THE SPIRIT OF MORRIS: CRAFT VS. STUFF

Martin Stott

At a time of global economic and environmental crisis it is heartening to find two powerful contributions about our current existential predicament having such an impact on thinking on both sides of the Atlantic. This year saw the publication of two books by American authors which address both the global ecological challenges we face and the dominant thinking about what we value in our late capitalist societies, in ways which I am sure would have warmed Morris's heart, and which act as a rallying cry to present day Morrisians.

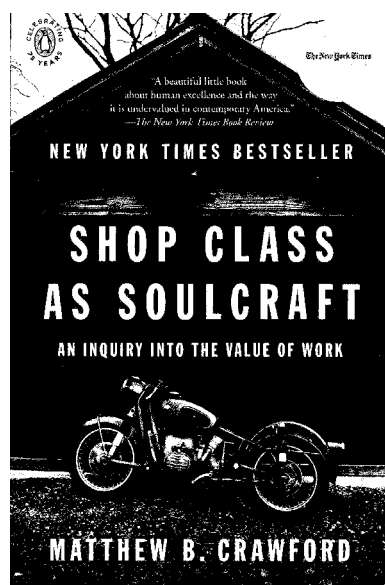


Both books address the dysfunctional and unsustainable approaches our societies promote—from very different viewpoints. But their conclusions are complementary and, for me at least, strike a powerful chord. The starting point is consumption. By this I mean the lust to secure status by acquiring and consuming more and more "stuff" and in chucking more and more of it away. First up is *The Story of Stuff*. Its genesis and political impact worldwide is a story worth telling in itself. In December 2007, a twenty minute, low budget film appeared on the internet. Made by Annie Leonard, *The Story of Stuff* led to an enriched website of the same name (www.thestoryofstuff.com) and sparked a debate in the US on the nature and direction of that consumer society. The film's impact—over twelve million downloads—has been such as to draw the ire of right wing talk show hosts, most notably Glenn Beck, who has denounced its producer and narrator as "the Marxist in the pony tail" and an enemy of the American way of life. *The Story of Stuff* takes a journey into the "dark

heart of American consumerism,” and in a hard-hitting but amusing way takes it apart and explores how there could be another way.

Now the book is out (Free Press). Running to four hundred pages this is hardly a slight strip-cartoon magazine, but a much more serious contribution. It combines autobiography, polemic, hardheaded analysis, and relevant policy proposals with the little stick people and their props that characterize the film. Closely argued and sharp, the book describes “How our obsession with stuff is trashing the planet, our communities and our health.” Like the film, it sets out the whole cycle of extraction, production, consumption, and disposal across the planet, what Leonard calls, “the take-make-waste economic model.” I recall the cheerleaders of the e-revolution in the UK a decade or so ago in books with titles like “Living on thin air,” which argued that the new information society would lead us to the promised land. Unfortunately, in terms redolent of Ellen in *News from Nowhere*, Leonard reminds us that the five-to-seven million tons of electronic “e-waste” dumped each year are “poisoning the land, air and water and all the earth’s inhabitants.”

Apart from pithy insights into the American (and European) obsession with “stuff” and what we do with it when we no longer want it, there are some really heartbreaking stories about labor exploitation and toxic dumping in Haiti and the disaster produced by the cavalier disregard for life in the cause of industrial production in Bhopal, India.



But it’s the section on the American (and British) love affair with shopping that will make you weep—with laughter sometimes. I had forgotten that George W. Bush in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy had urged Americans to go shopping as “the ultimate repudiation of terrorism.” So anyone who suggests that consuming

less might be a bad thing is, quite literally, threatening the American way of life.

This brings me to my second exhibit. In the UK Matt Crawford’s book is called *The Case for Working With Your Hands*. I like the title with its Morrisian overtones. However, in the US it was called *Shop Class as Soulcraft* (Penguin). Which is a great title too if you understand the term “Shop Class” (or “Shop”), not one used in the UK. Crawford is both a (former) academic philosopher and a man who works with his hands. He runs a motorcycle repair shop, Shokoe Moto, in Richmond, Virginia. His critique of post-industrial capitalism is the other side of the coin from Leonard’s. His concerns are that we now live in a society where we make nothing—that we are all engaged in “meta work” and everything tangible is made abroad, and that the assumption is that because we don’t know how to fix things any more, we just chuck them away when they break.

Crawford is a Morrisian. Indeed the book explicitly traces a lineage back to Ruskin, Morris, and the Arts and Crafts movement, although rightly he refers more to “trades” than “crafts.” I am not exactly sure what Crawford means by “soulcraft” but the British philosopher Louis de Bernieres described it as “an activity that is good for your moral being, developmental intelligence, sense of self worth and social usefulness.” A good summary of the spirit that infused Morris.

Crawford is someone who is trying to reclaim the value of specialist manual labour in societies that continually privilege “knowledge work.” Craftsmen are continually absorbed in highly complex processes that require not just manual dexterity but also feats of analytical thinking that are themselves shaped by that person’s growing experience. He identifies a social dimension to this. If you have a problem you seek advice from someone older, wiser, and more experienced. There is fellowship and comradeship in this, even if you work alone. In Crawford’s own context, you also have a motorcycle that works again, a customer who is delighted and impressed (and not out of pocket), and enormous personal satisfaction. Not bad for a day’s work. And it makes a difference in the context of what we all do and why we do it. As he says, “If you need a deck built or your car fixed, the Chinese are of no help. Because they are in China.” That’s the problem with the “knowledge economy” obsession, or, as he puts it, “get every warm body into college, thence into a cubicle.” No work is safe from globalization. Office jobs are even more likely to be “offshorable” than manufacturing these days, as Asian call centers graphically demonstrate. But, “You can’t hammer a nail over the internet.” That is why I have encouraged both of my rather intellectual daughters to take up a “trade” seriously. I am glad to say they have, bike maintenance and cookery respectively.

Like Leonard, Crawford recognizes that his quest is to have a different value system. One where producing is better than consuming, where reuse and repair are activities which lift the spirit as well as ensuring we all collectively live more lightly on the earth. He invokes the “spirited man” (actually he’s not very good on women—it can grate a bit) who will learn an instrument rather than “consume” music, who is repulsed by the new make of Mercedes that doesn’t have a dipstick and where, if something goes wrong, opening up the hood is of no help because everything is in sealed units—to take out and replace—no opportunity to repair.

These advocates of a new look at the nature of work and the opportunities to create meaningful work by creating a more ecologically sound, less wasteful society are working with the grain of the times. The global recession and the evidence all around us of the impact of our extraordinarily wasteful lifestyles on the planet has created a space where challenging the assumptions of the last twenty-five years doesn’t seem quite so outlandish—“make do and mend,” dig for a personal victory of the spirit. Perhaps their sympathetic reception is a harbinger of something more profound.

Martin Stott is a member of the committee of the William Morris Society (UK) and a master composer. For mental labour he is employed as Head of Environment and Resources by Warwickshire County Council.

WILLIAM MORRIS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI ARCHIVES AND RARE BOOKS LIBRARY *Lilia Walsh*

I remember my first experience with the work of William Morris. I was nine and my parents’ friend Darlene, who lived in London, had just arrived in Cincinnati from the airport. She carried with her several bags of tightly-rolled William Morris wallpaper, with which we proceeded to paper a room in our house. I remember how the tight rolls unfurled, revealing an endless stream of waving branches and thin leaves: Morris’s *Willow* pattern. For the next few days our home was a blur of paper, scraps, and sticky, drippy paste. Slowly the walls were covered and the willow branches closed around us, creating the semi-sacred sanctuary found under the limbs of a willow, right in our living room. The whole process seemed delightfully old fashioned and slightly enchanted.

William Morris popped up again when I visited London later at ages eleven and eighteen, seeing Morris’s tapestries, furniture, and stained glass in the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. I began to appreciate the range of his work, and as familiarity

often facilitates, I soon saw Morris everywhere: on stationary, walls in movies, and plastered across umbrellas and coasters in every museum gift shop. The range of his talents was staggering, but it all shared a common “feel.”

While in college, I stumbled across an honors seminar called “William Morris and His World” and decided it was time to actually learn something about the man behind the patterns. The class was taught by two University of Cincinnati professors, Cindy Damschroder, a professor of art history from the College of Design, Art, Architecture and Planning (DAAP), and Jane Carlin, who was at that time the head librarian of the DAAP library, but now works at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington. We studied William Morris’s life and career, as well as those of Morris’s wife, Jane, and fellow artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Damschroder and Carlin impressed upon us the aesthetic and socio-political relevance of Morris’s work, and its relationship to the industrial revolution. We visited UC’s Archives and Rare Books Library, where Kevin Grace, the head librarian and university archivist, showed us a number of Kelmscott volumes and examples of contemporary printing.

Later, an honors seminar with Kevin Grace on the culture of books and reading led me to apply for an internship in the Archives and Rare Books Library. The project was to create an annotated bibliography of the William Morris holdings and design a web exhibit to better showcase the collection and make it more accessible to users. I was thrilled when Professor Grace hired me as the 2009–2010 intern, but I’ll admit I was slightly overwhelmed when I began work in the fall of 2009.

The collection contains approximately 150 volumes; 22 original Kelmscott Press volumes, 5 published at the Chiswick Press, 32 books written by Morris, and 30 books about Morris and his circle. In addition, there are more than 80 books pertaining to printers and designers who followed Morris and were heavily influenced by him. A number of the volumes are inscribed: two by Morris himself, and three by his wife. Additionally, two volumes have been inscribed by F.S. Ellis, who frequently edited the texts printed at the Kelmscott Press.

One unique piece in the collection is a copy of *Sire Degrevaunt* (Kelmscott Press, 1895), which has been fitted with an elaborate embroidered cover. Though Morris assumed that some purchasers of his Kelmscott books would have them rebound to their taste (a curious break from his usual obsession with detail and desire to control every aspect of production), only a few of the Kelmscott volumes in our collection have actually been rebound. The binding is very elaborate: white silk with gold and silk thread embroidery forming a



Left to right: Kelmscott *Sire Degrevaunt* in an embroidered binding, Kevin Grace and Lilia Walsh with part of the UC Morris collection, and wood-engraved portrait of Morris by Barry Moser

stylized floral pattern. *Sire Degrevaunt* comes from the collection of Cornelius Hauck (1893–1967), an heir to a Cincinnati brewery fortune and rare book collector (much of his library, formerly owned by the Cincinnati Art Museum, was sold by Christie’s in London in June 2008). The library also holds one of the ten vellum copies of *The Order of Chivalry* (Kelmscott Press, 1892) with vellum binding and cloth ties.

The item with the most personal interest is an autograph letter Morris wrote to his good friend Aglaia Coronio on 24 October 1872. The Archives and Rare Books Library acquired this while I was working on my project so I was able to transcribe it and write an annotation. In 1872 Morris was thirty-eight years old. He had recently published *The Earthly Paradise*, the work for which he would gain the greatest fame during his lifetime, and was collaborating with Eiríkr Magnússon on translations of Icelandic legends. Morris is writing to Coronio in Athens. It is not clear if he sent the letter to Greece, or merely expected it to be waiting for her upon her return.

Coronio was the daughter of the Greek merchant and art collector Alexander Constantine Ionides. Her father’s business interests included the Crystal Palace Company (he was a director), which had built the famous glass structure in London for the 1851 Great Exhibition. It was there that Morris observed the ornamental, poor quality products that the industrial revolution had produced. What he saw horrified him and spurred him to start his own firm in 1861. In 1862 Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. exhibited at the London International Exhibition to commercial success and acclaim.

Morris wrote to Coronio frequently while at home and on his travels. This letter is the second he sent in the month of October. There is tenderness in the way he addresses her, and a feeling of comfortable emotional intimacy; “When are you coming back again? You know how much I miss you so there is no need of

talking of that anymore.” Although written during the height of Jane Morris’s and Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s affair, Morris’s letter betrays little of the delicacy or discomfort of his situation. Even though Aglaia Coronio was, after Georgiana Burne-Jones, Morris’s most intimate epistolary confidante, Morris is taciturn; he says only that he is having a “fit of low spirits” but does not attribute this to his wife’s affair or the presence of Rossetti at Kelmscott Manor. Instead, he claims, it’s for “no particular reason.” Coronio was also a close friend of Jane Morris, so perhaps Morris didn’t want (or need) to expose himself in this way or put his friend in an uncomfortable situation.

Many of Morris’s letters from this time suggest that he was deliberately avoiding being anywhere near Kelmscott Manor and Rossetti and Jane. He returned to London frequently, went house-hunting, fished the nearby rivers and ponds, and made a second trip to Iceland in 1873, all in an attempt to escape the potential scandal and discomfort of a potentially embarrassing predicament.

This letter offers a startling insight into the discrepancy between the way we glorify artistic and historical figures while looking back through the lens of history, amid the struggles and mundane nature of their everyday lives. It is easy to envision Morris’s work, but less easy to understand who he was as a person.

Kevin Grace has made the acquisition of special items, such as Morris’s letter to Coronio, the focus of the library’s collecting. It’s paid off. The inscriptions add greatly to the value and interest of the books; they become not just objects of literary and design history, but a small physical representation of these remarkable people’s lives. The strength of the collection, I soon found, lies not in its completeness or size, but rather in the emphasis on unique material, and in the way it shows the wide net of influence Morris had through the variety of his works and his effect on both his contemporaries and the printers, type designers, and crafts-

men who followed. The UC Archives and Rare Books collection focuses especially on Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, Thomas Mosher, Elbert Hubbard and the Roycrofters, T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, W.A. Dwiggins, Daniel Berkeley Updike, Eric Gill, and Dard Hunter.

So how did William Morris come to be such a big interest at UC's Archives and Rare Books Library? Who acquired these volumes? The collection was not bought as a unit, and in fact Kevin Grace has largely built it piece by piece since he joined the library in 1979. The dozen or so Morris-related volumes in the collection at this time were heavily used by a variety of art history and literature classes at the university. Grace told me that he is not sure when these volumes were acquired, or from where.

When he first took his position with the Archives & Rare Books Library, Grace was dismissive of Morris's work, summing up Morris's type: "It is not readable or legible. His typeface is clunky." However, he couldn't deny that the volumes were valuable for a variety of classes, including art history, history of the book, graphic design, political science and English literature. He slowly became a fan when he started to "look at them [the Kelmscott books] as works of art," not to be read for the pleasure of reading or the content. Grace's view is that "Morris's books are tactile, their value is in holding them and admiring the quality of the binding, the indentations of the printed letters." In time, Grace also became intrigued by Morris's socialist beliefs, and the inherent contradiction they provided with his productions.

Grace continued to add to the collection. He began to use a little of his budget every year to buy more for the Morris collection, establishing relationships with certain book dealers who would notify him when Morris volumes or related materials became available. As a result, the existing collection has been slowly gathered over a period of thirty years.

"I think that in the last twenty-five years there has been a growing appreciation for Arts and Crafts, and I think it has lasted longer in the United States," Grace explained. This may be due to the number of historic Arts and Crafts communities in America, and their focus on furniture craftsmanship which has led to a more permanent legacy. The Ohio-Kentucky area specifically has a strong Arts and Crafts identity. Chillicothe and Steubenville in Ohio were both bases for Dard Hunter, and Berea College with its crafts emphasis is located across the Ohio River in central Kentucky.

The existence of the University of Cincinnati's William Morris collection has largely been fueled by Grace's interest, but it certainly has its place in the city of Cincinnati. In general, Cincinnati is very strong in the arts for a city of its size, with the great Cincinnati Art Museum and the Contemporary Arts Cen-

ter, designed by architect Zaha Hadid. The city has an extraordinary number of artists, art lovers, and art patrons. Most importantly, the Arts and Crafts heritage here is very strong. The world famous Rookwood Pottery Company was founded here in 1880 by Maria Longworth Nichols. In addition, a number of notable Cincinnati historians and curators have worked to preserve and showcase Cincinnati's Arts and Crafts culture. Jonathan Riess, an art history professor at UC until his death in 2006, worked with Grace and the Archives and Rare Books Library when he curated a Morris exhibition at the Cincinnati Public Library in the mid-1990s. Anita Ellis, deputy director for Curatorial Affairs at the Cincinnati Art Museum, has written extensively on Rookwood pottery and has organized numerous exhibits of Cincinnati craftwork. Kenneth Trapp, formerly of the Cincinnati Art Museum, has written about Cincinnati art and the Arts and Crafts movement in the United States, including the 1993 exhibition catalogue, *Art With a Mission: Objects of the Arts and Crafts Movement*.

The work of these individuals has led to a strengthening of Arts and Crafts appreciation in Cincinnati in the last decades. Most recently, the Rookwood Pottery Company has been revitalized by Christopher Rose, who led a group of investors to buy the company in 2005, and has since resumed production. As Kevin Grace puts it, "In some ways we have held on to that era of Cincinnati history. Many would argue that it represents the time when our city was strongest, artistically, in craftsmanship, or in homegrown industry. It was the best era in terms of decorative arts and print for Cincinnati."

The William Morris collection is certainly not as large as those at other academic institutions or found in independent research libraries such as the Morgan and the Huntington, but Kevin Grace aims to put the UC in the "top twenty public collections of Morris books in the US." When I asked him what set it apart from other collections he stated that it was "probably just the way it is used." It is utilized frequently for teaching and research, and it grows a little each year. The class I took, "William Morris and His World," was, in fact, built around the collection.

My internship project was designed to enable the collection to be even more widely used. In giving me direction, Grace outlined the goal: "I would like the collection to be heavily used again, to make the collection relevant and accessible." Additionally, we hope that my work will create interest in books and book design at the University of Cincinnati. While it seems that public awareness of design principles is increasing (I would cite the success of the documentary film *Helvetica* as an example), there is a focus on highly dramatic formats such as posters and album art. There is

little knowledge of the elements and choices that go into the production of a book.

In the process of producing the collection bibliography and online exhibition I became immersed in the world of William Morris. I was constantly surprised by how large a net he cast and by all of the interesting things my research led me to. In all I wrote descriptions of one hundred and fifty volumes. Creating the website was a fun application of my graphic design classes, though scanning the images was a challenge. Some of the Kelmscott Press books were very difficult to scan, due to their large format and stiff vellum bindings, and I was always nervous I was damaging these valuable books. Though I was not the first person to open these volumes and pour over them for hours, I built a familiarity but would also find myself shocked and thrilled to turn a leaf and discover a hidden inscription or particularly beautiful woodcut.

Through handling the works of Morris, and reading a letter written in his hand, I gained a reverence for objects that seems lost in this modern world. We live in a time of material culture; our focus on the acquisition of stuff and that stuff's inherent replaceability and impermanence causes a devaluing of the object itself. Actually touching Morris's books was a tactile, emotional, and historical experience. It was exhilarating to figuratively break the glass museum case that usually separated me, and my dangerously oily fingers, from works of such power. I felt lucky to be able to experience these objects so intimately, and so directly in the way Morris intended. Unlike the printed book, electronic items simply die, simply live out their lives and fall dormant. In twenty years the iPod Nano will

hardly be appreciated for its beauty, or, likely be able to perform its function.

Perhaps there is a rising interest in physical books as a reaction against the burgeoning digitization of words. We see in our current yearning for the screen-less reading experience a new appreciation for what Morris was trying to do. We (and by we, I mean . . . book lovers, academics, casual readers, librarians, and scholars) have the same need for a sense of craftsmanship and the visible human element in the reading experience. Having lost that human element, we find ourselves in the same situation Morris was in his day.

It may be that Morris is more successful and respected now than when he was alive. The appreciation for his guiding philosophies has grown, as electronics and mass-produced products figure more and more into our everyday lives. The relevance of his work is growing and his printed works are being seen as the "sacred" objects he designed them to be. I feel honored to be part of that process and to have worked to make his works a little more public and a little more available.

If you would like to visit the web exhibition of the University of Cincinnati Archives and Rare Books Library's William Morris collection or view images from the collection and peruse the annotated bibliography, follow this link: www.libraries.uc.edu/libraries/arb/exhibits/William%20Morris/index.html or access it through the Archives and Rare Books Library website: www.libraries.uc.edu/libraries/arb.

Lilia Walsh is an undergraduate senior in Human Geography at the University of Cincinnati. She was the Archives and Rare Books Library 2009–2010 intern and continues to work in the library as a student worker.

THE LAST WORD: J. W. MACKAIL ON MORRIS

And all the while he led his own inner life, apart and alone in a world of his own—a life of brooding thought and romantic imagination, in which the whole framework of things and the whole history of the race lay before his eyes as though in some magic crystal. "It seems to me," he wrote once, "that no hour of the day passes that the whole world does not show itself to me." The strength of this inner life made him self-absorbed, and sometimes unsympathizing. . . . But his rare words of comfort ring true in their austerity. "I entreat you to think," he wrote once to his dearest friend, "that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that the parts of it fit one into another in some way."* The words sound a little cold, a little abstract. But he would not go beyond what he felt to be the truth; and it is in some such words as these, if we ponder them well, that we shall find the ultimate basis, and the final expression, of the beliefs which enable us to live.

—J. W. Mackail, *William Morris and His Circle* (1907), 18.

* The quotation is from a letter which appears in J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris* (1899), 1:327–28 with the opening and closing removed, and reprinted in Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris* (1985), 1:291, written from Leek and dated "[March 22–April 6, 1876]."